DAUGHTERS OF NOSTRADAMUS

An Original Screenplay by Venessa Sangreal

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FADE IN:

A light wind rustles leaves and a gunshot echoes . . .

EXT. SNOWY WILDERNESS - DAWN

Fresh blood dots strange tracks in deep, virgin snow.

A PERSON in bulky hooded parka, gloves and snow shoes pants heavily. A rifle is in one hand. The other drags a freshkilled deer. The deer's dead eyes stare out. Its newly slit throat and belly bleeds.

Small game - rabbits, crow - dangle limp down the person's back. Dead eyes stare. Blood trickles from their slit bodies.

A clearing opens to a small barn and large picture-windowed house.

Signs on trees read GUARD DOG ON DUTY and TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED. A vicious-sounding dog begins to bark steadily as the person nears the barn. A key is inserted into, and opens, a padlock.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Inside the barn door, a heavily-gloved finger stabs at a wall-mounted keypad. The barking stops.

The barn walls and wooden work tables feature snares, sharp implements, a crossbow, knives, skins stretched on peg-boards and bear traps.

The person binds the deer's hind legs separately. A push of a button starts a mechanical hoist. Its motor whirs and the deer lifts, spread-eagle, into the rafters.

The person sets the electronic dog and leaves the barn.

EXT. SNOWY WILDERNESS - CONTINUOUS

After locking the barn padlock, the person moves through the snow to the house. Stairs lead to an enclosed porch. The person releases the bindings on the snow shoes and takes them inside.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The person removes the small kill and tosses it face first into the sink. Off come the heavy gloves and boots.

The hood from the parka falls back exposing the head of a pony-tailed brunette.

Attractive HALEY ANDERSON, 30, removes her parka, heavy winter sweater and snow-pants.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - SAME AFTERNOON

NOVA CARTER, 30, sits in a pummelled heap on the floor braced in a corner. Her wild red hair is glued to her face with fresh-drying blood - an obvious victim of a brutal beating.

A truck's engine sputters outside and fades away. Nova heaves a sigh of relief.

Nova unfolds her legs from beneath her, V-ing them flush out. A distorted reflection mocks her from the stove-front opposite.

Nova drags one shaky hand across her bottom lip. It collects saliva and blood. Her face swells and shimmers with tears. She moans in agonizing pain.

From down a hallway, a FEMALE CHILD calls out.

CHILD (O.S.)

Mommy?

Nova snaps alert. She clears her throat.

AVON

Go back to bed, Katie. Mommy will be there in a minute. Okay?

KATIE (O.S.)

I need milk. I'm thirsty.

NOVA

Okay, Sweetie. I'll bring you some.

Nova wipes her face with her palms. They pull away covered with snot, blood and sweat. She shakes her head.

Nova winces and clutches her rib cage, trying to get up. She finds the pain too great. She crawls a few feet forward on the floor towards a bathroom.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Go back to bed, Honey. Mommy will be right there with some milk for you, okay?

Nova waits breathless on all fours.

Finally, the sound of Katie's tiny feet slowly shuffle on carpet away from the kitchen.

Nova closes her eyes. She sighs relief. She lifts herself from the floor - not moving too fast - and clutches a counter for support on the way up. She makes her way to the bathroom.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nova splashes water onto her face. It stings. She winces, sucks air between her teeth in pain. She gently pats her skin dry with a towel and exits.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nova moves slowly. She holds her battered self. She removes milk from the fridge and a plastic cup from a cupboard. Her hand shakes as she pours the milk. She takes it to Katie's room.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - KATIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katie takes the milk in two hands and drains it in sleepy oblivion. Nova takes the empty glass. She bends to tuck Katie back in and winces in pain when gravity pulls at her injuries.

KATIE

Mommy? Why were you making funny noises?

NOVA

Shh. You need to sleep now.

KATIE

I heard you, Mommy. Why were you making funny noises?

NOVA

Never you mind, young lady. It's nap time. Go back to sleep. Everything's okay.

Katie drifts back into sleep. Nova leaves the room, closing the door.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nova leans carefully against the wall, shoulders back, eyes closed. She sinks down into a crouch on the floor. Her body quakes with sobs. Suddenly she stops and lifts her head.

A spine-gripping chill courses through her body - an unsourced electrocution. It's brief. And then it stops. Nova groans.

NOVA

Oh, no, God. Not this. Not now.

Nova sinks limply, prostrate to the floor.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Haley steps in from outside, laying a wet shovel aside. She undresses. She puts away her winter-wear and dons a butcher's apron.

Haley collects a group of different knives - one a cleaver - and lays them on the counter beside the sink. She bends to the cupboards below, reaching to retrieve a cutting board. Suddenly, a blinding revelation takes her over...

HALEY'S POV: A Mack truck barrels around a bend down the treacherously icy road where Haley lives. It passes her driveway and crashes into a small truck caught turning onto the road from Haley's driveway-

and then it's gone. Haley stares, mindless, into the cupboard.

HALEY

Uh-oh! Okay, hang on... It's
fixable...

Haley removes the cutting board to the counter. She removes the dead rabbit from the sink to the board and arranges the legs for removal.

Haley raises the cleaver, but stops mid-air when she hears the sound of a truck pulling up outside the house. Haley lays down the cleaver and heads to open the front door.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN DOOR/STOOP - CONTINUOUS

EARL, 60, the mailman, greets Haley with a large parcel. Earl steps inside. He places the parcel on the counter.

EARL

Mornin', Bob!

HALEY

Hey, Earl. Looks heavy.

Earl pats the parcel.

EARL

Uh, yes'um.

Earl turns to step back outside.

HALEY

Hey, Earl. Tell Martha I'll have deer meat for her tomorrow.

EARL

Hmm. She was hopin'. Heard yer rifle earlier.

HALEY

Well, I'm happy to share. But, you tell her not to give it to them dogs of yours, you hear? I'll get something for them next time.

EARL

I'll tell her... How's that new beau of yers? Like to meet him sometime, shake his hand.

HALEY

Don't think that's in the cards. We're having... problems. I never see him...

EARL

Hmm... too bad. Martha was hoping... Well, gotta go. Martha's waiting, you know. Bit behind for all the snow.

Earl opens the door to step out onto the stoop.

HALEY

Earl?

EARL

Yes'um?

Uh, be extra careful on the way out, okay? The end of the driveway is really slippery.

EARL

No problem, Bob. No problem comin', no problem goin'.

HALEY

Earl?

EARL

Yes'um?

HALEY

Humour me, will ya? Tell me you'll be extra careful - slow - going out.

EARL

Sure Bob. Extra careful. Slow goin' out.

Earl leaves.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Earl walks down the stoop and to his small mail truck. The mail truck goes down the drive, slowing to a complete stop. Suddenly, a Mack truck roars past, inches from Earl's truck.

The Mack's trailer swings slightly inward as it passes. It clips the tiny mail truck, sending it and Earl into a violent spin. It near-misses Haley's mailbox.

The mail truck settles and Earl blasts his horn, cursing. As the disturbed snow settles, the name on the mailbox becomes clear. It reads "BOB SMITH".

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Haley stands at the sink. She listens attentively to Earl'S honking. She nods and smiles to herself.

Haley retrieves her meat cleaver. The blade comes down and severs the rabbits paws. Haley - bare-handed - removes the fur and skin.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME EVENING

Haley lounges in a cozy leather chair and watches TV. A mostly empty dinner plate rests on her chest. She scrapes a last bite into her mouth, tosses her fork clanging onto the plate and places them on a side table.

The Weather Network predicts thirty-six hours of heavy snowfall. Haley does the mental math.

HALEY

Shit! Five feet. I hate shovelling.

Haley turns the TV off via remote control. She takes up her plate and leaves for the kitchen.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Haley scrapes her dinner remains into the garbage.

Close up, the rabbit's rib cage on the plate, picked clean, looks eerily like a mouth full of sharp teeth taking a bite.

Haley rinses the plate and puts it in the dishwasher.

Haley sighs at the unopened parcel that waits on the counter. With effort, she lifts it and heads out of the kitchen.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Haley enters her office nook. The wall is covered in framed objects: diplomas, licences, permits and degrees. She is well-versed in investigation, journalism, weapons, criminal psychology...

A note of thanks from a grateful mother, happy to have her daughter back home as a result of Haley's KEEN SKILL AND DEDICATION, is taped to the wall.

Pinned haphazardly beside it is a bumper-sticker which reads: THE FUTURE IS SET - UNTIL YOU CHANGE IT!

Haley drops the box onto her huge desk with a thud.

HALEY

Phew! Heavy sucker, you are.

Haley picks up a serious knife from the desktop and opens the box. Haley reaches in and removes a bullet-proof vest.

With some difficulty she straps it on. She raps on its breastplate with her knuckles.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Hmm... Seems durable.

Haley does a few "moves", checks out the vest's flexibility. She discards the vest to a large, skirted wing-back chair.

Haley turns her attention to her computer. She clicks the mouse, types a password and opens a new E-mail message. She scrolls down past many lines of text to a photo at the bottom.

POV: Photo of a sweet and innocent-looking little girl with blond hair, about ten years old, smiling happily.

Haley's shoulders slump slightly.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Okay, little girl...

Haley scans the text for a moment and goes back to the photo.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Okay, Jessica. It's okay. We're going to have a little communique here and you're going to tell me all about it... What happened, Jessica?

Haley lays her right palm over Jessica's photo. Jessica's story assaults Haley's "mind's eye"...

SERIES OF SHOTS - JESSICA plays in the woods by herself; Jessica encounters a BAD MAN, 50; bad man lures Jessica behind the dense trees; Jessica is murdered; bad man buries Jessica's body beneath the snow; bad man looks directly at Haley.

Haley pulls her hand away from the screen as if stung. She shakes her head sadly. She again briefly scans the text portion of the E-mail.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Pierre, South Dakota.

Haley does an Internet search for Pierre, South Dakota, police department. She dials the station from the phone on her desk.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Hi ... In Crichner's Woods, southern end, Jessica Robin's body is buried just beneath the snow at the base of a large elm tree.

Haley hangs up. She clicks to reply E-mail. She reads as she types.

INSERT - COMPUTER MONITOR

HALEY (V.O.)

Dear Mrs. Robins... I am in receipt of your request concerning your missing daughter, Jessica. I have reviewed the data and regret to inform you I have no answers for you as to her whereabouts. Be patient. I'm certain she'll turn up soon. Sincerely, Bob Smith.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Moonlight casts a sinister gloom over Nova, asleep alone in bed. Nova's eyes snap open with fright as she hears glass clinking and a mature, drunk MAN ranting outside the closed bedroom door.

MAN (O.S.)

Nova? Where's my bottle?

A few moments later, louder.

MAN (O.S.)

Hey, Bitch!? Where the fuck's my bottle?

Nova hears a small, glass "something" hit the floor outside the bedroom door. Nova winces as she listens to it break. The man, JACK, 35, enters the bedroom. Nova pretends to be asleep. He sniggers.

JACK (CONT'D)

Nova? You here? Know that vase you love, <u>loved</u> so much...? Nova!

Jack topples into bed. He gropes Nova. Nova shifts a bit, still feigning sleep.

JACK (CONT'D)

Com'on, Nova. I didn't mean to break it.

Jack gropes Nova some more, then stops. He looks down at her with disgust. Jack flops back on his side of the bed.

JACK (CONT'D)

(disdainfully)

Can't get it up anyway, darlin'. Forgot the bag for your face.

Jack mumbles a few more incoherent words, then passes out.

INT. HALEY'S BARN - SAME

Haley stands in a puddle of deer blood and guts. Individually bundled, freezer-paper packages lie on the work table at which she stands. She scoops up the packages and places them in a wax-board box. She tapes it securely shut.

Haley tidies up, resets the electronic dog and, with the box in tote, exits the barn.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The hue of moonlight catches Haley's attention as she crosses the crisp snow to the house. She stops and looks around at the cold pallor of the night. A full moon hovers directly above her.

HALEY

Eerie.

Haley keeps walking. She deposits the box at the foot of the stairs. She proceeds into the house.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Haley discards her winter-wear. She turns out the lights.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley turns off all the living room lights.

A wide splay of silvery moonlight shimmers on the snow outside the picture-window. It catches Haley's eye and inspires her close to the window. She inhales the serene beauty before her.

Beautiful. No footprints. No animal shit. Just fresh, undisturbed snow.

Without warning, an impact strikes the window - a woman with red hair in a nightgown is smashed, frontally, against the window. Her face is disfigured. Her eyes widen. She pleads to Haley to help her, then becomes confused.

Haley screams and steps back from the window. Her eyes are fixed on the violence playing out in front of her. Haley quivers, consumed with terror.

HALEY'S POV: "Jack" grabs "Nova" by the back of her nightgown and flings her away from the window into the unmarred snow. She lands crumpled like a Raggedy Anne. He kicks her until she lies limp in blood-spattered snow...

... From a sheath on his belt, Jack removes a large Bowie knife. He lifts Nova's head by a tight fist of her hair. He grazes the blade against her throat. He pauses and looks up from his prey for a moment-

and then they're gone.

Haley gasps. She's pale with sweat. She sinks to her knees on the hardwood floor. She holds herself and mutters in disbelief.

HALEY (CONT'D)

No. Not possible... Not possible.

Haley weakly lifts her hand to the window and presses her sweaty palm to the freezing glass.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Nova?

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - ONE HOUR LATER

Haley paces. She mumbles in a panic to herself.

HALEY

What do I do?! What the <u>fuck</u> am I supposed to do!?

Suddenly she stops. Recognition creeps into her face.

HALEY

That's right. Lots of snow...

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME 4 AM

A wake-up alarm pierces the darkness. Haley groggily turns off her wristwatch alarm and stumbles out of bed. She heads to the kitchen.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Haley puts on coffee. She trudges to the bedroom.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley dresses warmly. She heads for her office.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Haley writes a note and attaches a piece of tape to it. She goes to the kitchen with it.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Haley pours her coffee into a travel mug and adds fixings. She puts on her winter-wear and gloves and exits. She takes the note with her.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Huge flakes of snow dust the stoop and railing. At the bottom of the stairs Haley swipes snow off the wax-board box and attaches the note. It reads:

EARL, GONE AWAY FOR A BIT. IF YOU SEE GERRIE, SHAKE HIS HAND. BOB.

Haley gets in her 4X4 pickup.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

With her keys, Haley opens the locked glove compartment exposing the revolver inside.

HALEY

Armed...

She moves some objects around until she sees the box of bullets.

HALEY (CONT'D)

... and dangerous.

Haley slams the glove compartment door closed and locks it. She fires up the engine and drives carefully out to the road.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING 8 AM

Nova's mirrored reflection is bruised, black, cut and battered - heavy damage requiring heavy cover-up.

NOVA

Not too bad, really.

Nova retrieves a bucket of make-up. She picks out specific foundations, blushes, dark eye shadows and heavy lipsticks. She winces with each application. Her facial expression is very glum.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Better improve your mood.

As her face picks up, so does her attitude. When done, she pulls away from the mirror and examines her artwork.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Michelangelo's got nothing on you, Kid.

Nova puts her make-up arsenal away. She turns the bathroom light out and heads to the kitchen.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nova putters at the sink. The time on the microwave reads 8:07.

Jack's voice pierces the room.

JACK (O.S.)

What are you up to, Nova?

Nova jumps with fright. She spins around to face Jack who stands by the garbage can.

NOVA

Jack! You're home?! You scared me. I thought you were at work.

JACK

Do you think I'm some kinda idiot?

Nova is very afraid.

NOVA

No.

JACK

Well, ya must.

Jack closes the distance between him and Nova. Nova backs up a few paces, her back to the counter. She quivers in fear.

NOVA

Please, Jack. I'm not up to anything.

JACK

Well, what's with all the make-up? Who you planning to meet?

NOVA

I'm not meeting anyone. I just thought...

JACK

Don't lie to me, Nova. Who are you meeting?

NOVA

I told you...

Jack grabs Nova by the elbow. He grinds his fingers deep into her flesh. He yankes her close to him.

NOVA (CONT'D)

Jack, you're hurting me.

Out of nowhere, Jack's fist connects with Nova's cheekbone. Her head smashes back against the cupboard.

Jack yells. His spit sprays into her face.

JACK

Don't lie to me, you fucking bitch.

NOVA

I'm not, I swear I'm not. Jack, don't. Please, you'll scare Katie. I put on make-up so you wouldn't feel you needed a bag.

Jack's face takes on a demonic seething. Through clenched teeth he addresses her, his eyes like slits.

JACK

I knew it. I knew you were awake last night.

Nova opens her mouth to object, then closes it again - caught. Jack knots his hands in Nova's long hair. He fills his fist with the strands behind her ears. Nova whimpers in pain as the clumps of hair rip from her head.

Nova raises her arms in defense, but, still stunned from hitting the cupboard, she isn't quick enough. Jack grabs more hair, pulls her face up close to his and glares with absolute malice - his mouth a sickly sadistic grin.

EXT. NOVA'S HOUSE - SAME 8:15 AM

Haley's 4X4 pulls up in front of Nova's house. Heavy snow has begun to fall showing fresh tire tracks in Nova's driveway. They lead into a closed garage door.

HALEY

Shit! That bastard beat me to it.

Haley kills the engine, opens her door and begins to get out of the truck. Her driver's door is open just a crack when she hears Nova's screams from inside the house.

Haley quickly inserts her keys into the glove compartment, opens the door and grabs the revolver. She sprints to Nova's front door. She tries the door knob and it allows her entry.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Haley peers cautiously inside.

HALEY'S POV: Katie, in slippers and pyjamas, squats in the hallway against the wall. She clutches a soft doll and rocks herself back and forth.

Haley motions for her to be quiet. Haley bends down and whispers in Katie's ear.

HALEY

Go wait in the truck, Sweetie. Aunt Haley's going to make everything all better.

As Katie leaves the house, Nova's gurgled screams reach a new height from down the hall. Haley moves on.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Haley finds clumps of red hair scattered across a bloodstreaked floor.

Jack has his back to Haley, his one hand knotted in Nova's hair. The other hand is a white-knuckled fist on its way down and about to connect with Nova's unrecognizable face.

Haley aims the gun at Jack.

HALEY

Hey, you worthless piece of shit. (warning)

Don't do that.

Jack stops, looks in the direction of Haley's voice. His expression changes from sadistic victory to utter surprise to pure hatred when he realizes the source.

Jack sees that the revolver in Haley's hand points level at his chest. He releases Nova's hair. Nova slumps in a heap to the floor.

HALEY (CONT'D)

You know, asshole, every dog has its day. Since you're the only one with the temperament of a bad rottweiler, I guess that means you.

Jack raises his hands in the air.

JACK

Hey, Haley. Don't do anything stupid now.

HALEY

Nah, you've got that covered. Back it up, Jack-ass.

Nova groans and slowly lifts her head from the floor. Her voice is rough and shaky.

NOVA

Haley?

HALEY

Yeah, it's me. Just stay put. And get your head together.

HALEY(cont'd)

(to Jack)

Okay Slugger. Or should I say Slug? Park your no good ass in that chair.

Jack backs up until his legs connect with a chair. Rigidly he sits down.

HALEY (CONT'D)

(condescending)

That's a good boy.

(to Nova)

Nova? Are you still with me?

Nova's glazed look turns to alarm as she notices Haley's revolver.

NOVA

Don't do this, Haley. Please?

HALEY

Nova, get moving. Now.

NOVA

I don't want to, Haley. You're scaring me.

HALEY

Nova, <u>you're</u> scaring <u>me</u>. Now get in my truck.

NOVA

I can't leave Katie.

HALEY

Katie's already out there. Now go!

Nova manages to get herself up off the floor. With the support of walls and counters, she eventually leaves the kitchen. Haley listens until, from down the hall, the front door closes.

Haley keeps her revolver aimed at Jack while she opens, and looks through, several drawers in the kitchen. Finally she removes a roll of nylon twine from a drawer and tosses it to Jack.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Bend over and tie your legs to the legs of the chair. And do it right - wrap it around a few times, nice and tight.

Jack does so.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Very good, Jack. Now, the gun <u>is</u> loaded. Pass me the rope and put your hands behind your back.

Haley takes the roll of twine, still attached at Jack's feet. She jams the revolver in the back of his neck and awkwardly wraps the twine around his wrists. She binds his hands securely into place.

Haley gets a dish rag from the sink and stands before Jack.

JACK

Haley? What do ya think you're doing with that?

HALEY

Open wide.

Jack refuses.

Haley shakes her head and pouts in mock disappointment. She lays the revolver and rag aside. She uses her index fingers and moves in on Jack's face. Jack is attentive to her every move.

Haley jams a finger into a jaw point on each side of Jack's face. Jack's mouth opens reluctantly and he screams in pain. Haley stops, steps back.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Good. Now you understand. You either open your mouth or I'll break your fucking jaw and yank it open.

Haley takes the dish rag and jams it deep into Jack's open mouth. Haley walks around behind him and Jack muffles expletives.

Haley takes up the revolver and brings it down with full force. It connects with the back of Jack's head. Jack goes unconscious.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - SAME 9 AM

Haley pulls up to the Hospital emergency doors and stops. She addresses Katie who sits next to her.

I'm just going to take your mom in. I need you to promise me that you'll wait right here.

KATIE

I promise, Aunt Haley.

HALEY

And, I'm locking all the doors when we go in. I need you to promise you won't open them to anybody.

KATIE

I promise.

HALEY

That's my girl.

Haley exits the 4x4.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Haley locks her door then goes to the passenger's side. She carefully helps Nova - limp and semi-conscious - out of the truck. Haley takes Nova's purse with her and looks at Katie.

HALEY

I'll be back in a few minutes.

KATIE

Is mommy going to be okay?

HALEY

Sure she is, Sweetie. Of course she is.

Haley locks and shuts the truck door. She supports Nova into the hospital through the opened automatic doors.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY WARD - CONTINUOUS

Haley half-drags Nova to the waiting room and eases her into a chair. Haley approaches the reception window where a pleasant-looking NURSE is busy with paperwork.

HALEY

My sister has been assaulted - badly. Any idea how long it'll be before you can attend to her?

NURSE

It's been a busy morning... I'd have to say about one hour before anybody can see her.

HALEY

Is there any place she can lay down? Her head is really banged up and she's barely conscious.

The nurse looks past Haley's shoulder at Nova.

NURSE

Yes. I'll get someone to come with a gurney.

HALEY

Okay. I have my niece in the truck outside. I need to attend to her, but I'll be back.

NURSE

Do you have her health card and information?

Haley digs through Nova's purse and gives the nurse Nova's particulars.

HALEY

Hey, I was wondering. I need to get the little one some breakfast. Could you hang on to my sister's purse until I get back? I won't be long and she's kinda out of it, you know. I don't want to leave it with her.

NURSE

Sure, no problem.

Haley gives the nurse Nova's purse.

HALEY

And, is there a mall near by?

NURSE

Yes. Actually, close. Go left out of the hospital a couple of blocks and hang a left at the lights. Can't miss it.

HALEY

Thanks.

Haley approaches Nova.

HALEY

Nova? ... Nova, Honey?

Nova weakly acknowledges her.

HALEY

Nova, I'm going to get Katie something to eat.

Nova's eyes widen at the mention of Katie.

NOVA

Katie?

HALEY

Katie's fine. She's waiting in the truck. Listen... The nurse has your purse. She'll give it to you when you're done. And they're bringing a gurney, so you can lie down and relax.

Nova groans a little in pain. Haley sympathetically takes Nova's hand.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Ah, Nova, Honey... It's going to be okay. You'll feel better soon...

As Haley leaves the hospital she works an optimistic glow into her face.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Haley drives while Katie plays with her doll.

HALEY

How'd you like to go to the mall, Kiddo?

KATIE

Is mommy coming with us?

HALEY

Not right now, Honey. Soon though. In a bit.

KATIE

Hmm... Okay. But I can't go in my pyjamas!

You're right. That's why we're going to the mall.

Haley finds the shopping mall.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK IN MALL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Haley pulls into a parking spot.

HALEY

Okay, Kiddo. I need you to stay in the truck again, just for a few more minutes, while I run in and grab a few things.

KATIE

But I wanna go!

HALEY

Yep. And, you will. But first, I have to get you something to wear. (teasingly)
Unless you would prefer to hang out at the mall in your PJs.

Katie giggles.

KATIE

No.

HALEY

Okay. I'll be right back.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY WARD - SAME 9:15 AM

Nova manages to get herself up to the nurse's reception window.

NOVA

You have my purse?

NURSE

Yes. It's safe. Would you like it?

Nova nods and the nurse retrieves Nova's purse.

Nova wanders around until she finds a pay-phone. Nova fumbles around in her purse for coins. She plugs several into the pay-phone and dials a number. She seems to change her mind and hangs up after a few rings.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK IN MALL PARKING LOT - SAME 9:30 AM

Haley's truck interior is littered with open parcels. Katie is now dressed in proper clothes.

HALEY

Ready, Kiddo?

Katie nods a hard "Yes".

INT. MALL MIDWAY - MOMENTS LATER

HALEY

So, what do you want to do first? Eat? Are you hungry?

KATIE

Can we go see the toys?

HALEY

I should've known... What else would a five-year-old want to do at the mall? ... Okay, Kiddo. Toy department it is!

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Jack is still tied, unconscious, in the chair as Haley left him. He stirs a bit as the phone rings, but then it stops and he nods back out.

INT. MALL - TOY DEPARTMENT - SAME 9:45 AM

Haley and Katie wander the aisles. Katie leads the way. They pass a heaped pile of over-sized stuffed animals, jig-saw puzzles and board games. Finally they arrive at the dolls aisle. Katie pauses and looks up to a shelf.

KATIE'S POV: a DARTH VADER doll.

Haley stops with Katie.

HALEY

Which one did you want?

Katie takes Haley's hand. With a worried expression, she looks up at Haley.

KATIE

The bad man's coming, Aunt Haley.

Haley looks down at Katie quizzically. She squeezes Katie's little hand re-assuredly and sighs.

HALEY

I know, Baby. I know...

KATIE

Barbie!

Katie dashes off further down the aisle. She tugs Haley as she goes.

Another little girl, ANDREA, about Katie's age, joins them. The three of them admire Barbie's latest collection of goodies.

A WOMAN calls out nicely from another aisle.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Andrea? ... We gotta go, Puddin'.

As Andrea moves to leave, Katie stops her. Katie whispers in Andrea's ear. Andrea is suddenly worried, scared. The two girls look around frantically. Katie points out the pile of stuffed animals.

KATIE

(to Andrea)

In there.

Andrea nods and begins to head towards the pile. But, she is cut off by the woman, her MOTHER, who takes her hand to leave. Andrea resists adamantly, pulling to get free of her mother's grip.

MOTHER

What has gotten into you? Com'on. We got to go.

Andrea gives in reluctantly. As she is towed away by her mother, she looks back at Katie with sad eyes. Katie looks back at her with a similar sadness.

HALEY

What was that about? What did you say to that little girl, Katie?

Katie shrugs.

KATIE

To hide.

HALEY

From her parents?

KATIE

Uh-huh.

HALEY

Why would you want her to do that?

KATIE

So she wouldn't get hurt.

HALEY

You mean, like her mommy and daddy hitting her? Like that kind of hurt?

KATIE

No... Aunt Haley?

HALEY

Yes?

KATIE

Isn't Talking Fashion Barbie cool?

Haley is lost in her own thoughts.

HALEY

Talking Fashion Barbie? ... Oh, yeah. Talking Fashion Barbie. Is that the one you want?

Katie nods "Yes" excitedly.

HALEY

Excellent choice. Talking Fashion Barbie it is! Now, how about we get some crayons and a coloring book.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY WARD HALLWAY - SAME 10 AM

Nova stands at the pay-phone looking dismal, but mildly alert.

From the emergency reception, Nova hears the nurse call her name.

Nova leaves the pay-phone and approaches the nurse.

NOVA

I'm okay. I don't need to see a doctor.

The nurse looks compassionately at Nova.

NURSE

Seems to me you might want to.

NOVA

No, no. That's okay. I'm just going to go home. I'm just clumsy and my sister over-reacted and -

NURSE

And you're used to it.

Nova looks surprised.

NURSE (CONT'D)

I've heard it all before - here, in emergency. Unfortunately, once they reach the morgue, it's too late to understand there is no excuse.

Nova just stares coldly at the nurse.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Please, do yourself a favor, see the doctor and talk to him about getting yourself into a woman's shelter.

Nova just stares at the nurse with dull eyes. She holds out her hand to get back her health care card. Reluctantly, the nurse obliges. Nova slowly walks to the hospital exit.

EXT. SMALL TOWN STREET - CONTINUOUS

A strong wind pelts dense snowflakes at Nova as she stumbles down the street away from the hospital, arms wrapped about her. Her thin shirt, pants and house slippers provide little protection.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - SAME 10:15 AM

Haley and Katie near a major intersection. Traffic slows to an unusual crawl.

Hmm... Flashing lights ahead - ambulance.

KATIE

It's a accident.

HALEY

Yes... It appears so.

Finally, they get up to the location of the accident.

A cube van's front is crunched. Across the street, a family-sized car's driver's side is completely crushed. Broken windshield glass from the car glints from the road. Two adult-sized bodies lie shrouded by sheets at the side of the road.

HALEY'S POV: A third, smaller body, is being covered - Andrea in the toy aisle.

Haley glances over in wonderment at Katie, who is totally engrossed in her new Barbie. They get past the accident and, finally, pull up to the hospital.

HALEY

Okay, Kiddo. I'm going to get your mom. I'll be right out. Same rules, right?

KATIE

Right.

HALEY

And they are...?

KATIE

Don't leave and don't unlock the door for anyone.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY WARD - MOMENTS LATER

Haley searches the hospital emergency waiting room. Nova is nowhere to be found. She approaches the reception desk window where the same nurse does paperwork.

HALEY

Hi... I was wondering -

NURSE

She's not here. She left.

She what?

NURSE

She wouldn't even see the doctor. I tried to talk to her, but she was determined.

HALEY

Well, do you have any idea where she went?

NURSE

She did say she was going home, if that helps.

HALEY

And you let her go, just like that?

NURSE

I'm sorry, there's not really anything we can do to stop them if they want to go. She took her purse and her documentation and walked down the hall to the front doors.

EXT. SMALL TOWN STREET - SAME 10:30 AM

Nova attracts a lot of attention from passers-by. Her lack of winter-wear and dishevelled body lend the impression she is the victim of a mugging. She weaves down the street.

A caring MAN, 50, approaches her, to offer help, but Nova snubs him away. He shakes his head at her as she continues past him.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - SAME

Haley drives slowly down the street away from the hospital. She mutters under her breath as she thoroughly scans the sidewalks.

HALEY

How far could she go?

Haley notices people as they walk and shake their heads, as if in disbelief. They look back over their shoulders towards one door in particular - a diner.

Haley pulls over and parks. Before Haley can say anything, Katie speaks with authority.

KATIE

I know, Aunt Haley... The rules.

HALEY

I'll be right back.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Jack hears the phone ring and cracks his eyelids slightly open. In his stupor, he attempts to answer it. He grunts in pain from his restraints. He quickly remembers his dilemma.

The answering machine picks up and the house again becomes silent. Jack starts to become alert.

INT. DINER - SAME

Nova talks on the phone in the diner, a coffee to-go beside her.

NOVA

... Please don't be mad. I'm not far... Coltsville. I'm heading to the bus station now and I'll be home as soon as I can -

A gloved hand bangs down the phone connection, disconnecting Nova. Nova jumps, startled.

HALEY

What the hell do you think you're doing? Why did you leave the hospital?

NOVA

I... I want to go home.

HALEY

No, Nova. You can forget that. Are you nuts?

NOVA

If I don't go home, Jack will kill
me.

HALEY

He's going to kill you anyway. Have you looked at yourself lately?

NOVA

I'm afraid for Katie.

Phht! So am I! And you! (negotiates)

Okay, okay, tell ya what, just come up to my place for the night. You can call Jack from there and let him know you'll be home tomorrow. Give him time to cool off.

NOVA

No. I want to go home, Haley. You don't know Jack like I do. He will hunt me down and kill me if I don't go home.

Haley is frustrated with Nova's attitude.

HALEY

Okay. Fine. Go home. But Katie comes with me.

Nova begins to object, but Haley turns and leaves.

NOVA

Haley? No. Wait.

Haley keeps walking. Nova gathers her things from around the pay-phone and goes out the diner after Haley.

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME 3 PM

Jack is still tied to the chair. His eyes are wide open and furious. He stretches his throat and works the rag out of his mouth. He inhales deeply and coughs harshly for a few moments afterwards.

JACK

God - I need a drink.

Jack looks behind and around himself. He gauges his position in the kitchen. He violently rocks the chair and topples into a safe area on the floor. A chair leg breaks off. Jack grins.

He lets his frustration out on the rest of the chair. It breaks apart. Jack is almost free. He brings his tied hands under his feet and up to his mouth. He unties his bonds with his teeth. It's not easy, and his temper flares.

JACK (CONT'D)

Bitch! Fucking Bitch!

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - SAME

Haley pulls into her driveway as Nova and Katie revive from brief naps. Nova notices the mailbox.

NOVA

Where are we, Haley? Who's "Bob Smith"?

HALEY

Relax. We're at my place, and I'll explain Bob later.

Katie looks very worried suddenly.

KATIE

We have to go, Aunt Haley.

Haley parks the 4x4. She looks at Katie.

HALEY

No, Honey. We're at my place. We don't have to go anywhere else.

KATIE

No. We have to go. The bad man's coming.

HALEY

No, Honey. Everything is fine. Your daddy doesn't even know where I live, so -

Katie begins to object again, but Nova glares at her. Katie falls silent. Haley notices that the box she left for Earl at the bottom of the stairs is still there.

HALEY

Hmm...

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - SAME 5 PM

Jack's winter jacket, truck keys and Bowie knife lie on the hood of his truck. Jack rips things apart on a worktable. He looks for something.

JACK

Ah, there you are. Come to Papa.

Jack unscrews the cap and drinks long on a half-empty bottle of Scotch. He takes another long swig. He slams the bottle onto a work table. He roots through a toolbox.

Jack upturns its contents onto the table and claws at the inside bottom of the toolbox. He withdraws a grease-smudged envelope addressed to Nova. The return address reads: BOB SMITH.

Jack removes a letter from the envelope. He opens it to the last page. The author's signature: Haley.

JACK (CONT'D)

Nice try, Bob.

Jack replaces the letter to the envelope. He gathers up his things and, with scotch bottle in hand, hops into his truck.

Jack lays the knife and envelope on the passenger seat and wedges his scotch bottle safely in his crotch. Jack jams the key into the ignition.

Click, click is all he hears.

JACK (CONT'D)

What the...?

Jack tries again. Nothing. He grabs the bottle and slams it down onto the passenger's seat. Liquor shoots out the neck. He reaches down and pulls the hood release.

Jack stumbles out of his truck and pops the hood full open, cursing and swearing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Fuckin' bitch took my distributor! And all my plugs!!

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Haley prepares dinner. Katie looks at Haley's books on a bookshelf in the kitchen. Katie picks a big book and brings it to the table.

HALEY

Whatcha got there?

KATIE

A book 'bout animals.

(laughs)

Well, yeah, there's stuff about animals in it... Yeah, sure, look at it if you want.

Katie flips open the book and looks at the pictures. A knock at the door announces the arrival of Earl with the mail. He steps into the kitchen.

EARL

Sorry, I'm behind schedule. Too much snow... Another parcel for ya, Bob.

Haley takes the parcel and deposits it on the kitchen counter. Katie laughs at Earl.

EARL (CONT'D)

And who might you be, Little Lady?

Katie gets up from the table and introduces herself to Earl. She extends her little hand in a handshake.

KATIE

My name is Katie and I'm five years old.

Earl shakes her hand politely.

EART

Well, Katie. Pleased to make your acquaintance. Are you visiting for the day?

KATIE

Oh, no. I'm going to live with Aunt Haley. Hey... Why did you call Aunt Haley "Bob"?

Haley moves into the conversation.

HALEY

It's kinda like a game Earl and I play.

(to Earl)

That box outside is for Martha.

EARL

Right - the deer meat. Thanks. Which reminds me... Watch yourself out there over the next few days.

Why? What's up?

EARL

Rogue bears. There was two of 'em, but the dogs got one.

KATIE

Bears? There's bears here, Aunt Haley? Cool!

HALEY

(to Katie)

No, not cool. Dangerous. Bears in zoos - cool. Bears in woods - very not cool. Especially in winter.

(to Earl)

Thanks for the warning. I guess
I'll have to put a trap or two out.
(to Katie)

That means you now have a new rule -

Katie grimaces.

KATIE

No going outside.

HALEY

Not tonight, anyway.

EARL

Well, must be going... Nice meeting you Miss Katie, so grow'd up for five years old.

Earl throws a wink at Haley as he turns to leave. Katie suddenly calls out to him.

KATIE

Mr. Mailman?

EARL

You can call me Earl... Yes?

KATIE

You got to be careful on the stairs so's you don't fall down.

Earl is a little puzzled by her statement, but nods assent to her anyway. Earl heads out.

EARL

Later, Bob.

Katie giggles again.

HALEY

Later, Earl.

Earl leaves.

EXT. HALEY'S STOOP - CONTINUOUS

Earl closes the door behind him and puts on his gloves as he walks down the snow-covered stairs. He slips on the last one. He flails for a moment. He barely catches the handrail in time to break his fall.

Earl winces as a splinter of the wooden handrail embeds itself in his partially-gloved hand. Earl goes down on his ass with a moderate thump.

A bit shaken, Earl gathers his wits for a moment. He protectively cups his injured hand.

Earl takes his time straightening himself up again. He dares a quick glance behind him and through the door's window.

Katie stands at the window. She watches him with piercing intent and worry in her face. Earl smiles awkwardly and waves his good hand at her to assure her he is okay.

EXT. NOVA'S HOUSE - SAME 5:30 PM

Jack watches as his truck is towed away down the street. A nosey neighbor peeks through her curtain at him. Jack notices her and gives her a mean scowl. He mouths words at her he knows she'll understand.

JACK

Mind your business, you fuckin' nosey bitch!

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME 7 PM

Haley, Nova and Katie nibble on finger foods. The weather station is low-volume on the TV. Nova lounges on the couch. Haley sits in her chair with Katie nuzzled in beside her. They look through the big book. Katie points at different pictures.

KATIE

And what's this picture?

Hmm... It's a cave, a big cave. Here's the entrance, and there's a fire near it.

KATIE

There's a sleeping bag.

HALEY

Right.

KATIE

What are the pointy things?

HALEY

They're rock that has formed from dripping water. They're called Stalactites - 'cause they "hang on tight".

Katie and Haley giggle. Katie turns to the next page.

KATIE

What's this one?

HALEY

Let's see... Oh, it's a tree with snow all around. It says to pick a tree with large lower branches. At the trunk - the bottom of the tree - there won't be any snow 'cause the snow couldn't get in there. If you dig out the bit of snow that is there and line it with tree branches, it'll protect you against cold... That's why deer sleep under the trees. Pretty neat, eh?

KATIE

Yeah.

(turns page) What's this one?

HALEY

It's a small cave, made of snow.

KATIE

Like a igloo.

HALEY

Right. Like an igloo.

NOVA

Katie, Honey.

KATIE

Aww... I don't want to go to bed. Can I please stay up? Please?

NOVA

No, Honey. Don't worry. You'll see your Aunt Haley tomorrow.

Katie looks pleadingly at Haley.

KATIE

But, I'm ascared to go to bed.

HALEY

Don't be scared. You're totally safe.

Katie leans in close and whispers to Haley.

KATIE

No. The bad man's coming.

NOVA

Enough, Katie. We've talked about this before. There is no bad man coming to get us. That's silly talk. Now, go wash your face and hands.

HALEY

Com'on, Kiddo. I'll take you to the bathroom and help get you organized. Okay?

INT. NOVA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - SAME 7:30 PM

Jack gives the service DRIVER a hard time.

JACK

Do you know how much time I've lost? I swear, if I don't find her, I'm going to hunt you down and kick your ass.

The driver smells the liquor on Jack's breath and backs up a step.

DRIVER

I'm sorry Sir. It's like I said, the service station only had your truck ready -

JACK

Don't give me excuses, Moron. Just give me my fucking keys.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Haley walks into the living room where Nova is still on the couch.

HALEY

She's all ready to tuck in, Mom. I put her in the far bedroom, where it's quiet.

Nova gets up off the couch.

NOVA

Thanks, Haley.

HALEY

While you're doing that, I'm just going to go outside to the barn and finish a few things, okay? You going to be okay?

NOVA

Yeah, sure. I'm fine. (cynical)
Just great.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The storm rages and much snow has accumulated on the ground. Haley walks about fifteen steps in the deepening snow and stops to look at the sky. The moon is only beginning to rise.

She looks behind her at her tracks. Snow already begins to fill them. She keeps walking. As she nears the barn the barking starts. Haley unlocks the door.

INT. HALEY'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Haley turns the electronic dog off.

Yes, yes, Ralph. I'm giving you the night off tonight. What do you think of that?

Haley fetches a large bear trap off the wall. She drops it onto the table with a loud clatter. She turns to walk away, but pauses.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Uh... Better to be safe than sorry.

Haley retraces her steps and takes a second trap down to join with the first. The wind howls. It whips against the barn walls outside and whistles in the rafters.

Haley gets her rifle, opens a drawer and removes a box of bullets. The barn door whips open and bangs closed again.

Haley jumps.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Jeez! Shit.

Haley takes a deep breath and consoles herself.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Relax, Kiddo. Everything is going to be fine.

Haley removes two bullets from the box and loads them into the rifle. She gets the traps and leaves the barn with rifle in hand.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Haley lays the traps at the base of a tree between the house and the barn. She locks the barn door. Haley walks around the back of the barn towards the heavily wooded area on the property.

Haley walks about twenty feet into the woods. She toe-stubs various logs on the ground. She finds one about six inches around and two feet long caked with ice and snow.

HALEY

Perfect.

She takes the log back to the traps.

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - SAME 8 PM

The letter is out of the envelope and lays on the passenger seat with the Bowie knife. The scotch bottle is between Jack's legs. He rants drunk and heads down a dark, slippery highway.

JACK

Bob Smith, R. R. 1... So, you live in the sticks. Makes things so much easier.

Jack takes a swig out of the bottle. He swerves on the road and veers into the next lane. He near-misses an oncoming car. The DRIVER of the other car blares the horn.

JACK (CONT'D)

Fuckin' asshole. Learn to drive! Should'a run ya off the road!

Jack takes a swig.

JACK (CONT'D)

Now there's a thought... I could just run 'er over...

Jack savors the thought, chuckles and takes another swig.

JACK (CONT'D)

Run 'em both over...

Jack goes to take a swig from his bottle. It's empty. He rolls down his window and throws the bottle out. It smashes against a tree.

JACK (CONT'D)

No matter. I'm gonna teach you bitches a lesson you'll remember into your next lives...

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Haley strips off her winter wear as Nova comes out of the guest room and into the living room.

HALEY

Wow! You were in there a while.

NOVA

Yeah. Katie's got this strange thing going on.

NOVA (cont'd)

She's terrified to go to sleep sometimes 'cause she's certain some bad man is going to come and kill us.

HALEY

Does she know who he is?

Nova is dumbfounded.

NOVA

Of course not, Haley. It's not real... It's just a dream...

Haley's eyes drift off to "another place" momentarily before fixating back on Nova.

NOVA (CONT'D)

How could she know?

HALEY

Well, don't you know things sometimes?

NOVA

You mean like future stuff?

HALEY

Yeah. Like that. Do you ever see the future?

NOVA

Do you?

HALEY

Yes... Yes, I do. More often than I'd like, sometimes. You?

NOVA

Yeah. I try to avoid it.

HALEY

Apparently - I learned - it runs in our family, our <u>real</u> family, for centuries. How long have you been able to -

NOVA

Since I was a child. Look - they terrified me, alright? Horrific nightmares. I went through too many foster parents to count because I used to scream through the night in terror.

Yes, I used to get horrible nightmares, too, when I was young. Mom - my adopted mother - was very patient about the whole thing. I also find it interesting that Katie talks about the bad man. I used to be terrified of the bad man.

NOVA

Is that why you have a dog?

HALEY

A dog?

NOVA

Yes. A dog. I heard one barking when I was in with Katie.

HALEY

Oh, Ralph? ... He's all bark and no bite. He's electronic.

NOVA

Oh, a fake dog.

HALEY

And I have a fake boyfriend - Gerrie is the current one.

NOVA

And Bob Smith on your mailbox?

HALEY

It was here with the original property. I tore down the ruined old house, built this one.

NOVA

So everything around you is an illusion.

HALEY

Correct.

NOVA

Why?

HALEY

For my protection.

NOVA

Why? Is somebody after you?

Haley shrugs.

HALEY

I can't remember how I know, but ever since I was quite young, there's two things I've always known about. One of those is you.

NOVA

Okay. And the other...

HALEY

The other is somebody out there who's been looking for me for a long time. Always there, but not. Somebody I don't know who's hunting me, sort of...

NOVA

Sounds kinda paranoid, to me.

HALEY

Well, maybe I am. And, maybe I'm wrong. But just in case, this is my fortress - the safest place I know.

NOVA

Not for long, not when Jack comes here looking for me. And he's real, Haley. You should be afraid of him... I have to go home.

HALEY

No, Nova. We're not having this conversation again tonight. I told you, I'll take you back in the morning.

NOVA

It'll be too late. You talk about "knowing things", "seeing things". Well I do too. And I know I have to go back tonight, Haley. And Katie too.

HALEY

Tell you what - I'll call and tell Jack that I'm bringing you home in the morning. That the storm's really bad right now and the roads won't be cleared until tomorrow. How about that?

NOVA

Well, I can call. It's my husband.

HALEY

No, I'll call. You'll get all emotional. I'll tell him you're resting, or something.

NOVA

Well, warden, if that's the best you can-

HALEY

(snaps)

I resent that. You talk about me getting real? Take that reality check yourself. You're not a prisoner, Nova. You're a victim. And a brainwashed one, at that.

Haley dials Nova's home number. The phone rings, but nobody picks up. Haley leaves a message.

HALEY

Hi, it's Haley. Call me, please. 555-6263.

Haley hangs up.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Answering machine. I don't think he's home, Nova.

NOVA

No. True. He's at the bar right now. He goes every night from eight til whenever.

HALEY

(sarcastic)

Wow, big surprise there...

INT. STRIP JOINT - SAME 8:30 PM

Jack sits alone at a table in a relatively empty, back-water strip joint. He rants about Nova under his liquor-soaked breath.

JACK

... bitch... Hide from me in Smithsville, ya think? Not likely, stupid whore...

Jack pushes himself up out of his chair with a sense of resolve. He teeters to the bar exit.

EXT. STRIP JOINT PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jack steps outside to an assault of raging wind and blinding snow. He weaves his way to his truck.

The heavy wind throws him off-balance and he slips on ice hidden beneath inches of snow. He barely catches his balance.

Jack makes it to his truck. As he opens the door, a strong gust of wind vacuums the letter and envelope out of the truck. Jack scrambles and catches the letter, but the envelope is sucked out the door into the parking lot.

JACK

Shit!

Jack spins around to go after it and slips again. He watches the envelope tumbleweed away on the wind.

JACK (CONT'D)

Fuck it.

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Jack finally gets his semi-sober self settled into his truck. He pulls out of the parking lot onto the highway.

The Bowie knife on the passenger's seat glints in the light of the rising moon. It catches Jack's eye.

JACK

Not long now, bitch.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Haley and Nova engross in conversation.

HALEY

Yeah. I wrote you about it, oh, must've been about two years ago.

NOVA

No. I never received anything from you.

Well, I have a copy in my office. Hang on... I'll get it and then you can read it. It's just stuff I learned about us as babies and a bit about our mother. I found out where she lived and her phone number, God, about a year before I wrote you.

NOVA

Our real mother?

HALEY

Yeah. I called her one day and asked her about things.

Haley goes to get the letter, talking as she goes.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Yeah, my mom - Liz Anderson - received a letter from my adoption agency saying my - our - biological mother had written them with permission to disclose.

NOVA

Really?

HALEY (O.S.)

Yeah. My mom gave me the information and let me decide about it... Ah, here it is... So, I called our biological mother and she basically told me that she gave us up because our father - an occult freak - had left and she couldn't afford to keep us.

Haley comes back to the couch.

HALEY (CONT'D)

She brought us to the nuns. It's all in here.

Haley hands the letter to Nova. Nova takes it.

Instantly, Nova is assaulted by a gripping, spine-twisting chill. She releases the letter and it flutters to the floor. Nova clutches at her chest. She shakes and gasps for air.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Nova? What's wrong? What's going on?

The spasm calms down. Nova composes herself as her body relaxes.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Nova? Say something. Are you okay?

NOVA

Need to lay down's all. Really sleepy.

HALEY

Okay, I'll help you to your bedroom. It's right beside Katie's, okay?

Haley helps Nova off the couch.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley helps Nova into bed, turns off the light and heads to the kitchen.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

HALEY

Nine o'clock. Gives me three hours. Better get some sleep.

Haley opens the outside door and retrieves the rifle that leans on the stoop.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley leans the rifle near the couch. She gets a thick blanket from a closet, turns off all the lights and curls up on the couch.

Haley sets the alarm on her wristwatch to go off at exactly twelve, then falls into sleep.

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - SAME ALMOST MIDNIGHT

Jack passes a highway exit sign barely visible in the heavy blizzard. It reads SMITHSVILLE. The dash clock reads 11:55 PM in green LED.

Jack slows his speed and takes the exit ramp. He drives slowly down the town's back roads and reads the mailboxes. Eventually he finds one that reads THE ALBERTS FAMILY R. R. 1 SMITHSVILLE.

JACK

Gettin' warmer, Jackie.

Jack continues down the country road. He checks mailbox after mailbox. Finally he passes one that reads BOB SMITH.

JACK (CONT'D)

Gotcha!

Jack slows to a stop, makes a three-point turn and parks his truck a little ways from Haley's driveway. He scoops up the Bowie knife and heads through the snow towards Haley's dark house.

Jack cups his hands around his eyes and peers in each window. He makes his way around the house.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MIDNIGHT+

Haley stirs on the couch. She wakes and staggers to her feet. She goes to the bathroom.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley does not turn on the bathroom light, just trudges to the toilet.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - NOVA'S ROOM - SAME 12:20 AM

Jack is at Nova's guest room window, outside. He raps on the frost-covered glass with his bare hands to get Nova's attention. He waits two seconds and impatiently raps again, louder.

Nova finally stirs from sleep. She notices the noise at her window. She goes to investigate.

NOVA

Oh, my God. Jack!?

Jack's voice is muffled through the glass.

JACK

Open up, Nova. I'm freezing my balls off!

Nova doesn't react, just eyes Jack - a million thoughts going on behind her glazed stare.

JACK (CONT'D)

Com'on, Nova. Let me in!

With restrained anger, Jack hits the glass with his palm. Nova jumps nervously. She unlocks and slides up the window, afraid.

NOVA

Jack, I tried to call you to tell you we'd be home tomorrow and -

JACK

That's okay, Sweetheart. I understand. Go on, now. It's cold out here. Let me in, we'll get Katie and your things and we'll go home.

NOVA

But... but Katie's settled in and it wouldn't be a good idea to disturb her and-

JACK

You're starting to piss me off, Nova. And you know what happens when I get pissed, right?

Nova nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

(clenched)

Nova? Honey? Open the door.

NOVA

But I'm afraid, Jack-

JACK

Afraid? I'll give you something to be afraid of. Just keep this shit up!

NOVA

But-

JACK

Don't worry. I ain't gonna hurt you, or Haley, or even Katie. Just stop fucking around and open the door, Nova. Nova just stands there, considering. Jack oozes controlled anger.

JACK (CONT'D)

Nova, you're doing a great job of pissing me off, making me stand out here. And when I get pissed, somebody gets hurt. You know that. So, I guess if anybody gets hurt, it'll be your fault. Right?

Nova reluctantly nods in agreement and heads out of her room.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Nova unlocks the door and opens it to receive Jack.

Jack grabs Nova by her nightgown and hair and yanks her outside.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nova falls down in the deep snow. Jack kicks her. She howls in pain.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME

Haley hears something odd as she sits on the toilet. She strains to listen. It takes a few seconds for her to realize it is a commotion going on outside. She looks at her wristwatch which reads 12:22.

HALEY

What?

Haley pushes the stem on her wristwatch.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Shit! I set the wrong twelve o'clock!

Haley runs out of the bathroom.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley picks up her rifle beside the couch.

Without warning, Nova is smashed, frontally, against the outside window, her face disfigured. Her eyes widen as she pleads to Haley to help her, then become confused.

Haley sees Jack fling Nova into the snow. He kicks her mercilessly. Nova's body lies limp in the blood-spattered snow.

HALEY

No!!

Haley runs out the front door with the rifle.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Haley sees Jack lift Nova's head by a tight fist of her hair. The Bowie knife glints in the moonlight against Nova's throat. He stops and looks up from his prey for a moment when he hears the rifle being primed.

HALEY

You just don't learn, do you, Jack?

Jack let's go of Nova's hair. He spins the Bowie knife around in his hand impressively. Nova lays unconscious in the deep snow. Haley motions to him with the rifle.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Back it up, Jack.

Jack just defies her. Haley aims the rifle at Jack.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Get the fuck away from my sister, asswipe. I won't tell you again.

Jack backs up a step.

JACK

Okay, okay...

HALEY

More. A few more steps, Jackie boy.

Jack backs up a few more steps. As he does, he stumbles on an oblong log beneath the snow and falls backwards. As he lands, a snapping sound is heard.

Jack trips a bear trap that hides beneath the snow. Its sharp teeth engulf his head and easily cut through his neck. Jack's body twitches.

Haley lays down her rifle and quickly runs to Nova. Haley struggles as she lifts Nova's limp body.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Okay, Nova. Hang on, Honey. You're going to be okay. Just hang in there.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - NOVA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Haley gets Nova into the guest room bed, smothers her in blankets and shuts the window that was left open. She checks Nova's pulse.

HALEY

Weak, but still breathing. Good... Hang in there, Nova. Everything is going to be okay.

Haley leaves.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Haley goes down the hall to Katie's room. Haley peeks in and sees Katie sound asleep and curled up around her soft doll. Haley closes Katie's door.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Haley revoltingly releases the trap, freeing Jack's dead body. She goes into the barn, quickly returning with a small plastic tarpaulin. With mild disgust, she maneuvers Jack's body onto the plastic.

Haley stops suddenly. She listens intently for a noise. Haley pans the edges of the woods, but there is nothing there. She gets up and moves herself to Jack's feet. She grabs his ankles with the plastic and drags him to the barn.

INT. HALEY'S BARN - HALF-HOUR LATER

Haley looks towards the ceiling. She grinds the blade of a butcher knife against a sharpening stone.

A few feet ahead of her, the floor is blood-spattered around a bucket. The odd drip from above meets with the few inches of blood within the bucket.

The source of the drip is identified by a disturbing shadow super-imposed over the implements hanging on the wall behind Haley. A headless human body hangs from the rafters upsidedown, spread-eagle.

HALEY

Okay, girl. Steady... It's just another carcass.

INT. HALEY'S BARN - HALF-HOUR LATER

On the floor at Haley's side is an open wax-board box filled with freezer-paper packages. In a plastic box are clothes, feet, hands, organs and the visible top of Jack's head.

Haley closes the wax-board box and drags it to the barn door. She walks over to one of the work tables, puts on her gloves and picks up a set of keys. She jingles them in her left hand.

Haley squats before the plastic box. She lays her right hand on Jack's hair.

HALEY

Okay, Jackie boy. Where'd you leave your truck?

Haley gets a shiver. She takes up the plastic box and turns off Ralph.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Haley walks about fifty yards into the woods behind the barn and dumps Jack's remains into the deep snow. Haley looks pathetically down at the heap.

HALEY

Nice to see you finally doing something useful with yourself, Jack. Feeding the animals - now that's using your head.

Haley walks back to the barn.

INT./EXT. HALEY'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Haley discards the plastic box. She drags the wax-board box outside near the barn wall. In the barn, she grabs Jack's Bowie knife. She activates Ralph on the way out, locking the barn door behind her.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Haley checks on Katie who is asleep with her soft doll. She backtracks a few steps to Nova's room.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - NOVA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley checks Nova's pulse.

HALEY

Nova? Can you hear me, Honey? (waits)

Nova? Wake up, Nova. I need to know you're okay... Nova!

Nova regains consciousness. Wildly, she flails her arms against an unseen opponent. Haley grapples with Nova to pin her arms down.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Nova! It's Haley. You're safe! ... NOVA, YOU'RE SAFE!

Nova begins to calm.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Nova? It's Haley, Honey. You're safe and you're going to be alright.

NOVA

Katie?

HALEY

Katie is fine. She's asleep in her room.

Nova's eyes begin to show panic again.

NOVA

Jack? Where's Jack?

HALEY

Jack is gone, Nova. And he's never coming back.

NOVA

What?

Just go to sleep and rest. I'll be back shortly.

Nova grabs onto Haley's coat.

NOVA

Haley, please, don't go.

HALEY

Don't worry. We're safe. Just relax and I'll be back shortly. I'm going to bring you some pain-killers and a glass of water, okay?

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Haley places a mostly empty glass of water in the sink. On the counter beside it is the Bowie knife and two sets of keys.

Haley puts on her winter-wear and gloves. She grabs everything on the counter and leaves the house.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Haley heads down the driveway to the highway and turns right. About one mile down the road, Jack's truck is parked and buried in snow.

As Haley is about to pull over, oncoming headlights warn of an approaching vehicle. Haley speeds up.

As the two vehicles pass in opposite directions on the stormy road, Haley vaguely glimpses the other DRIVER, catching and holding her attention.

HALEY

(muttering, shocked)

I... I know you...

Haley is fixed on the other driver, mortified as his head appears to turn too far around on his neck as he looks back at her in passing.

HALEY

What the hell...?

Haley shakes her head as if to clear her mind. She looks forward again to the road ahead of her, screams and raises her arms to protect herself.

A deer strikes the windshield of her truck.

Hooves penetrate the glass and the deer slides into the cab. The legs stab the passenger's area.

Haley swerves too late. The 4x4 lunges into the embankment on the opposite side of the road and is buried in a soft mound of deep snow among the trees.

INT. HALEY'S TRUCK - SAME 3:15 AM

HALEY'S POV: Vision fuzzy, she stares at her gloved hands in her lap. She lifts her head and looks around groggily. She screams, suddenly face to face with the dead deer.

Haley scrambles to open her door to get out, but the door is jammed. She rolls the unbroken window down and climbs out.

EXT. HALEY'S ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Haley walks towards Jack's truck. She digs Jack's keys out of her coat pocket, opens the driver's door and climbs in.

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Haley fires up the engine and speeds to her driveway. Jack's truck is all over the road. She slows a bit and mumbles under her breath.

HALEY

Idiot! You're supposed to weight the back.

Haley approaches and looks down her long driveway at the deep snow.

HALEY (CONT'D)

This piece of shit'll never make it.

Haley pulls Jack's truck up along the roadside and gets out.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - SAME 4 AM

Haley steps inside and notices immediately that something is wrong.

HALEY

Why is it so cold in here...?

Haley notices the front door is wide open. Wet footprints dot the floor. They lead from the door, down the hallway and into Nova's room.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Oh my God! What the hell is going on?

Haley quickly but cautiously follows the wet footprints to Nova's room.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - NOVA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley finds Nova lying face-down in the middle of the room. Haley rushes over to her.

HALEY

Nova? Oh my God, Nova. What were you thinking?

As Haley touches Nova to roll her onto her back, Haley is assaulted by a vision...

SERIES OF SHOTS: From behind is seen the driver of the passing vehicle, the bad man, dressed in black clothing. He moves towards Nova's sleeping form... Nova wakes in surprise and terror... Nova is choked mid-air by the bad man. Her feet kick uselessly at the air below... Katie wanders in "Mommy?"... The bad man drops Nova in a heap on the floor... He walks towards Katie. His hands clench and unclench in violent anticipation... He speaks her name: Jessica...

HALEY

Oh, my God, Katie!

Haley dashes out of Nova's room.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Katie's bedroom door is wide open. Haley cautiously steps up to it. She feels her hand inside the door frame and flicks on the light-switch.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KATIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katie is not in the bed. Haley calls out as she frantically checks the room.

Katie? Katie?! Where are you?
Answer me, Katie, please.

Haley races back to Nova.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - NOVA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley shakes Nova's shoulders in an attempt to rouse her.

HALEY

Nova! Where's Katie? What's happened to Katie? ... NOVA!!

Nova responds weakly.

NOVA

The bad man took her.

HALEY

The what...? Nova, you're not making-

NOVA

The bad man...

(coughs)

Katie was right.

HALEY

What bad man? Who?

NOVA

The man I saw at our mother's

house.

(heaves)

The man I saw... when I touched the letter.

Haley looks confused. Nova coughs heavily and spits up blood. Haley helps her off the floor.

HALEY

I'm going to get you to a hospital, then go get Katie.

Haley wraps a warm blanket around Nova.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - SAME 4:15 AM

Haley supports Nova down the driveway, through the deep snow, to Jack's truck. Haley gets Nova settled into the passenger's side.

HALEY

Okay. I'll be right back. I just need to go to the house for a couple of things.

Nova gropes at Haley.

NOVA

No. Don't...

HALEY

I have to, Nova. I need to lock the house.

NOVA

You can't go there.

HALEY

What do you mean, Nova? Can't go where?

Though very weak, Nova gets antsy.

AVON

Our mother's. You can't go there. You must... find another... way.

HALEY

Why?

NOVA

Because...

(coughs)

I saw you get shot.

HALEY

Shot?

NOVA

I saw him shoot you... In the chest... Saw you fall...

HALEY

Shh... Save your strength. I'll be right back.

Haley goes quickly down the driveway. Nova watches for a few minutes, her body beginning to spasm. As the lights go dark in the house, Nova's spasms stop.

Haley comes down the driveway to Jack's truck.

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Haley hops in the truck and tosses Nova's purse onto the seat between them. She turns to Nova.

HALEY

Okay. Everything's going to be- ... Nova?

Haley shakes Nova by the shoulder. No response. Fear sets in.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Nova? ... No... No, God, please don't let this be happening...

Haley removes a glove, leans in close to Nova and checks her pulse. It is obvious by Haley's reaction that Nova is dead. Haley puts her glove back on. She slams her hands on the steering wheel in anger.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Shit! ... Fuck!!

Haley notices the letter on the floor by Nova's feet. Haley retrieves it and realizes what it is.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Jack, you bastard! You never gave Nova my letter!

Haley notices the address of their real mother. It triggers a flood of images...

HALEY'S POV: Katie struggles against the bad man as he carries her, bundled in a blanket, through the deep snow to the road, to his big black car... The bad man's car pulls up to a house Haley does not recognize... The bad man towers over an older woman gagged and tied in a chair... The bad man is in a small bathroom stitching a nasty, bloody gouge on his upper arm...

HALEY (CONT'D)

(agitated)

Who are you, dammit...?

Haley checks the address again.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Bourne Creek... 'Bout an hour's drive...

Haley tosses the letter back to the floor, jams the key into the ignition and fires up the engine. Haley roars down the highway. She glances at Nova with resolve.

HALEY (CONT'D)

We're going to get Katie.

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - SAME 5 AM

Haley turns onto McKesson Road. She drives slowly and inspects the few houses she drives past.

HALEY

(cynical)

Welcome to Bourne Creek.

She passes one house in particular and her body tenses...

FLASHBACK: THE BAD MAN'S BLACK CAR PULLING UP TO THE HOUSE (HALEY SAW IN HER VISION)

HALEY (CONT'D)

That's it. That's the house...

Haley scopes the area.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Where's his car...?

Haley parks a bit of a way from the house. She kills the engine, but leaves the keys dangle in the ignition. She exits the truck.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Haley looks around the dark road where all is quiet. She approaches the house with caution. She moves to the side and peeks into a large window. Inside, in the dark, she makes out the figure of an OLDER WOMAN, gagged and tied to a chair...

FLASHBACK: THE BAD MAN TOWERING OVER THE GAGGED WOMAN (HALEY SAW IN HER VISION)

HALEY

(under her breath)

My God! How can this be happening?!

Haley looks around, thinking. She continues along the side and peers in the next window - an empty bedroom.

Haley keeps going to the back of the house. The back door is wide open. Haley stares at it momentarily, considering.

HALEY

No way, Jose!

(thinks)

The future is set, until you change it - so let's change it!

Haley backtracks to the window of the empty bedroom and peeks in again. Inside, the bedroom door is closed. Haley tries the window and it opens for her. She climbs in, especially wary.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Quickly, but quietly, Haley moves down a hallway looking, room by room, for Katie.

Haley looks into the bathroom as she passes.

HALEY'S POV: White floor tiles reflect steel blue in the fading moonlight. Blood dots the tiles at the base of the sink.

FLASHBACK: THE BAD MAN IN A SMALL BATHROOM STITCHING HIS UPPER ARM (HALEY SAW IN HER VISION)

HALEY'S POV: The porcelain of the sink is streaked with drying blood. Stuck to the soap in the soap dish is a small bloodied pair of scissors.

Haley moves towards the living room and spies it before she enters.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The gagged older woman sees Haley and whimpers. Haley approaches her and begins removing her gag.

Shh...

A man's VOICE penetrates the darkness.

VOICE (O.S.)

Don't do that, Rachel.

Haley freezes, then slowly turns to face the direction of the voice. The area is very dark.

A glint of metal reveals the large figure of the BAD MAN, 50, camouflaged in pre-dawn shadows. He separates himself from the corner. He holds a gun aimed at Haley.

HALEY

My name's not Rachel.

BAD MAN

Actually, it is. And I should know - I named you.

Haley is suddenly confused, thinks quickly and shakes her head.

HALEY

You're... you're my... father?

(thinks)

This is a trick...

Haley regains her focus.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Where's Katie?

BAD MAN

That doesn't matter. All that matters is now.

Haley notices that blood from his upper arm seeps through the fabric of his shirt.

HALEY

Why? Why are you doing this to us? What did any of us ever do to you? You're the one who left!

The Bad Man laughs heartily.

BAD MAN

Is that what she told you?

The Bad Man implicates the older woman.

BAD MAN (CONT'D)

She's the one who left with you.

Haley spins around and addresses the older woman.

HALEY

Why would you do that?

The older woman shakes her head in desperate denial.

BAD MAN

To protect you.

HALEY

(to Bad Man)

From you. Why would you possibly want to harm two innocent babies?

BAD MAN

Three babies, and hardly innocent. I mean...

(reminisces)

I felt so blessed - three perfect, beautiful little girls. I named you all after Bible characters - Rachel the loved, Sarah the princess and Jessie the graced.

HALEY

A third sister? Jessie... As in Jessica?

FLASHBACK: JESSICA IN THE WOODS; MAN CALLING KATIE BY THE NAME JESSICA

BAD MAN

You were all so tiny - fit all of you in my arms... so innocent. But you weren't innocent. One of you would kill me - I saw it. I saw it and I decided right then none of you would make it through the night. But your mother came in right then and took you and Sarah to feed.

HALEY

And you killed Jessica and... buried her in the woods.

BAD MAN

Very good... that's right. And when I got back home, your mother was gone and so were you. It took me a long time to find your mother again, but when I did, it was easy to convince her to write the agency.

Haley seethes.

HALEY

I knew it... I could sense you always, this evil thing on the edge of my peripheral senses.

BAD MAN

"Evil thing"? We're not so different.

HALEY

You're a monster, a murderer.

BAD MAN

Ah, the pot calling the kettle black... I <u>saw</u> what you did to Jack. Not the way most people see things, but, you know what I mean.

Haley is defiant.

HALEY

What I did was an act of self-preservation.

BAD MAN

Touche!

A GUNSHOT cuts through the dark living room. It hits Haley in the chest - just as Nova had predicted. Haley collapses to the floor. Her legs kick for a few moments then go still.

The Bad Man cuts across the living room and towers over the gagged older woman. Tears stream down her face. Her eyes plead in terror. She shakes her head "No" as garbled sounds escape her throat.

BAD MAN

No time for long good-byes, Darlin'...

He steps back from the older woman and aims the gun.

Haley's voice is heard.

HALEY (O.S.)

Don't do that, Karl.

The Bad Man turns slightly. He keeps the gun aimed at the older woman.

MAN

My name's not Karl.

HALEY

That doesn't matter. All that matters is now.

The Bad Man turns to take a new shot at Haley. Haley throws Jack's Bowie knife. It plunges deep into the center of his chest.

The Bad Man turns from the blow, back towards the older woman. The gun fires several shots. Haley lunges forward to stop it, but isn't quick enough. The Bad Man falls to the floor. He chortles.

BAD MAN

Some things... can't be... Changed.

HALEY

You Bastard! What did you do with Katie? ... Where's Katie?

He smiles sinfully and breathes out one last sentiment.

BAD MAN

Jessica...

Haley checks him for a pulse. Nothing. She moves to the older woman and checks for a pulse. Nothing.

HALEY

Shit!

Haley looks around and takes the hallway to the open back door.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Haley cuts through the back of the property and makes her way to a street. She can hear sirens approach the house. She walks quickly to a small shopping mall and hails a cab.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

A CABBY makes conversation with Haley.

CABBY

Where to?

HALEY

Oh, just the next town over - Cambridge.

CABBY

Do you want me to take Fourteenth or Second Highway?

HALEY

Second's good.

The cabby drives and Haley closes her eyes... The cabby's voice cuts into her thoughts.

CABBY

Ma'am? Ma'am!? Where should I be dropping you?

HALEY

Uh... Cambridge Automotive.

CABBY

On Dawson?

HALEY

Yep.

The cab cuts across a quiet major intersection and pulls up to an automotive store. Haley gets money out of her pocket to pay the Cabby.

CABBY

Looks closed still, Ma'am. I can wait for a few minutes, if you want. Pretty stormy still.

HALEY

That's very kind of you, but, no. I'll be okay. They told me they'd be open soon.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE AUTOMOTIVE PARKING LOT - SAME 5:30 AM

Haley waits until the cab is out of sight, then walks to the main intersection. She continues to the highway where she hitches a ride on a Mack Truck.

EXT. HALEY'S PROPERTY - SAME 6:15 AM

The Mac truck idles in front of Haley's house as the passenger door swings open. Haley climbs down. When the truck has gone, Haley runs down the driveway.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Haley quickly strips off her coat. Underneath is the bulletproof vest. A deformed bullet is lodged in its center.

Haley removes the vest and drops it at the skirt of the winged-back chair where it lies hidden. She races down the hallway.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KATIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley kneels on the floor beside Katie's bed. She lays her upper body across the crumpled, empty sheets.

HALEY

Tell me Katie... Tell me where you are... Help me find you...

HALEY'S POV - A SERIES OF SHOTS: The Bad Man carries Katie bundled in a thick blanket out of Haley's house and to the road... Katie fights as the Bad Man roughly removes her from his car... Katie runs through the woods and tries to escape... The Bad Man pins Katie up against a tree... The Bad Man pauses, Katie screams...

HALEY (CONT'D)

The woods! Of course! He took her to the woods!!

EXT. SNOWY WILDERNESS - SAME 6:30 AM

Follow tracks in deep, virgin snow. Haley pants heavily. In bulky hooded parka, gloves and tall boots, she makes her way through the fresh-fallen snow. In her right hand is a rifle.

Haley calls into the woods as she wades as fast as she can.

Katie! Katie, it's me, Aunt Haley. Answer me, Honey... Katie!

Haley listens for an answer. Silence. She mutters to herself.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Com'on, Sweetie, give me a sign. Give me a-

Haley freezes in her tracks. She stares at pink snow a few feet in front of her. A few feet further lies Katie's soft doll. Haley picks it up with a look of despair.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Oh my, God, no.

Haley increases her panic. She calls more loudly and races around. She looks for more clues.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Katie!... Katie, answer me...

Haley sees something near the bough-line of a large evergreen tree and dashes over. The brown tip of a blanket sticks out of the snow.

Haley digs at the snow like a dog. She follows the blanket under the tree. A dense collection of branches are clumped there.

Haley rips through the tangle and exposes its center. Katie is curled around the trunk of the tree. She shivers and whimpers.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Oh my, God, Katie, Honey.

Haley drags Katie out with the blanket into the snow. She removes her parka and wraps it around Katie.

Haley slings her rifle across her back. She lifts Katie into her arms and moves as fast as she can through the deep snow back towards the house.

Haley trips and falls in the snow. She lands on Katie.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Jeez! What else could go wrong?

Behind her not far, Haley hears a loud GROWL.

Cautiously, Haley gets to her feet. She gathers up Katie again and moves towards the house. As she crosses near the house, in front of the picture-window, Haley trips again - on the same log Jack did earlier.

Katie is pitched into the air and lands a few feet away. Haley lands face-first in the snow. Haley comes up and gasps for air. She flips over onto her back.

A few feet away, a large upright bear snarls at Haley, ready to pounce down on her.

Haley grabs for her rifle, but can't dislodge it from under her own weight. The bear takes a final step closer, ready to strike.

HALEY (CONT'D)

No - not this, not now...

Haley shuffles herself backwards to where Katie lies in a heap. As the bear attacks, a SNAPPING sound is heard and the bear howls.

The bear's foot is caught in the second trap Haley laid last night.

The bear falls down exactly where Jack had fallen earlier. Haley scrambles to her feet, unslings her rifle and shoots the bear dead. Haley stares at the trap clenching the bear's foot.

HALEY

"Better to be safe than sorry"...

After a few moments, reality kicks in and Haley remembers she must attend to Katie. Haley quickly carries Katie to the house.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Haley has Katie on the couch and attempts to revive her. Katie's lips are blue, her pallor colorless. Haley calls her name as she checks for a pulse in different areas of Katie's cold body.

HALEY

Weak, but there... Com'on Katie, open your eyes...

Vigorously, Haley rubs Katie's little bundled body.

You're safe now... Just open your eyes, Honey...

Katie's eyes flutter and slowly open, disoriented.

KATIE

Aunt Haley?

HALEY

It's okay, Katie. Everything is okay. You're safe now... We're safe now.

Haley climbs onto the couch with Katie and holds her close. They both nod off to sleep together.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - SAME 2 PM

The property has been secured with yellow DO NOT CROSS tape when Detectives STEINBECK, 35, and PETRIE, 45, arrive on the scene. An OFFICER holds a clipboard and approaches them.

PETRIE

What we got?

OFFICER

Well, outside we got a dead woman in a truck, registered to one... (checks clipboard)

Jack Carter - wife beater, boozer. Keys are still in the ignition. We figure the woman is his wife Nova. Long history of spousal abuse. She was strangled. Inside - it's a mess. Older woman and a man, dead. A letter we found in the truck indicates they were all related.

STEINBECK

Any witnesses?

OFFICER

Nobody saw a thing. But, neighbors reported hearing one shot, then a few moments later a series of shots.

The trio cross the yellow tape and go into the house.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Steinbeck, Petrie and the Officer stand outside the living room. Various officers gather evidence about the scene of the crime.

OFFICER

It looks like Carter tied up the old woman. She's tied to the chair with nylon twine, same kind we found at Carter's residence. Looks like the big guy interrupted with a gun. Carter threw his knife-

STEINBECK

Prints?

OFFICER

Yeah, Carter's. On the knife... He hit the big guy square in the chest. In reflex, the big guy fires his weapon on the way to the floor, kills the old woman.

Steinbeck and Petrie look into the living room and view the evidence as it lays. Chalk body outlines replace corpses.

PETRIE

Anything else?

OFFICER

Blood in the bathroom from the big guy. Maybe Carter cut him first, not sure. It's all at the lab...

STEINBECK

Good. And?

OFFICER

And, the back door was wide open, prints leading out the back yard. More around the side of the house. Forensics checked the depth in the snow of the prints and they're consistent with Carter's body weight, according to his driver's record... Guy must've been pretty mad - drove two hours to get here.

The officer hands the clipboard over to Steinbeck.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Oh, well, Detective Steinbeck. All yours now.

STEINBECK

What did we find at the home address?

OFFICER

Yeah. That. It's a bloody mess there too. There's a kid, about five years old. We think she's with her Aunt, one Haley Anderson. Her phone number's in the data sheets. We got it off the answering machine.

PETRIE

But, no sign of Carter?

OFFICER

Nope. It's like he just vanished out the back of the property.

PETRIE

(to Steinbeck)

Think he's going after the kid?

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME 3 PM

Haley wakes from the couch. Voices trail in from the kitchen. She listens for a few moments, half-awake. Katie's voice floats through the living room.

KATIE (O.S.)

Do you want the blue one...?

Haley hears Earl next.

EARL (O.S.)

No. Green, I think.

KATIE (O.S.)

Right here. Green...

Haley gets up and goes to the kitchen.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Earl and Katie color together in Katie's coloring book. Earl stands up from the table in respect as Haley enters the room.

Katie jumps up from the table, fetches a large box from the kitchen counter and dashes it over for Haley to see.

HALEY

Hey, Earl.

EARL

(winks)

Hey, Bob.

Katie laughs, then sneezes.

KATIE

See what Earl brought me? It's twelve little teddy bears! In little sweaters. All in their own windows!

Haley takes the box of mini teddy bears.

HALEY

Oh, neat! Those are really cute, Honey. Did you say thank-you?

EARL

Yes'um, she did. I told Martha 'bout the little one when I got home yesterday, how she got all jazzed up 'bout the bears. Well, you know Martha... Had to run out and get the little one something.

Haley puts the box back on the counter. Katie jogs to the table and holds up her coloring book.

KATIE

Look, Aunt Haley. We was coloring.

EARL

(to Haley)

You was sleeping, Bob, so I thought I'd sit with the little one for a spell, you know, to be safe. Hope that was alright.

Haley walks over and hugs Katie.

HALEY

(to Earl)

Yeah, fine. Thanks, Earl.

(to Katie)

How are you feeling, Missy?

KATIE

Okay.

EARL

(to Haley)

Think she's gettin' a bit of a cold, sniffles and such. Well, you're up now, so I'll go.

Earl motions to Haley with his head and eyes that he wants to talk to her out of Katie's earshot. Haley catches on.

HALEY

Well, before you go, Earl, I wanted to ask you about mailing something out. It's in my office.

Earl follows Haley out of the kitchen.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

EARL

Just wanted to tell you I'm real sorry to hear 'bout your sister and her husband being in that accident. And, well, having a little one 'round the house can be a handful if you're not used to it. And well, Martha and I will help any ways we can. You know that, Bob, do you?

Haley is stupefied momentarily.

EARL (CONT'D)

Katie told me all about it when we was coloring. I think it's really good of you, Bob, to take in your sister's kid. She's a good little girl. Can't see her being much trouble.

HALEY

Thanks, Earl. She's going to be just fine. It'll take some adjusting for both of us, but I have a strong feeling we're going to be okay.

EARL

Yeah, especially since you got that bear.

Haley quickly whips around to look out the picture window. The bear is gone.

EARL (CONT'D)

Lots of tracks. Musta been a scuffle for you. Heard yer rifle go off early this morning and I thought something might be wrong. Found the bear fresh-killed, but not gutted. I slit him and called old Jeremiah down the road to help me with it. Oh, and I put your rifle away in the porch.

HALEY

You have the bear?

EARL

Well, Jeremiah's got it. He was so obliged to you for takin' care of it, he volunteered to skin and butcher it.

HALEY

Wow... That's really great of you to do all this. Thanks, Earl, really.

EARL

My pleasure, Bob. You's always doin' nice things for the Missus and me.

HALEY

Oh, that reminds me... There's a box of meat out by the barn for you... Actually for your dogs.

Haley points through the window towards the barn and notices her truck - covered in snow, windshield intact - sits in her driveway.

EARL

I saw that out there earlier. I'll fetch it now. What kind of meat?

HALEY

Uh... Wild game... Not fit for human consumption, but the dogs will love it, I'm sure... Earl? How'd my truck get here? And fixed?

EARL

Oh, yeah. I noticed it in the bush down the road early this morning when I came out here after I heard the gunshots. The deer wasn't no good no more, but after I spoke to Jeremiah 'bout yer bear, I called Bill's Towing to take care of yer truck. Seems he did.

Haley is amazed.

HALEY

Yeah, really. Wow, that's great, Earl. Thanks. Thanks so much.

Haley and Earl make their way back to the kitchen.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Earl says good-bye to Katie on his way out. Katie looks anxiously up at him as he goes out the door and heads down the first stair. As he turns to close the door behind him, he addresses Katie's worried look.

EARL

Don't worry, Sweetie. I'll be careful going down the stairs.

Earl exits. Haley makes a coffee and sits at the table with Katie who colors. Haley picks up a crayon and continues where Earl left off.

HALEY

So, you're feeling better?

KATIE

Uh-huh.

HALEY

You're sure?

KATIE

Yes, okay... I like Earl. He's a nice man.

HALEY

Yes. Yes he is. He's been a friend of mine for many years, ever since I first came to this house.

(thinks)

HALEY(cont'd)

Uh, Katie? What exactly did you say to Earl about your mom and dad?

KATIE

They was killed in a accident, so I get to live with you now.

Haley nods to herself. Both remain silent. They color.

HALEY

And how do you feel about that? Living here, with me?

Katie thinks it over.

KATIE

Do I have to go to school?

Haley laughs.

HALEY

Of course you do!

KATIE

Do I get to take a school bus? That would be cool!

HALEY

Yes, I think you'd have to take the bus to school.

Katie stops coloring, gets up and walks around to sit on Haley's lap. She wraps her little arms around Haley's neck and hugs tightly. Haley, caught a little off-guard, squeezes Katie lovingly in return.

After a few seconds, Katie pulls back and looks Haley in the eyes.

KATIE

Aunt Haley?

HALEY

Hmm?

KATIE

Why did daddy always hurt mommy?

Haley sighs heavily.

HALEY

Wow, Kiddo, that's a tough question.

HALEY(cont'd)

I don't know for sure what his reasons were, but I guess your daddy was just a really angry person and the only person always there he could take it out on, was your mommy.

KATIE

Oh.

HALEY

Katie, Honey. What your daddy did was wrong. And your mommy didn't deserve it.

KATIE

Like the little girl. In the box.

Haley is confused.

HALEY

What little girl, Katie?

Katie points to the kitchen counter where the parcel Earl brought yesterday still waits to be opened. Haley is about to get up to get it, but Katie skips over to the counter and brings the parcel back to Haley at the table.

Haley doesn't open it. Instead she looks at Katie, curious.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Katie? What do you know about this parcel?

Katie plays with her fingers on the table top as she answers nonchalantly.

KATIE

Her mommy doesn't know where she is, so she wants you to help find her. She's only eight.

Haley tears the parcel open and removes a letter and a small stuffed dog - a Dalmatian. She unfolds the letter and a picture falls out showing a little, freckle-faced eight-year-old girl.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Amanda.

(takes Dalmatian)

"Lucky"...

(pause)

They can't find her 'cause she's hiding.

HALEY

Hiding where?

KATIE

In the white powder.

Katie replaces "Lucky" the Dalmatian to the parcel, sits down and continues coloring.

Haley reads the letter, gets a horrible shiver and puts it all back in the parcel. She puts it aside and continues to color with Katie.

HALEY

Katie, do the things you see - the stuff nobody else can see, you know the stuff I mean...

KATIE

The stuff I see in my head.

HALEY

Right. Does it scare you?

KATIE

... Not when it's about someone else. But I was ascared of the bad man, and he tried to hurt me and I was scared of that. And I tried to help mommy, but...

HALEY

I know, Honey. I saw it.

Katie looks up at Haley with inquisitive eyes.

HALEY (CONT'D)

Yes. I see things too. Lots of things. And know things, like, he's never coming back, Katie, you know that. Right?

KATIE

Yeah... the bear got him, and I ran and hid under the tree, just like it said in your book, Aunt Haley.

Katie's face changes, lights up with excitement.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Gerrie's coming, Aunt Haley.

Haley is thrown by Katie's statement. She laughs nervously.

HALEY

No, Honey, there is no "Gerrie"-

KATIE

He's ascared for you.

INT. DETECTIVE'S VEHICLE - SAME 5 PM

Petrie drives down a country highway, six-foot snowbanks flank each side. Heavy snowflakes melt on the windshield here and there. Steinbeck sits beside him. He eats a Twinkie and looks at a thick file in his lap.

STEINBECK

She finds missing children. Ironic, isn't it?

PETRIE

I don't understand why we're here. You think Carter is fool enough to come out here?

STEINBECK

It's a family thing and he's definitely a die-hard type. Serious ego.

PETRIE

Right. The neighbor said he was violent and ruled his house with an iron fist.

STEINBECK

Hmmph, literally... Okay, let's start with the old woman, Edwina Notredame. She gives two babies up, practically from birth, to the nuns. According to the Church's record, Edwina pleaded with the nuns to change the girls' names.

PETRIE

So, she was afraid of something. Sarah becomes Nova. Rachel becomes Haley, who we're going to see.

STEINBECK

Right. The big guy-

PETRIE

Cezar Notredame. Caesar! Who gives a kid a name like Caesar?!

STEINBECK

Apparently, it's an old name. "Ceasar's" jail buddies said he used to brag about being psychic, able to tell the future. Says he claimed he was a descendant of Nostradamus, the prophet.

PETRIE

Phht! A spook!

Steinbeck shoots a "shut up" look at Petrie and continues.

STEINBECK

He spent ten years in jail for attempted kidnapping. Tried to abduct a three-year-old named Jessica Flemming.

PETRIE

Slime!

STEINBECK

Well, the father intervened. Pounded the crap out of Notredame... He got out almost four years ago.

PETRIE

Son-of-a-bitch got what he deserved, then.

STEINBECK

Looks like Edwina took him back when he got out of prison.

PETRIE

What about Anderson?

STEINBECK

Adopted by a really nice family. Sarah, however, uh, Nova, went through the foster system. Says she was moved a lot because she had seizures and night terrors.

PETRIE

Poor kid... The kid, uh, Katie? Think she knows anything.

STEINBECK

She's five years old. She has no idea her mom is dead.

STEINBECK (cont'd)

Let's see what Anderson has to say and we'll take it from there. Let's not involve Katie if we don't have to.

PETRIE

I think we're here.

Petrie slows down and checks the trees for signs.

STEINBECK

Fire Route number 72277...

PETRIE

Just ahead.

The detectives pause in front of Haley's plowed driveway. They notice the mailbox name does not read Haley Anderson.

STEINBECK

It's the correct fire route number.

Petrie turns left into Haley's driveway.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The detectives pull up and park behind Haley's 4x4, lightly covered with snow. Steinbeck and Petrie step out and scope the property before going up to the front door and knocking. After a few moments, Haley opens it to them. They produce their badges.

STEINBECK

Miss Anderson?

HALEY

Yes?

STEINBECK

I'm Gerrie Steinbeck and this is my partner Dale Petrie. We have some sad news to discuss with you. Might we come in?

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

HALEY

Uh, yes, sure. You said Gerrie?

STEINBECK

Yes, Steinbeck... And Petrie.

Katie bolts out from the kitchen. Her feet squeal to a halt.

KATIE

Hi. I'm Katie and I'm five years old.

PETRIE

Hello Katie, I'm Detective Petrie.

KATIE

(giggles)

That's a funny name... pee tree...

Katie dashes off back to the kitchen giggling.

HALEY

Spirited little thing, isn't she?

STEINBECK

She seems comfortable. How long has she been visiting with you?

Haley motions the detectives into the living room.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HALEY

Uh, just a couple of days. I had to take my sister to the hospital and ended up bringing Katie up here with me.

STEINBECK

Because your sister had left the hospital before you could get her.

HALEY

Yes, that's right. I tried looking for her, but she was gone. I assume she went home... You're here to tell me Jack put her in the hospital again, aren't you?

PETRIE

Put 'er in the morgue, actually.

HALEY

What?

Steinbeck shoots a nasty glance towards Petrie, who backs off.

STEINBECK

Yes, we do believe your sister somehow got herself home. And, sometime between then and 5 this morning, he killed her... I'm sorry to tell you this, Miss Anderson, but we need to alert you that we suspect Jack Carter is trying to find you.

HALEY

To kill me?

STEINBECK

Yes, and probably Katie too.

HALEY

It's not possible. He has no idea where I live.

Steinbeck withdraws Haley's letter from his file folder. He hands it to Haley.

STEINBECK

Do you recognize this, Miss Anderson?

Haley appears surprised.

HALEY

Yes, this is a letter I wrote to Nova a couple of years ago- How did you get this?

STEINBECK

We found it in Carter's truck. The problem is, we can't find the envelope or Carter.

HALEY

That's why you think he's on his way up here. You think he's got my address from the envelope. Well, there you go - I don't put a return address on my mail.

Haley gives Steinbeck back the letter. He replaces it to his folder.

PETRIE

Good thing.

HALEY

Yeah. But, I mean, I only met my sister two years ago. We live a few hours away from each other, and we only met twice.

STEINBECK

How did you find her?

HALEY

Through the adoption agency. They helped me after my biological mother granted permission to disclose the details of our separation. That's the letter I wrote Nova about it.

PETRIE

Was there a special reason for your visit with your sister?

HALEY

No. Just a visit. Not much of a visit though... Wait a minute. You're not going to take Katie, are you?

PETRIE

No. Not yet, anyway. After our investigation is complete, we'll submit a recommendation to the court and they'll decide what happens to her -

STEINBECK

And we'll be certain to recommend that she live with her Aunt.

Steinbeck smiles warmly at Haley.

STEINBECK

Seems to me anybody who finds missing children for a living is a wise choice of guardian for a little girl like Katie...

(sheepishly)

I noticed your office when I first came in.

Steinbeck gets up to leave and Petrie follows.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

STEINBECK

Nice property you have here, Miss Anderson. A bit remote though. I can assign a patrol car to watch for you -

HALEY

No need. This is bear country.

PETRIE

You think a bear's going to stop him?

HALEY

No. But the bear traps will. Need I say more?

Steinbeck laughs and the detectives exit to the front porch.

EXT. HALEY'S HOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Steinbeck hands Haley a business card.

STEINBECK

There's a number there where you can reach me - for any reason.

Steinbeck smiles warmly at Haley.

STEINBECK (CONT'D)

Someone will be in contact with you in a few days to make the arrangements.

HALEY

Thanks, Detective Steinbeck.

STEINBECK

Gerrie. Call me Gerrie

HALEY

Uh, Detective Petrie?

PETRIE

Yes?

HALEY

Remember to stay on the path.

Haley winks at him in jest. Petrie sends a wild look her way and Steinbeck laughs.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Haley watches, worried, through a window as the detectives drive away.

KATIE

Don't worry, Aunt Haley. Everything is going to be okay... (giggles)

He <u>likes</u> you, Aunt Haley.

Haley dashes over and lifts Katie off the chair. Haley tickles her. Katie wriggles and giggles.

HALEY

You, Missy, know too much sometimes. So, what d'ya think, is he a good man?

KATIE

Yep.

HALEY

Think I should call him sometime to have dinner with us?

KATIE

Yep.

HALEY

Speaking of dinner, I'm going to make some macaroni for us and then you're getting in the tub. And then it's bedtime.

KATIE

But, I'm not tired.

Haley tickles Katie.

HALEY

No, but I am!

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME 11 PM

Haley relaxes in her chair. The news is on the TV.

ANCHOR

Seems most of us weathered the storm well... In other news, the body of an eight-year-old girl was recovered earlier today from an abandoned cement factory in Krestington, Illinois. A group of teenagers discovered the body in a crate of dry cement powder. Police are still investigating the circumstances around her death... And in Bourne Creek today, a family murder -

Haley turns the TV off via remote control and gets up.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Haley approaches Katie's room, opens the door and peeks in. Katie sleeps soundly, the mini teddy bears all over the bed around her.

HALEY

(whispers)

Life with you, little girl, is going to be very interesting... Jeez, were Nova and I like this when we were Katie's age? Hmmph.

Haley closes the door. She turns off the lights in the house and goes to her bedroom.

INT. HALEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haley puts on a nightie and climbs into bed. She turns off the bedside lamp. A few minutes later, she turns the lamp on again and uses the phone beside it.

HALEY

Hey, Mom, Dad, it's Haley... I know you snow birds won't get this message for a while yet, but I just wanted you to know that I love you both so very much. Give me a call when you get this message. Bye.

Haley turns out the lamp and lies down to fall asleep. Moonlight shines brightly through the window.

INT. DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT (11:05 PM), 1980

Garbled screams are heard coming from an adjacent room. A WOMAN'S VOICE, frustrated, cuts through the darkness.

WOMAN

Not again!

A MAN'S VOICE interjects.

MAN

Well, go shut 'er up! And tomorrow, you phone that children's aid and get a different foster kid. Tell 'em this one's fucked up!

The woman, 30, reluctantly gets out of bed and puts on a flower-power patterned housecoat. The screaming in the next room continues. The woman leaves the bedroom.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The woman saunters down a hall and stops at a door. She turns the knob to enter. The screams coming from the opened room are deafening.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (11:06 PM), 1980

A WOMAN, 30, in a velvety housecoat, enters a child's bedroom and closes the door behind her. Whimpers hang in the darkness. The woman approaches the bed. A small figure hides beneath a pile of messed-up blankets.

WOMAN

Shh... It's okay. Mom's here. Everything's okay, Honey.

A FEMALE CHILD'S shaky voice penetrates the layers of blankets.

CHILD

I dreamed a bad man was trying to get me.

WOMAN

You were dreaming, Sweetie. It's not real... It's just a bad dream. Everything's fine now.

CHILD

But-

WOMAN

Did he get you?

CHILD

No, 'cause I killed him.

WOMAN

There. See? You're safe.

Silence. The child pulls the blankets down slightly. She's brunette and five years old.

CHILD

Mom?

WOMAN

What, Dear?

CHILD

Do I have a sister?

WOMAN

(taken aback)

What makes you ask that?

CHILD

In my dream I have a sister.

WOMAN

Oh... Well, shh... We'll talk about all that in the morning. Right now, though, you need to go back to sleep. It was all just a dream, Haley...

FADE OUT

THE END