History Lesson
FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

SUPER - NEAR ANDOVER MASSACHUSETTS

A Ford pickup that's seen better days. It comes to a stop on an overgrown trail. The driver, JESSE(35) opens his door.

The inside light still works, and it illuminates his companions, RICH(35) and TOBY(24). All three wear black gear.

TOBY
How far we gotta walk again?

He drinks nervously from a grimy bottle, scans the ground.

TOBY
Ain't no swamp here is there? Can't stand frogs. I hate the fuckin' things.

JESSE
It's a forest. Dry as a bone. No damn frogs. And take it easy on that stuff. We need clear heads tonight.

RICH
Too late for Toby, man.

He opens his door, gets out. There's a silence in the forest. It's an overcast night - the dark hangs like a curtain.

RICH
It's so fuckin' quiet.

Jesse gets out, leans into the back of the rig. Toby slides across and out the same door.

Jesse rummages through a large duffle bag, takes out three balaclavas. He flings one across to Rich, one towards Toby.

JESSE
Put these on when we get near the house.

TOBY
Who lives there again?

JESSE
You stupid fuck. I told you to stay off the booze this afternoon.
Toby
I did. Until six.

Rich spits into the foliage as he makes his way around the Ford. He eyes Toby with disdain.

Rich
But I bet you were on it all morn. Jesus...

Jesse takes out a torch with cardboard over the end. He turns one on and a pinprick of light emerges through a hole.

Jesse
Take your torches when we get in. The duffel is for loot. If Rich's cousin's information is right...

Rich
Oh, my intel is good, don't worry.

Toby
'Intel'? What is this, 'Call Of Duty'?

He starts to laugh, a high pitched braying sound.

Jesse
Shut the fuck up, will ya?

Rich
Yeah, you imbecile. Why the fuck is he here, Jess? He's only gonna get in the way.

Jesse
Because he's my older sister's boy. She likes me to watch over him.

(beat)
And if this house is full of the stuff your cousin says it is...well, we're gonna need him to help carry it.

Rich
My cousin ain't talking out of his ass on this one. Single mom, a school teacher. Moved in a month back. Ten year old son.

Toby
So what's so special about her? Why does your dipshit kin think she's a rich bitch?

He giggles at his own joke. Until Rich slaps his head.
TOBY
Hey! The fuck...?

RICH
Don't you ever diss Miles again! He's a fuckin' war hero. You ain't worthy to lick his boots.

TOBY
His boot you mean. Left his other leg in I-raq. Fat lotta good being a hero did for him.

Rich looks set to jump him but sees Toby isn't laughing.

TOBY
I'm sorry bro. Been a long day, is all.

RICH
Yeah, well, just keep quiet. Let's get going instead of standing here jawing.

He takes a torch from the duffel bag and walks off through the trees. Toby watches him go then tips the bottle back. His eyes widen as Jesse takes a gun from the bag and checks it.

JESSE
We ain't shoplifting anymore, Toby. This is the real thing. Hard times for all of us.

He takes the bottle from Toby, flings it into the scrub.

JESSE
Sober up before we get there.

He stows the gun in his waistband, grabs the duffel. He heads off after Rich. Toby follows, a worried look on his face.

Overhead the clouds part to reveal a full moon.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house sits on about five acres. It's a rambling two storey, at least eighty years old. A small barn off to one side of the dirt track leading to the main road.

Rich crouches behind an empty water trough. The other two join him. There's no visible lights on in the house.

RICH
Miles said there ain't no dogs.
He turns to Toby before he can ask anything.

RICH
My cousin did a few days work...with a removalist. Friend of the family, helping Miles earn some cash.

He breaks off to spit again.

RICH
Anyway, he reckoned this furniture and stuff was fuckin' A class, some of it antiques. Plus they dropped off a new fridge, plasma T.V, computer gear.

JESSE
Maybe she won the lottery. It happens.

RICH
Yeah, could be. Or an inheritance maybe. But the interesting thing is these steel sorta strongboxes. Four or five of them, all padlocked. Miles reckons they were full of jewellery. Something precious anyway...

They all contemplate that. Then Rich sniggers softly.

JESSE
What's so funny?

RICH
This lady? Maybe more to her than meets the eye. Talk has it that she's into the witchcraft thing.

He grins humorlessly. And a shiver ripples through his body.

TOBY
What the fuck crazy talk is that?

RICH
You know old Jimmy? Sits near the pool table at Casey's?

Jesse and Toby both nod.

RICH
Said she's descended from the witches they killed in Salem Town way back when. Said his grandson has the next farm over...

He waves a hand in that general direction.
RICH
...and that he's seen strange
lights from this house and heard
noises.

A silence, punctured by the distant HOWL of a dog. Jesse
clears his throat, pulls the balaclava on.

JESSE
Old Jimmy Bush is eighty fuckin'
years old. He wouldn't know what
day it was.

(beat)
I'm banking on Miles to be
telling it how it is. That's what
we're here for.

Rich and Toby put their balaclavas on.

JESSE
Ready?

The other two nod.

JESSE
Ok, remember the plan. Rich picks
the lock. The bedrooms are
upstairs. Me and Rich will wake
the woman up, bring her down.
We'll leave the boy unless we
need him to force her to hand
over the keys to those boxes.

He hands the duffel to Toby.

JESSE
Meanwhile, Toby can search the
rooms downstairs for anything
small we can take.

RICH
What if she doesn't do as we say?
Even with threats? How far do
we...you know...

JESSE
She's a mother. She won't let
anything happen to the boy. And
no using our names. Want this to
be a clean heist. No ties.

The others nod. They head off across the damp grass.
INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door eases open. Rich peers in. A long carpeted hallway stretches the length of the house. Doors lead off on either side. At the far end is the kitchen.

RICH
Ok.

He eases himself in. Jesse and Toby squeeze through the gap. Rich quietly closes the door. Jesse flicks his torch on. Rich looks down at the carpet, feels the material.

RICH
That's real damn expensive.
Probably imported from Turkey.

They all creep forward.

JESSE
Makes for less noise too.

TOBY
I'm liking this place more and more.

He comes to a door on his right, opens it carefully, shines the torch in. A sitting room, with furniture and book cases.

TOBY
I'll start in here. Lotta ornament type things.

He carries the duffel in, closes the door. Jess and Rich move along. An opening to the left - stairs leading up.

JESSE
Right. I head up. You go to the kitchen, see if there's another stairwell down.

RICH
Got it.

JESSE
I'll bring her down to the kitchen. If she tries to run or something, head her off.

Rich nods, continues on. Jesse puts a foot on the stairs. Suddenly there's a NOISE in the kitchen. A light comes on.

Rich freezes, looks back. Jesse eases off the stairs, gestures for Rich to get going. He follows him, gun held by his side.
INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The carpet muffles any sound as the two men reach the doorway. Jesse sneaks a look.

A woman CARLA(30) stands at the kitchen sink, drinking a glass of water. She wears a bright red silk slip. Putting the glass down, she leans forward to open the curtains over the window.

The kitchen fills with a pale light as the moon is revealed. A large wooden table takes up the middle of the room. There's a covered shoe box sitting on it.

The two men watch, spooked for a moment. Then...

Jesse deliberately steps onto the timber floor of the kitchen. The woman doesn't react at all. Simply stares at the moon.

RICH
Is she deaf or something?

JESSE
I...who knows?

He steps around the table to one end of the bench, level with her. He waves the gun at her. Nothing. The woman is oblivious.

JESSE
Did your cousin mention anything about her being crazy?

RICH
Nope.

He shivers again, glances around the room. Then she is turning to face them, speaking in a deep voice, intoning like a judge passing sentence of death.

CARLA
Richard Stoughton...Jesse Newton...Toby Sewall...

RICH
The fuck...?

Jesse's eyes widen in fear. He points the gun right at her head, wrist trembling.

RICH
How the hell...

JESSE
Quiet.
He's concentrating on keeping his sanity but it's a tough gig.

CARLA
My family has been seeking revenge for over four hundred years. Now that time is here.

JESSE
Rich? You have any idea what she means?

RICH
Maybe. But it's crazy as hell.
(beat)
One of my ancestors was involved in the Salem witch trials in the sixteen hundreds. Chief prosecutor or something.

Carla nods at this, a faint smile on her lips.

RICH
And I'm guessin' you and Toby have the same kin in there too back then.

Carla nods again. There's a faraway look in her eyes.

RICH
And I guess Old Jimmy was on the money about her ancestry.

CARLA
Her name was Bridget Bishop. Falsely accused. Taken with other innocents and hung from a tree like a piece of meat.

A noise from the hallway. Toby enters the kitchen, hauling the now bulging duffel. He frowns, examines the scene.

TOBY
Thought I heard voices. Got some real nice stuff from that room. So, she hand over the keys yet?

He places the duffel on the table with a THUMP. Looks at the shoebox. Jesse keeps the gun on Carla.

TOBY
What's in the box?

CARLA
Things for school.

Toby lifts the lid. Peers in. Empty.
TOBY
Nothin' in it.

CARLA
It's not ready yet.

She takes a deep breath. Jesse's finger tightens on the trigger. Then all hell breaks loose.

Carla lifts her hands in front of her face. The window suddenly opens with a CRASH. A wind HOWLS in.

Jesse pulls the trigger. The roar of the gun is lost in the sound of the wind.

The three men watch in shock as the bullet slows and stops an inch from Carla's eye. She reaches up to take it.

CARLA
Bridget Bishop was not a witch. But her daughter was, and she vowed that her descendants would hunt the progeny of those who put to death so many. I continued quest for revenge. My powers drew me here.

She moves forward, as the men cringe. Toby is hyperventilating. Rich trembles.

JESSE
Please...you can't, these things happened centuries ago. It's not our fault.

RICH
Fuck this! Run!

The three turn as one, filled with the speed of fear. Carla raises her hands again. The men's movements slow, like the bullet, before they can reach the doorway.

JESSE
Don't kill us. We're sorry for breaking in, sorry for...

CARLA
Oh, don't worry. I'm not going to kill you.

She closes her eyes, begins a soft chant. The men start SCREAMING. The sound of bones CRUNCHING, shrinking...

The CHANT rises along with the wind until...BLACK
EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

A busy carpark, teachers arriving, students being dropped off.

MAX(O.S.)
Have a great day, Mom. Meet you for lunch?

CARLA(O.S.)
You bet. Now, you take this straight to Mr. Parsons, ok?

MAX(O.S.)
Sure thing. Bye!

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - MORNING

Inside a black space, moving forward. The SOUND of kid's voices, laughing, chatting. The SLAM of locker doors.

INT. SCIENCE ROOM - MORNING

A table filled with equipment - bunsen burners, microscopes. And a stainless steel tray with clips. The science teacher, Mr. PARSONS is there but only his hands are visible.

MR. PARSONS(O.S.)
Ah, hello, Max. What do we have here?

Small hands place the shoebox on the table, lift the lid.

MAX(O.S.)
My mom said you were looking for specimens. She found them at our farm. Careful, they are feisty. Been jumpin' about, hitting the lid all morning.

The view of the box - three frogs frantically leaping and scratching at the cardboard. The lid hurriedly pressed down.

MR. PARSONS(O.S.)
Excellent! Thank you, Max!

Hands place instruments on the tray - cotton buds, a scalpel.

INT. SHOEBOX - MORNING

 Darkness. Faint screams.

FADE OUT.