

THE BOY

In a Dark Place

by

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A PAINTING OF THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE

The yellows and oranges of a painted morning. Expert brush-strokes of fog lifting from the land. Delicate puffs of white sheep dotting a distant hill. A line of wide-branched trees cut across textured pastures of impressionistic grass.

It's a painting of the perfect English countryside...

And then something strange happens. Something in the painting moves.

A car.

It makes its way across the painting, sliding in a perfectly straight, horizontal line across our view.

And then that expertly painted fog becomes unfrozen and starts to rise. The delicately painted sheep are herded up the hill and we realize that this isn't a painting any longer...

This is real.

INT. CAR - DAY

GERTI EVANS, mid-20's, asleep in the backseat, oblivious to the scenery zipping by outside the car's window. She's blonde and pretty in that "Hi, I'll be your waitress for today" kind of way. Without being told we know she's American - a stranger in a strange land.

She turns her head, still asleep, and begins to snore lightly. At the same time her shirt comes open revealing an angel necklace hanging between her slightly visible bra line...

THE DRIVER

Takes notice in his rear-view. He's an ancient looking guy, more hair coming out of his ears than on his head. He works his mirror back and forth with vulgar fervor, trying to get just the right view down her shirt. He's almost there when--

Gerti shifts again, her shirt closing. The Driver turns his full attention back to the road dejectedly.

DRIVER

Shite...

CUT TO:

LATER

The car's stopped.

The driver circles the car to the back seat where Gerti is still curled up, asleep. He gives a light knock. No response. Gives it another, less polite, knock. Nothing.

Mumbles a curse to himself. Opens the car door...

DRIVER

Miss? We've arrived, Miss.

Gerti doesn't even move. She's out.

The Driver let's out a "I don't get paid enough for this" sigh. Gently taps her shoulder. Gerti turns slightly and lets out another snore.

Finally the Driver gives her a good nudge. Gerti bolts awake. Grabs his hand, ready to defend herself. The old Driver just about has a heart attack--

DRIVER

I apologize, Miss, I was--

Gerti looks around sleepily, not yet sure where she is or what she's doing.

DRIVER

Uh, we're here, Miss.

GERTI

Sorry, I was dreaming.

Mustering his best British politeness--

DRIVER

Not at all, Miss. Perfectly alright.

Gerti steps out of the car and into the shadow of

HEELSHIRE MANOR

An old, two-story building with large barred windows that almost give the impression of lifeless eyes peering out from behind large, leafy trees.

Gerti shudders - maybe because of the cold.

GERTI

It's like something out of a book.

DRIVER

Yes, it's very lovely. I've taken your things inside.

He pulls a letter from his pocket and hands it to Gerti--

DRIVER

From the Heelshires.

Gerti unfolds it revealing long, flowing, beautiful handwriting. Before she can read it--

DRIVER

They've stepped out. They beg your pardon, Miss, and ask that you wait in the parlour.

INT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - ENTRANCE-WAY - DAY

Gerti pops a piece of gum in her mouth and looks around, surveying her surroundings, says what we're thinking:

GERTI

Holy crap.

The entrance-way is cavernous, reaching up to the second floor. The house itself is old-time, solid construction. Thick, wood beams run up the walls.

Gerti walks timidly to the right and pokes her head into--

THE LIVING ROOM

The first thing you notice is there are no windows on one side. In fact, as we'll find out, there are no windows on the entire back-side of the house.

The next thing is the furniture. Dusty antiques, all of it. The living room time forgot.

A GRANDFATHER CLOCK sits in the corner. It's stopped at 6:30 and, from the looks of it, it's been stopped there a long, long time.

Gerti peaks out of the front window, surveys the front yard through thick, steel bars.

And then she walks back through the entranceway to--

THE DINING ROOM

More of the same. That eerie lack of windows. An ornately carved dining table with a few rickety looking wooden chairs around it.

ENTRANCEWAY

Gerti pulls out the letter again, trying carefully not to make too much noise as she unfolds it. There's a heavy silence in the house. A formal gloom that Gerti unconsciously is scared to break--

GERTI
(reading)
...we ask that you wait in the parlour...

Gerti looks around--

GERTI
Which one is the parlour?

And then she looks at--

THE STAIRS

Directly in front of her - a wooden railing almost looks like it's reaching out a deformed, wooden hand to her--

The staircase splits in two midway up - and where it splits is a large painting of the house's residents - THE HEELSHIRES.

It's not the parlour, but...

CREAK

Gerti takes a step on the stairs, breaking the heavy silence of the house. She takes another, softer step - willing herself to be lighter. A slightly quieter CREAK up to...

THE PAINTING

The PARENTS, Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire, each have a hand on their young son's shoulders. The FATHER is tall, dignified looking. The MOTHER is small, squat and stern. An odd-looking pair.

The SON looks to be around seven. He's almost disturbingly perfect looking in a dated looking little suit.

He has perfectly combed hair, perfect skin with perfect features and a slight, half-smile as if he knows something we don't.

But the eyes are what sticks out - black and huge and lifeless. The right eye has a slight rip in the canvas. Gerti reaches out to touch it when--

A CREAK.

The house settling or maybe a CHILD'S FOOTSTEPS from the floor above.

GERTI

Hello?

Gerti looks up the stairs to the second floor.

GERTI

(to herself)

That's not the parlour. That is definitely not the parlour.

Gerti looks back down the stairs where she should go - and then looks up again--

SECOND FLOOR

CLUNK, CLUNK. The sound of high-heels on a wood floor, shattering the silence of the house.

Gerti slips off her shoes and places them carefully against the wall. She tip-toes barefoot down the hallways.

They're narrow. Claustrophobic. As if the walls were pressing inward.

More portraits. Various other family members going back through the years. Each staring out silently as Gerti passes down to--

A BOY'S ROOM

Unlike the rest of the house this room looks untouched, pristine. A child's bed perfectly made. A few toys on shelves. It looks more like a show room than an actual child's room.

A DOOR SHUTS somewhere in the house.

Gerti quickly tip-toes out of the room and down the hall, right past her shoes without noticing.

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hello?

GERTI
Hello?

She moves down the stairs towards the voice--

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hello?

GERTI
Yes? Hello?

Back through the Entranceway to--

THE DINING ROOM

At the other end is the owner of the voice, MALCOLM (30's). He's smack dab between handsome and nerdy - and very English looking. He's dressed in a black tie and a white shirt, making him look like an off duty waiter.

MALCOLM
Hello.

GERTI
Hello.

A beat. Malcolm seems a little bit shocked to see this pretty girl standing before him.

MALCOLM
You're the new nanny?

GERTI
I'm not sure yet. Mr. Heelshire?

MALCOLM
Me? No, I'm the grocery boy. Grocery man. I deliver groceries. I own the store actually.
(flustered)
I saw your bags and I...I'm Malcolm by the way.

He puts out his hand to Gerti. The two shake awkwardly--

GERTI
Gerti Evans.

MALCOLM

I've got to unpack these groceries, care to join me? I can give you a tour of such exotic locations as the pantry and the bread cupboard.

Gerti smiles--

GERTI

Lead the way.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A large kitchen - the kind that probably once housed a whole staff of servants. Now it's just Malcolm and Gerti stuffing cans of food on shelves--

MALCOLM

American, yeah?

GERTI

Yeah. My first trip out of the country.

MALCOLM

Let me guess...California, right?

Gerti looks at him, not sure if he's joking or not. She's got a pretty unmistakable Texan accent.

GERTI

Texas

MALCOLM

Hm. I'm usually so good at these things. I've got a touch of the gift you know.

GERTI

The gift?

MALCOLM

Prognosticator. Clairvoyant. Whatever you like to call it. I had a grandmum that read tea-leaves. My mother read palms.

GERTI

And what do you read?

Malcolm looks at her, thinking. Gerti chews her gum--

MALCOLM

Chewing gum.

GERTI

Gum?

MALCOLM

If you'll allow me...

Malcolm holds out his hand. Gerti stops chewing. Is this guy serious?

MALCOLM

Don't be shy.

Gerti spits her gum into Malcolm's hand. Off Gerti's somewhat disgusted look--

MALCOLM

We don't get to choose our gifts, Miss Evans.

Malcolm examines the gum carefully. He turns it over in his hand, squints his eyes in concentration.

GERTI

So what do you see?

MALCOLM

Interesting. Very, very interesting. I see that you're a writer...from Dallas, Texas. It looks like you've come here to be inspired by the English countryside. To get away from the hustle and bustle of your life in the U.S. of A.

Gerti LAUGHS. Not even close.

MALCOLM

No?

GERTI

No.

MALCOLM

Close?

GERTI

Not even a little.

Malcolm looks back at the gum.

MALCOLM

Rubbish. One more try, yeah? Okay...ah! Here it is. I see what went wrong. Ah, a dark past. On the run are we?

He smiles. Gerti doesn't. That one hit a little too close to home.

MALCOLM

Sorry. I'm afraid that was my best attempt at flirting. Believe it or not I'm actually considered charming here in this country. It's amazing that any of us manage to procreate at all really.

Gerti grabs a loaf of bread.

GERTI

Bread?

Malcolm clears his throat uncomfortably. Tough crowd.

MALCOLM

Cupboard behind you.

GERTI

So what's the family like?

MALCOLM

The family? Well...they're nice. Very generous. As good a people as you'll ever hope to meet.

Gerti hands Malcolm some cans--

GERTI

And their son. Brahms?

MALCOLM

Brahms. Yes. He's...uh...I'm not sure how to put it...

Malcolm searches for the words as A DOOR OPENS in another room. Saved by the bell--

MALCOLM

--here they are now.

That's all he can say as MRS. HEELSHIRE enters the kitchen.

If we thought the artist was taking some liberties in the painting of the woman we were very, very wrong. Mrs. Heelshire is short and squat - not quite a little person, but definitely less than average height. She looks as if she stepped directly out of the painting.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Miss Evans?

GERTI

Mrs. Heelshire, it's so nice to finally meet you.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Yes. Follow me, Miss Evans.

ENTRANCE WAY

We can hear talk in the other room. It's serious, FATHERLY ADVICE TALK--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Brahms is very excited to meet you, Miss Evans. He's never met an American before.

GERTI

I'm very excited to meet him too. I've never met an English person. Well, I mean, I met Malcolm and you, but--

Mrs. Heelshire stops. She looks at Gerti's feet.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Where are your shoes?

Gerti looks down at her shoe-less feet. She looks up at Mrs. Heelshire, embarrassed.

SECOND FLOOR - HALLWAY

Mrs. Heelshire waits, arms folded, in the hallway. Gerti comes out of a room with an apologetic look on her face.

GERTI

I was sure I took them off right here.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

They'll turn up. It's Brahms. He can be...playful. I assume you brought other shoes?

Gerti gives one last glance around--

GERTI

In my bag.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Good. Now come along, we've kept them waiting long enough.

LIVING ROOM

MR. HEELSHIRE, is bent down on his knee, obscuring the figure he's talking to, presumably Brahms.

Mrs. Heelshire clears her throat. Mr. Heelshire stands obediently and turns toward Gerti. He, like Mrs. Heelshire, looks like he stepped directly out of the painting.

And then we get our first look at the figure Mr. Heelshire was talking to...

A DOLL.

Literally. A life-size and somewhat life-like doll with a perfect porcelain face, not unlike the painting, with perfect, delicate hands and wearing a suit like you might see British children wear in the 1950's. It, or he, as this is BRAHMS, stands facing Gerti--

MR. HEELSHIRE

Miss Evans, allow me to introduce you to our son, Brahms.

A beat.

A long, painful, silent beat where Gerti opens her mouth, then closes it unable to find the proper words for a situation like this. Finally, Gerti manages to make a sound.

She LAUGHS.

An uncomfortable, unsure laugh. The kind of forced chuckle you give when you're not quite sure if someone is joking. The whole thing would be funny if it weren't so creepy.

Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire give each other a disappointed, meaningful look.

Gerti notices it, but all she can do is let out another little NERVOUS LAUGH.

Gerti's drowning. She looks at Mr. Heelshire, then Mrs. Heelshire - and then tries again to try and say something. Her mouth opens and closes.

Malcolm swoops in just in time--

MALCOLM

You've met Brahms then?

Without missing a beat Malcolm gets down on a knee and shakes Brahms's porcelain hand, careful to look and talk directly to him, as if he was a real little boy.

MALCOLM

How are you doing, Brahms? You take it easy on Miss Evans, she's traveled a long way just to meet you.

Malcolm stands up-

MALCOLM

I'm off then. Bill's on the table.

(to Gerti)

Pleasure meeting you, Miss Evans. Hope to see you when I deliver next Thursday.

He smiles at Gerti. Gerti's face says it all - THANK YOU!

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Thank you, Malcolm.

Gerti regains herself. She kneels down to Brahms level, just like Malcolm did, and takes Brahms' little porcelain hand in hers.

GERTI

It's so nice to meet you, Brahms. I hope you and I can be friends.

Mrs. Heelshire smiles broadly at Mr. Heelshire. Gerti's passed the first test. And now on to the other tests--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Mr. Heelshire, will you please take Miss Evans' things to her room? Miss Evans, we might as well get started. I have quite a bit to show you. If you'll help Brahms along, we'll begin upstairs.

STAIRS - LATER

Mrs. Heelshire moves up the stairs with surprising quickness for a woman of her age and size. Behind her Gerti struggles, huffing and puffing, with Brahms held awkwardly in her arms.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Brahms has a detailed schedule. You are detail oriented, aren't you?

GERTI

Yes...detail...oriented.

MRS. HEELSHIRE
 We'll run through a typical day. It's
 Brahms' decision in the end and he can be
 quite selective. We've had a number of
 nannies come through already. Though
 none of them were nearly as pretty or as
 young as you.

Mrs. Heelshire turns around. Looks at Gerti.

MRS. HEELSHIRE
 That is your real hair color, I assume?

Gerti reaches up, touches her blonde hair--

GERTI
 Uh, yeah. It is.

MRS. HEELSHIRE
 That's good. You never know nowadays.

Mrs. Heelshire continues up the stairs. Gerti stands
 there for a beat wondering what, exactly, she's gotten
 herself into...

UPSTAIRS - BRAHMS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Heelshire undresses Brahms and then puts little doll
 pajamas on him as she talks.

MRS. HEELSHIRE
 You'll wake him at 7:00 each morning and
 dress him.

Mrs. Heelshire finishes putting Brahms in pajamas and
 puts him in bed. Then she looks at Gerti expectantly.
 Gerti stands there, not quite sure what she's supposed to
 do. Mrs. Heelshire motions toward a dresser.

MRS. HEELSHIRE
 You'll find his clothes in there.

GERTI
 So I should...?

MRS. HEELSHIRE
 Wake and dress him, Miss Evans. There's
 no better way to learn than by doing.

Gerti walks to the dresser and opens up the top drawer.
 Inside are five full outfits; socks, underwear, pants,
 shirt and jacket. She pulls one out and walks to the bed
 where Brahms is "sleeping".

Gerti stands over Brahms, still not sure what to do. She gives a glance toward Mrs. Heelshire. Mrs. Heelshire nods, as if to say, "yes, keep going..."

GERTI

Um...wake up...

MRS. HEELSHIRE

I don't know about you, but that certainly wouldn't wake me.

Gerti takes a breath - okay, fine. Gerti sits on the bed next to Brahms.

GERTI

It's time to wake up, Brahms.

She pulls the covers off of him and pulls him up into her arms very gently and carefully. Then, just as slowly and carefully, she begins to pull off his pajamas. At the rate Gerti is going Brahms will be fully dressed and ready to go in about 3 hours.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

He's not a newborn, Miss Evans. You needn't worry about hurting him.

Mrs. Heelshire walks over and practically pushes Gerti out of the way and starts dressing him, quickly, efficiently and, not coincidentally, like a woman who has done this for decades...

To Brahms, in the way you'd speak to your real child--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Now let's show Miss Evans how to get you dressed. I'd let her do it, but I'm afraid we'd be here all afternoon, wouldn't we?

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Heelshire moves along briskly with Gerti walking behind her lugging Brahms...

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Normally breakfast would be next, but it's already the afternoon now, so we'll move on to class. Brahms, as you might imagine, is home-schooled.

Mrs. Heelshire comes to a door at the end of the hall and stops. She looks at Gerti who stands there with Brahms, breathing heavy - it's not a light doll.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

He can be a bit much to carry, I'm afraid. I've got Mr. Heelshire to help me, but you'll be alone out here. Do you think you can manage?

GERTI

(out of breath)
Of course. No problem.

Mrs. Heelshire seems doubtful.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

You're awfully skinny. But then people have doubted me my whole life and I manage.

Mrs. Heelshire opens the door to--

THE CLASSROOM

The walls are lined with bookcases full of dusty books. In the center of the room are two desks and at the front a podium. All very mid-50's style.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Brahms has three hours of class five days a week. I like to begin by reading some poetry. Do you know any poetry, Miss Evans.

GERTI

Not really. I do know all the words to "Sweet Home Alabama" though.

A beat. Mrs. Heelshire just stares at Gerti, the kind of stare reserved for blathering idiots--

GERTI

It was a kind of a joke...

MRS. HEELSHIRE

We have plenty of books. Choose one and then read through it.

(demonstrating)

It's very important you speak in a LOUD, CLEAR VOICE.

As politely as she can muster--

GERTI

Yes. Of course.

Mrs. Heelshire looks at her blankly - waiting. A beat. Then Gerti realizes and replies in a CLEAR, LOUD, VOICE.

GERTI

YES. OF COURSE.

Mrs. Heelshire smiles.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Excellent.

Then she spins on her heels and vanishes back out into the hallway--

MRS. HEELSHIRE (O.S.)

Music appreciation is next...

Gerti rolls her eyes and shifts Brahms in her arms. What has she gotten herself into?

LIVING ROOM

Brahms sits on the couch. He starts to slide, then falls over onto his side. Mrs. Heelshire is there in an instant, setting him upright again.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Now be a good boy, Brahms, and sit up.

Mrs. Heelshire motions toward a large cabinet style record player almost buried underneath stacks of records.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Music, Miss Evans. I don't think Brahms could go on without his music. It means everything to him. It is his world.

She picks up a record and sets it on the turntable--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

You simply take a record and place it here, then take the needle and...

The record starts spinning. From the hum and hiss we can tell the volume is turned up LOUD--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Brahms likes it a bit louder than I prefer, but it gives him so much joy I don't dare take it away from him.

Right on cue, the music jumps in - a THUNDEROUS BURST that nearly gives Gerti a heart-attack.

Mrs. Heelshire closes her eyes, enjoying the music. Gerti looks at Brahms and it almost - *almost* - looks as if a little smile has crept onto his face.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Heelshire circles the table. A bowl of some kind of steaming stew for Mr. Heelshire, Gerti and then finally, for Brahms. Mr. Heelshire ties a napkin around Brahms's neck before she sits.

Gerti can't take her eyes off the whole sad/creepy affair. Mr. Heelshire clears his throat loudly--

MR. HEELSHIRE

Brahms is very fond of your accent. He says it makes you sound like a movie star.

Gerti laughs and blushes despite herself.

GERTI

You think so?

Mr. Heelshire gives a slight motion with his head for Gerti to speak directly to Brahms. Gerti turns toward Brahms--

GERTI

I think the English accent is so much nicer.

MR. HEELSHIRE

Brahms would like to know if you've ever been horse riding? Or met any Indians?

Gerti has the hang of it now - she turns to Brahms as if he was a real little boy--

GERTI

I've been on a horse. I think everyone in Texas has. As for, uh, Native Americans - well, I've only seen them in casinos.

Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire smile at one another. Maybe this will work out after all...

KITCHEN

Mrs. Heelshire walks quickly into the kitchen - she's back in tour mode, going a mile-a-minute. Gerti follows her lugging the dinner dishes.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

We don't throw any food out in this house, Miss Evans. This is a country house, do you know what that means?

On Gerti - um...

MRS. HEELSHIRE

It means we are in a constant battle with the outside elements. Weather and plants and vermin. Especially vermin, Miss Evans. So we take certain measures against them.

She opens a cupboard - inside is a mountain of tupperware. Mrs. Heelshire takes Brahms's bowl of stew and dumps it in a container.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Mr. Heelshire can tell you about those duties.

For the first time Gerti notices Mr. Heelshire standing in the doorway holding Brahms lovingly in his arms. He hands Brahms to Mrs. Heelshire and takes the tupperware.

MR. HEELSHIRE

If you'll follow me...

LAUNDRY ROOM

A large freezer is shoved into the corner of the room. Mr. Heelshire drops the tupperware container inside.

MR. HEELSHIRE

The food goes in here. Now I'll show you the traps.

On Gerti: Traps?

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - CONTINUOUS

Gerti, holding a large garbage bag, waits by the side of the house. Mr. Heelshire emerges from behind a shrub with a large rat-trap containing one very large, very dead rat.

He pulls the rat out of the trap as he talks--

MR. HEELSHIRE

Personally, I don't know that any of this is necessary. But the Missus is convinced they'll get into the walls. And Brahms...

Mr. Heelshire drops the rat into the bag and resets the trap. Gerti looks like she might drop the bag and run away any second--

MR. HEELSHIRE

...well, Brahms has never been very fond of animals of any kind. He was always very shy, you see. Very timid.

Mr. Heelshire's voice drops, almost to a whisper, as if he doesn't want the house itself to hear him--

MR. HEELSHIRE

I know how it must look to you, Miss Evans. To be completely honest I'm not sure how it all came to this. Little by little and then all at once, I suppose.

Mr. Heelshire bends behind another shrub. Gerti grimaces, not sure if she can stand another bloody rat corpse.

MR. HEELSHIRE

Empty.

They move on to the next trap.

MR. HEELSHIRE

What I'm trying to say, Miss, is that whatever it might look like on the outside, our son is here. He's very much with us. Do you understand, Miss Evans?

GERTI

Yes.

Mr. Heelshire smiles--

MR. HEELSHIRE

Good. That's very good.

They reach the end of the house where a large chimney rises up along the house. A thick shrub grows around it--

MR. HEELSHIRE

No need to look here. We don't put traps
'round the chimney.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The bath water runs...

Brahms sits in the tub. His little suit is hung up on the shower rod. His doll-body is a yellowed kind of fabric with patches and repairs here and there. From the looks of it this is an old doll.

Gerti stands in the doorway and watches as Mrs. Heelshire gently, lovingly cleans his hands and face with a wet cloth. The whole time she talks to him, just as you would a real child.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

You were a very good boy today, Brahms.
I'm very proud of you. You behaved like
a little gentleman...

She combs his fake hair carefully. A clump falls out--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

Oh dear. We'll have to get papa to fix
this...

BEDROOM

Brahms is in bed. Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire are on either side of him, hands folded, heads bowed in prayer.

Gerti waits in the doorway, not daring to break up this strangely touching family moment.

The prayer ends. Mr. Heelshire whispers something to his wife and they both turn toward Gerti.

Gerti's heart skips a beat - though she's not even sure what she's afraid of.

MRS. HEELSHIRE

If you would give us one second to speak
with Brahms...

Gerti backs out of the room, into the

HALLWAY

Mrs. Heelshire closes the door. Gerti shivers. A cold night in a drafty house.

LOW, URGENT VOICES from inside the room. Gerti strains to hear. For a second it almost sounds as if a CHILD'S VOICE is among them. The door opens--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

He wants you, Miss Evans. He's chosen you if you'll have him.

She hugs Gerti. The look on Gerti's face is neither excitement or dismay, it's the same face she's had all day - overwhelmed.

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gerti's bags are spread across the floor. Gerti steps over them, pacing and talking on the phone to her older sister, SANDY.

SANDY (ON THE PHONE)

What did you do?

GERTI

I didn't do anything. I couldn't even speak. If the grocery boy - er, *man* - hadn't come by I'd probably still be standing there.

LAUGHTER on the other end of the line--

SANDY

So...are you going to do it?

Gerti sighs--

GERTI

I don't know. The whole thing is just creepy. This house. The doll--

SANDY

--the money. You'll make more in three months than I make in a year. That kind of money can change your life, Gert.

GERTI

I feel guilty. I mean these people are seriously nuts. I shouldn't take advantage of them. You should have seen the way they treated it. Like a real little kid. It's heartbreaking.

SANDY

If it makes them happy, who cares? Play along. We talked about this. This is good for you. You need to get away for a while. Get some perspective.

GERTI

So living with a doll all summer is perspective?

SANDY

Yes. Coming from what you came from, it is. You need this.

GERTI

I don't know. This house. The doll. These sad, sad people. It's just...it's too weird.

A beat, the kind always followed by bad news--

GERTI

What?

SANDY

Cole's been asking about you. He's been calling non-stop. He came by the house and scared Morgan half-to-death.

Looking like she got kicked in the gut--

GERTI

What'd you tell him?

SANDY

Nothing. And I'm not going to tell him anything.

(a heavy beat)

You have to get away from him, Gert. Do this. If not for you, then for me. I can't stand to see you get hurt again.

Gerti takes a breath like a woman about to take the plunge...

INT. ENTRANCE-WAY - MORNING

A stack of ancient looking luggage. The kind of stuff you'd expect to see getting loaded onto the Titanic.

The Driver that dropped Gerti off is back. He picks up two of the larger suitcases and carries them--

OUTSIDE

Where the car is waiting. The trunk open. He tries to toss both suitcases in the back at once. One falls to the ground--

THE DRIVER

Bloody...

The Driver stops. Looks at the suitcase. Empty. Not a single item in there. He looks back at the house. Picks up the suitcase. Closes it back up.

THE DRIVER

Crazy old buggers.

Stuffs it into the trunk of the car and trudges back to the house...

INT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - HALLWAY - DAY

Gerti walks out of her room. The SOUNDS OF PLEADING. An urging, whispering voice coming from Brahms' room.

Gerti tip-toes to his room and peaks--

INSIDE

Brahms is set up on the side of the bed, like a real little boy listening to his mother. Mrs. Heelshire stands at the foot of the bed with her back to the doll. By the sound of her voice she's on the verge of tears--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

...had to happen. It's time now and we have to go and you've got to be a good boy, Brahms. You promised us--

MR. HEELSHIRE (O.S.)

I apologize for the rush, Miss Evans.

Gerti whips around. Mr. Heelshire stands over her in a black suit, looking like death going on a holiday.

He walks toward the stairs, motions for Gerti to follow--

MR. HEELSHIRE

It's been many years now since we've had a holiday and we're anxious to be off. Besides Brahms seems to be so fond of you and in this matter his opinion is of the highest importance. I only wish we could have shown you some of the...

(MORE)

MR. HEELSHIRE (CONT'D)
 idiosyncracies of life with a child as
 unique as our Brahms. But you'll figure
 them out, I suppose. I have some things
 to help you along.

(pulling out papers)
 A schedule. Mrs. Heelshire took the
 effort to write one down for each day.

Again that impossibly perfect handwriting like something
 out of the 19th century. Time's listed from 7:00 A.M.
 until midnight. From washing cheeks to reading stories -
 every hour full of something for Brahms.

Mr. Heelshire hands her another paper. At the top is
 written "RULES" under which is a set of rules listed 1
 through 10. We note some of them: NEVER LEAVE BRAHMS
 ALONE, NO GUESTS and GOODNIGHT KISS EVERY NIGHT.

Mr. Heelshire almost looks embarrassed as he hands them
 to Gerti--

MR. HEELSHIRE
 Rules might seem a bit silly, but it's
 important that you follow them, Miss.
 Brahms isn't like other children and he
 can be...particular. I'm afraid we might
 have indulged him a bit over the years.

ENTRANCE-WAY

Mr. Heelshire stops - looks as if he's going to cry. He
 reaches out and puts a large hand on Gertie's shoulder,
 then gives it a pat, as you would a soldier about to
 storm the beach at Normandy.

MR. HEELSHIRE
 I'm a bit off today. It's been so long
 since we've gone anywhere.

The Driver comes in--

DRIVER
 All ready then.

MR. HEELSHIRE
 (calling up the stairs)
 It's time, mother.

Mrs. Heelshire appears, holding Brahms in her arms.
 Tears on her cheeks as she slowly descends the stairs.
 One painful step at a time - a kind of sad and bizarre
 descent to the entrance-way.

She kisses Brahms porcelain face one last time and hands him to Mr. Heelshire. Mrs. Heelshire grabs Gerti tightly in her arms and whispers into her ear--

MRS. HEELSHIRE

I'm sorry.

Gerti stands there - accepting the hug with a bewildered hug of her own until Mr. Heelshire leads Mrs. Heelshire towards the door.

MR. HEELSHIRE

Come on, dear, it's time we left.

Mr. Heelshire hands Brahms to Gerti.

MR. HEELSHIRE

Be good to him and he'll be good to you.
Be bad to him and...well, be good to him,
won't you Miss Evans?

Mustering a smile--

GERTI

Of course. I'll treat him like my own.
Now go and enjoy your vacation. You have
nothing to worry about here.

All Mr. Heelshire can muster is a weak nod. He closes the door behind him. The house is suddenly very silent, very big and very empty. Gerti waits - listening, until--

The sound of the CAR DRIVING AWAY.

She let's out a BIG BREATH - like she's been holding it since she arrived.

She heads to the couch and sets Brahms down. He stares back at her, that strange little painted smile on his face. Those black, dead eyes.

A beat.

Finally, Gerti can't stand it anymore. She picks up a blanket and tosses it over Brahms.

GERTI

No offense, but you creep me out.

INT. GERTI'S ROOM - DAY

Chaotic unpacking. Clothes and magazines everywhere. Gerti grabs an armful of shirts, jeans and socks out of her suitcase and crams them into a drawer.

She turns back to the suitcase and sees

A WELL-WORN PICTURE

It's her, a bit younger, and a MAN holding hands and smiling at the camera. We don't know it yet, but this is COLE, the man that Gerti's sister mentioned.

Gerti takes the picture and shoves it in a drawer underneath a heap of underwear and socks.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Some British comedy flickers on the TV. Gerti eats a PB & J and drinks a glass of wine - the dinner of champions.

She takes a quick, almost guilty glance at Brahm, still covered in the blanket, still sitting on the chair where she left him.

A LAUGH TRACK on the TV pulls her attention back to the show. Gerti giggles along and pours herself another glass of wine...

GERTI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Time for bed. Gerti, in pajamas, crawls into bed and then reaches over and flicks off her lamp.

A beat.

The room is almost completely back. And then we hear Gerti stirring. The lamp flicks back on and Gerti gets out of the bed and heads to--

LIVING ROOM

She pulls the blanket off Brahm. Picks him up.

BRAHM'S ROOM

Gerti tosses Brahm on to the bed. Brahm lays there, his limbs akimbo, looking like a broken toy.

Gerti pauses, mulling something over. Finally she walks back over to Brahms and lays him out flat. Puts his hands on his chest like a corpse, thinks better of it and then puts them at his side.

Finally satisfied she flicks off the light and walks out of the room.

We hold on Brahms.

A beat. Then another. We're waiting for something, maybe waiting for him to move, to stand up and follow Gerti out of the room...

Outside RAIN starts to fall, building from a few gentle beats to a DULL ROAR that carries over to...

GERTI'S ROOM - MORNING

Gerti stirs and then opens her eyes. Lifts her head just enough to look around the room - as if she's remembering where she is--

Gerti lets her head fall back onto the pillow, ready to go back to sleep when she hears something that makes her sit back up.

A CHILD CRYING.

Big painful SOBS that are just barely audible above the rain outside. Gerti throws the covers off--

HALLWAY

Gerti steps out into the hallway and pauses - listening. MORE CRYING, even louder now. She follows the sound to--

THE STAIRS

Tiptoes quickly down the stairs, closer and closer to the sounds of the crying child until she reaches--

THE FAMILY PORTRAIT

The crying stops. Gerti looks around. The house is completely still and silent, save for the ever growing rumble of the rain outside.

She studies the painting of the Heelshire family. Something seems different. The rip is missing and Brahms looks almost life-like now. There's color in his skin and his eyes look as though they might blink any second.

Gerti can't help but reach out towards the painting, towards Brahms' life-like cheek. The sound of the rain becomes a ROAR, until it's almost deafening.

Gerti is about to touch Brahms' cheek when--

WOOSH!

Brahms reaches out of the painting! Grabs Gerti. His eyes go black. His skin goes white as porcelain.

Gerti SCREAMS!

Tries to jerk away, but Brahms hangs on, pulling her into the painting, her own skin going porcelain white, her eyes going completely black as we--

CUT TO:

GERTI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Gerti wakes up in bed, still SCREAMING and fighting off some invisible foe until she realizes--

It was a dream. Just a dream.

She looks around the room, breathing hard as the memory gives way to reality. The sound of rain coming down--

GERTI

Jesus...

Then something that makes her BLOOD RUN COLD. The sound of CRYING. Soft sobs, barely audible above the wind and rain outside.

Gerti freezes and listens. A beat. Maybe it was nothing.

And then...

More CRYING. Gerti throws the covers off--

HALLWAY

Just like in her dream Gerti stops and listens. But the sobs are gone now, replaced by the thousand tiny drumbeats of the rain.

Gerti looks towards Brahms' room and, almost against her will, walks toward it--

BRAHMS' ROOM

Brahms is just as she left him. But now something glistens on his cheeks.

Gerti moves in closer. The floor CREAKS mercilessly with every step. Gerti bends down, her face close to Brahms. The rain RUMBLING outside.

TEARS

Running down Brahms's cheeks.

Gerti reaches out and touches his cheek as one of the tears runs down his porcelain face. As soon as she touches it - feels its wetness - she sucks in a breath, making a sound somewhere in between surprise and a stifled scream--

A DROP OF WATER

falls with a SPLAT on Brahms' face. Gerti looks up

ON THE CEILING

A large brown stain from water damage. A drip of water hanging, close to falling and then - DRIP - another drop splashes down on Brahms.

Gerti lets out a big sigh of relief--

GERTI

Come on, Gert. Your first week and you're already cracking up.

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - DAY

A rat makes its way along the outside of the house. It stops, sniffs at something and moves on to--

A RAT TRAP

The rat circles the bait, sniffing. Then, quickly, moves in and--

SNAP!

The trap snaps down on the rat. A SQUEAL. The rat struggles and then goes silent. Dead...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gerti flips through the channels. News reports. Comedies. Commercials.

She keeps flipping until, finally, she just turns it off. Gerti looks around, completely bored and restless - looking for some new way to distract herself...

INT. MR. AND MRS. HEELSHIRE'S ROOM - DAY

Gerti tip-toes into their room, as if someone might catch her snooping.

Goes to the dresser. Opens it slowly, quietly. Full of underwear. Opens another. Full of shirts. The next one. Pants. If these people took anything, it doesn't look like it.

Next to the dresser is a LONG POLE with a hook on the end of it. Gerti holds it, not sure what to make of it. Puts it down again.

She goes to the night stand by the bed. Picks up an old looking PICTURE FRAME. The kind that might hold a family photo, but this one is empty.

GERTI

Well, at least that's not weird at all.

Opens the drawer in the night stand. Just one thing. AN ENVELOPE. It's unsealed.

A beat. Gerti looks around the room. Not sure if she should open it. She pokes a finger in the envelope, pulls out the contents a little. "LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT" written at the top--

A FLASH of something - or someone - passes by in the hallway. Gerti looks up, a second too late. But she feels it - a shiver passes through her.

She looks back down at the will. Not exactly the kind of snooping she was hoping for. Stuffs it back in the envelope...

HALLWAY

Gerti heads toward her room when, for some reason, she looks up.

AN ATTIC DOOR

The type in the ceiling that you pull down. She backtracks to the Heelshire's room. Re-appears with the hooked-pole.

She hooks the ring on the door and pulls. It doesn't budge. She rests for a beat, then really tugs on it. This thing isn't moving.

She gives up. Tosses the hook into Brahm's room and walks back into her own room.

BATHROOM - LATER

A bubble bath.

Gerti reads a magazine. Turns the water on with her toes for a second and then turns it off. She hums some poppy-sounding song and turns the page as...

THE SOUND OF A PHONE RINGING on the other side of the line carries over to...

INT. GERTI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gerti's buried under the covers, only her head sticking out, the phone stuck to her ear. The other line rings and rings and no one picks up. Finally her sister's voice-mail kicks in:

SANDY(VOICE MAIL)

Hey ya'all, this is Sandra. Leave a message...or don't.

Beep.

GERTI

Sandra, it's me again. I don't know what time it is. I still haven't figured out the whole time difference thing. Maybe you're asleep. Maybe you're at work...

She pauses, thinking of what to say next--

GERTI

Call me. Soon. I'm lonely. And this house is creepy. And send more magazines. I've read all mine. Especially any with Ryan Gosling.

A beat. Gerti doesn't want to get off the phone--

GERTI

I want to come home, Sandy.

And then she hangs up. Gerti stares at the phone for a beat. She picks it up quickly and dials. It rings and then a MAN'S VOICE answers.

MAN'S VOICE

Hello? Hello?

Gerti doesn't say a word.

MAN'S VOICE

Who is this?

A beat. Then the voice changes, becomes softer, more intimate. The way you might speak to a girlfriend--

MAN'S VOICE

Gerti? Is that you? If this is you I just want to say I--

Gerti practically slams the phone down - rushing to hang-up before the Man gets another word out. She stares at the phone for a beat...

EXT. THE HEELSHIRE COTTAGE - DAY

Another gray English day. Heavy clouds stacked along the horizon. The next storm on its way.

Gerti walks down the long gravel drive-way to the

MAILBOX

Flips it open, peers inside. EMPTY. Disappointed, she flips it closed and starts the long trudge back to the lonely cottage when--

A TRUCK

Turns down the driveway and pulls up along side her. Malcolm rolls down the window, smiles:

MALCOLM

Need a lift?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Gerti puts groceries away, mostly canned goods. Malcolm is just around the corner, pulling the tupperware containers out of the freezer and putting them into a trash bag.

Gerti peaks around the corner at him before stuffing yet another can of food in the pantry--

GERTI

I was wondering about that freezer.

MALCOLM

Mrs. Heelshire's orders. Everything gets thrown out every two weeks.

GERTI

So all that food just goes to waste?

Malcolm holds up an empty tupperware container--

MALCOLM

Not all of it. Mr. Heelshire eats a few of them. He's always been the less strict one about all of this.

GERTI

You could have warned me, you know.

MALCOLM

And ruin the surprise?

GERTI

Thanks.

MALCOLM

How are the two of you getting along?

Gerti holds up a jar of peanut butter and a jar of jelly before shoving them into the cupboard--

GERTI

Like peanut butter and jelly.

(beat)

So, I have to ask--

Malcolm comes around the corner with his garbage bag of tupperware.

MALCOLM

Yes, I am single. Believe it or not.

Off Gerti's look--

MALCOLM

What's up with the doll?

GERTI

Yeah.

MALCOLM

Not the happiest story, I'm afraid. They had a real son once. A real Brahms. He died as a child. They moved here not long after and built this house. They never went out much - maybe because of the looks they got when they went into town with this doll. And the last few years - I'm not sure they left the house at all. It's all harmless, though, this little world they've made. A way to cope. I can't imagine how difficult it must be to lose a child.

GERTI

How long ago did Brahms - the real Brahms - die?

MALCOLM

He'd be older than me now, I suppose. 30 or so years ago?

GERTI

They've lived like this for 30 years?

Malcolm nods--

MALCOLM

And they've been looking for a nanny for the last seven. You must be a special lady, Gertrude Evans.

Gerti smiles - something about the way he says her name. She looks at him, really looks at him for the first time. Not a bad looking guy--

GERTI

Nobody calls me Gertrude.

Malcolm smiles - sees his chance.

MALCOLM

You're probably going mad in this house, yeah? It might be good to get out. I could take you to town, if you'd like. Show you the world-famous Norwich nightlife.

GERTI

I don't know. I just got out of a...a thing.

MALCOLM

Well, this is not a thing. I can assure you of that. This is a professional courtesy seeing as we're employed by the same people. It's a duty is what it is. I'll take no pleasure in it whatsoever, I promise.

Gerti LAUGHS.

GERTI

Okay.

MALCOLM

Yeah?

GERTI

Yeah.

INT. BRAHM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Light spills in from the hallway.

On the bed is a pot filled with water from the leak. The rain has let up, but the leak continues.

DRIP. DRIP.

Pushed unceremoniously aside is Brahms, turned on his side so he's facing toward us. In the shadows of the room his knowing smile has taken on a sort of demonic air.

We can hear Gerti in the next room TALKING ON THE PHONE. She laughs, walks across the room with light, happy steps, as we--

Begin to pull slowly - almost carefully - out of the room, leaving Brahms alone. He continues to stare at us - through us - with those eyes that suddenly seem almost alive while the smile on his face becomes more and more menacing...

INT. GERTI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gerti braces the phone between her cheek and shoulder, then zips up the back of a sexy black dress.

SISTER (ON THE PHONE)

Is it a date?

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

Gerti spins - checks out her backside and frowns. She unzips the back.

GERTI

No. It's not a date. It's professional.

SISTER

Professional? You're not a hooker now, are you?

GERTI

Ha. Ha. Hold on.

Gerti puts the phone down and pulls the dress off. She opens the closet door - where the mirror is attached - and finds another dress to try.

She slips on a white dress and picks the phone back up.

GERTI

I mean he works for the same family I work for. We're like co-workers.

Not buying it--

SISTER

Hm. Are you wearing that white dress?

Gerti does a spin. Not too bad. She pours herself a little more wine and takes a drink, posing in the mirror.

GERTI

What?

SISTER

The white dress. You're wearing it right now, aren't you?

Obviously lying--

GERTI

No.

SISTER

And you're drinking wine?

Gerti's about to take a drink of wine and stops.

GERTI

How do you know all this?

SISTER

Because I'm your sister. And I know your going-on-a-date routine.

GERTI

It's not a date. I just don't want to look like a hobo. Besides I--

Gerti sees--

IN THE MIRROR

BRAHMS sits in the crack of the doorway. His gaze fixed on her.

GERTI

Lets out a YELP. Turns around to the door, dropping her glass of wine in the process. Glass shatters. Wine sprays all over the white dress--

Brahms stares back at her, that mysterious slight smile on his face.

Gerti pushes the door open. Storms past Brahms and into

THE HALLWAY

She looks up and down. No one in sight. Everything quiet and as normal as this house gets--

GERTI

Hello?

The only sound is Gerti's sister's panicked voice on the phone--

SISTER

Gerti! Are you there!? Gerti?

Gerti moves to the top of the stairs.

GERTI

Hello? Is somebody here?

Silence, save the phone--

Gerti walks back to Brahms sitting innocently in the doorway. She stares at him for a second trying to figure it all out.

Then she gives him a good kick, sending Brahms sliding down to the end of the hallway where he ends up sprawled against the wall.

INT. GERTI'S ROOM

Gerti grabs the phone from the broken glass and wine--

GERTI

Sandra?

SISTER

Gerti!? Jesus! You scared me to death.
Are you okay?

She looks in the mirror. Her white dress covered in drops of red wine. She grabs the black dress--

GERTI

Yeah. It was Brahms.

SISTER

Who?

GERTI

Bra--...the doll. Nevermind. This house. I'm just feeling a little stir crazy is all.

INT. BATHROOM

The rush of the water as the shower is turned on. Steam billows out of the shower curtain.

Gerti studies her face in the mirror. She makes a sexy face, then sticks her tongue out.

GERTI

You're a weird girl, Gert.

She hangs the black dress on the towel rod beside the mirror. Then slips off her white wine-stained dress and lets it fall to the floor. Finally she takes off the angel necklace, sets it on the sink, the chain hanging off the side...

SHOWER - LATER

Her body is just barely visible as a silhouette through the shower curtain. Steam has covered the mirror and filled the bathroom.

Gerti starts to sing softly to herself as an unseen presence pulls her dress down from the towel rod. Silently tugs the angel necklace down from the sink...

BATHROOM - LATER

Looking into a foggy abyss.

With a swipe of a hand Gerti clears an area of mirror. She's in a towel now. Looks at her face in the mirror. Reaches out, without looking, for her dress. Her hand touches bare metal.

Gerti looks over - the towel rack is empty.

HALLWAY

Watery footprints as Gerti walks down the hallway, naked. She opens the door to her room - but pauses for a second to look at--

BRAHMS

Still crumpled in the corner of the hallway where she kicked him. She shakes her head, as if to shake away the thought that maybe - just maybe...

BEDROOM

The light flicks on. Gerti gasps--

The clothes that were everywhere are gone. The underwear flung on the night stand, the jeans thrown on the bed, the sea of dresses laying on the floor. All of it gone.

All Gerti can manage to get out--

GERTI

No.

Gerti lifts a pillow gently, her hand shaking. Nothing. Pulls open a drawer. Empty.

PANIC.

She whips open the closet door. Empty hangers and stacks of boxes. Gerti tears a box open. Another. She tosses them one by one. Checks her luggage - nothing in those either.

She looks dazed, as she walks slowly out of the closet and past the open hallway-door and out of our view.

Then, as if in slow-mo rewind she walks back, staring straight through us at:

HALLWAY

The attic stairs descended. Waiting for her...

Gerti rips a sheet off the bed, wraps it around herself. Then steps up to the stairs, staring into the darkness of the attic.

GERTI

I know you're up there! I've called the police!

Silence.

GERTI

You better come down right now, you pervert!

The wind picks up outside. The windows SHAKE and RATTLE. The house GROANS--

GERTI

I have a gun! A big fucking gun! And I'm from Texas, I know how to use it!

She looks around the empty house. Then to Brahm's crumpled in the corner.

GERTI

(to herself)

Don't go up there. Go into your room and lock the door.

As if against her will, she takes a step on the first rung.

GERTI

Don't do this, Gert.

Another step...

GERTI

Don't take another step...

But she does...

GERTI

Stop. Call somebody...

She takes one more step and pauses.

Now, if she steps on her tippy-toes she can just see into the attic. She lifts herself up, slowly, slowly, just enough to peek into the pitch black attic--

GERTI
I know you're up there!

WHOOSH!

The stairs raise underneath her. Gerti SCREAMS as she's thrown into--

THE ATTIC

Black.

Our eyes haven't adjusted yet. The only sound is Gerti's BREATHING, coming fast and loud.

Then another sound - something in the hallway below. SOFT STEPS. Like a child - or a doll - walking carefully...

Our eyes adjust and now we can see Gerti groping in the darkness.

A LIGHT from a car outside illuminates the room, makes the shadows shift and move. Gerti crawls to one of the small port-like windows.

OUTSIDE

Malcolm's truck. He gets out, moves toward the door--

GERTI
Malcolm! Help! Malcolm!

She slams her fists against the window - wild with fear, SCREAMING for help.

Downstairs she hears MORE STEPS - this time moving quickly through the house. Gerti slams on the window and the wall with her fists, while

OUTSIDE

Malcolm walks around the house, looking in windows for any sign of Gerti.

GERTI

Races through the dark attic, tripping on boxes, fighting her way through the maze of shadows, tugging to keep the sheet on her.

She finds what she was looking for - the broken leg of a table. She stumbles back to the window--

GERTI

MALCOLM!

SLAM!

She swings the table leg against the window as hard as she can. The window holds. She swings again - this time the table leg snaps in half. The window's thicker than coke bottle glass.

OUTSIDE

Malcolm stands next to his truck, looking confused. He gives the horn a couple of HONKS--

GERTI

slams on the glass. SCREAMING, PANICKED--

GERTI

Malcolm! Up here! Malcolm!

But he can't hear her...

Gerti continues SCREAMING and BEATING on the wall as Malcolm climbs into his truck--

Gerti turns back to the room - looking for some way to get Malcolm's attention or escape. Heads toward a dark corner of the room. Moves quickly through the sea of boxes and random objects and then runs right into

A FIGURE

Obscured by the darkness. Gerti SCREAMS, stumbles back into a stack of boxes, trips and falls, hitting her head.

She doesn't move. Knocked out cold, the sheet half-draped over her...

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - MORNING

The sun rises behind the cottage. The storms have passed, the gray clouds have lifted.

No sign of the terror that raged in the night...

INT. THE ATTIC - MORNING

Light spills through the windows, catching the dust that twists and turns like spirits. The attic is filled with fire-damaged furniture. Blackened wood chairs. A half-burnt painting. A fire-melted lamp.

Something stirs in a corner.

GERTI

Opens her eyes. Reaches a hand up and touches a big bump on her head. She grimaces in pain, sits up with a GROAN.

Next to her is the FIGURE she ran into in the dark. A DRESSING MANNEQUIN knocked on its side. This too, blackened by some past fire.

Behind the mannequin is a LARGE PAINTING, just like the one downstairs with Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire - but in this one it's not a doll they are posing with, it's a real boy. The real Brahms.

Just beyond the painting a box has been overturned, spilling its contents across the floor. Various baby and toddler clothes, a pair of very small shoes and

A PHOTO ALBUM

Gerti opens the first page. Various pictures of a BABY, Brahms, and the Heelshires in much happier, much more normal times.

Turns the page.

Brahms as a toddler, holding the doll Brahms. The same one that Gerti now cares for. Gerti looks through more pictures. Brahms smiling at the camera. Brahms opening birthday presents. Brahms showing a missing tooth. All normal pictures, except in each one the doll is there.

Gerti turns another page.

Brahms as a young boy. Maybe eight. The smile is gone. A pale, unhappy boy stares at the camera. In most of the pictures he holds the doll over his face.

Gerti turns the page again. Only one picture. The only one without the doll. A LITTLE GIRL (8) looks unhappily at the camera while Brahms stares at her.

The little girl has blond hair. Freckles. Could easily pass as Gerti's daughter - or maybe a picture of Gerti as a little girl.

Gerti flips through the rest of the book. Empty. It stops there. That's when Gerti notices--

THE ATTIC DOOR

It's open.

Gerti peers down the steps. Puts a foot on the top-most rung and then quickly pulls it back up.

GERTI
(to herself)
Now you're scared?

A beat.

Gerti thinks of something, moves through the attic. Picks up the broken chair leg. The only weapon she can find.

She stands back at the top of the stairs, holding the leg of the chair. Adjusts the sheet she's wearing.

GERTI
I'm coming down! I'm warning you I'm armed!

She summons her courage. Slowly, slowly, steps. One step. The next. Then one more, all just as slowly as the first, until she reaches the floor.

And there, waiting for her, is a PILE OF HER CLOTHES.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

The attic stairs are still down.

Malcolm walks around them, examining. Gives them a tap with a broom handle. Gerti, clothed now, stands back a few feet and watches.

Malcolm gives the stairs another tap. This one a bit harder. Then again and--

WOOSH! SLAM!

The attic stairs slam closed like the spring on a rat trap. Malcolm looks at Gerti--

MALCOLM
Well, that's one mystery solved.

CUT TO:

HALLWAY - LATER

Gerti waits nervously in the hallway. Arms crossed, maybe because of the cold, maybe out of fright. We can hear Malcolm in the room, moving things around--

MALCOLM (O.S.)

Nothing under the bed...bars on the window are still solid...

Gerti gives a quick glance down the hallway to

BRAHMS

Sitting up now. Hands in his lap like a real, little boy. He's staring directly at Gerti, almost as if he's watching her--

Malcolm says something from in the room--

GERTI

Turns her attention back to the room. Just as she turns her head, she catches sight of Brahms out of the corner of her eye as he BLINKS.

Or at least it looks like he does.

Gerti does a double-take. Brahms sits there, motionless, inert, harmless - staring back at her with big, black, lifeless eyes...

MALCOLM (O.S.)

...closet's clear...

Malcolm walks out of the room. Gerti snaps out of her staring contest with Brahms.

MALCOLM

That's the last room. The house is clear.

GERTI

Someone was in here, I know it.

MALCOLM

The doors were locked when I got here, there's bars on the windows and I've checked every nook and cranny in this very lovely and very large home. I'm not sure what else I can do...

GERTI

But my clothes...

Gerti looks down - a bit confused and embarrassed. Could she really have imagined all this?

MALCOLM

You know, I used to sleep-walk as a boy. One night my parents found me outside in my pajamas washing my bike with my sister's bra. As you can imagine my therapist has a really good time talking about that one.

Gerti can't help but laugh a little--

GERTI

I don't know...maybe I was sleep-walking.

But she doesn't look very convinced - or comforted. Gerti's look isn't lost on Malcolm--

MALCOLM

I could stay a bit longer if you want. Just make sure that we don't have some very polite burglar on our hands here. Coming in, taking nothing and then locking up after himself when he leaves.

Gerti's face: Yes, yes, yes!

GERTI

No. I feel silly enough already. And I don't want to inconvenience you...

MALCOLM

It's really no problem. I'm here. Just say the word. I could even cook you dinner if you'd like.

GERTI

I couldn't ask you to do that...

MALCOLM

So yes?

GERTI

If it's a hassle or--

MALCOLM

Yes?

Gerti smiles--

GERTI

Yes.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Gerti sits at the table - a plate and fork in front of her. Malcolm bursts out of the kitchen holding a baking dish full of steaming food.

MALCOLM

Ta-da!

He sets the baking-dish down revealing what looks like hot-dogs placed in a kind of uncooked dough. Not exactly appetizing.

MALCOLM

Toad-in-the-hole. Just like my mother used to make it.

GERTI

Toad?

Malcolm scoops some out and puts it on Gerti's plate.

MALCOLM

Not to worry. Just a name. Our food's so bland, we've been forced to give it exotic sounding names to make it more exciting. If we'd invented the hamburger we'd have called it "The Gleaming Jewel of Ipswich Sandwich" or something.

He sits down and watches Gerti take her first bite. Gerti takes a bite and chews cautiously--

MALCOLM

And...?

Gerti looks a little surprised--

GERTI

Not bad.

MALCOLM

"Not bad". The highest compliment a British chef can receive.

KITCHEN - LATER

Gerti scrapes the remaining food into a big tupperware dish. It's the one rule handed down from the Heelshires she actually follows.

She hands the scraped dishes to Malcolm who washes them in the sink.

GERTI

You really don't have to do that.

MALCOLM

It's no trouble. You will owe me, of course.

GERTI

Owe you one? How about a high-five and I tell you your frog-in-the-cave was delicious.

MALCOLM

Toad-in-the-hole. And I'm afraid a high-five's not going to cover it. I believe you still owe me a night on the town.

Gerti's about to reply when - from somewhere upstairs--

TWO LOUD CREAKS like steps. The kind we dismiss as a house "settling".

Both Gerti and Malcolm look up at the ceiling and then at each other, eyes big.

MALCOLM

Well, I'm glad this isn't a big, empty creepy house or that would have been a little spooky, yeah?

Gerti smiles--

GERTI

Yeah.

They both return to cleaning up--

MALCOLM

So about this night on the town...

GERTI

I'll make you a deal? I go out on the town with you in exchange for a little information.

MALCOLM

Sounds easy enough.

GERTI

Tell me more about Brahms.

A shift in Malcolm's face - obviously not a subject he wants to talk about.

MALCOLM

I told you about all I know.

GERTI

Wow.

MALCOLM

What?

GERTI

That was truly a terrible poker face.
Like one of the worst ever.

Malcolm smiles - a serious kind of smile, as if he knows he's been caught and doesn't like what's coming next.

MALCOLM

Okay. What do you want to know?

GERTI

How did he die?

Malcolm lets a dish settle underneath the soapy water. Dries his hands, giving full attention to Gerti.

MALCOLM

First, you need to know that Norwich tends to have two kinds of talk. Polite talk and pub talk. And the truth is usually somewhere in between.

GERTI

So what's the polite talk?

MALCOLM

That it's no one's business but the Heelshire's.

GERTI

And the pub talk?

MALCOLM

That there was a car crash. Or that Brahm's was sick. I've even heard people say that the Heelshire's killed him. Which is rubbish. I've known them most of my life and there's no gentler, kinder, more decent people in all of England.

A beat. Gerti isn't exactly sure she wants to keep going anymore.

GERTI

And the truth.

MALCOLM

A few years ago I came out here to make a delivery. It was Brahms birthday - or would have been. Mrs. Heelshire was in the living room, opening presents with the doll. Mr. Heelshire was in here, off-his-pickle drunk. I come in and he's mumbling to himself, just kind of low and sad, about how he can't do it anymore. I tell him I'll come back another time, but he says, "No, come in. Sit down. Have a drink with me." So I do. We get a couple of drinks in just chatting about the weather and so on and I finally get the courage to ask him. How did Brahms, the real Brahms die? He looks at me. Kind of shakes his head as if even he doesn't know anymore. And he says, "Can a boy die of shyness?" And I tell him, "I suppose he could." "Then that's what it was," he says. And then he excused himself and said he'd better get to the birthday party or he was going to catch hell from the missus. So I guess, maybe, that's as close to an answer as any of us are ever going to get.

CREEEAAAAAK. THUD. The house settling...

Malcolm and Gerti look up at the ceiling and then back down at each other.

GERTI

Not spooky at all.

MALCOLM

Nope.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Gerti stands in front of the mirror, brushing her teeth when--

IN THE MIRROR

Something FLASHES behind her - maybe just a shadow flickering across the hallway--

GERTI

Spins around and looks into the darkened hallway.
Nothing. Just silence and shadows...

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerti turns toward her room when she stops.

Brahms sits in his same spot at the edge of the hall.
Gerti quickly disappears into his room and, just as quickly, re-emerges with a blanket.

Gerti tosses the blanket over Brahms, careful to make sure that Brahms' blank stare is covered.

The SOUND OF WOMEN'S VOICES carry over to...

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gerti's in bed, a magazine open in front of her, the phone pressed to her ear--

SANDY

...how do you know this guy is safe?

GERTI

He's a family friend of the Heelshire's.

SANDY

Oh, so a family friend of the freaky people who pretend a doll is their dead son? That sounds very safe to me.

GERTI

He didn't have to come out here and check the house. Or make me dinner.

SANDY

How can you still be so naive? He's trying to get in your pants, Gert. Men will do whatever it takes to sleep with you.

GERTI

He's not like that. He's nice. He made dinner, did the dishes and went home. A perfect gentleman.

SANDY

You watch. You'll wake up in the middle of the night and he'll be standing over you in one of your dresses with lipstick smeared all over his face.

Gerti laughs--

SANDY

I'm serious, Gert. There are bad people in this world, you should know that better than most. Speaking of bad people...

Gerti's whole body goes rigid--

SANDY

...Cole has been after me non-stop. He even showed up at my work a couple of times.

A beat.

SANDY

I gave him your address. I'm sorry. I just didn't know what to do. He came by the house when I wasn't there and the kids were alone and he just wouldn't let up with the calls and the...

Another beat.

SANDY

He said he just wanted to send you a letter. I'm sorry, Gert. I really am, but I can't have him around my family.

GERTI

It's fine. I can handle it. I'm sorry I dragged you into this.

SANDY

When the letter comes, just promise me you'll tear it up, okay? Don't even look at it.

Gerti speaks, but it's almost as if she's in some kind of daze now, as if she's speaking to no one in particular--

GERTI

Of course.

SANDY

Promise me.

GERTI

I promise.

SANDY

Good. I have to get the kids up for school. Morgan has a field trip to the zoo today. You take care of yourself, you hear me, Gerti?

GERTI

I will.

SANDY

And Gerti...?

GERTI

Yeah?

SANDY

I love you.

GERTI

I love you too.

CLICK. The phone hangs up on the other end of the line. Gerti continues to hold the phone to her ear for a beat, thinking.

Another CLICK. As if a second phone is hanging up or maybe picking up--

GERTI

Hello? Hello?

Silence. Gerti hangs up the phone. A look of concern on her face as she sets it on the side-table...

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - MORNING

A gray, foggy morning.

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Gerti's still half-asleep. Crawls out of bed--

THE HALLWAY

And trips over something. She looks down and sees--

SHOES

The same shoes she lost on her first day. Underneath the shoes are a small stack of papers. Gerti lifts them up--

BRAHMS' RULES

"NEVER LEAVE BRAHMS ALONE" has been circled in red crayon. Gerti looks at the next page - the schedule, starting with Tuesday. Today.

ON GERTI

The hair standing up on the back of her neck. And then she sees something that makes her go cold--

The hallway is empty.

No blanket. No Brahms. Gerti lets the papers fall from her hand...

BRAHMS' ROOM

Gerti peeks in and sees:

Brahms laying peacefully in a perfectly made bed, just like Mrs. Heelshire would do it. Brahms is facing up, one hand by his side, one hand on his chest, just like a real little boy might sleep.

GERTI'S BEDROOM

The door slams. Gerti locks it. Grabs the phone and dials. Puts the phone up to her ear and...nothing. It's dead.

GERTI

Hello?!

She turns the phone on and the off again. Still dead--

GERTI

Shit...

Gerti moves quickly. Shoves the dresser in front of the door. Then she backs away to the opposite wall, holding the phone in front of her like some kind of weapon...

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - EVENING

The sun slowly disappears behind a shield of grey clouds on the horizon. Night falls...

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

...and Gerti is still in the same place. Waiting. Eyes still on the door. Without making a sound she raises the phone to her ear again, listens.

Still dead.

At the door--

TAP. TAP.

Like little porcelain fingers tapping on the door.

GERTI

Malcolm?

No answer.

GERTI

Hello?

Gerti quietly moves to the door, still blocked by the dresser. She listens again. Silence.

She slowly, quietly slides the dresser aside. Gets down on all fours and peers

UNDERNEATH THE DOOR

There's something there, it's hard to tell what it is.

GERTI

stands, unlocks the door. Carefully, silently opens it and peeks--

HALLWAY

A peanut-butter and jelly sandwich sits just outside the door. A glass of wine beside it. The papers, rules and schedule, underneath it.

GERTI

Closes the door again. Locks it. She's breathing hard now. Scared. Tired. Hungry.

She has that look on her face. What do I do?

HALLWAY

The door opens. Gerti peeks out. Then takes a step out. She picks up the sandwich. Smells it. Opens it up. Just peanut butter and jelly.

She picks up the papers stacked neatly underneath the plate...

INT. BRAHMS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gerti stands over Brahms.

He lays there, the little smile on his face. Gerti looks at him and then the papers. She notices something on the list: *bath time*.

Gerti looks at Brahms again. Dirt smudges on his porcelain face. Comes to some decision--

GERTI

Okay, Brahms...

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Brahms sits in the bath while Gerti gently wipes the dust and dirt off of his little porcelain face and hands.

DINING ROOM - LATER

Brahms and Gerti sit directly across from each other. Plates of food in front of them. Gerti eats, never taking her eyes off of Brahms.

Almost in a whisper--

GERTI

Brahms?

Silence.

GERTI

Are you there? Can you hear me?

She waves her hand in front of his face. Nothing.

GERTI

Just give me some kind of sign. A blink.
Or move or whatever you do, just let me
know that you can hear me.

Gerti looks up at the ceiling - calls out in her best
spirit medium voice--

GERTI

If there is a spirit in this house...
um...let your presence be known.

Beat. Same voice--

GERTI

Spirit come forth into the land of the
living. Give, uh, upon me a sign.

A long, silent beat. Brahms remains perfectly still, the
same half-smiling look on his face.

Finally Gerti stands up. She takes her dish. Walks
around the table and picks up Brahms's untouched plate.
Pauses behind Brahms.

GERTI

RAAAAH!

She screams directly into Brahms ear. He doesn't flinch.
Doesn't move.

Gerti stands there, embarrassed. Looks around as if
someone might be watching and then gathers herself and
continues into the kitchen as if nothing happened...

LIVING ROOM

Classical music is BLASTING.

Gerti and Brahms sit side by side on the couch. The
music is so loud Gerti has her fingers in her ears. She
takes one finger out just long enough to turn a page in
her magazine...

INT. BRAHM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gerti tucks Brahms into his bed. She turns off his light
and stands there for a moment. Under the moonlight he
almost looks like a real little boy.

A flash of tenderness on Gerti's face. She softens.
Relaxes for the first time.

Gerti bends down and kisses Brahms lightly on the cheek. Then leaves the room, closing the door behind her...

HALLWAY

Gerti turns to walk to her room. Stops. Something suddenly occurring to her.

Reverses course and walks to--

MR. AND MRS. HEELSHIRE'S ROOM

Gerti heads directly to the bedside table. Opens the drawer and takes out the envelope.

She sits down on the bed. Waits a moment. Maybe building up courage. Then pulls out the contents.

"LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT" written at the top. Lower on the page Gerti finds what she was looking for. The typed words "conservator of the Heelshire estate and fortunes" followed by a blank underlined portion that's been filled in with Mrs. Heelshire's perfect handwriting with two words:

Gertrude Evans

EXT. BEACH CABIN - DAWN

The rain coming down in sheets.

A small bare cabin the same color of the sand and driftwood surrounding it. Thick fog moves like ghosts across the land. We can just hear the sound of the ocean waves above the rain..

INT. CABIN

The first page of a letter sits on the table in front of Mrs. Heelshire. She's busy now, writing the second. We pass over the first page, catching snippets here and there, things like: "...can't bare to live with what we allowed you to become" and "Gerti is your doll now, yours to love and care for.."

We move across the table to the letter Mrs. Heelshire is finishing the letter. She writes, "May God forgive us all" and then "Love always, Mother".

Mr. Heelshire puts a hand on Mrs. Heelshire's shoulder--

MR. HEELSHIRE

It's time mother.

Mrs. Heelshire nods sadly. Stuffs the letter into an envelope.

EXT. CABIN

Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire walk down a gravel path to a post-box. Mrs. Heelshire reaches into her jacket pocket, produces a letter. We get a quick look at it, Mrs. Heelshire's distinctive writing - addressed to Brahms.

Mrs. Heelshire stuffs it in the mailbox and lifts the letter flag. Then she and Mr. Heelshire join hands and continue their walk...

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - MORNING

They make their way slowly down the beach. Mr. Heelshire stops, picks up a couple of large-ish stones. One he puts in the pocket of his heavy winter jacket. The other he hands to Mrs. Heelshire who puts it in the pocket of her own jacket.

This continues - the couple stopping and picking up stones every couple of feet - until they reach the edge of the sea.

Mr. Heelshire takes Mrs. Heelshire's hand in his. Then the couple - hand in hand - walk straight toward the sea.

The ice-cold water rushes against their feet, rises up to their ankles and then the sea foam is up to their knees and they keep walking, bending over to push themselves into the waves--

Mrs. Heelshire struggles against the waves until they reach up to her neck. A large swell hits the couple and Mrs. Heelshire disappears. Mr. Heelshire struggles on. Another wave and Mr. Heelshire, too, disappears.

And then it's as if they were never there - just the beating of the waves on the sand and the rain erasing any trace of their footprints...

EXT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Something GOLDEN glimmers in front of Gerti's door...

THE DOOR

Opens. Walks out and sees

A GOLDEN NECKLACE

An antique. Expensive looking. Diamonds decorate a large gold pendant. A gift from Brahms.

BRAHMS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gerti stands in the doorway. Looks at Brahms, sitting under the covers just as she left him.

She looks down at the necklace in her hand. Then slips it in her pocket and lifts Brahms up. Then, for the first time, speaks to Brahms as if he was a real, live little boy.

Tenderly, motherly--

GERTI

Wake-up, sweet-heart. Time for breakfast...

INT. ENTRANCE WAY - DAY

The sound of TALKING. At first it almost sounds like two people talking. We push through the house to the

LIVING ROOM

Gerti and Brahms sit side by side on the floor. A stack of records in front of them. Gerti flips through them--

GERTI

Classical...classical...classical...
Liberace. I'm not sure what kind of music that is. We really need to get you some new music, Brahms. How does that sound?

Gerti pauses, looks at Brahms for some kind of reaction.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

How about some REO Speedwagon?

Gerti just about jumps out of her skin. Malcolm stands just inside the room. He smiles--

MALCOLM

Sorry. REO Speedwagon is a bit scary. Maybe we'll start with something a bit milder. Maybe some Wham?

Gerti LAUGHS. Malcolm hold up some mail - a few bills and the letter to Brahms. A flash of worry on Gerti's face--

GERTI
Anything for me?

MALCOLM
'fraid not.

GERTI
You can put it in the mail vase.

Gerti motions toward a large vase filled with various pieces of mail--

MALCOLM
Mail vase. Very classy.

Malcom drops the mail in. We can see the letter from Mrs. Heelshire stuffed in with the rest...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Brahms is positioned carefully at the table. A sandwich and a glass of milk sit untouched in front of him.

Malcolm gives the whole set-up a scrutinizing look before he puts away a can of beans. Gerti packs the fridge with vegetables.

MALCOLM
I see you and Brahms are getting on.

Gerti looks up from the fridge and smiles - one of those mysterious, inside joke kind of smiles.

GERTI
Yeah.

Gerti goes back to her work. Malcolm watches her for a beat, aware that something strange is going on, but not quite sure what it is...

MALCOLM
I thought I might take you up on that night-on-the-town offer. Dinner. Drinks. Dancing. I'll have you know I'm a legend in these parts for my dance moves. Not because they're good, mind you - but a legend's a legend.

GERTI
I don't think I should.

MALCOLM
I'm afraid I can't take no for an answer.
If I let you return to America without
ever showing you more than this dreary
mansion I won't be able to forgive
myself.

GERTI
I really shouldn't leave, Brahms...

MALCOLM
Is that all it is then? Let's ask him,
yeah? I'm sure he won't mind.

Malcolm walks over to Brahms--

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Brahms, you, old sod, would you mind
terribly if I take the lovely Miss Evans
out for a night on the town?

As Brahms--

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Why of course not. I've been hoping
she'd get out of the house. I need a
little privacy. Think I'll watch telly.
Take a nice bubble bath. Have a little
Brahms' time.

Gerti watches - not amused. Her hands clenched.
Malcolm, oblivious, continues his routine. Now he
switches to a Senor Wences impression--

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Is alright? S'alright.

He holds up Brahms' hand and gives himself a high five.
Gerti can't take anymore.

GERTI
(a little too loud)
Stop!

Malcolm freezes. Then let's out an uncomfortable laugh.

MALCOLM
I was just joking--

Malcolm gives Brahm a couple of knocks on the head, as if to emphasize he's just porcelain. Gerti rushes over, re-adjusts him, putting his hands back where they were--

GERTI
Just don't. Don't touch him.

MALCOLM
I'm sorry...I...

And for once Malcolm doesn't have the words.

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - DAY

Malcolm gets into his

TRUCK

He sits there a moment, looking at the Heelshire Manor, a kind of "What the hell just happened" look on his face.

A curtain moves in an upstairs window, as if someone was peeking on him, watching...

Malcolm doesn't see it. Starts up his truck--

MALCOLM
Crazy bloody American...

The rest is just grumbling as he drives away.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

It's turned into a beautiful day.

Afternoon sunlight spills through the window illuminating the thin veil of dust hanging in the air.

Brahms is seated at his desk while Gerti stands at the podium reading from some children's book in a LOUD, CLEAR VOICE - just as she was instructed by Mrs. Heelshire.

THE PHONE RINGS in another room.

Gerti pauses - just long enough to let it register.

RING. RING.

Then she continues reading while the phone RINGS and RINGS...

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gerti lays on her bed, talking on the phone. Brahms is propped next to her--

SANDY

I've been trying to call you all week. I was about to call the boobies.

GERTI

The boobies?

SANDY

The British police. You're lucky Rick talked me out of it.

GERTI

It's Bobbies, Sandy.

SANDY

I don't care what they're called. You can't just stop answering your phone. I worry about you.

GERTI

I'm sorry, there was a, uh...a problem with the phone.

SANDY

Is it fixed now? You can't be out there with no phone.

Gerti looks at Brahms--

GERTI

Yeah, everything's fine now.

SANDY

Are you sure you're okay? You sound, I don't know. You just sound different.

As if realizing it for the first time--

GERTI

Yeah. I'm good.

A SIGH on the other end of the line - as if Sandy doesn't quite buy it--

SANDY

Well, in two months you'll be back here and everything will be back to normal.

Gerti looks less than happy about it--

GERTI

Yeah...

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Lunchtime. Brahms sits at the table alone.

We PUSH IN on Brahms' face. It almost looks like his expression is changing - ever so slightly - from that mysterious half-smile to something darker and more sinister...

GERTI (O.S.)

I don't know what kind of food you like, but until you say otherwise it's sandwich city for you.

Gerti emerges from the kitchen with a sandwich and a glass of milk. She's smiling, happy - at home.

Gerti sets the plate down in front of Brahms.

GERTI

So what do you feel like doing today? How about we forget the schedule and do something fun? Hide-and-seek? Play some checkers? Maybe go for a walk outside?

A beat. Gerti waits.

GERTI

No? Okay. Well, we'll stick to the schedule then.

We FOLLOW GERTI as she walks back into --

THE KITCHEN

She starts making another sandwich for herself.

GERTI

I gotta be honest with you, Brahms. This schedule thing is getting to me. I don't see how you do it. Same thing every day. Not leaving this house. I'm a girl that needs a little spontaneity. I just can't do the same thing everyday. I need adventure. I need surprises. I might need to get out of the house for a couple of days here...

We FOLLOW GERTI back into the

DINING ROOM

Gerti freezes, her mouth hanging open. Brahms is gone. The chair pushed back and away from the table.

Gerti looks around the room--

GERTI
Brahms?

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - DAY

Truck tires come to a skidding stop in the gravel driveway.

MALCOLM

Jumps out of the truck. Practically runs up to the front door. The door swings open and there's Gerti, wild-eyed and half-crazy looking.

GERTI
I...uh...I. He. Brahms. He just.

Gerti starts LAUGHING - somewhere in between hysterical and joyous. Gathers herself--

GERTI
You're not going to believe this.

INT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - STAIRS

Gerti races up the stairs, Malcolm struggles to keep up--

GERTI
I needed someone to see it too. So I'd know I wasn't crazy.

MALCOLM
To see what too?

Gerti suddenly stops - looks at Malcolm beaming happily--

GERTI
He's alive.

A beat. Malcolm doesn't get it--

MALCOLM
Who's alive?

GERTI

Brahms.

MALCOLM

Brahms is alive?

GERTI

Maybe not alive. I don't know.
He's...something.

Gerti starts up the stairs again--

GERTI

You just have to see it.

Malcolm pauses before following her--

MALCOLM

(to himself)
Christ...

BRAHMS' ROOM

Gerti's on her hands and knees wiping chalk lines and circles off of the floor. Brahms is seated on the bed.

Malcolm stands in the doorway looking more than a little uncomfortable. He goes to talk and then doesn't. Starts again. Stops again...

MALCOLM

Are you sure you're feeling alright?

GERTI

I know you must think I'm crazy. I'd think the same thing.

She scrubs at the floor--

GERTI

I have to erase this, so you don't think I'm cheating--

MALCOLM

I don't think you're cheating. No worries there.

(to himself)
I think you've gone completely fucking mad's what I think...

Gerti stands up smiling.

GERTI
Come inside. Look around.

Malcolm steps inside the room cautiously. Looks around.

MALCOLM
What is it, exactly, that I'm looking
for?

GERTI
Make sure there's no one here. It's just
Brahms.

Taking nothing for granted--

MALCOLM
Um...we're here.

Gerti smiles at him - a big joyous, or maybe, insane
smile. It's hard to tell--

GERTI
But we won't be.

She sets Brahms on the floor and then carefully draws a
circle around him.

GERTI (CONT'D)
I use the chalk because sometimes he
doesn't move very much and it's hard to
tell. I knew I had to be scientific
about it. I even measured it at first.
I don't want any doubt when it happens.

She stands again. Stares straight into Malcolm's eyes.

GERTI (CONT'D)
This is something...

She shakes her head, like there's not a word big enough--

GERTI
...this is SOMETHING.

All Malcolm can do is nod.

HALLWAY

Gerti closes the door to Brahms' room. Gerti and Malcolm
walk into--

GERTI'S ROOM

Disaster. Clothes everywhere. They have to walk over them just to get in. Malcolm looks around, lifts up clothes as if looking for clues to the tragedy unfolding before him--

GERTI

I couldn't figure it out before. There were these strange things going on. Little things. Sounds. A necklace. My shoes that I lost.

She gives the wall TWO KNOCKS - as if a signal--

GERTI (CONT'D)

And then I remembered what you said. He's shy. He doesn't want people to see. But if you go into another room, if you leave him alone, he'll give you sign.

MALCOLM

This is like a magic trick, yeah? You don't really think he's alive?

GERTI

It's not a trick.

Gerti walks out of the room--

HALLWAY

Gerti and Malcolm stand in front of the closed door to Brahms' room. Tense. They look at each other. Even Malcolm's starting to believe a little--

GERTI

Are you ready?

Malcolm doesn't look ready, but--

MALCOLM

Yeah.

GERTI

Okay.

(to the door)

Brahms, here we come...

Gerti reaches out to the door-knob. Gives it a slow turn and pushes the door open--

INSIDE

Brahms sits, still very much inside the circle. Just as Gerti left him. Gerti's smiles fades. Malcolm puts his arm around her--

MALCOLM

It's okay. I think maybe we should sit down for a bit, yeah? Honestly, I think maybe you're a bit tired.

Gerti pulls away--

GERTI

No...

She kneels down to Brahms--

GERTI (CONT'D)

Please, Brahms. I need him to see. I know you're scared. I know this is hard for you. Do it for me, okay? I need this or I can't stay here any more.

It's pitiful to watch. Malcolm rubs his face hard with his hand--

MALCOLM

Gerti...

Gerti stands--

GERTI

One more time. If nothing happens then I'm crazy. I'll sit. I'll rest. I'll leave. Whatever you want. Just one more time.

GERTI'S ROOM

Gerti gives the wall between her room and Brahms room a firm knock. Once. Twice.

Malcolm paces the floor, a continual creaking with each footstep. He stops - the creaking doesn't. It's coming from the other room.

Malcolm and Gerti look at each other--

HALLWAY

Standing before the door to Brahms's room again. Even more tense this time. Gerti reaches out for the door knob and stops. She pulls back afraid. She looks at Malcolm. He nods.

Malcolm reaches out. Opens the door--

INSIDE

An empty circle - with no Brahms. Malcolm lets out a gasp. Gerti lets out a LAUGH that's almost a cry. A kind of joyous release - she's not crazy!

MALCOLM

Bloody...

They walk into the room. Malcolm looks around. No sign of Brahms.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Where'd he go?

Gerti just smiles and shrugs--

GERTI

I don't know.

Malcolm looks under the bed.

GERTI (CONT'D)

It's real isn't it?

Next he looks through the closet. Pushing through piles of Brahms' clothing.

MALCOLM

Bloody...

GERTI

(to herself)

It's real.

Malcolm stands next to Gerti looking completely confused.

MALCOLM

I don't understand.

Gerti throws her arms around Malcolm. His confusion drains away as he feels her body pressed into his. He puts his arms around her.

And then Malcolm sees something over her shoulder. He goes completely still. Gerti turns around and sees:

BRAHMS

sitting just outside the room in the hallway - just like someone placed him there. Gerti laughs.

GERTI

Now Brahms, be a good boy. Don't scare Malcolm.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Red wine filling a glass all the way to the top...

Malcolm and Gerti sit on the couch drinking wine looking giddy and maybe more than a little drunk. Brahms is seated in a chair facing them.

MUSIC plays in the background. Not as loud as Brahms' likes it, but loud enough--

MALCOLM

Can he hear me?

GERTI

I think so.

MALCOLM

It's bloody incredible, isn't it? It's gigantic. It's huge. I don't even know how to feel. I'm half scared out of my mind and half...I don't know...amazed. I mean, my mind is just...

He makes a "mind blowing" motion. Malcolm talks quickly, half from the wine and half from the excitement.

MALCOLM

What do we do now? Do we tell someone? Go to the papers. Have experts come in? Have those blokes, those ghost hunting blokes from the reality TV come in and take a look. Do tests or, I don't know, a seance. We really don't even know what we're dealing with, yeah? Is it a ghost? Some sort of trapped spirit. Or a...a...

GERTI

A little boy. Brahms is a little boy.

Malcolm stops. Catches his breath--

MALCOLM
Of course. Yeah.
(to Brahms)
Sorry about that, mate.

Malcolm pours them both more wine. He smiles at Gerti.
She looks beautiful, happy. A little flushed with wine--

MALCOLM
You're lucky you found her, Brahms. Not
all nannies are as nice as this one.

GERTI
It wasn't luck.

Gerti blushes. The words just slipped out--

MALCOLM
What do you mean?

Gerti shakes her head, embarrassed--

GERTI
It's the wine talking. I'm not much of a
drinker.

MALCOLM
You can't stop now, you've got me
curious. It wasn't luck?

GERTI
You'll think I'm crazy.

MALCOLM
I'll have you know I just played several
rounds of hide-and-seek with a - no
offense, Brahms - a doll. I doubt very
much you can tell me anything that can
make me think you're crazy.

Gerti takes a big drink of wine, building courage.
Clears her throat--

GERTI
I, uh...I prayed for this.

MALCOLM
You prayed for a haunted doll?

Gerti LAUGHS.

GERTI
No, not exactly. I mean...

We can see Gerti sorting the whole thing out in her head. Maybe she doesn't even know what she means. Or maybe she does - but she's been avoiding the truth--

GERTI

There was a guy. Back home.

MALCOLM

A boyfriend?

Gerti nods - yes--

GERTI

Cole Perkins. It was one of those things. We met in high school and he was charming and funny. And handsome. I thought I was the luckiest girl in Texas. But something changed. I don't even know when it happened. At first I thought it was just stress or him worrying. But it just kept happening. This switch would flip inside him and just like that the man I knew'd be gone and standing there in his place would be this monster, just screaming and hollering and...

Gerti doesn't say it, but we know by the look on her face - hitting her.

GERTI

Afterwards I'd pack up and go stay with my sister or my aunt. A day later Cole'd show up with flowers and beg me to come back and tell me how he'd changed and I'd believe him and go. And it'd be good for a while, then it wouldn't. It went like that over and over until everyone I knew'd given up on me. Not that I blame them, I'd given up on me too. I thought, "Well, this is the way it's gonna be, Gert, you better get used to it."

Gerti takes another drink of wine--

GERTI

And then I found out I was pregnant.

A beat. A pained smile on Gerti's face. She looks at Brahm now, almost as if she's telling him the story--

GERTI

I'm sitting in the doctor's office sobbing. The nurse is telling me what a blessing it is.

(MORE)

GERTI (CONT'D)

How everything is gonna change for the better now. But I knew better. I knew I couldn't have that baby. Not into this world. Not with Cole. How could I expect to protect a baby when I couldn't even protect myself? I knew I wasn't strong enough. That I wasn't brave enough...

Gerti starts to cry silently--

GERTI

So I didn't have it and I ran away from everything and came here. But ever since that day I've prayed and I've wished for some kind of sign. I don't even know what I was asking for. Just something to let me know that life wasn't so small. So mean.

She motions to Brahms. Smiles through the tears--

GERTI

And now here's Brahms. And I can't help but feel like maybe he was praying for me too. Like we were the answers to each others prayers. I'd felt so empty for so long and now, finally, I'm starting to feel whole again. Like a real person. And I think maybe he feels the same way.

Gerti reaches up, touches her tears, not even aware she was crying--

GERTI

I'm crying. I'm sorry. I warned you I'm not much of a drinker and now I'm rambling on and on...

MALCOLM

No. Don't be sorry. I like the way you ramble. You have a very nice ramble.

Gerti laughs, that sad little laugh. Somehow crying has made her look even more beautiful. Malcolm reaches out to wipe a tear away and there's a moment - a moment that we know there's something between them.

A beat.

Malcolm goes to say something, but before he can get it out Gerti kisses him. A hard, passionate, half-drunk kiss...

INT. BRAHMS' ROOM - NIGHT

Gerti tucks Brahms in. She leans down and kisses him on the cheek.

GERTI

I promise I'll never leave you.

She switches the light off and the room goes black.

We follow Gerti as she walks out into the HALLWAY and then to her

BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gerti walks into a dark room. A figure sitting on the bed stands up. Malcolm. Gerti moves toward him and the two of them stand there awkwardly for a beat.

The two of them are drunk, but not quite drunk enough to keep from feeling a little shy--

MALCOLM

So...

Gerti steps in close toward him, close enough to kiss him. But she keeps her head down, staring at his chest shyly.

GERTI

This is a nice shirt.

MALCOLM

My mum bought it for me.

Gerti undoes the top button--

GERTI

She has good taste.

MALCOLM

I'll let her know...

And with that Malcolm tips Gerti's chin upwards and kisses her, softly and then harder, pulling her back onto the bed.

We PULL BACK...out of the room and into the hallway where we can see into both Gerti and Brahms' room. Something MOVES in Brahms room as we...

FADE OUT...

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Early morning.

Gerti and Malcolm are tangled in the sheets, asleep. We hold on them as--

STEPS. Soft as a doll's footsteps.

ON THE FLOOR

A pile of Malcolm's clothes. Something - or someone - just out of view, drags Malcolm's shirt from the pile. It's the same one Gerti complimented.

More STEPS. We turn just as--

THE BEDROOM DOOR CLOSES quietly. Someone sneaking out. A silent beat and then--

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Something pounding at the door. Gerti and Malcolm bolt up in bed.

MALCOLM

What in the--

Panic.

Malcolm scrambles out of bed, tripping over the sheets and landing with a THUD. He gets back up, heads to the door--

GERTI

Malcolm, no--

More POUNDING on the door. Not the kind of noise a doll could make. Malcolm looks at Gerti and then--

WHIPS THE DOOR OPEN REVEALING

The doll. Sitting there in front of him. Malcolm sticks his head out into the hallway. Empty.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Breakfast.

Gerti, Malcolm and Brahm at the table. Malcolm wears one of Gerti's t-shirts - a too-tight "Hook 'em Horns" Texas shirt. He doesn't look too happy about it.

GERTI

He likes to play little tricks on people.
It means he likes you.

To Brahms--

MALCOLM

Very funny. You know what would be even
funnier? If you gave my shirt back.

Gerti can't help but LAUGH.

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - MORNING

Gerti walks Malcolm to his truck. They stop before it -
smile at each other awkwardly. Malcolm looks back at the
house nervously. Something's on his mind--

MALCOLM

I was thinking, why don't you come in
town for a few days? Get out of this
house for a bit.

GERTI

I admire your persistence, but I don't
think I should. Brahms needs me here.

Malcolm shifts uncomfortably--

MALCOLM

What happened this morning. With the
door. That was--

GERTI

It was a tantrum. Children have
tantrums. I shouldn't have--

Gerti stops, blushing.

GERTI

I'm not supposed to have guests. This is
his house.

MALCOLM

One night away. To get some perspective
and we can figure out what all this is.

GERTI

You know I can't leave. I promised the
Heelshires I'd take care of Brahms.

MALCOLM

Under the circumstances I think the Heelshire's would understand. When they get back--

GERTI

They aren't coming back.

It just slipped out. But Gerti knows it's true--

MALCOLM

What?

GERTI

I found a will. My name was in it. That's why they looked for so long. They had to find the right person to take over for them. They were waiting for me. I'm the only person Brahms has now.

MALCOLM

Whatever you saw, I'm sure it's just some kind of emergency plan or something. You don't really think that they went off and...

The look on Gerti's face: Yes, she does.

MALCOLM

If you really believe that, it's even more reason to step back. To look at this with clear eyes--

GERTI

I'm not leaving. Not for a day. Not for an hour.

For the first time Malcolm looks truly shook up. He rubs his face hard with his hand--

MALCOLM

There's something I need to tell you. About Brahms. I should have told you before, but I didn't want to scare you away. And now...well, maybe you should be scared.

(beat)

There was a man one night in the pub I go to. He was from the same town as the Heelshires. He'd known them as a boy. He said they used to pay kids to come out and play with Brahms. He'd even gone out there once, but Brahms wouldn't come out of his room the entire time he was there.

(MORE)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

But they eventually found someone he liked. A little girl. She'd go out there once a week to play with Brahms then walk home. But one night she doesn't come home. Her parents call the Heelshires. The Heelshires tell them Brahms just left to walk her home. The parents wait until dark. The little girl still doesn't show up. So they decide to go out there and look for her themselves. When they get to the Heelshire's house it's up in flames. Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire made it out. But Brahms...he didn't. He said it was two days later that they finally found the girl. Dead. Hidden in some bushes along the trail she took to walk home.

(beat)

What I'm saying is, if this is some kind of spirit or ghost or...whatever it is. I'm not sure it's the good kind.

GERTI

It's not true. I can feel him. I know him. You said yourself it's just pub talk.

MALCOLM

Not this. This was different. He said it was a childhood friend of his. Emily. And the look in his eyes...

GERTI

I won't leave him. He needs me.

Malcolm reaches out to Gerti--

MALCOLM

Just one day--

Gerti pulls away from Malcolm - HARD--

GERTI

I think it's best if you don't come over for a few days.

MALCOLM

I'm trying to help you.

GERTI

I don't need your help.

MALCOLM

Gerti...

But Gerti's already walking back to the house--

INT. ENTRANCE WAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerti closes the front door behind her. Looks at Brahms sitting on the couch.

A beat.

The sound of MALCOLM'S TRUCK leaving outside. She looks upstairs, something nagging at her. Suddenly heads for the stairs--

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Comes out of the Heelshire's room, walking fast. Carrying the attic pole.

Pulls down the attic stairs and goes up--

ATTIC

Gerti moves through the burnt remains of furniture. Finds the photo album and flips through quickly. Finds what she was looking for--

THE PHOTO OF BRAHMS AND THE LITTLE GIRL

Gerti takes out the picture. Flips to the back. Written in Mrs. Heelshire's handwriting "Brahms Heelshire & Emily Cribbs".

Gerti looks up from the photograph. At all the half-burned objects around her. They somehow seem menacing now. Gruesome.

For the first time since she discovered Brahms was alive, Gerti looks afraid...

INT. MALCOLM'S TRUCK - DAY

Some POP SONG plays on the radio. Malcolm drives.

A FAINT SCRATCHING SOUND

Malcolm listens. SCRATCH. SCRATCH. He turns off the radio. More SCRATCHING. It's faint, but it's definitely there.

Malcolm keeps driving as he leans forward, listening. Trying to figure out where the sound is coming from.

He taps the GLOVE BOX and the SOUND STOPS.

Keeping one eye on the road Malcolm reaches over and opens the glove box.

THREE BLOODY, HALF-DEAD RATS come tumbling out. One goes scurrying towards Malcolm's feet.

MALCOLM

SHOUTS, swerves off the road into a field before he manages to SLAM ON THE BREAKS.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Malcolm jumps out of the truck and does one of those creeped-out dances in the field, cursing loudly--

CUT TO:

INT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - DAY

Classical music THUNDERS on the stereo - through all the empty rooms of Heelshire manor. The sound of music carries over to-

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - DAY

Where it carries into the open air.

Gerti walks around the house with a garbage bag. She stops at a bush and reaches behind it, bringing up an empty rat trap.

Gerti sets it back and heads to the next one. She pulls it up - empty.

She rounds the house to the front and stops. Drops her garbage bag. A confused, shocked look on her face--

GERTI
(barely audible)
Cole?

ON THE PORCH

COLE PERKINS (mid-30's). Tall, all-American looking with sandy-blond hair. He looks like some kind of a harder-lived version of Troy Aikman.

He gives her an apologetic, almost shy, smile.

COLE

I was going to send you a letter, but, you know me, I was never one for writing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gerti and Brahms sit side by side on the couch. Cole sits on a chair facing them, leaning forward toward Gerti.

COLE

This is a joke, right?

Gerti doesn't look up. She reaches out and puts a comforting arm around Brahms. Cole grimaces, rubs his face hard - partly puzzled, partly frustrated.

A beat.

COLE

The whole way out here I was thinking of what I was going to say. How I was going to convince you to forgive me and to come back to Denton. I had this speech worked out, but now...I mean, this, this is...

Cole looks at Brahms, still not quite believing what he's seeing. He reaches into his bag, pulls out two plane tickets and tosses them on the coffee table.

COLE

Our flight leaves tomorrow afternoon. You're coming home.

Gerti squeezes Brahms tighter to her...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gerti and Cole at the dinner table. Brahms is tossed haphazardly on of the chairs--

COLE

I been working out at Fairview with Ed Bruner's crew. They got a contract to put in a new hotel, so there's more than enough work for all of us.

(MORE)

COLE (CONT'D)

Ed says "hi" by the way. Actually he said--

(in a thick, exaggerated
Texas drawl)

"You tell Gert to get her cute little hind-end back here to Texas where she belongs."

Gerti can't help but smile a little.

COLE

There it is, that famous Gerti smile. I missed that smile.

(beat)

You know I love you?

Gerti nods.

COLE

I know I've done some stupid things. I've done wrong by you. But I'm finished with all that, I swear. I had a lot of time to think while you were gone. You've been right about everything. You were right all along. I get it now. I really do. Things are going to be better from now on. I can't live without you, baby. I just can't.

He kisses her on the forehead. The nose. And then, finally, on the lips. Gerti doesn't kiss him back, she just sits there, taking it.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

I let myself in.

Malcolm stands in the doorway. Gerti shoots him a panicked look - please don't say anything...

GERTI

Cole, this is Malcolm. He brings us our groceries out here.

Cole stands up, towering over Malcolm and offers his hand. Malcolm shakes it.

COLE

So what do you think of all this doll stuff?

Malcolm looks at Gerti, not sure what to say. Gerti shakes her head, "No".

MALCOLM

I try not to get involved in other people's affairs.

Cole laughs--

COLE

Smart man.

MALCOLM

(to Gerti)

I have that delivery if you want to go over the inventory list.

GERTI

Yeah. Of course.

KITCHEN

Malcolm and Gerti duck into a corner of the kitchen, away from the door. Malcolm tries to whisper but it comes out loud--

MALCOLM

What in the--

Gerti puts her finger to her lips - Shh. Whispering--

GERTI

He just showed up.

A beat.

GERTI

He wants me to go home with him.

Malcolm heads toward the dining room.

MALCOLM

I think I should have a little talk with him--

Gerti grabs him--

GERTI

Don't. Please. You'll only make it worse.

MALCOLM

If you think I'm letting him--

GERTI
 You don't know him, Malcolm. You don't
 know what he'll do. When he gets
 angry...He'll hurt you.

MALCOLM
 I'm not afraid of him.

GERTI
 He'll hurt me.

Malcolm stops.

GERTI
 I know what I'm doing. You have to trust
 me.

Malcolm thinks it over--

MALCOLM
 I can't leave you here with him. What if
 he--

GERTI
 He won't. He's going to be on his best
 behavior for now. And I have Brahms
 here.

Gerti speaks louder now - loud enough for Cole to hear in
 the next room.

GERTI
 Looks good. Thanks, Malcolm.

Then, in a whisper--

GERTI
 If you want to help come back tomorrow.
 There's nothing you can do tonight.

DINING ROOM

Gerti walks back in, followed by Malcolm. Malcolm has a
 big, friendly grin on his face. If we didn't know better
 we might think he was saying goodbye to a good friend--

MALCOLM
 It was a pleasure meeting you.

COLE
 You too.

Malcolm leaves. Cole eats. Gerti watches him. The only sound is Cole chewing loudly.

Cole waits until he hears the sound of the door closing in the kitchen.

COLE
Should I be worried?

He says it with a smile and a little laugh, but it's obvious he couldn't be more serious.

GERTI
About Malcolm?

Cole nods.

GERTI
No.

Gerti looks to where Brahms is tossed down on a chair and we can almost read her thoughts: But maybe you should be worried about Brahms...

INT. BRAHMS ROOM - NIGHT

Cole watches from the doorway as Gerti undresses Brahms and puts pajamas on him--

COLE
At least I know what to get you for
Christmas now.

Gerti tucks Brahms into the bed. Bends down and gives him a kiss, whispering something to him.

Cole gives a disgusted look--

COLE
Jesus, don't do that.

Gerti stands up, careful not to look at Cole. She doesn't say anything.

COLE
I'm not going to let you treat this thing
like it's real. Not in front of me.

GERTI
He is real.

COLE
He's real? Okay.

Cole picks up Brahms.

COLE

Hello!? Anybody there? Are you real?

Cole knocks on Brahms' head, hard.

COLE

Come on! If you're real just speak up.

Gerti stands there, frozen. Cole finally tosses Brahms back on the bed.

COLE

Looks like he's just a doll after all.

Gerti goes to tuck Brahms back into bed, but Cole stops her.

COLE

Don't.

A beat. For a second it looks like Gerti might say something, but she thinks better of it.

COLE

Go get packed. We leave in the morning.

Cole waits until Gerti walks out, then turns off the light behind her.

INT. GERTI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gerti closes her door.

She goes to the wall she shares with Brahms' room. Barely above a whisper--

GERTI

I need your help. He's going to take me away, Brahms. I need you. Please...

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - NIGHT

A dark, silent night.

And then a sound. CAREFUL STEPS on a wood floor. CREAK. CREAK. The sound of the steps carry over to...

INT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - SAME

BRAHMS' POV:

Moving through the upstairs hallway. We pause at Gerti's closed bedroom door and continue to...

THE STAIRS

Moving slowly, purposely. CREAK. CREAK. CREAK.

LIVING ROOM

We're standing over Cole. He's sleeping, curled up on the too-small couch.

A DROP OF BLOOD

falls on his face, dropped from somewhere just out of frame. Then another drop. And another. Cole stirs, wipes at it with his hand, smearing it, but he doesn't wake up...

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - MORNING

The sun peaks up behind the hillside. Fog lifts from dew-spangled earth...

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Gerti stirs. Wakes. She looks tired, broken. Pulls herself out of bed...

INT. BRAHMS ROOM - DAY

Dresses Brahms. Talking to him softly as she does--

GERTI

Everything will be okay. He'll leave and we'll go back to the way things were...

Rumblings from downstairs. Like someone talking to themselves. Then an angry SHOUT--

COLE (O.S.)

Gerti! GERTI!

A flash of fear on Gerti's face. She picks up Brahms, holding him close. The storm is coming...

LIVING ROOM

Gerti stops in the doorway, afraid to enter. Cole doesn't notice her at first. Scrubs his face with his t-shirt. Finally he turns and sees her, his face smeared with blood--

COLE

Get in here!

Gerti doesn't move. Cole's eyes are wild - filled with rage. The eyes of some animal--

GERTI

What happened?

COLE

Get in here!

Gerti takes a hesitant step in the room. Cole violently grabs her by the arm and drags her to face the wall.

LEAVE

Written in blood. Below it are two dead rats lying in a small pool of blood.

COLE

What is this?

GERTI

I didn't--

Cole jerks her violently--

COLE

Don't pull this shit on me, Gerti...

GERTI

It wasn't me.

She looks down at Brahms.

COLE

The doll? The doll wrote this?

Gerti doesn't say anything. She's terrified.

COLE

Fine. Okay. It wasn't you. It was the doll. Give it to me.

Gerti backs away.

COLE

Hand him over.

GERTI

No. Please...

COLE

Don't play around with me. I've had as much as I can take with you.

GERTI

I did it. You were right.

COLE

It's too late for that. I gave you a chance to come clean. Give me that doll. Now. I'm not joking around.

He lunges at Gerti, grabs her. The two struggle, but Gerti's no match for Cole. He rips the doll out of her arms with one hand and pushes her down to the floor with the other.

GERTI

No!

In a flash Gerti is back on her feet. She lunges at Cole who holds her back with one hand. Lifts the doll over his head with the other.

He's about to smash the doll on the floor when--

MALCOLM (O.S.)

Stop!

Cole looks over to Malcolm, standing in the Entrance-way.

MALCOLM

Get your things. Get out.

Cole pulls away from Gerti, still holding Brahm's. Cole motions to the wall.

COLE

Everyone seems to be in a big hurry for me to leave. Maybe you're the one that left me this little message. Or are you going to say it was the doll too?

Malcolm doesn't answer.

GERTI

Cole, you don't understand. He's real.
He's just a little boy. Please, let him
go, please...

Cole looks at Brahms - holding him up for appraisal.

COLE

He's real, huh? Let's see about that.

And then he does something that they'll all regret.

HE SLAMS BRAHMS DOWN

Headfirst. Into the ground.

The CRASH of porcelain breaking. Jagged pieces of
Brahms' head fly in different directions.

A beat.

Silence. No one even breaths. Cole smiles, about to say
something when--

A SCREAM OF RAGE

Like we've never heard. So loud the WALLS VIBRATE.

And then POUNDING AT THE WALLS. Like a THOUSAND FISTS
beating at the house. A picture falls from the wall with
a crash. A bookcase overturns.

A sound LIKE RUNNING. A stampede coming from every
direction at once. Gerti, Malcolm and Cole spin around,
trying to follow the sounds--

COLE

What the hell is that?

The SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING, but not any door anyone can
see. A FLASH of something out of the corner of Malcolm's
eye moving outside--

MALCOLM

I think we need to get out of here...

AT THE FRONT DOOR.

The scraping of wood and metal together. Something
locking them in.

Malcolm inches next to Gerti.

MALCOLM

I really, really think we need to leave.

COLE

What is this? What is going on!?

A loud SLAM, somewhere back in the kitchen and then silence. More POUNDING, moving through the house and then--

SILENCE

Everyone freezes in the center of the Living Room where they've instinctively huddled into a group.

GERTI

Brahms?

The sounds of SHUFFLING coming from somewhere in the walls, moving fast--

COLE

It's in the walls...

Cole moves towards the sound--

MALCOLM

I really think we should--

COLE

Shhh!

Cole puts his ear to the wall. HEAVY BREATHING. Like some cornered, wild animal--

Without moving his ear from the wall--

COLE

Something's in there...

SLAM!

A KNIFE BLADE rips through the wall. Hits Cole between the neck and shoulder.

SCREAMS FROM EVERYONE

Cole falls to the floor. Reaches for his wound. Malcolm and Gerti run for him.

POUNDING

From inside the walls. Something running--

Gerti puts pressure on Cole's wound--

COLE
Jesus...oh jesus...

GERTI
We have to get him help!

Malcolm rushes to--

THE FRONT DOOR

Tries to open it. It won't budge--

MALCOLM
It's locked!

Rushes back to the--

LIVING ROOM

As the grandfather clock starts ticking. TICK. TICK.
TICK. Gerti and Malcolm turn to it as--

The grandfather clock swings open.

A secret door. Out steps a very large man. He's wearing
Malcolm's shirt. A knife in one hand. A cricket bat in
the other.

THIS IS BRAHMS

The real Brahms. A child-like face, despite his age.
Tall, taller even than Mr. Heelshire. He has to stoop to
get through the passageway and into the living room. He
takes two light-as-a-doll steps. His feet wrapped in
dirty rags.

He's pale, impossibly - painfully - pale. With sores and
scratches covering him. He licks his chapped lips
nervously. Looks from face to face. A drop of blood
falls from his knife.

GERTI
Who...?

Quiet, almost to himself--

MALCOLM
Brahms.

In a child-like, high, soft voice--

BRAHMS

She's mine.

Malcolm moves slowly. Like you would when faced with a bear. Doesn't take his eyes off Brahms. In a whisper--

MALCOLM

Gerti. Get up.

Gerti doesn't move. Can't move.

GERTI

It can't be....

MALCOLM

Up. Now.

Malcolm grabs her under the arms. Lifts her up roughly--

COLE

What is that thing!? Who is that?!

To Gerti--

MALCOLM

Get out the back. Get help.

Brahms takes a step toward them. Malcolm steps in between them. Looks back at Gerti--

MALCOLM

Now!

Gerti snaps out of it. Runs for the kitchen--

AT THE SAME TIME

Brahms let's out a HORRIBLE YELL. Charges Malcolm. Malcolm puts up his arms in defense as Brahms slams down on him with the bat.

Malcolm falls. Brahms hits him again, with a sickening THUD. Knocking Malcolm out.

Brahms stands over Cole. Cole looks up, eyes wild--

COLE

No...

Brahms raises the knife and--

WE CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN

Gerti sprints through to the back door. Locked. She tries it again, desperate, scared. It doesn't budge. Scared tears are falling from Gerti's eyes as she turns around. She knows what's there--

BRAHMS

Stands at the other end of the room. The cricket bat in his hand.

GERTI

Please...no...

Brahms walks toward Gerti.

GERTI

Don't...please...

Brahms walks to her and, without stopping, grabs her violently by the hair and drags her out of the kitchen, like a child dragging a doll.

LIVING ROOM

Gerti slides on the floor behind Brahms, SCREAMING in pain and terror. Past Cole, the knife plunged into his chest.

And now it's obvious where Brahms is headed - back into the walls. Gerti struggles, tries to get away when--

SLAM!

Malcolm, hiding behind the couch, slams a piece of the doll's shattered porcelain head into Brahms' leg. Brahms lets go of Gerti, falls down to a knee and lets out a SCREAM of agony and anger--

Malcolm staggers to his feet.

GERTI

Upstairs!

Gerti helps Malcolm stumble up the stairs while Brahms watches them race from the room.

Brahms walks to Cole. Calmly pulls the knife out of his chest. And, with the bat, walks back into the grandfather clock passageway, closing it behind him.

Leaving the room empty, quiet...

INT. GERTI'S BEDROOM

Gerti and Malcolm burst in the room. Gerti slides her dresser in front of the door.

MALCOLM

The phone!

Gerti looks for her phone. Finds it, smashed into pieces. Gerti goes to say something when--

CREAKING in the walls. Malcolm and Gerti freeze.

Another CREAK. Malcolm and Gerti follow it with their eyes as Brahms moves inside the walls.

MALCOLM

(whispering)

Can he get in?

Gerti's mind races - something clicks--

GERTI

The closet!

Gerti races to the closet--

INSIDE

Brahms is crawling through a small hatch-door in the back of the closet. Gerti SLAMS the closet door closed. Gerti and Malcolm brace the door with their bodies as--

WHAM!

Brahms slams into the door from the other side. WHAM! Again. And again! WHAM! But this time Brahms fist goes right through the door. His hand grasps wildly at the air until he gets hold of Gerti's shirt.

Gerti SCREAMS! Flails against the arm. Tries to pull away, but he's too strong. Pulls her closer and closer to the door.

Malcolm looks down. A BELT. He grabs it. Quickly loops it around Brahms hand and PULLS as hard as he can. Brahms' hand bends in a gruesome direction right into the jagged edge of the splintered door.

Brahms lets out a SCREAM OF ANGER. Tries to pull his hand back through the hole. Too late. Malcolm is already looping the other end of the belt around the bedpost.

MALCOLM

Hold it!

Gerti grabs the belt. Pulls. Malcolm ties the belt off on the bed post. Brahms is trapped, his hand caught outside the door and tied to the bed.

He pulls wildly, lifting the bed off the floor, but he can't get free--

HALLWAY

Gerti and Malcolm flee to the hallway. Malcolm heads for the stairs, but Gerti stops him--

GERTI

This way!

Gerti races into--

BRAHMS' ROOM

We can still hear Brahms YELLING and RAGING in the other room. Gerti tips over the bookcase. Then runs to the closet and rips everything out--

GERTI

There has to be a door here somewhere.
This is where it started.

She goes to the dresser and tries to pull it away from the wall. It doesn't budge--

GERTI

This is it. We have to pry it open.

Malcolm doesn't move--

MALCOLM

You're not going in there?

GERTI

It's the only way. The windows. The doors. Everything is blocked off. But he got out. We have to go in the walls.

Malcolm hesitates. A LOUD CRASH in the other room.

GERTI

He's coming. Hurry.

Malcolm grabs hold of the dresser and, along with Gerti, pulls. CRACK! The dresser swings open, revealing a passage into the walls. A small bolt lock falls to the floor at Gerti's feet.

Gerti and Malcolm look at each other. Are we really going to do this?

Gerti gets down on her hands and knees and pokes her head into the passage. Dark and narrow. The floor is covered with some kind of stained, worn padding. A few pin-pricks of light show down the passageway through holes in the wall.

Not the kind of place you would ever choose to enter. Gerti backs out of the passage way, looks at Malcolm.

GERTI

Ready?

MALCOLM

No.

Gerti takes a breath and crawls into the wall, trailed by Malcolm.

INT. WALLS - CONTINUOUS

Black.

Gerti reaches out, her hands stretched out in front of her, groping in the darkness, feeling her way along the walls, stepping silently on the padding beneath her feet.

GERTI

Malcolm?

MALCOLM

Right here...

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

Gerti's eyes begin to adjust and we can make out some of the details of the surroundings. The walls are covered in drawings. Faces. Words. The sketches of a madman. Trinkets hanging - necklaces, ties, bits of clothing and decorations. Things Brahms has stolen over the years--

Gerti comes to a pin-prick of light and puts her eye up to it.

GERTI'S POV:

Looking into her room at the bed and closet. The closet door is open, the belt still tied to the bed. But Brahms is nowhere to be seen when--

BRAHMS

Walks right past our view.

GERTI

Ducks down. Stifles a scream.

MALCOLM

What? What is it?

Gerti puts her finger to her lips - shhhh. The two of them sit there, in the narrow passageway, waiting, listening.

MALCOLM

I don't hear any--

WHAM!

The blade of Brahms' knife slams through the wall, stopping just short of Malcolm's mouth. SCREAMS!

GERTI

Run!

In a flash, they're back on their feet, stumbling through the passage, the pictures, the scribblings, the madman-decorations blurring by our view as they race through the walls until they come to--

A FORK IN THE PATH

Splitting in two different directions. A CREAK somewhere outside of the wall.

Gerti's mind races - trying to figure out where they are in the house...

MALCOLM

Which way?

GERTI

I don't know...

More CREAKING. The unmistakable sound of steps coming from the right. The decision is made for her. Gerti heads left--

GERTI

This way.

END OF THE HALLWAY

Gerti stops. Nothing but black down the hall. A dead end.

MALCOLM

We have to go back...

But Gerti doesn't move. She's still looking at the wall. There's something about it that's not quite right and then we see--

IT MOVES

Swaying gently, just a tiny bit. Gerti moves toward it--

MALCOLM

We have to go. Now.

Gerti reaches up and touches the wall. It gives to her touch. A THICK BLACK CURTAIN.

MALCOLM

What is it?

GERTI

A curtain.

She pushes it aside. Another black curtain behind it. And then another one behind that. Gerti pushes her way through them - layer after layer--

She pushes through a final curtain and walks into--

BRAHMS' ROOM

Everything you could need. A sink. A shower. A toilet. A microwave and a fridge. Canned foods. Various tupperware, mostly empty.

It's lit dimly with Christmas lights illuminating various stacks of porn magazines and a few porn pictures hung from the walls along with various pages from a coloring book. Toys line the shelves. It's part jail cell, part demented dorm room.

MALCOLM

Jesus...

Malcolm and Gerti spread out, investigating the room.

MALCOLM

Brahms. He's been living here. In this room. For 30 years.

Malcolm reaches up and touches the walls - they're covered in some kind of textured foam.

MALCOLM

Sound proofed. Everything he could need in here.

But Gerti isn't listening. She's found a letter - THE SAME LETTER MRS. HEELSHIRE MAILED EARLIER. She reads--

GERTI

We won't be back. We've gone on now to heaven where someday we'll all be reunited. The girl is yours now. A final gift from us. Treat her well. Let her see the beautiful, sweet little boy that we love so very, very much...

Gerti lowers the letter. A dazed look on her face as she notices

A BED

And on it a home-made looking doll, almost life-size.

Gerti inches closer, notices the dress it's wearing. A white dress with wine stains on it. Her dress. It has a necklace - a thin gold chain with a small angel. Her necklace.

Gerti reaches out and touches the doll's sparse, matted hair, clumsily plastered to the doll's head. As soon as she touches it her hand recoils. It's real hair - her hair. Gerti's hand goes up to her own hair.

Malcolm steps beside Gerti. He's gathered supplies. A flashlight. Two kitchen knives. Gerti can't take her eyes off the doll.

GERTI

It's me.

Malcolm holds a knife out to Gerti.

MALCOLM

I think I found the way downstairs.

Gerti doesn't move. She just keeps staring at that doll.

MALCOLM

Gerti?

Nothing.

MALCOLM

We can't stay here any longer.

Without taking her eyes off the doll. Shock setting in--

GERTI

It's me. That's my necklace. My dress. My hair. He's been watching me. This whole time. Just sitting in the walls watching me. He was here. And they planned the whole thing. They knew what would happen.

A beat. Then, finally, Malcolm reaches out and takes the necklace off the doll. He puts it in Gerti's hand, squeezing her fist around it.

MALCOLM

We have to keep going.

A CORNER OF BRAHMS' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malcolm lifts up a hatch in the floor. Gerti and Malcolm peer down it as Malcolm lights the way with the flash light. A ladder leads down to the first floor.

Malcolm takes a pen and draws a rectangle on the floor. He puts an X on a back corner.

MALCOLM

We're here. In the back of the house. Any idea where we might get out.

GERTI

I don't know.

MALCOLM

Think. There has to be something you saw. If we're just down there walking blindly we're not going to make it.

Gerti puts her finger down on the rectangle Malcolm has drawn. She traces the outside of it, thinking, and as she does we see:

THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE

Gerti's POV. Murky, foggy. A memory. We pick up a rat-trap. It's empty. We walk along, fast forward, looking at the wall of the house. Another rat trap. Nothing stands out.

We turn the corner of the house. Everything slows down. Directly in front of us is the chimney, surrounded by hedges.

BACK IN BRAHMS' ROOM

Gerti's finger is stopped on the opposite side of the rectangle - almost as far as you can possibly get from their present location.

GERTI

The chimney.

MALCOLM

You're sure?

Gerti nods.

MALCOLM

Couldn't be in the kitchen, could it?

Malcolm holds a knife out to Gerti. She doesn't take it.

MALCOLM

If he catches us he won't hesitate to kill me. And you...

Malcolm looks over at the life-size doll on Brahms' bed.

MALCOLM

He'll do worse to you.

Gerti reaches out a timid hand and takes the knife.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - IN THE WALLS - NIGHT

Malcolm drops down from the ladder. He covers the flashlight with his shirt, softening its light. He shines it up and down the passageway.

MALCOLM

(whispering)

It's clear.

Gerti drops down. This floor is the same as the top. Dark passageways pin-pricked with light shining from the rooms.

Gerti peers through one of the pin-pricks at

THE KITCHEN

Empty. Silent. We're peering at it from just underneath a cupboard.

MALCOLM

(whispering)

Gerti...

He takes her hand in his, leading her down the dark passageway. Gerti follows, lit only by the small slivers of light as they take slow, careful steps.

BEHIND THEM

The slivers of light disappear. Someone walking by outside the room. Following them. And then THE LIGHTS GO OUT.

DARKNESS.

Gerti and Malcolm freeze. Gerti drops the knife and raises a shaking hand to her mouth, stifling a scream that comes out as a WHIMPER...

A CREAKING SOUND

Footsteps. It's impossible to tell where they're coming from. The SOUND OF SOMETHING FALLING with a CRASH.

And then, in a soft, almost childlike voice calling for Gerti like you might for some pet--

BRAHMS

Gerti...Gerti...come here pretty Gerti...

Gerti and Malcolm crouch down on the floor--

BRAHMS

You've been naughty.

More FOOTSTEPS, roaming the house--

BRAHMS

Come back pretty Gerti, come back...I won't hurt you...

A beat. More FOOTSTEPS - it almost sounds like they are moving away now. Malcolm motions to Gerti - let's go.

They tip-toe down the passageway, as slow and as quiet as they can when--

Malcolm brushes against something. A small bell hung on the inside of the wall. One of the hundreds of little trinkets Brahms has decorated his space with--

A SLIGHT TINK. Not much. But enough. Gerti and Malcolm look at each other.

HARD FAST STEPS POUND towards them from inside the house--

MALCOLM

RUN!

Before Gerti and Malcolm can even take a step--

BRAHMS

SLAMS through the wall just behind them. He doesn't make it all the way through, but enough to GRAB GERTI by the hair. She SCREAMS--

Malcolm leaps on Brahms in flash. Stabs him in the shoulder, the blade sinking deep. Brahms SCREAMS, lets go of Gerti. But before Malcolm can pull away, Brahms grabs his knife hand and BITES down like some crazed animal.

Malcolm jerks his hand away. He and Gerti turn to run as Brahms struggles his way through the wall, pulling himself with all his might through the splintered dry wall--

PASSAGEWAY

Gerti and Malcolm, stumbling through the darkness as fast as they can. They turn a corner--

ANOTHER PASSAGEWAY

Pitch black--

GERTI

It has to be somewhere here.

SCREAMS OF RAGE behind them.

Malcolm pulls out the flashlight, shines it down the passageway. Something SHIMMERS. Something metallic. They rush towards it--

A SMALL DOOR

With two dead-bolts.

MALCOLM

Hurry.

Gerti fumbles at them, panicked. Malcolm points the flashlight back down the hallway. Empty, but we can hear BRAHMS CHARGING TOWARDS THEM--

BRAHMS (O.S.)

GERTI!

GERTI

Undoes the first lock. The second. She turns the knob, pushes and...It's still locked.

GERTI

It won't open!

Malcolm shines the flashlight on the door. ANOTHER DEADBOLT at the bottom of the door. Gerti unlocks it, opens the door as--

MALCOLM

Turns the flashlight back down the hall.

BRAHMS

Stands there. Not more than a few feet away. He smiles - showing a row of yellow, rotten teeth--

No one moves.

Gerti stands there with the door open, the moonlight spilling in. Malcolm holds his ground, the flashlight aimed at Brahms face, Brahms squinting back--

MALCOLM

(quietly)

Gerti. Run.

GERTI

Malcolm?

MALCOLM

Run!

Gerti darts out the door--

Brahms CHARGES, SCREAMING.

Malcolm runs toward him. The two COLLIDE and Malcolm falls back. The two wrestle on the floor. And then, just as quickly it's over.

Brahms stands up, knife in hand. Malcolm lays on the floor gasping. His shirt beginning to stain with blood...

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - NIGHT

Gerti sprints through the yard and then slides to a stop in the overgrown shrubbery at the edge of the yard. She hides on her stomach - looking back at--

THE PASSAGEWAY DOOR

Brahms emerges. He calls for Gerti, his voice unnaturally boyish again. A lost little boy calling for his mother--

BRAHMS

Gerti? Gerti? Come back. Please come back. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Gerti...

Brahms scans the yard then disappears back in the house. Gerti starts to get up when Brahms reappears. He drags Malcolm to the doorway, holding him there as he speaks--

BRAHMS

He's hurt. He needs your help...

A beat. Suddenly shifting to a man's angry voice--

BRAHMS

If you leave I'll kill him! I'll kill him just like the other one!

Brahms surveys the yard. Back to a childish voice--

BRAHMS

GERTI! GET BACK HERE! DON'T LEAVE ME!
I'LL BE GOOD! I WILL!

Gerti, on her belly, backs up, deeper into the edge of the yard. She turns and crawls, faster and faster away from the house--

BRAHMS

DON'T LEAVE ME!!!

EXT. MAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Gerti emerges from the bushes to the main road. Long black pavement as far as the eye can see. No cars. Not even the hope of a car coming by.

She looks back at the house. Dark. Silent. No sign of the carnage inside.

She begins to walk, down that long black road - away from the house. Away from Malcolm. She slows. Stops.

GERTI

No.

She turns.

GERTI

No.

And starts to walk back to the house. As if convincing herself--

GERTI

I'm not running away. I'm not leaving him...

Gerti walks faster. Her bare feet padding quickly across the cold, moonlit pavement. Then faster, breaking into a run back to the house--

EXT. MALCOLM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Still parked in the driveway. All the tires are flat, stabbed with a knife. Brahms wasn't taking any chances.

Gerti opens up the back of the truck. She searches for something. Finds it. A long screwdriver. She places it into the back of her pants and walks to--

THE FRONT DOOR

A thick wood beam placed on the hooks on the front of the door. Gerti lifts the beam off. Opens the door and steps inside--

INT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - ENTRANCEWAY - NIGHT

Gerti takes a step inside. Dark. The remnants of the violence and chaos that just took place. An overturned chair. The railing on the stairs is splintered.

Gerti keeps walking, her feet padding softly in the silent house--

LIVING ROOM

Gerti walks inside. Stops. Cole's corpse lays just to the right of her.

She sucks in a breath. Every atom in her body tells her to scream. To run. She keeps going to--

THE RECORD PLAYER

And puts on a record. At the same time something MOVES IN THE WALLS. Gerti pauses - but only for an instant - then puts the needle down.

THE MUSIC ROARS TO LIFE

Gerti sits down on the couch and waits. It doesn't take long.

Brahms emerges silently from somewhere in the shadows. A hulking figure. He stands there in front of Gerti, his chest heaving. The bloody knife shaking in his hand.

GERTI

I didn't leave you, Brahms. I promised you I wouldn't.

Brahms doesn't say anything. Just stands there staring at her, his eyes as lifeless as a doll's.

GERTI

It's time for bed.

Gerti gets up, calmly takes a few steps toward the entranceway. Stops. She looks back at Brahms. In a FIRM, MOTHERLY VOICE--

GERTI

Brahms. It's time for bed. Now.

A beat.

Brahms' hand tightens around the knife. He walks toward Gerti, one heavy step after the next, his eyes fixed on her. He walks right up to her, only inches away--

Gerti keeps her eyes fixed on his, looking straight up at him. One swipe with the knife, that's all it would take--

Brahms' hand tightens around the knife again and then... he drops it. He walks past Gerti, heading for the stairs. Gerti lets him pass, then follows.

As she does she reaches back with her hand, feels the screwdriver stuck in the back of her pants...

BRAHMS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brahms stops at the side of his bed, his back turned to Gerti, a pouting child.

GERTI

Get in bed.

Brahms sits down. The little bed sagging under his weight.

GERTI

Under the covers.

Gerti's voice cracks - showing a glimpse of the fear she's hiding. Brahms looks up at her--

GERTI

(loud, firm)

Under the covers.

Brahms pulls the covers up. Climbs under them. Gerti leans down, tucking the blankets around him.

GERTI

You don't get a story tonight. That's your punishment.

Gerti stands up, Brahms looking up at her - almost looking boyish for a moment.

BRAHMS

(little boy voice)

Kiss.

Gerti goes cold inside. She doesn't move.

BRAHMS

(little boy voice)

Kiss.

Gerti force a smile on her lips.

GERTI

Of course...

She leans in towards Brahms, at the same time she reaches back for the screwdriver, grabs it in hand. Gerti's lips are almost to Brahms forehead when--

He grabs her HARD by her head and neck, forces her down to his lips and kisses her. Forcing his tongue in her mouth, pulling her down on the bed--

Gerti pulls the screwdriver from her pants. SLAMS it into Brahms' belly--

Brahms SCREAMS. Releases Gerti. She falls back against the wall.

Brahms leaps to his feet, the sheets stuck to him where Gerti stabbed him with the screwdriver.

HE CHARGES GERTI

She manages to get to her feet right as BRAHMS GRABS HER BY THE NECK with both his huge hands.

BRAHMS SQUEEZES

Lifts Gerti off of her feet. Gerti chokes. Tears at Brahms' hands. But he's too strong. Her hands search Brahms' body, looking for--

THE SCREWDRIVER

She pulls it out of him. SLAMS it back into his belly.

BRAHMS SCREAMS but doesn't let go.

Gerti stabs him again. Brahms still doesn't let go. Gerti is fading. Her eyes fluttering, her arm weakening. It's a battle of wills now--

Gerti slams the screwdriver into his side.

Brahms drops to his knees, taking Gerti down with him. She gasps, taking in a breath. She stabs him again. His grip loosens. She has the upper hand now as she slams it right into his sternum.

BLOOD comes out of Brahms mouth.

Gerti twists the screwdriver. Brahms SCREAMS IN AGONY finally releases Gerti and falls back on the floor, the screwdriver stuck in his chest, rising and falling with his breathing--

Gerti gasps for air, the color returning to her face. Then forces herself to her feet and scrambles out of the room--

BRAHMS

Mummy...mummy...

LIVING ROOM

Gerti sprints through, towards the Grandfather clock.
Pries it open--

GERTI
Malcolm!? Malcolm!?

She moves quickly--

INTO THE WALLS

And through the darkness. The flicker of a flash light
glows somewhere ahead-

GERTI
Malcolm?

In a voice that's weak, but alive--

MALCOLM (O.S.)
Gerti.

Gerti turns a corner in the walls. Sees Malcolm. Bloody
but still breathing. Holding the flashlight.

Gerti takes him in her arms.

GERTI
Malcolm...

MALCOLM
You came back.

Gerti smiles at him--

GERTI
Yeah. I came back.

EXT. HEELSHIRE MANOR - NIGHT

Gerti helps Malcolm to the pick-up truck. Malcolm looks
at the tires as he pulls out his keys--

MALCOLM
Just bought those tires.

He hands the keys to Gerti smiling. Then coughs - a
violent, sick sounding cough. Gerti helps him into the
truck--

INT. MALCOLM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Gerti turns on the ignition. Let's out a sigh - thank god it works. She puts it in reverse. Turns to look behind her when--

MALCOLM
(terrified)
Gerti!

Gerti turns back around just in time to see--

BRAHMS

Leap onto the hood of the car. He has the screwdriver in his hand, slams it into the windshield, shattering it.

Gerti doesn't blink--

Gerti looks right into his eyes, shifts the car into drive and SLAMS ON THE GAS--

The truck Speeds forward, directly towards the front door of the house--

BRAHMS

Turns around, just in time to see

CRASH

The truck SLAMS through the front of the house. Brahms slams into the stair case - falling on the splintered railing - a piece of wood going right through his chest.

Gerti puts the truck in reverse, pulling out through the debris. Then slams the truck into drive again, right at Brahms--

MALCOLM
Gerti...?

She slams on the gas.

WHAM!

Nails Brahms, crushing him between the car and house. This time he won't be getting back up...

CUT TO:

INT. MALCOLM'S TRUCK - DAWN

The truck bumps along violently, the horrible sounds of metal on pavement. They're traveling some deserted country road, getting further and further away from the nightmare they just experienced...

Malcolm slides down, putting his head on Gerti's lap as she drives. She puts an arm over him, protecting him--

Gerti looks at him, smiles - a real honest to goodness smile despite everything that's happened--

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SAME

The tires are gone. They're down to the metal wheels. The truck rumbles along, sparks in its wake where the rims meet the pavement.

WE PULL OUT

Further and further leaving the truck behind, focusing instead on the sun rising above the impossibly green pastures and the morning fog lifting from the land...

...and then even further out, until the world looks peaceful and still and it's impossible to tell if we're looking at the real world anymore or some too-perfect painting of the English countryside...