

BAD JUJU

FADE IN:

INT. ROOM NUMBER ONE - MORNING

Medical supplies fill wire shelves. A walker and rehab equipment shoved in a dark corner. A layer of dust indicates they haven't been used in a while.

In the middle of the room, propped in a hospital bed is MEGAN STRAUB (45). Her vacant eyes stare at a wedding photo on the dresser. In the picture she's young, beautiful and happy next to her husband, Brian.

Megan is barely recognizable now. Sunken cheeks, ashen complexion, white sheet draped over her emaciated body. She tries to speak but can only groan.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

A blender hums and vibrates in this small, outdated kitchen.

In boxers, white t-shirt and black socks with sandals, BRIAN STRAUB (55), hair now grey, prepares breakfast.

He places everything on a tray, along with a jar of baby food then heads through the door to the

LOBBY

Stacks of unopened mail litter the shabby front desk, several with "FINAL NOTICE" stamped in red.

On the wall behind the desk hangs a sign, "HILLTOP MOTEL - SILVER SHORES, ALABAMA". Under the sign are thirty numbered key hooks, the only key missing is room number one.

Brian passes the desk, exits one side of the double glass doors and walks outside.

EXT. MOTEL - ROOM NUMBER ONE - MORNING

The parking lot is desolate, the landscaping overgrown and only the letters "-ACAN-Y" remain on the marquis.

Brian balances the tray as he slowly opens the door. Moans come from inside.

BRIAN

Megan? Good morning my love.

He enters then closes the door.

EXT. MOTEL - ROOM NUMBER ONE - AFTERNOON

The door opens. Brian, haggard, food stains on his shirt, exits with the tray now filled with remnants of breakfast.

He closes the door and is immediately face to face with REVEREND QUINTON MANSI (60), tall, dark hair and eyes, dressed in black.

Startled, Brian drops the tray.

BRIAN

Jesus!

REVEREND MANSI

(deep voice with Southern drawl)
Naw. Still just a Reverend.

They both kneel down to pick everything up.

BRIAN

You scared the shit out of me. Oh, sorry. I mean...

REVEREND MANSI

I've been calling for two days. I didn't think you were here.

BRIAN

Yeah well, the phone isn't working.

They stand. Reverend puts his hand on Brian's shoulder.

REVEREND MANSI

How are you Brian? How's Megan?

They walk toward the Lobby doors.

BRIAN

We're fine. She's...fine.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Brian quickly puts the tray down to cover the overdue bills.

BRIAN

Come for a visit?

REVEREND MANSI

Guess you haven't been watching TV?

BRIAN

The TV is ahhh...

REVEREND MANSI

I know...not working. I'll give you the report then. There's a hurricane coming. And as you know, we flood out every time so we need a place to stay.

BRIAN

Actually, that might be a problem.

The Reverend gestures toward all the keys. Smiles.

REVEREND MANSI

No vacancies?

BRIAN

Well, no. I just haven't had time to prepare any rooms. And...

REVEREND MANSI

Brian, these people were homeless. They're just happy to have a roof over their heads.

BRIAN

It's just that, well...Megan.

REVEREND MANSI

I know she doesn't like visitors. I certainly don't want to upset her but we really need a place to stay.

Before Brian can answer, he looks out the door and sees a line of people walking up the hill, their belongings in tow.

REVEREND MANSI (CONT'D)

Please Brian. I'll pay of course. Maybe you can use the money to...fix your telephone?

INT. LOBBY - LATE AFTERNOON

Dressed a bit nicer, Brian stands at the kitchen door, watches the influx of people.

It's well organized thanks to Reverend Mansi who keeps the crowd in check outside, and SISTER FRANCENE (30) pretty, kind, energetic and clearly in control of the front desk.

Next at the desk is big, black, boisterous JANELLA HARRIS (40) and wiry, pasty white, nervous BOBBY JACK WIGGINS (30).

Sister Francene has them sign a ledger.

SISTER FRANCENE
 Promise me you'll be on your best
 behavior? No fighting?

JANELLA
 Don't tell me Sister, tell him. He
 the one who works on my last nerve.

Sister Francene holds up a finger, shushes Bobby Jack before
 he can respond. She looks at Brian.

SISTER FRANCENE
 This is Janella and Bobby Jack.
 They're inseparable. And believe
 me, we've tried.

Not sure what to say, Brian just smiles.

JANELLA
 We'll be fine just as long as he
 don't have none of them night
 terrors and wets the damn bed.

Brian's smile disappears.

BOBBY JACK
 Only night terror I have is when I
 crawl on top of you woman!

Sister Francene interrupts and hands them their room key.

SISTER FRANCENE
 Here you go, room thirteen.

As Janella reaches for the key Brian runs over and grabs it.

BRIAN
 Sorry! I forgot. Room thirteen is
 not available. The last people
 left it, well...it's just a mess.

He shoves the key in his pocket then realizes he freaked a
 bit. Embarrassed, he returns to the kitchen door.

SISTER FRANCENE
 Okay then. I guess, Room fourteen?

She looks back at Brian, flustered he nods "yes".

As Janella and Bobby Jack leave, thunder rumbles in the
 distance.

SISTER FRANCENE (CONT'D)
 We'd better hurry this up. NEXT!

She looks at Brian, her eyes soften.

SISTER FRANCENE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry to hear about your wife.
My Momma had a stroke but she was
much older. So tragic when it
happens to someone so young.

He musters a smile, Sister Francene returns to her business.

INT. ROOM NUMBER ONE - EVENING

Megan moans in the background as Brian peeks out the curtain.
It's almost dark, the wind is picking up.

He watches Reverend Mansi and a male CHURCH WORKER (30)
unload supplies from their van and carry them into the lobby.

Brian turns toward Megan. She's very agitated.

BRIAN
They won't be here long.

She moans louder.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
What did you want me to do? We
could use the money. Bills are
piling up and...

She moans louder. Frustrated, he grabs the dinner tray and
leaves.

INT. ROOM NUMBER EIGHT - EVENING

Sister Francene unpacks her bag. She places hygiene supplies
on the dusty dresser and her clothes in a drawer.

She pulls a crucifix from her bag, looks at it then looks at
a gaudy painting on the wall.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Brian helps Reverend Mansi put together lunch bags.

REVEREND MANSI
We've really invaded your space.

BRIAN
It's okay. Really. I forgot how
nice it is to have people here.

A strong wind blows in when the Church Worker opens the front door. His raincoat soaked, so is the empty box he carries.

CHURCH WORKER

It's gettin' real bad out there.
How many more I got to deliver?

REVEREND MANSI

Only four more, and one is yours.

Brian loads the bags into the box along with candles and matches. The Church Worker grabs the box.

REVEREND MANSI (CONT'D)

Peace be with you. See you in the morning when it's all over.

The Church Worker nods, works up his courage then opens the door. A huge gust of wind blows in as he trudges out.

REVEREND MANSI (CONT'D)

Guess it's time for us to call it a night too.

Brian looks at a small area next to the kitchen that houses a cot, now covered with cases of water bottles and dry goods.

REVEREND MANSI (CONT'D)

Is that where you sleep? You don't sleep in Megan's room? I'm sorry, that's none of my business.

BRIAN

Well, it's hard to sleep in there. She sort of makes a lot of noise.

REVEREND MANSI

Then I insist you sleep in my room. Take the other bed.

BRIAN

Okay. Sure. Thanks.

INT. ROOM NUMBER EIGHT - EVENING

Gaudy picture now propped against the dresser, Sister Francene stands on a chair and hangs the crucifix.

As she climbs down, the crucifix falls behind the dresser.

She tries to move the dresser but can't then tries to reach her arm behind it but it's too narrow.

INT. ROOM NUMBER FOURTEEN - EVENING

Bobby Jack, already asleep and snoring. Janella paces the floor. She jumps every time thunder claps.

JANELLA

No damn TV. Nothin' to do and this damn fool snoring like a buzz saw.

Suddenly Bobby Jack sits up and screams which scares Janella. She screams. Bobby Jack appears disoriented.

BOBBY JACK

There's evil here!

JANELLA

What the hell are you talking about? You gonna give me a heart attack! Bad enough we got this hurricane now I gotta deal with you screaming like a dog gone maniac! Did you wet that bed?

He looks under the covers then looks at her sheepishly.

JANELLA (CONT'D)

You son of a bitch. Well I'm not sleeping in no piss pool.

She flings open a drawer and tosses her belongings into the shopping bag she brought them in then heads for the door.

BOBBY JACK

Where the hell you going? Out in a hurricane you crazy bitch?!

As she opens the door a gust of wind blows in. She pushes herself out and slams the door.

INT. LOBBY - EVENING

Outside the glass door, Janella fights the wind as she tries to open it. Finally it opens, she runs inside. She catches her breath, turns on the light and looks around.

JANELLA

Mister Brian? You in here? I need another room.

She checks the kitchen. Empty. Back at the front desk she sees the board of hooks. Only one key hangs, number thirteen.

Janella thinks for a moment then grabs the key.

INT. ROOM NUMBER TWENTY FIVE - EVENING

The only light comes from the bathroom, door slightly open.

In one bed, the Reverend sleeps. In the other Brian lay on top of the covers, wide awake.

Unable to relax, he stares at the ceiling, listens to the wind howl outside. Occasionally it sounds like Megan.

INT. ROOM NUMBER EIGHT - EVENING

With a hangar, Sister Francene tries to push the crucifix to where she can grab it. It works. She reaches for it.

Suddenly she screams in pain, quickly pulls her hand out. Her palm has a burn mark in the shape of the cross.

EXT. MOTEL - ROOM THIRTEEN - EVENING

Wind and rain whipping her face, Janella struggles to get the key in the door. It finally opens, she hurries inside.

INT. ROOM NUMBER THIRTEEN - CONTINUOUS

She flips on the light, her eyes immediately widen in terror.

Strange symbols painted on the walls in what appears to be blood. One wall has a hand with an eye in the palm.

The bed has been removed. In the middle of the floor is a painted circle. Inside, half melted candles surround a handmade doll, with real hair and needles in it's head.

JANELLA

Oh dear lord. I know what this is.

Janella backs up, quickly opens the door and rushes out.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

In a panic, Janella runs passed rooms twelve, eleven, ten. Out of breath she mumbles...

JANELLA

Bad JuJu. Bad JuJu. Bad JuJu.

Up ahead Sister Francene, towel wrapped around her hand, exits room eight.

JANELLA (CONT'D)
Sister Francene! We gotta get out
of here!

Sister Francene sees Janella run toward her. Before she can react, Janella grabs her by the arm, pulls her into a run.

JANELLA (CONT'D)
We gotta leave. That dumb ass was
right. There is evil here.

Sister Francene struggles then breaks free, faces Janella.

SISTER FRANCENE
What are you talking about? We
can't leave! What's going on?!

JANELLA
It's voodoo Sister. Room thirteen.
I only seen it once before. It's
pure evil.

SISTER FRANCENE
Let's get out of this rain. We'll
talk in the Lobby. Just relax.

They walk at a fast pace. Through the rain they see the door of room number one open, a bright light shines from inside.

Cautiously they look in, see Megan in the hospital bed. Stunned by her sickly appearance, they don't notice that no wind blows into the room.

INT. ROOM NUMBER ONE - CONTINUOUS

As they enter, the door shuts behind them. Showing no fear, only compassion, Sister Francene approaches Megan.

SISTER FRANCENE
The storm must be frightening her.
I can't believe he leaves her in
here alone.
(toward Megan)
Don't be afraid Megan. We won't
let anything happen to you.

With her burned hand, Sister Francene reaches for Megan's. Sister Francene gasps as their hands touch, she begins to shake violently.

SISTER FRANCENE (CONT'D)
(man's voice)
Leave us! Leave us be!

Janella rushes over, tries to pry apart their hands. The door bursts open, this time wind blows in. Reverend Mansi and Brian enter. Brian runs to the bed.

BRIAN

What are you doing to my wife?

Their hands finally come apart, Sister Francene falls back. She's stunned but okay. The Reverend tends to her.

JANELLA

(matter of fact)

Mister, your wife is possessed. There is something evil in there and if that thing comes out it's gonna get us all.

BRIAN

You don't know what you're talking about...she had a stroke.

He breaks down. He knows it's true. He watches Megan, her behavior is inhuman.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Have some compassion.

SISTER FRANCENE

I'm so sorry Brian.

REVEREND MANSI

I don't understand what's going on.

Sister Francene, Janella and the Reverend stand together and watch Brian as he cries next to Megan.

INT. LOBBY - EVENING

Sister Francene, hand bandaged, Janella and the Reverend hold a candlelit meeting at the front desk. Brian sits across the room, head in his hands. They whisper as to not upset him.

SISTER FRANCENE

I spoke to Brian. There was a mother in room thirteen who had a sick child. But obviously the child wasn't sick, she was possessed. I guess in a desperate attempt to save her daughter she used black magic to transfer the demon to Megan. She really knew what she was doing. This is very advanced stuff. I read about it years ago.

JANELLA
It's some bad juju.

REVEREND MANSI
What do we do now?

SISTER FRANCENE
We need to free Megan.

BRIAN
This is gonna kill her, isn't it?

Surprised he heard them, they look over at Brian.

SISTER FRANCENE
His evil energy is the only thing
keeping her alive. You even said
the doctors couldn't figure out how
she'd been holding on so long. Her
soul needs peace Brian.

REVEREND MANSI
And how do we do that?

EXT. MOTEL - ROOM ONE - EVENING

Janella comes out, holds the door open while Reverend Mansi and Sister Francene wheel the hospital bed out of the room. Megan is covered with a sheet to protect her from the rain.

They wheel her down to room thirteen where Brian waits by the door. As they approach he opens it and they wheel her in.

INT. ROOM NUMBER THIRTEEN - EVENING

Candles illuminate the room. The hospital bed is in the center of the circle with Brian, Reverend Mansi, Janella and Sister Francene standing around it.

Reverend Mansi holds up the crucifix as Sister Francene reads passages from the bible (MOS). Flashes of lightning brighten the room as Megan's begins to respond.

Brian reaches out to her but Janella holds him back. He watches helplessly as her body thrashes. Her face contorts.

A blast of energy comes out of her body, knocks Sister Francene to the ground. Reverend Mansi helps her up and they continue the ritual.

Too agonizing to watch, Brian collapses in Janella's arms. She comforts him, her eyes fill with tears.

EXT. MOTEL - ROOM THIRTEEN - MORNING

The door opens. Reverend Mansi, Sister Francene and Janella walk out, exhausted and haggard.

They look around, the storm has passed. Besides leaves and branches all over the damage isn't bad.

The door to room fourteen opens, Bobby Jack walks out.

BOBBY JACK

What's going on? We leaving?

Janella rolls her eyes. Sister Francene takes her hand.

SISTER FRANCENE

Thank you Janella. I couldn't have done it without you.

JANELLA

I feel so bad for Mister Brian.

They all look at room number thirteen.

INT. ROOM NUMBER THIRTEEN - MORNING

Brian kisses Megan on the forehead, places the crucifix on her chest then folds her arms across it.

He covers her with the sheet.

EXT. MOTEL - ROOM THIRTEEN - MORNING

Brian walks out, squints as the sun hits his eyes. Sister Francene takes his hand, Janella takes the other and they head down the walkway. The Reverend follows.

BOBBY JACK

Did I miss something? Where you guys going?

They keep walking. Brian looks at his new friends and smiles. Janella puts her head on his shoulder.

BOBBY JACK (CONT'D)

Hey! What's for breakfast?

Bobby Jack watches as they all walk away together.

FADE OUT