

THE POOL

Original Screenplay

by

Anton Diether

THE POOL

FADE IN:

EXT. PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

A BRIGHT POOL LAMP ripples under the surface of an Olympic sized pool. Sequins shimmer across its calm waters.

JULIE ATKINS (20's) dives in and breaches the surface. She propels herself forward across the pool length with overhand strokes. Stroke, breath, stroke, breath...

UNDERWATER

Julie zips through the deep side toward the pool lamp...

She suddenly stops before its blazing light, startled by something deep below --

A YOUNG BOY, drifting at the bottom, reaching a desperate hand up to her, his "O"-shaped mouth open in surprise.

Julie gapes down at him, flailing helplessly, too scared to dive down to him. A BUBBLED OUTCRY, "B-B-Billy!"...

INT. JULIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Julie's eyes snap open to LOUD BANGING. She sits up in bed, unsettled and hung over. Stares around her ratty trailer, a jungle of indoor plants, toward a front screen door...

BAM, BAM, BAM!

Julie rises and throws on a bathrobe. She opens the door...

Outside stands EARL, a weasel with beady eyes.

JULIE

Earl? What're you doing here?

EARL

Hey, Julie. Got some primo Prozac's for ya. Thirty percent off.

JULIE

I...I can't right now. I've got bills to pay.

Earl dangles a pill pouch of white tablets before her.

EARL

Free sample, babe, just because I like you.

Julie takes it and pockets it in her robe, eying him warily.

EARL (CONT'D)

Those are strong meds, a lot better
than that prescription shit.

He slithers closer with a creepy, seductive look.

EARL (CONT'D)

Of course we can always work out
somethin' in trade...

JULIE

Forget it, Earl.

She shuts the screen door in his face.

TRAILER BATHROOM

Julie stares at her reflection in a sink mirror, strung out.
She splashes water on her face and reaches for a prescription
bottle, her hands shaking from withdrawal.

It's empty. Frantic, she pulls out Earl's pouch, digs out a
tablet and swallows it with a palmful of sink water.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

A BOY TODDLER wails in tears, alone at a busy intersection.

Julie hurries to the corner, dressed up, wearing a backpack.
She notices the crying child and leans down to him.

JULIE

What's the matter, sweetie? Are
you lost?

His MOTHER appears out of nowhere and grabs the boy angrily.

MOTHER

I told you to stay close to me!
And don't talk to strangers.

They bustle off. Julie gazes forlornly after them.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY ATRIUM - DAY

An artificial waterfall cascades into a fountain.

Julie sits on a lobby sofa. Noticing a cigarette pack in her
blouse pocket, she hides it in her backpack. Gazes toward...

The swirling fountain. Sequins shimmer across its surface. Julie's gaze deepens on the sequins. Startled by...

PETER HOLGRAVE (40's), approaching her. A natty business type, GQ perfect. All cool and studied charm, yet stiff and inscrutable. An email printout in his hand.

PETER
Are you Julie Atkins?

JULIE
Yeah. Mr. Holgrave?

PETER
Yes, hi. I have your resumé.

He sits down with her and peruses the email.

PETER (CONT'D)
Lots of nanny experience, I see.
You've worked in Las Vegas?

JULIE
I just moved back here.

PETER
You like kids, I gather.

JULIE
Oh, you bet. I love kids.

PETER
No children of your own?

JULIE
Uh no, I'm afraid not.

Her eyes troubled. Peter doesn't notice, eying the resumé.

PETER
I checked your references, seems fine. Here's the deal. I've gotta go to London on business for the summer. I can't take the kids.

JULIE
Right. What about your wife?

PETER
Jessica. She...died last summer.
A car crash on our canyon road.

JULIE
My gawd. I'm so sorry. How are your kids handling it?

PETER

It's been hard. They're still coping with post-loss syndrome. Melissa is starting to adjust, but Sean...well, it's been difficult.

Julie waits to hear more. Peter nods at her resumé.

PETER

I see here you also do landscaping. You're a licensed contractor?

JULIE

No, but I've done a few jobs.

PETER

I leave town tomorrow, the Fourth of July. Can you start then?

JULIE

Tomorrow? You bet.

PETER

One thing. You need to be with them twenty-four-seven. You can have Sundays off. Use Beth across the street, she's our babysitter.

JULIE

Shouldn't I meet your kids first?

Vaguely uneasy, Peter rises and looks at his watch.

PETER

I'm too busy today. Tomorrow.

EXT. SUBURBS - EVENING

A pickup truck turns off the freeway, past a roadside Motel Six, into a gated community amidst hilly countryside.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING)

Julie drives, in a casual Western outfit. She glances out over a steep canyon drop by the road, noticing...

A small *makeshift cross* on the roadside, flanked by flowers.

Then, endless rows of cookie-cutter tract homes. She pulls over before a house, checking the address...

A one-story suburban stucco, crammed between two twin houses. A hedgeless lawn out front, Mercedes on the driveway.

INT. HOLGRAVE HOUSE - EVENING

A CAMCORDER'S VIEW of the entry hall from the living room.
A HUSHED CAMERA VOICE, with melodramatic flair...

MELISSA (O.S.)

Bianca enters the premises with a
concealed nine-mil Beretta...

WE ZOOM IN ON Julie, GREETED AD-LIB by Peter who sets down a
travel bag by the door.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Dark vengeance in her heart for...

(ON Peter)

Lucas, the evil fiancé who murdered
her incestuous brother so he could
marry Bianca for her fortune.

(ON Julie, approaching)

The femme fatale closes in.

JULIE

Hey there!

MELISSA (14) lowers her camcorder from a couch, her pretty
features overshadowed by punk makeup and gloom. The couch
faces a giant flat screen, paused on an Xbox game.

PETER

Melissa, say hi to Julie.

MELISSA

Hullo.

Feigning disinterest, she resumes the Xbox game.

PETER

I only have a few minutes, Julie,
I've got an airport taxi coming.

JULIE

A few minutes?...

PETER

Let me show you around.

KITCHEN-DINING AREA

SEAN (11) picks at a split pomegranate at a center counter,
spitting out seeds. His cherubic, soft features offset his
piercing eyes. Peter enters with Julie.

PETER

Julie, this is Sean.

JULIE
Hey, Sean! Nice to meet you.

SEAN
Hi.
(to his dad)
So you're just gonna take off again
and leave us here?

Peter's eyes darken on him.

PETER
We discussed this already.

A mute tension between them. Julie glances out an open sliding-glass door: a long, oak-shaded pool in the dusk.

JULIE
Wow, that's a pretty big pool.

She steps out onto the patio. Peter follows reluctantly. Sean watches them from the kitchen.

EXT. BACK YARD - EVENING

Around the pool, a barren yard with bark-chip ground cover, broken by feeble shrubs. High walls block out neighboring houses. Beyond the back fence, a wooded wilderness.

Julie regards it all with a landscaper's eye. Peter waits impatiently, vaguely uncomfortable out here.

PETER
We don't have a guest room, but you
can stay in the master bedroom.

JULIE
How deep is this pool?

PETER
Nine feet. It's got solar heating.

Julie glances at the pool's deep end: a *painted scuba diver* and a *happy-faced octopus* on the bottom, grinning up merrily.

PETER
I wrote down my hotel number in
London, it's on the dining table.
Call me only if it's an emergency.

Julie glances up at an oak tree: a kids' tree house built high with a rope ladder and a *NO TRESPASSING* sign.

She notices a tarp-covered jacuzzi built into the poolside.

JULIE
Is that a hot tub?

PETER
It doesn't work. But we've got
a sauna over there.

He nods toward a Finnish-styled hut by the house's side wall.

PETER (CONT'D)
It's got a timer meter, but the
electrical gets screwy sometimes.

Julie regards a lonely, withered tomato pot in the shrubs.

JULIE
You need a gardener.

PETER
I had a Mexican...I mean, Hispanic.
He hasn't been around lately.

Julie notices prickly branches hanging far over a border wall
from a next-door pomegranate tree.

PETER (CONT'D)
The back yard could use a little
landscaping, if you're interested.

JULIE
Sure. The energy here feels off.

Peter removes his wallet and hands her a platinum VISA card.
Julie smiles, a bit surprised.

PETER
Household account, within reason.
(checks his watch)
I really have to get going.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Peter opens the front door and grabs his travel bag, Julie
beside him. Sean rushes over with a distressed look.

SEAN
Dad, don't. You can't do this...

PETER
It's my job, Sean. Show some
spine, for God's sake, try to be
a man about this.

SEAN
A man? I'm only eleven, remember?

An airport taxi pulls into the driveway outside. Julie turns to Sean with an assuring smile.

JULIE
Don't worry, Sean, I'll be here.

Sean stares woefully at her. Peter grips his shoulders.

PETER
Son, I have to catch my flight--

SEAN
Go to hell!

He storms away. Pained by him, Peter turns to Julie.

PETER
Post-loss syndrome, y'know...

A DOOR SLAMS. Julie flinches. Peter turns to Melissa.

PETER
Melissa, honey? I'm leaving.

Melissa keeps playing the Xbox game, ignoring him. Julie eyes her curiously, turns back to Peter...he's already out the door to the taxi. Julie frowns at him.

Peter turns, his face a strange mix of guilt and relief.

PETER
You'll be fine, Julie, just don't leave them alone. I'll check in with you later.

Then he's gone. The taxi recedes away. Julie gazes after it, slightly bewildered.

EXT. HOUSE STREET - NIGHT

Fourth of July pinwheels light up the suburb. Neighbors on lawns. Kids dash about with sparklers. Firecrackers POP.

Julie unloads a potted monstera plant from her pickup, its rear piled with plants.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Melissa joysticks tensely before the flat screen. Julie carries her plant inside and passes the couch.

JULIE
Melissa, what time do y'all wanna eat dinner?

MELISSA

I don't eat, I'm on a diet. My brother eats when he feels like it.

JULIE

O-kay. Don't y'all wanna see the fireworks?

MELISSA

No. Excuse me...

She pauses the game, tosses the joystick and marches off to her bedroom down the hall. Julie puzzles after her.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

The pool fully lit, a translucent green, its underwater lamp FLICKERING ERRATICALLY. Sliding glass doors afford a full view into the living room and kitchen.

Julie arranges her potted plants on a patio corner with motherly care. She scans around the back yard and the pool.

She kneels over the poolside and submerges a hand to test the water temperature. Ripples from her hand warp the pool's glow into wavy prisms...

Below, the scuba diver's happy grin undulates on the bottom. Distorted in the deep, his eyes seem to follow her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Julie peers down a hallway toward the kids' bedrooms. Their doors closed, not a sound. She fidgets restlessly, unsure what to do. Her eyes wander back out to the pool.

EXT. POOL - LATER

In a bikini, Julie swims steady laps across the length of the pool. Overhand strokes, back and forth, sucking in air. Stroke, breath, stroke, breath...

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. HOME POOL (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Bleached-out sunlight, sequined waters. A YOUNG JULIE at age 12 sits on the pool steps, fitting on face goggles.

A house looms in b.g., the distant figures of adults milling inside its windows. A LOUD PARTY in progress.

Her 4-year-old brother BILLY, the boy from Julie's dream, wanders outside.

Back in the present, adult Julie swims back and forth in the pool-lit night. Stroke, breath, stroke, breath...

In the past, Young Julie eases down into the shallow side. Billy plays hopscotch on the patio.

Adult Julie slows her strokes, enervated, gulping for air...

UNDERWATER, Young Julie scans the home pool's expanse of bottom litter through her goggles, lost in her own world...

IN STAGGERED MOTION, adult Julie swims with labored breath. Stroke, breath...stroke, breath...stroke...breath...

Billy waddles onto the diving board and chalks a hopscotch pattern across it, all the way to the end of the board.

BACK TO PRESENT

Julie grips the poolside, trying to will away the memory. She climbs up a pool ladder and sits over the side, gazing down at algae along the pool's underwater walls.

Near her feet, a drowning moth squiggles in the water. She scoops it out and dumps it onto the poolside, watching its life-and-death struggle.

VIDEOGAME SOUNDS distract her toward the house...

LIVING-ROOM GLASS DOOR

Julie peers inside: Melissa and Sean sit on the couch, Sean eating junk food, the two playing the Xbox game together.

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS - LATER

FAST CUTS ON a boy's hands double-locking the front door -- securing a backyard door -- testing the locked garage door.

KITCHEN

Sean darts from windows to patio door, checking every lock.

In her bathrobe, Julie observes him from the dining area.

Sean turns off the pool and ground lights with an indoor switch. He stares intensely outside.

JULIE

Sean? You okay?

SEAN

Uh-huh. G'night.

He beelines down the hall to his room and disappears inside.

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Julie sets up her laptop on a desk and plugs it into an outlet -- a spark SNAPS at her. She yanks her hand back.

Settling in, she lies back on a king-sized bed. Wide awake, staring at a *cobweb* in a corner ceiling. She glances over at Earl's pill pouch on a bedstand, full of white tablets.

EXT. POOL AREA

Moonlit darkness. The underwater pool lamp FLICKERS ON... then SPUTTERS and dies out. Blackness.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Awake in bed, Julie listens to the silence...

A DISTANT WAIL OF COYOTES. Unnerved by it, she reaches for the pouch, opens it and downs a pill with a water glass. Lies back and closes her eyes, trying to sleep...

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. HOME POOL (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Starkly bright sequins on the water. A hopscotch pattern across the diving board. Billy's little feet skip over the chalking, too close to the edge...

In the present, Julie's eyes open to DISTANT ANIMAL CRIES. A kill in the hills. SQUEALS and YAPS, COYOTES SQUABBLING over their prey. Julie forces her eyes back closed...

Back to the past. UNDERWATER, Young Julie's GOGGLE-MASKED POV SKIMS OVER sunken leaves on the shallow bottom, OVER a drowned spider. OUR VIEW PANS TOWARD the deep end --

SPLASH! Billy's figure suddenly PLUMMETS DOWN in a swirl of bubbles. He sinks fast to the bottom.

Young Julie SCREAMS underwater, "B-B-Billy!"

She explodes to the surface in a scared panic and bellows out -- "MOM! DAD!" Her shouts are drowned out by LOUD PARTY NOISE. No one hears her. OVER this, an ELECTRIC BUZZ...

BACK TO PRESENT - MORNING

Sprawled across the bed, Julie jolts awake to a GRATING BUZZ OUTSIDE. Druggy-eyed, she peers out a curtained window:

Her neighbors across the street. A cheerful MR. CHALMERS jumps into his Navigator. MRS. CHALMERS and their teenage daughter BETH wave goodbye from the driveway.

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - LATER

Julie emerges in her bathrobe and collects a newspaper on the lawn. Sprinklers spit on, forcing her to jump clear. She glances over at the house next door...

A "FOR SALE" sign on the lawn. The LOUD BUZZ draws her eyes toward the second house over...

An elderly neighbor (AGATHA) prunes shrubs with an electric hedge trimmer, oblivious to Julie.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

A toaster ejects burnt waffles. Julie waves away smoke and fumbles over breakfast. She downs a coffee cup, noticing a wall clock: past eleven.

She looks down the hall at the kids' doors. Still closed.

EXT. POOL AREA

A tall, gaunt POOL MAN skims the pool, ignoring the algae. He rushes through his job with an odd belligerence, warily eyeing the house, tripping over a coiled garden hose.

INT. KITCHEN

Julie eats breakfast alone at the counter, watching him:

The Pool Man empties his net haphazardly on the shrubs, dumping the pool gunk over the tomato plant.

EXT. POOL AREA

Julie steps outside. The Pool Man collects his gear and hustles away down a side path.

JULIE

Excuse me...

Ignoring her, he hastens his pace out an entry gate.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Excuse me? Hello?

HOUSE FRONT

Julie dashes out to the driveway. A pool truck speeds away.

POOL AREA

Julie hoses clean the trashed tomato plant. A BUBBLING SOUND jars her...solar-heated water shoots out from a pool vent, churning up bubbles.

RUMBLING SOUNDS draw her attention toward water pipes on the rooftop, connected down a wall to a poolside pump. They TREMBLE with turbulence. Julie turns to notice...

Sean, inside the kitchen window, shuffling from the fridge.

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM

Julie opens the door to the glow of a TV screen. Sean lies in bed and watches cartoons, nibbling on a pop tart.

JULIE

Hey there, cave dweller. Want some breakfast?

Sean shakes his head. Julie glances around his room. Star Trek spaceship models hang from ceiling strings.

JULIE

Cool starships. Is that a Klingon?

SEAN

Romulan War Bird.

JULIE

I'm gonna order a pizza.

Sean shrugs, whatever.

MELISSA'S BEDROOM

Julie taps on the door and opens it to reveal...

Melissa in bed, buried in an adult-romance novel. Lit by a bubbling goldfish aquarium, her window curtains drawn.

JULIE

Hi. Seems awfully dark in here. You want some pizza?

MELISSA

I'm on a diet.

JULIE

Uh-huh. I'm going for a dip in the pool. C'mon out and join me.

EXT. POOL AREA - LATER

Clad in her bikini, Julie repots her monstera in the hot sun. A SCREECHY CAW-CAW distracts her...

Black crows SQUABBLE on the fence wall under the next-door pomegranate tree. They pick at fruit with their beaks. Blood-red juice seeps down the wall.

Julie powers on the hose and aims it, spraying them. The birds SQUAWK and fly away.

POOL'S SHALLOW END - LATER

Julie stands on the pool steps, a snorkel and mask in hand, staring at the sun-speckled water, UNNATURALLY BRIGHT.

Changing her mind, she tosses aside the snorkel and wanders around the pool. Spies something on the bottom...

A *small, white object* between the scuba diver and octopus.

SQUAWKS distract her: the crows settle back on the fence.

Julie catches Sean staring from the kitchen's open glass doorway. Melissa beside him, aiming her camcorder at her.

JULIE

Well, howdy! It's about time.

She goes to the patio table and opens a pizza box.

JULIE

Half extra cheese, half pepperoni.

They venture outside and approach the table, avoiding the pool. Julie grabs a slice. Sean follows suit and nibbles on a slice. Melissa refrains, fiddling with her camcorder.

JULIE

Wanna go for a swim?

SEAN

You can't swim after you eat.

MELISSA

Yeah. Kids die in pools.

Taken back by that, Julie follows their stares over the pool.

JULIE

What're you, scared of your own pool?

Melissa trades glances with Sean. Their eyes lower to the pool's depths: the scuba diver.

JULIE

Not *that*, are you? Come on guys, that's just paint on cement.

MELISSA

I'm not a "guy". I'm going back inside.

JULIE

Aw, c'mon.

SEAN

I don't see you going in the pool.

Julie sighs, tosses her pizza and walks to the deep side. She stares down, hesitating. Turns aside to the kids.

JULIE

Well? You coming in or not?

SEAN

You first.

Julie bravely faces the pool, then swan-dives in. SPLASH!

UNDERWATER

A green, unfocused world. Julie streaks to the shallow side.

ABOVE WATER

She surfaces and clings to the poolside, looking around...

The kids are gone. She scans the patio. The tree house's rope ladder dangles wildly. She looks up:

Sean watches her from high on the tree platform, Melissa videorecording her.

TREE HOUSE

CAMCORDER VIEW DOWN ON Julie in the pool, waving up.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Bianca, trapped in the Danger Zone.

JULIE

Hey! Can I come up there, too?

SEAN (O.S.)

No adults allowed!

POOL

Dismissing them, Julie peers down at the white object on the bottom. She starts to dive for it, then stops, hindered by some fear of the deep.

She grabs her snorkel mask, fits it on her face and peeks underwater. Her GOGGLED POV:

Shards of refracted light, the magnified bottom. Between the diver and the octopus...a golf ball.

Mustering her courage, Julie sucks breath and plunges down.

UNDERWATER

She swims toward the bottom, then stops midway. She can't do it, floating above, flailing futilely.

Her GOGGLED POV TURNS DOWN ON the scuba diver...

A chlorine-eaten face. Wide, paint-etched eyes, his open mouth grinning with cartoonish glee.

JULIE'S POV SCANS OVER the cement bottom: settled leaves, dead spiders, dead June bugs, dead bees...

...and *LITTLE BILLY'S DROWNED CORPSE*.

TREE HOUSE

CAMCORDER VIEW: Julie explodes to the surface. She madly power-strokes to the pool steps. Sits there, shaken.

MELISSA (O.S.)
Something's wrong.

SEAN (O.S.)
She shouldn't go in that pool.

POOL

Julie recovers and stares at the deep end. Nothing there.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - EVENING

The suburb block comes alive. Cars return home, neighborhood kids play, couples jog, mothers push strollers.

INT. DINING AREA - EVENING

On the dining table, a salad bowl of crab claws. Sean and Melissa sit staring at it. Julie joins them and sits.

JULIE
I hope you like cracked crab.

Melissa fingers a nutcracker by her plate with uncertainty, Sean's eyes fixed on the claws in the bowl.

Julie plucks one up and wedges it into her nutcracker.

The kids watch rigidly. Julie's claw CRACKS. They both flinch at the sound.

JULIE

So, do you guys...
 (glances at Melissa)
 I mean, do you *kids* have any summer sports? Like hiking, baseball, soccer? Basket weaving?

She rips open the crab shell...CRUNCH, SNAP. Sean jumps up.

SEAN

Excuse me, I'm really not hungry.

MELISSA

Me neither. I'm on a diet.

They both disappear down the bedroom hall. Julie sits alone, gazing glumly at her dinner.

VARIOUS ROOMS - LATER

QUICK CUTS. Sean locks and double-checks every access into the house, an obsessive nightly ritual.

KITCHEN

He switches off the pool light, staring out at the darkened pool. Julie touches his shoulder. Sean flinches.

JULIE

Sorry. Does the dark scare you?

SEAN

No. Does it scare you?

JULIE

Not if nothing's out there.

SEAN

Then I guess what you can't see can't hurt you. G'night.

He retires down the hall and shuts himself in his room.

Julie gazes out at the moonlit yard, her nerves on edge. She unpockets the pill pouch and ponders it, debating with herself. Then puts it back.

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Julie sits at her laptop. Insomnia time.

ON LAPTOP SCREEN

Landscaping graphics, a simulated three-dimensional model of the Holgrave house, the pool and its environs.

Julie studies it, uninspired. She reaches for her cigarette pack, then checks herself. DISTANT TV NOISE distracts her.

BEDROOM HALL - KIDS' ROOMS

Julie opens both doors at once. Sean watches TV at a HIGH VOLUME. Melissa highlights passages in her romance novel.

JULIE

Y'all know what time it is?
It's no wonder you sleep all day.
Melissa, what're you reading?

She steps in and grabs the book from Melissa, who gasps in protest. Julie glances over the bodice-ripping cover.

JULIE

"Bianca's Flames of Desire"?

MELISSA

Hey, that's invasion of privacy!

Julie hands it back, turns across the hall into Sean's room.

JULIE

TV off, Sean -- please.

SEAN

Why should I? You're not my mom.

JULIE

Turn the dang thing off!

Sean remote-switches off the TV, sulking at her.

SEAN

What're you, some kinda cowgirl?

JULIE

Yeah, from cattle country. Las Vegas strip.

Melissa enters, eying her curiously. Julie faces them both.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Y'all ready to go to bed now?

MELISSA

I can't sleep.

SEAN

Me neither.

JULIE

Well, that makes three of us.

SAME SCENE - LATER

On the bed with Sean and Melissa, Julie fast-shuffles a casino deck with a croupier's skill.

JULIE

I do this when I've got insomnia.
Like counting sheep...

She does a swift accordion shuffle, the kids mesmerized.

SEAN

Cool. How'd you learn to do that?

JULIE

Used to be a blackjack dealer.

MELISSA

So you're not really a nanny.

JULIE

Am too. I just don't have kids
of my own.

SEAN

Can you teach me how to deal?

JULIE

I'll teach you how to win.

Sean beams a smile, finally warming to her.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Not tonight. Time to hit the sack.

MELISSA

Okay. We'll try.

Sean nods in agreement, his smile a portrait of innocence.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Julie sits alone on the couch, subdued, her edginess gone, the opened pill pouch on the coffee table. She flips idly through a family photo album...

Peter with the kids, birthday party, pool games...a younger, happier Sean and Melissa. In one photo, a man in b.g.:

A HISPANIC GARDENER, pruning a shrub with electric shears. An odd look on his face.

Julie peers closer to make out his blurred expression...

A wary stare...toward the house. Just like the Pool Man.

EXT. POOL - LATER

Julie lights up a cigarette, edgy again, the pill not working. She paces and fidgets...then notices the algae in the pool. Kneels over the side and peer down at...

A *bacterial layer*, coating the underwater walls. She reaches down and runs her hand along a wall. Mustard clouds billow out, the pool infested with algae.

June bugs smack the pool surface. Julie watches them spin, shedding water circles, drowning. Her eyes deepen on them...

FLASHCUT TO:

EXT. HOME POOL (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Young Julie treads helplessly in the deep end. "MOM! DAD!" Nobody's coming. She gapes UNDERWATER through her mask --

Her brother on the bottom, staring helplessly up at us, his "O"-shaped mouth dribbling bubbles -- *drowning*.

The young girl tries to dive down but can't -- too paralyzed by her fear of the deep. A BUBBLED OUTCRY, "B-B-BILLY!"

EXT. HOLGRAVE POOL (PRESENT) - NIGHT

A SQUALL blows over Julie. The oak tree rustles, shedding leaves and *countless spiders* onto the pool surface.

Julie stares down at the water. The pool lamp FLICKERS like rapid eye motion. The vent hole BUBBLES.

Behind her, the house lights FLASH from a power surge. Julie turns and frowns back. A LOW GROWL spins her around...

A COYOTE behind the rear fence SNARLS at the house, its fangs bared. It savages the chain links.

Julie gawks at the animal, edging back...

A CROW swoops low over her head -- SMACKS DEAD into a window. Jolted by it, Julie loses her balance and...

Falls backward over the poolside. SPLASH!

UNDERWATER

A swirl of algae and floating insects. Julie flails in eerie green clouds, glimpsing down toward the bottom...

The painted diver and the octopus in the undulating light.

Julie's eyes turn toward the bubbling vent across the pool...

Its bubbles MORPH INTO A HUMANLIKE SHAPE OF BUBBLED AIR, CREEPING THROUGH the deep with a will of its own...directly towards Julie. She gapes back at it...

The AIR MASS BUBBLES FORWARD with some malevolent energy...

Judy power-swims away from it.

ABOVE WATER

She splashes to the surface. The AIR MASS CHURNS TOWARD her like a watery shark. Julie lunges for the poolside...

A JARRING RING!

The pool light SNUFFS OUT -- pitch darkness. Julie gropes through the black waters to the pool ladder...

RING! The kitchen phone, the house lights becalmed.

She grapples at the ladder, covered in leaves and bugs. Her grip slips, her hands slimed with algae.

RING! Julie vaults out over the tarp-covered jacuzzi and scrambles to her feet. She stares back at the dark waters:

Nothing there but floating litter. She bolts away to the kitchen sliding door.

Behind her -- a LIGHT FLICKERS ON under the jacuzzi tarp.

INT. KITCHEN

Soaked and algae-skinned, Julie takes a deep breath and picks up a phone, making an effort to sound calm...

JULIE
Holgrave residence.

PETER'S VOICE
Julie?

JULIE
Oh...Mr. Holgrave.

PETER'S VOICE
Sorry, I'm on London time. Are you okay?

JULIE
Yeah...I was just swimming laps.

PETER'S VOICE
And the kids?

JULIE
They're asleep.

PETER'S VOICE
(an audible sigh)
Well, that's good. Anything else
I should know?

Julie flicks the switch for the pool. The pool lights up,
the jacuzzi dark and dormant. She peers out:

No bubbles, no coyote, no crow, not a sign of anything.

JULIE
Uhhh...

PETER'S VOICE
Something wrong?

JULIE
No...no, just a problem with algae.
The pool man's not doing his job.

HER POV - OUTSIDE

Across the patio toward the living-room glass door...a *shadow*
flits through the darkened living room beyond the glass.

BACK TO SCENE

PETER'S VOICE
Well, handle it. You're in charge,
right?

Julie still focused outside, trying to make out the shadow.

PETER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Julie? Are you still there?

JULIE
Yeah, yeah, I'm here.

PETER'S VOICE
Call me if you really need to. But
only in the case of--

JULIE
An emergency. Right. I'll take
care of it, Mr. Holgrave.

PETER'S VOICE
Fine. Enjoy your stay. Bye.

Julie hangs up the phone and hastens into...

LIVING ROOM

A figure at the sliding glass door: Sean, standing in a trance, staring out at the pool's glow. She's jarred by a VOICE next to her --

MELISSA (O.S.)

I was just getting some water.

Julie jumps out of her skin -- Melissa right beside her.

JULIE

Jeezus!... What's Sean doing?

MELISSA

Sleepwalking. He's been doing it a lot since Mom died.

(goes to him)

C'mon, Sean. Beddie bye.

She turns him gently around and guides him back toward the bedrooms. Sean floats past Julie, his eyes a cryptic daze.

KITCHEN - LATER

Julie empties a daiquiri mix into a blender with trembling hands. She dumps in a pint of rum.

Melissa walks in with a glass of water. Julie starts the blender. A SWISHING WHIR. Melissa YELPS in fright -- drops her glass. It shatters on the floor.

A LOW, GHOULISH MOAN, from down the hallway.

SEAN'S BEDROOM

Julie runs in and switches on a ceiling light. Sean dreams fitfully, his eyes open, his feet kicking the bedsheets...

SEAN

Max, don't...don't do that!...

JULIE

Sean?

SEAN

(deep adult voice)

Where's your li'l brother?

Julie flinches back. The light POPS OUT -- darkness. She gropes for a bedside lamp and turns it on, illuminating...

A shaken Melissa in the doorway, staring at her brother...

Sean's eye closed, his body at rest.

JULIE

Melissa? What the hell's going on with him?

MELISSA

Just a bad dream.
(looks at her)
Why are you all green?

BATHROOM SHOWER - LATER

Shower water shoots out, dousing Julie. A layer of algae washes off her skin, the floor fouled with green slime. She scrubs herself with a loofah, the shower stall steaming up.

Beyond the misted glass, she catches a *moving figure*.

Steeling herself, she slides open the shower door to see...

Melissa by the sink, her arms folded tight, stressed out. Julie steps out and wraps herself in a towel.

JULIE

Hey. What's wrong, honey?

MELISSA

I didn't wanna be by myself.

JULIE

I could sleep with you in your room if you like.

MELISSA

Really? I'd like that.

JULIE

Is Sean...is he okay?

MELISSA

He's still coping with stuff.

JULIE

You can talk to me, y'know. I'd like us to be friends.

MELISSA

He really blames Dad...for what happened.

JULIE

For what? Y'mean, your mom?

MELISSA

A bunch of stuff. I can't really talk about it.

She hugs herself tighter, on the verge of crying.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

I have to look after him. He's the only brother I've got.

JULIE

Why don't you let me help you with that? Just tell me what's going on, so I can understand.

Melissa shakes her head in silent, lonely torment.

MELISSA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julie lies beside a sleeping Melissa in the aquarium light, tired but wide awake. She forces her eyes closed...

A DISTANT SPLASH jerks her eyes open. She heaves a sigh.

JULIE

For chrissake...gimme a break.

LIVING ROOM

Julie creeps to the sliding glass door and peers out at...

The dark pool. Its pool lamp BLAZES ON, revealing --

A ghastly pileup of floating debris -- TREE LEAVES, CRAWLING INSECTS, DEAD CROWS, COYOTE CARCASSES, DISMEMBERED PREY.

Julie shuts her eyes in denial...

JULIE

No, no, no...

A TRAIL OF AIR BUBBLES STREAKS THROUGH the shallows toward the pool steps, inching forward like crocodile bubbles...

The shuddery-lit spectre of a MASKED, WETSUITED SCUBA DIVER breaches the surface...

Julie stiffens at the sight.

The Diver rises ominously up the steps, stalking toward her.

She edges back behind the glass door, fighting for control...

JULIE

You are...not...real! You're just a *bad dream*--

The Diver races forward IN ACCELERATED MOTION and CRASHES THROUGH the glass to get at her, splintered shards flying --

MELISSA'S BEDROOM

Julie jerks awake, disoriented. She takes a deep breath... it was a bad dream. She slips quickly out of bed.

MASTER BATHROOM

Shaking hands pry open the pill pouch. Julie hesitates, staring at herself in the mirror.

JULIE

C'mon, bitch...get it together...
just do it.

She empties the pouch contents into the toilet bowl.

IN SLOW MOTION, white tablets tumble down one by one.

Julie stops, fighting a weak impulse, a losing battle...

She leaves a half-dozen pills in the pouch. Then pops one into her mouth. Hurries to the sink, turns on the faucet and leans low to drink from the tap...

Above her, the sink cabinet's mirrored door drifts ajar...

Julie rises up -- bangs her head on it.

JULIE

Dammit!

She whacks it shut and turns away...

The cabinet door rebounds and swings back. Its mirror catches a quick reflection --

The *HISPANIC GARDENER* from the photo -- covered in mud, his face corpse-grey, his *EYELESS SOCKETS* watching her.

Sensing a presence behind her, Julie pivots around...

Nobody there. On the floor, puddles of green, algaed water.

And a splatter of *dark, muddy soil*.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NURSERY - DAY

A ceramic gnome grins up mischievously from a fountain. Julie stares dully at it, worn out from fatigue. She spots the nursery owner, a tall man arranging garden pottery...

TERRY (late 20's), a gorgeous, masculine, very gay hunk.

JULIE
Hey, handsome.

TERRY
Julie? Hey...what a surprise!

They hug with affection.

TERRY (CONT'D)
I thought you escaped to Sin City.

JULIE
I escaped back. How's business?

TERRY
Fab. How's your love life?

JULIE
(deadpans him)
What's that?

TERRY
Tell me about it. Raoul dumped me for a Chippendale dancer, that li'l slut. Weren't you going to marry what's his name in Vegas? Jason?

JULIE
Didn't work out. I ditched him.

TERRY
Hmm. Life's a bowl of cherry pits.

He sorts through pots and picks up a Babylon planter, glancing aside at her.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Too much earth tone?

Julie waves aside the planter and picks out another one.

JULIE
This one's better.

TERRY
Still got the magic touch, I see.

JULIE
I was gonna ask you about that.

She pulls a cigarette from her pack and lights it up.

TERRY
I thought you quit smoking.

JULIE

Yeah, sixteen times. Terry...I'd like to get back into landscaping. I mean, if you have any work.

Terry moves the planter, a look of uncertainty. Julie sighs.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Okay, I blew it the last time, but the client was being a jerk.

TERRY

Julie, he wanted conservative tropical. You gave him an Amazon rain forest.

JULIE

The Feng Shui energy was off...

TERRY

It was overkill. I had to rip it all out.

JULIE

It won't happen again.

An awkward beat, Terry deliberating to himself.

TERRY

Are you still on those meds?

JULIE

I'm not, I swear. They just make me see too much weird shit.

TERRY

Yeah, like those "psychic" visions you used to have? That's what addiction does to you.

JULIE

I wasn't addicted.

Terry gives her a look. Julie lowers her eyes.

TERRY

So you're unemployed now?

JULIE

No, no. I'm poolscaping a house. I mean...it's a side thing. I'm temping as a nanny.

TERRY

Nanny? What d'you know about kids?

JULIE
I've done it before.

TERRY
Okay, look. Give me an address
and I'll drop by, just to see how
you're doing. Then we'll talk
about the rest.

Julie smiles and hugs him gratefully.

EXT. HOLGRAVE HOUSE - DAY

Suburban tranquility. Julie gazes at the house from her
parked pickup, steeling her nerves.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Deathly quiet. Julie walks in, looking around.

JULIE
Beth?

Beth, the teen babysitter from across the street, appears
and hurries past her in a flustered rush. She heads straight
for the front door.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Beth? Something wrong?

BETH
I'm not coming back here anymore.

BEDROOM HALL - SEAN'S ROOM

Julie ventures down the hall. LOW VOICES behind Sean's door.

She stops at the door to listen: URGENT WHISPERINGS, their
words indiscernible. She opens it to reveal...

Sean and Melissa, sitting together in total darkness.

JULIE
Hey. What's up with Beth?

Melissa says nothing. Sean looks up unhappily.

SEAN
Why were you gone so long?

JULIE
It wasn't that long. What's going
on? Why's Beth so freaked out?

SEAN

Nothin'. The lights went out. She started going ballistic. She's such a retard.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - DAY

Julie opens a fuse box: all the circuit breakers off. She flips them back on and closes the panel, startled by --

Sean, standing there with a peeled pomegranate in hand.

SEAN

Want some?

JULIE

No thanks. I'll have to get an electrician if this keeps up.

(glances at pool)

Guess I'll have to talk to that pool guy, too.

SEAN

I don't think he's coming back.

JULIE

What d'you mean?

SEAN

He came by for his check, then he got all weird on me.

JULIE

You're kidding. What did he say?

SEAN

I dunno, he was yelling about his money or something...then he threw the hose into the pool.

JULIE

My gawd. He didn't try to hurt you or anything?

SEAN

Naw. But I wish you'd been here.

Julie looks away, totally guilt-tripped by that.

POOL AREA - LATER

Julie pulls the garden hose out of the pool, algae clouding the water. She glances up:

Sean and Melissa play in the tree house above her, Melissa with her camcorder.

Julie kneels and dips a hand in the pool. To herself:

JULIE (CONT'D)
Water's way too warm.

She scans the rooftop, noticing roof stairs by the left wall.

HOUSE ROOFTOP

A flat gravel surface. Solar collectors cover the roof, the front half blocked from view by an air-conditioning unit.

Julie climbs up and inspects the thermostat. She checks the circulation pipes, then glances across at...

The tree-house platform, strewn with kid's junk...and a golf bag. Melissa camrecords Sean practicing with a seven-iron club on the side open to the neighbor's wall...

The house for sale. Sean swings his club and whacks a golf ball over the wall toward...

A neglected, overweeded expanse with a dusty old trampoline, littered with golf balls. The ball smacks against it.

JULIE
Sean -- what are you doing?

SEAN
Practicing my swing.

JULIE
Not into someone else's yard.

SEAN
Nobody lives there.

TREE HOUSE

CAMCORDER VIEW ON Sean: he places a new ball on the open edge. WE PAN TO the deserted house's back yard...

MELISSA (O.S.)
The Dead Zone. Out of bounds.

ROOFTOP

Julie reacts to a CRASH OF GLASS. She turns to see...

A broken side window of the house next door, shards of glass falling away.

JULIE

Sean! For God's sake!

SEAN

Sorry -- it was an accident!

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT

QUICK CUTS. Sean's hands, locking the front door, back door, garage door, sliding doors with manic haste.

MASTER BEDROOM

Julie works at her laptop. On the screen: *the three-dimensional house model, fleshed out with details. On each side, the next-door back yards.*

Sean saunters in.

SEAN

Whatcha doin'?

JULIE

Designing a new poolscape for outside. Your dad asked me to.

Melissa joins them, eying the screen. Julie points at it.

JULIE (CONT'D)

This is a site analysis. I just add stuff to it...

She draws with her mouse, *tracing in a tree by the fence.*

JULIE (CONT'D)

Pomegranate tree on the right... neighbor's trampoline on the left.

She cursors to *two onscreen stick figures by the pool and makes them MOVE JERKILY WITH ANIMATED LEGS.*

JULIE (CONT'D)

And here's Sean and Melissa...

The two small figures RUN COMICAL CIRCLES around the pool, then JERK UP HIGH and PLOP DOWN on the pool surface.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Omigod -- you're in the pool.

MELISSA

I'm gonna go read in my room.

She moves to leave, waiting for Sean. He stares queerly at the laptop screen, then exits with her.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

The Holgrave house, dormant and dark under a waxing moon.

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sean sleeps restlessly, his eyes open wide. He rises in a trance and sleepwalks from his bed.

MASTER BEDROOM

Julie dozes at her laptop. She blinks awake. Reacts to something and peers at the landscape model on the screen...

A child stick figure WALKS JERKILY ACROSS the digital back yard, UP the roof stairs by the left wall, then LEAPS OVER ONTO the next-door yard.

Baffled, Julie works the mouse to cancel the action, to no avail. She squeezes her tired eyes shut. Looks again...

The child figure BOUNCES ON the trampoline.

A HIGH-PITCHED SHRILL startles Julie from above -- the ceiling smoke alarm. She rises, jumps up on the bed and reaches for it. It stops. Silence. She climbs down and turns back to the laptop. On the screen...

The bouncing image isn't alone. An ADULT STICK FIGURE DARTS AROUND the trampoline, as if trying to get at the child figure. Hostility in its JERKY MOVEMENTS.

Another DISTANT SMOKE ALARM, somewhere across the house.

MELISSA'S BEDROOM

The smoke alarm SHRIEKS. In bed, Melissa squirms in her sleep. Julie rushes in, mounts a chair and switches it off. Silence. Melissa murmurs, dreaming...

MELISSA

Don't...don't hurt him...

SEAN'S BEDROOM

Julie opens the door: Sean's bed empty. She wheels around to a DISTANT MECHANICAL GRIND. Runs out.

GARAGE

The garage door ROLLS methodically up and down. Julie hits a wall switch. It doesn't work. She unplugs the wall socket. The garage door closes and stops. Then...

A DISTANT BOY'S OUTCRY FROM OUTSIDE.

EXT. BACK YARD

CRIES and WHIMPERS beyond the left wall. Julie climbs the roof stairs next to the wall and looks over into...

The next-door yard. A frightened Sean cringes on his knees in the center of the trampoline in his pajamas, trying to crawl clear of something unseen around him.

SEAN

Lemme alone, Max! *Lemme alone!*

JULIE

Sean!

Jarred by her, Sean scrambles off the trampoline and races toward Julie on the wall. He climbs up frantically to reach her, gaping back.

SEAN

He's coming!

Nothing there, just a moonlit yard. He slips back down.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Help me -- he's coming!

Julie seizes him and hoists him over the wall. They fall together onto the roof stairs. Sean clings tight to her.

JULIE

It's all right, hon...it's just a bad dream.

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julie stands over Sean in bed, watching his fitful sleep.

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

She lies on her bed, fully clothed. Drugless and unhinged.

A PIERCING SHRILL jolts her -- the SMOKE ALARM again. She jumps up on the bed, reaches the ceiling alarm and pushes its off button. It keeps going, an INCESSANT SHRIEK...

Julie uncaps it and wrenches out the battery. Silence.

She jumps down and paces, stressed to her limit. Glances up at the corner cobweb: a spider feeds on a trapped fly.

JULIE

Shit. Shit! *Shit!*

Desperate to escape, she grabs her shoes.

INT. JULIE'S PICKUP (MOVING)

Julie burns rubber away from the house. She speeds through the suburb canyon, tires SCREECHING around a bend, almost running over the roadside cross by the canyon drop.

Down the road, the Motel Six. Julie drives into its apron and parks. She lights up a cigarette, taking solace in it. Reaches for her cell and speed-punches a number...

A FILTERED PHONE VOICE ON SPEAKER MODE...

TERRY'S VOICE

Hello?

JULIE

Terry? I'm sorry to bother you.

TERRY'S VOICE

Jeez, it's the middle of the night.

Julie takes a deep drag, gazing at the motel vacancy sign in a veil of cigarette smoke.

TERRY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

What's wrong, Julie?

JULIE

I dunno...I'm supposed to take care of these kids, but I can't even take care of *myself*.

TERRY'S VOICE

Okay, try to stay in control...

JULIE

Terry. I didn't ditch Jason in Las Vegas. He ditched *me*. We were trying to have a baby, but...I'm sterile. As if I could actually raise a kid on my own...

(agonizing)

I keep seeing my brother Billy. It'll be his death day soon.

TERRY'S VOICE

Hey, don't go there. You were just a *child*, Julie, there was nothing you could've done about that--

JULIE

I could've saved him! But I couldn't dive...too scared to go down after him. All I could do was watch him *drown*.

Her emotional floodgates burst open, tears flowing.

TERRY'S VOICE

Julie, take it easy. You want me to come over?

JULIE

No. Thanks, Ter. Sorry, I just needed to vent on someone...

(a deep breath)

I'm all right now. I've gotta go back. I can't leave them alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POOL AREA - DAY

Another sunny summer day. Crows perch atop the roof like vultures, holding vigil over the scene below...

Julie holds a tape measure over barren turf. Across the yard, Sean holds the other end. Melissa camrecords them from a patio lounge chair.

SEAN

I don't get what you're doing.

JULIE

Landscaping, I told you. I gotta excavate the grounds first.

SEAN

Why?

JULIE

It's all out of balance.

She marks off the ground with a can of red spray paint.

SEAN

So you're gonna dig it all up?

JULIE

Sure, then I'll replant it. You can let go now.

Sean releases the recoiling tape. Julie spray-paints the width between pool and fence. She glimpses toward...

A mound of fresh dirt by the tomato pot.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Oh great. We've got gophers now. I'll have to dig them out, too.

She notices Sean, gazing at her with a strange look.

Melissa pans her camcorder view around the grounds, then suddenly bolts up and points.

MELISSA

Snake!

A rattlesnake slithers out between the plants, weaving across the pool cement. Julie and Sean freeze.

Disoriented, the snake twists toward the pool -- then drops straight into the water.

The three venture over and gape down...

The rattler sinks like a rock. They watch it settle on the pool's bottom, looking very dead.

JULIE

I didn't know they sank like that.

She regards the two of them, gloomy eyes fixed on the pool.

JULIE (CONT'D)

We need a break from this house.
Let's get outta here.

INT. JULIE'S PICKUP (MOVING) - DAY

Julie drives with the windows open, wind blowing her hair. The kids are scrunched beside her, a bit disoriented.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Julie pumps gas. The kids watch her from the cab window.

JULIE

Feels good to get out, doesn't it? Maybe we oughta go somewhere. What did y'all do last summer?

MELISSA

Nothin'. Mom died.

Sean flits her a dark look.

JULIE

Oh. Sorry. Where was your dad?

SEAN

He wasn't around. He's never around.

INT. PICKUP IN CAR WASH - LATER

Julie drives into A self-car wash. She brakes and rolls up the windows. Sean sits window side, Melissa in the middle.

JULIE
Y'know what would be really cool?
Colorado. Shootin' the rapids.

SEAN
You've done that?

Julie nods. Outside the windows, hydrojets spray the truck.

JULIE
Maybe we could take a long trip.

MELISSA
Sweet. Like a vacation?

Soap rollers sud the windshield. Sean stiffens, alarmed.

JULIE
Isn't that what summer's about?

Flailing sponges attack the windows like octopus tentacles, SWISH-THUMP, SWISH-THUMP! Sean cringes back. Julie looks over at him: his face white with fear.

JULIE
Sean? What is it?

Sean seizes the door handle like a trapped animal.

MELISSA
Sean, don't do that...

She grabs his arm, but he fights her to get outside. Bedlam in the cab. Julie reaches over and yanks him back.

JULIE
Sean -- stop it!

SWISH-THUMP, SWISH-THUMP! Sean crouches down to the floor, braced against the dashboard with raw terror...

SEAN
NOOOO!

The rollers suddenly freeze. The car wash's power dead.

Julie slams the suds-covered truck into gear and drives out. Sean weeps on the floor, Melissa holding him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOLGRAVE HOUSE - SEAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sean sleeps restlessly. Julie tenderly strokes his hair, softly singing a Sixties lullaby, *Up On The Roof*...

JULIE

*"If this old world starts gettin'
you down, there's room enough for
two...up...on the...roof..."*

(whispers close)

What is it, darlin'? What're you
so scared of?

MELISSA'S BEDROOM

Melissa is fast asleep, night-lit by her aquarium. Julie picks a blouse off the floor and hangs it in the closet.

An open closet box catches her eye, filled with DVD cases. Home videos, with handwritten labels. Julie leans down and ferrets through the DVD box, peeking closer at the labels...

"MOM AND DAD"..."SEAN AND ME"..."SEAN AND MAX".

Pondering that last name, Julie pulls two of them out.

MASTER BEDROOM

Julie slips *"MOM AND DAD"* into a DVD player under a bedroom TV set. She settles back on the bedside to watch...

A HAND-HELD CAMCORDER VIEW of Peter and his attractive wife JESSICA (30's), lounging by the poolside...

Peter on his cell. Jessica nurses a cocktail, bored. In the water, Sean smacks a pool noodle around. Mom turns to Dad.

JESSICA

*Let's go to Max's barbecue. It's a
holiday, for crying out loud.*

PETER

Jessica, please. This is business.

He keeps talking on the cell. Jessica sulks to herself.

JESSICA

*It's like Siberia out here. Hey,
Sean...throw Dad in the pool.*

Sean splashes Dad's feet. Annoyed, Peter rises and walks off, still on his cell. Sean splashes toward CAMERA.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Don't! Cut it out!

Julie ejects the disc. She checks out the second DVD...

"SEAN AND MAX." She inserts it and hits the remote. Fixes on the TV screen...

Daytime, a STACCATO OF FAST VIDEO CUTS...

Sean at play with MAX (30's), an athletic, handsome man with an amputated lower arm, wearing an ARM PROSTHETIC with a cable-controlled hook for a hand...

Sean and Max, bouncing on the trampoline...Sean and Max, practicing with golf clubs on Max's yard, the one-armed man very adept...Sean and Max, cavorting in the Holgrave pool...

Sean, climbing to the tree house. Max tries to scale up the rope ladder, his two-pronged hook useless on the rungs. A glimpse of frustrated fury on his face...

WE ZOOM IN ON him. Max reacts to CAMERA, menacingly...

MAX

*Shut that damn thing off, Melissa --
or I'll SMASH it!*

SKEWED ANGLE DOWN ON Melissa's feet, running away.

MELISSA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julie sneaks past sleeping Melissa and slips the DVD cases back into the closet box, mulling over them.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

On the couch, Julie flips through the family album, searching for clues. Outside beyond the glass door, the dark pool.

Something occurs to her, in a low mutter...

JULIE

Where's their mom?

No snapshots of Jessica. Julie flips page after page...no Mom. Photos are missing. Julie stares curiously at the blank spaces, her eyelids heavy from exhaustion...

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Fully lit, its water surface cleared of leaves.

The bloated rattlesnake rises in a pool net. Julie heaves it over the back fence. She stares down at the glowing pool...

Thick with algae. Waxy spots stain the bottom, bleeding onto the painted diver's side...as if his arm were severed.

Julie averts her eyes and puts away the pool net. She turns away toward the house -- jolted by a LOUD SPLASH.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Julie twitches awake on the couch, the photo album sliding off her lap. She gazes around with a sigh...another dream. Then she notices something outside...

The pool, *brightly aglow*. Its waters rippling, agitated.

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Julie steps out and ventures toward the poolside, fighting a self-induced fear. She peers over at the bottom to see --

The POOL MAN -- the GARDEN HOSE COILED AROUND HIM like a boa constrictor. Trapped, squirming for his life. *Drowning*.

Julie staggers back. Then turns to see...

Melissa behind the open glass door, watching her in the rippling glow.

MELISSA

Come inside, Julie. You shouldn't be out here at night.

Julie looks back: the pool empty. She collects herself, trying hard to stay calm and sane.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

I couldn't sleep.

JULIE

Who could sleep around here. You wanna try *my* bed?

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Julie settles in bed, Melissa snuggling close beside her.

MELISSA

I had a really freaky dream. You ever seen "Forbidden Planet"?

JULIE

I don't watch a lot of movies. My imagination tends to go into overdrive.

MELISSA

Well, these space guys on a dead planet are getting killed off, and there's this old professor guy...

JULIE

Not a young "guy" like yourself.

MELISSA

Hah hah. Anyway, they think this monster's the killer, but it's the professor, only he doesn't know it. The monster's inside his head.

(looks up)

It wasn't really his fault. It was like, y'know, his *subconscious* made the monster kill people.

JULIE

Wow. Well, it's just a movie. What was your dream about?

MELISSA

I can't explain it. Would it be okay if we didn't talk about it?

JULIE

Sure, whatever. We all have freaky dreams. I know, I've had some doozies.

MELISSA

What if they're not dreams? They feel so real sometimes.

JULIE

Tell me about it. Our brains can play tricks on us, especially if we've had a bad experience. I had a pretty bad one myself.

Melissa snuggles closer, her tired eyes drifting off.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Didn't you ever talk to your mom about this stuff?

MELISSA

No. She stopped caring.

JULIE

Aw, c'mon. A mother loves her kids forever, no matter what.

MELISSA

Not our mother. Julie...how come you don't have any kids?

JULIE

Oh. Well...I can't make babies.

MELISSA

Why not?

JULIE

Medical issues. My body's broken.

She gazes off in troubled thought.

JULIE (CONT'D)

But at least I have you guys. Not
"guys", I mean...

She looks back down...

Melissa is sound asleep.

Julie eases out of bed and covers up her. She turns restless again, her insomnia kicking in.

KITCHEN

Light bleeds into the darkness from the open fridge. Julie rummages into it, desperate for something to drink. Nothing. She checks the freezer and finds a vodka bottle.

A *silhouetted figure* passes by. Julie stiffens up to...

Sean, sleepwalking toward the living room. Julie forgets the vodka and hastens over. She gently turns him around.

JULIE

C'mon, Mr. Holgrave. Beddie bye.

SEAN'S BEDROOM

Tucking Sean into bed, Julie passes a hand over his blankly staring eyes. They close. A low murmur from Sean...

SEAN

I can't stop 'em...they keep coming
back...can't stop 'em...

Agitated R.E.M. Julie studies his quivering eyelids.

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

In bed, Julie lies back beside sleeping Melissa, a bundle of cold-turkey nerves. She forces her eyes closed...

A tranquil beat. Then -- a HELLISH, SCREECHING BUZZ!

GARAGE

Pitch darkness. A flashlight beams around. Julie trembles behind it, searching for the source of the LOUD BUZZ...

JULIE
Who's there?!

The flashlight catches a ghoulish figure --

The GARDENER, his ashen, eyeless face smeared in black soil, his filthy throat slashed open -- holding a BUZZING ELECTRIC PRUNING SHEERS. A gnarled, raspy voice --

GARDENER
Senora! Socorro! Y muerto!

He brandishes the electric shears at her -- BZZZZZ!

FAST-CUT TO:

MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Julie jerks awake to a DOORBELL, noticing Melissa gone.

FRONT DOOR

A magnified eye peers through a peephole. DOORBELL RINGS. In her robe, Julie opens the door to...

DARCY (30's), trimly attired, Stepford Wife perfect.

DARCY
Hey there! You must be Julie. I'm
Darcy. Peter's sister?

Julie stares out at Darcy's brood, piling out of an SUV... her jolly husband BOB (40's) cradling a football, their boisterous pre-ads COREY and CONNER in swim shorts.

DARCY (CONT'D)
Peter asked us to stop by and check
on the kids. That's my hubby, Bob.

BOB
Hey, how-are-ya! These two knuckle
heads are Corey and Conner.

The two boys spill inside and beeline through the house.

KITCHEN

Sean and Melissa eat Cocoa Puffs at the counter. They react to the boys rushing past, displeased. Corey nods at Sean.

COREY
Yo, bro. Wanna play Marco Polo?

Sean shakes her head and takes his bowl to the sink, watching the two dash outside.

EXT. POOL AREA - MORNING

Corey and Conner splash onto the pool steps, then stop.

CONNER

Aw, dang! It's cold!

The pool pump POWERS ON, the wall pipes shuddering. Bubbles GUSH from the pool vent, stirring up clouds of algae.

COREY

Gross. This pool sucks.

They give up and step out. Julie and Darcy appear outside. Bob joins them, reacting to the pool.

BOB

Jeez Louise! Lookit that algae.
I'll get our pool man over here.
(hefts his football)
C'mon guys, let's go scrimmage.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Bob and his pre-ads bustle away to the front door. Darcy enters, Julie in tow. She approaches Sean and Melissa.

DARCY

Hey there! We're going camping
this weekend. It would be great
if you guys could join us.

Sean shrugs. Melissa mumbles "I'm not a guy" to her cereal. Darcy turns to Julie, nods out at the spray-painted yard.

DARCY

What's all that out there?

JULIE

I'm landscaping the yard.

DARCY

Oh...how nice. Nanny landscaper.
Peter's getting a bargain.

Julie returns the faux-smile. Darcy leans in confidentially.

DARCY (CONT'D)

I'm very concerned about Sean
and Melissa, y'know, after what
they've been through. I think we
should take them this weekend.

JULIE

I'll have to ask Mr. Holgrave.

DARCY
Peter could care less. They need
to be with *family*.

Julie eyes the kids: both look unhappy about this.

JULIE
Well, his instructions were that
I'd be with them at all times.

DARCY
Well, they'll be with us instead.

JULIE
I'm not sure if that's a good idea.

DARCY
That's really not your decision.

Sean appear beside Julie, Melissa joining him.

SEAN
I'd rather stay home.

MELISSA
Yeah, Aunt Darcy. Go have fun in
the woods with your psycho twins.

Darcy reacts with a glare. To Julie:

DARCY
I'll talk to Peter.

JULIE
Yeah, you do that.

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - LATER

Car doors slam shut, Darcy's tribe back in the SUV. From the
passenger window, Darcy regards Julie with reservation.

Julie and the kids watch them depart from the front doorway,
eying them like home invaders.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

After-dinner games at the dining table. Julie deals casino
cards to Sean who studies his hand. Melissa videos them.

JULIE
Deal card or hold.

SEAN
I'll hold.

JULIE

Okay. I spy with my little eye...
something tough and seedy.

Melissa lowers her camcorder, scanning the kitchen.

MELISSA

Animal, vegetable or mineral?

JULIE

Vegetable, but tough to eat.

SEAN

And full of seeds. Hah!

He points at a bowl of pomegranates. Spreads his card hand.

SEAN

Blackjack -- *gotcha*. That was too
easy. Let's play for money.

Julie shakes her head and gathers up the cards to re-deal,
Melissa camrecording them.

JULIE

The point is to focus on your cards
while you distract the dealer.

SEAN

Okay. I spy with my little eye...
something wet and wild.

JULIE

Animal, vegetable or mineral?

SEAN

Mineral, but you can't see it.

MELISSA

Unfair. It has to be visible.

SEAN

Whatever. Okay then, I spy with
my little eye...

His eyes pan around then stop, transfixed on the outside...

The pool ripples, its lamp FLICKERING. An UNNATURAL GLOW.

CAMCORDER VIEW: Sean turns to CAMERA, a sinister change in
his eyes.

SEAN

Turn it off.

The VIDEO still on. His face grows vile and twisted...

SEAN (CONT'D)

Turn it off -- or I'll SMASH it.

Julie reacts. Melissa lowers the camera and grips Sean.

MELISSA

Sean, don't...

She shakes him hard, jarring him back to himself. The vile expression melts away, Sean on the verge of tears...

SEAN

It wasn't me -- it was *him*.

MELISSA

C'mon, li'l brother. Bed time.

She rushes him to his feet and ushers him down the hall. Julie stare after them in a quandary.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

Julie walks down the block, smoking a cigarette in troubled thought. She stops before...

The small *cross* on the roadside, withered flowers around it. A hand-scrawled name on the cross: *JESSICA HOLGRAVE*.

Julie stares down over the steep canyon ridge. SOUNDS in her head...A CRASHING CAR. Grimacing, she glances around at...

The Holgrave house, a half-block away. In clear view.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

Julie walks home and crosses the front yard. Sprinklers spurt on from the lawn, *SHT-SHT-SHT-SHT-SHT*, chasing her. Dodging the sprinkler jets, Julie stops before the house and the Mercedes on the driveway. She stares up at...

Crows on the rooftop, dozens of them lining the roof's edge.

A *dark figure* flits across the rooftop behind them, then skitters out of sight.

Julie peers closer, then notices...

The garage door is up, the darkened garage wide open.

INT. GARAGE

Julie flicks on a light, scanning the area...

Neat and orderly, except for a grubby bag packed with garden tools. Julie peers into it, noticing...

The *electric sheers* from her dream, its blades encrusted with DRIED BLOOD. She gingerly picks it up...

The driveway Mercedes WAILS AN ALARM. Headlights flash on, illuminating the garage floor -- OLD, BLACKENED BLOOD STAINS streaked across it. Julie drops the shears.

The garage door RUMBLES closed, shutting her inside. The light POPS out -- plunging her into blackness.

SOUNDS OF GROPING, WHIMPERS, SOBS, BUMPING INTO SOMETHING -- BZZZZZZ! TERRIFIED SHRIEKS, RISING UP THE SCALE.

FAST-CUT TO:

EXT. HOLGRAVE HOUSE - DAY

A garbage truck's prongs STAB into the underside of a trash dumpster, lifting it in. The truck moves on to reveal...

Julie, a haggard figure. She stares at the Chalmers house across the street. Making a decision, she crosses over.

INT. CHALMERS HOUSE - DAY

Julie is led into the living room by Mr. and Mrs. Chalmers from earlier, a chatty, easy-going couple.

JULIE

Sorry about this, I didn't wanna to bother Mr. Holgrave. I just need a good electrician.

MR. CHALMERS

Not a problem. Our guy's the best. I'll give you his number.

He writes on a post-it. The two women trade polite smiles.

JULIE

I haven't seen Beth around much.

MRS. CHALMERS

Oh y'know, teenagers. Always off somewhere, up to no good.

Mr. Chalmers hands Julie the post-it. The couple walks her to the front door.

JULIE

Thanks. We lost our pool man and our gardener, too.

MR. CHALMERS

Good help is hard to find. Peter always had trouble with that...

MRS. CHALMERS

Except for Max. He always fixed things around their house.

That stops Julie. She turns.

JULIE

Max?

MRS. CHALMERS

Guy next door, the house for sale. He used to be a chiropractor.

MR. CHALMERS

Lost his arm in a diving accident, had one of those prosthetic things.

MRS. CHALMERS

He was on disability. Didn't have much to do except kill time.

JULIE

"Max", huh? Did he move away?

MRS. CHALMERS

Well, no. He died last summer. The realtors haven't even cleaned out his house yet.

MR. CHALMERS

No wife, no next of kin.

He opens the front door for Julie. She lingers.

JULIE

So, uh...Max spent a lot of time at the Holgrave house?

MRS. CHALMERS

Oh yes, he was a very outgoing guy.

A beat, Julie waiting to hear more.

MR. CHALMERS

Well, we've got a busy day. Not all of us have time to kill.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Julie crosses the street, pondering the next-door house with the "FOR SALE" sign. *The House of Max.*

EXT. POOL - DAY

A NEW POOL MAN sucks up the last of the pool's algae with an underwater vacuum. Its waters crystal clear.

SAME SCENE - LATER

The grounds are cleared of bark chips. Julie overturns soil with a shovel, layers of exposed dirt all around her.

In the tree house, Melissa camvideos her Operation Poolscape. Sean practices his golf swing, eying Julie below.

Julie moves aside the tomato plant and ponders the earth mound beside it. She pokes the shovel at it.

SEAN

You're gonna dig up *everything*?

JULIE

All of it. It'll look great.

SEAN

Dad's not gonna like it.

JULIE

It's what he hired me to do.

SEAN

He won't like it. He doesn't like anything.

Julie glances up at Sean, idly swinging the golf club.

JULIE

No hitting balls into yards, okay?

SEAN

I know.

JULIE

Where did you get that golf bag?
From the guy next door? "Max"?

Sean stops dead with a stricken frown. Melissa lowers her camcorder, a grim tension between them.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You played a lot of golf together?

No reply. Sean swings the club harder, slicing the air...

Water pipes SHAKE, the generator WHINING in overdrive. The vent BUBBLES into the pool.

JULIE

I'm talking about you and Max.

MELISSA

Can we just not talk at all?

JULIE

Sorry. Gawd. Just asking.

She goes back to shoveling dirt, away from the earth mound.

The water pressure winds down, the SOUNDS SETTling.

In the tree house, Sean tosses aside the club with a sulk. Melissa moodily powers off her camcorder.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A sci-fi flick on the giant TV screen: "*Forbidden Planet.*" Alone on the couch, Julie watches the climax...

Professor Moebius cringes before a molten door barrier. An unseen monster lasers its way in to destroy the cast. The Professor falls dead. The destruction ceases.

Julie gazes at the screen, deep in thought.

Sean appears before her in pajamas, staring at the movie. Julie turns it off.

JULIE (CONT'D)

What's up, kiddo?

SEAN

Nothin'.

JULIE

You wanna talk?

SEAN

I dunno. You ever get real sad?
Like the world's gonna end?

JULIE

All the time, but it never does.

SEAN

Ever wonder what it's like to die?

JULIE

Don't think about that. C'mere,
Sean. Sit with me.

Sean plunks down beside her, glum and distracted.

JULIE
What's really bothering you?

Sean tries to say something, but the words won't come out.

JULIE (CONT'D)
You can trust me. We're buddies
now, right?

SEAN
That's only because Dad pays you
to like us.

JULIE
I don't get paid to *like* you, I
just do. I mean, I could sort of
be like your mom.

SEAN
Don't be like her.

JULIE
Why not?

SEAN
She was a slut.

JULIE
Sean! Don't say things like that.

Sean tears up. He suddenly throws his arms around her.

SEAN
I'm sorry...I wish I were dead...

JULIE
(hugs him back)
Oh hush now.

SEAN
Please don't leave us. If you go,
it's only gonna get worse.

Julie squeezes him tight, feeling sorry for him.

JULIE
Hon, I'm not going anywhere.

SEAN
You swear?

JULIE
Cross my heart and hope to...

She stops herself. A beat, the two deep in their embrace.

MELISSA'S BEDROOM CLOSET - LATER

A flashlight beams over the closet DVD box. Julie scans the labels, glancing back at sleeping Melissa. She finds one hidden far in the back... "MOM AND MAX."

MASTER BEDROOM

Julie slips the "MOM AND MAX" disc into the DVD player. She works the remote and watches the TV screen...

A DAY VIEW of the yard, ANGLED DOWN from the tree house...

Max plucks a pomegranate from the neighbor's tree with his prosthetic hook. He takes it to Jessica on a lounge chair. They flirt, unaware of CAMERA. WE TILT DOWN TO...

Sean hiding behind the jacuzzi, eavesdropping on them...

The two adults suck pomegranate seeds with seductive looks and spit them out, laughing together...

Max suddenly spots Sean watching them.

MAX

Hey! What the hell ya doin'?!

Sean flees. Max bolts after him around the pool.

JESSICA

Max, don't! Leave him alone!

Max catches Sean...

MAX

Gotcha!

He shoves him hard into the pool. SPLASH!

A GRAVELLY SOUND distracts Julie. She pauses the DVD.

EXT. BACK PATIO - NIGHT

She steps out and scans the yard...the SOUND OVERHEAD, from the rooftop. A RUMBLE OF GRAVEL like a body being dragged.

Julie peers up at the dark roof and turns toward the roof ladder. Then stops with relief...

A raccoon climbs down the rungs and scampers away.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Julie focuses back on the TV screen. She hits the remote and watches...

A SERIES OF CHOPPY NIGHT CUTS, a HIGH ANGLE from the tree house, AIMED DOWN ON two pool-lit figures...

Max and Jessica, having rough sex in the bubbling jacuzzi...

Max and Jessica, running naked out of the sauna together like conspirators...

Max and Jessica lying by the pool in moonlight, the armless neighbor caressing the wife's back with his good hand.

Julie watches with fascinated dread. The bed lamp FLICKERS, the TV powers out -- the bedroom goes dark.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - NIGHT

Julie throws open the flashlit fuse box and switches the breakers back on. She heads back inside. WE PAN AWAY TO...

The earth mound...collapsed down into a deep, muddy hole, like a sunken grave. Crows peck hungrily at it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Terry enters from the side gate, wearing a tanktop, pushing a potted hibiscus tree on a dolly. Julie saunters over.

JULIE

Thanks for coming over, Ter.

TERRY

Well, you paid for these.

JULIE

Yeah, the power of platinum.

SAME SCENE - LATER

Julie trims new hibiscus trees. Terry cuts old shrub roots with a BUZZING power saw and rips them out. He switches it off and scans the yard. Nods at erected tiki lamps.

TERRY

What exactly are you going for here? Tropical kitsch?

JULIE

Polynesian.

Sean and Melissa appear on the patio. Both stiffen at the sight of the handsome hunk beside their nanny.

Julie turns and beckons to them.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Hey nightcrawlers, c'mon out.

The kids shuffle hesitantly over, staring at the stranger.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Sean and Melissa, this is Terry.

TERRY
Hey, Melissa. Hey, Sean.

No response from them, just stares.

JULIE
They're shy around strangers.

Melissa suddenly bolts back to the house.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Melissa!

Melissa disappears inside. Sean starts to edge away.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Nuh-uh, you stay put.

Sean fixes his wary eyes on Terry. Julie puts on a smile.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Be a sweetie and bring us a couple
of bottled waters, okay?

Sean heads reluctantly back into the kitchen. Julie turns.

JULIE (CONT'D)
See what I mean?

TERRY
Raging hormones.

JULIE
Terry. I found some home videos.
Their mom was screwing a neighbor
next door before she died. The
kids know. Every dirty detail...

TERRY
Whoa. You better stay out of it.

JULIE
I'm responsible for them.

TERRY
Just don't get too involved. Don't
go snooping on that neighbor...

JULIE

I can't, Ter. He's dead. I think Sean's haunted by him somehow.

Terry gives her a look.

JULIE

I'm not on meds. I'm serious. I think he's possessed or something.

Sean emerges from the house. Terry leans into Julie.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Look, if things get out of hand, you call me, okay?

Julie nods. Sean arrives with two squirt-top water bottles.

Terry gestures down at the *sunken hole*, full of watery mud.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You've got an underground leak here. I'll see what I can do...

He strips off his tanktop, kneels down to the hole and gropes into it. Julie takes the water bottles from Sean.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Thanks. Terry, wanna hydrate?

Terry rises and grabs a bottle. They drink together.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You look good. Pumping iron?

TERRY

Anything to get their attention.

Sean frowns at their flirting, his face rigid.

Julie squirts Terry's bare chest with her water bottle.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Hey, I still don't swing that way.

He squirts her back, soaking her top. They chuckle together, Terry throwing a friendly arm around her shoulder...

SEAN

DON'T YOU TOUCH HER!

Julie and Terry turn, stunned. The boy trembles with fear.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Go away! Get away from my house!

The underground leak ERUPTS, water gushing out of the hole.
Julie hurries over and grips the boy.

JULIE

Sean, what's the matter?

The saw BUZZES ON, jerking spasmodically on the ground toward Terry -- he jumps out of its way.

SEAN

I don't WANT him here!

JULIE

C'mon, stop acting out...

She grapples with him. He shouts over her shoulder...

SEAN

Go away, you DIRTY PIG!

Julie slaps his face hard. Stung, Sean comes to his senses. He clutches Julie tight, tears forming...

SEAN (CONT'D)

Make him go away! *Please!*

The underground flooding stops. Terry kicks off the ignition and picks up the power saw, puzzling over it.

Sean weeps pathetically in Julie's arms. She comforts him.

JULIE

Hush now...it's okay...it's okay.

TERRY

I'll come back another time.

JULIE

I'm so sorry, Ter.

Terry collects his gear and leaves by the side gate.

Julie grips Sean's shoulders, looking him in the eyes.

JULIE

Sean. What's gotten into you?

SEAN

I wasn't gonna hurt him...it just happened...

He bursts into sobs. Julie holds him, trying to fathom him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURB STREET - DAY

A man washes his car. Another barbecues. Housewives mingle between lawns. Kids play street ball. Normal suburbia.

EXT. HOLGRAVE BACK YARD

Not here. The excavated landscape looks like an unearthed graveyard. Cobwebs intrude between newly planted hibiscuses. Everything familiar seems sinister.

Julie paces alone around the patio, on her cell phone.

JULIE

No Peter Holgrave? Are you sure?
This *is* the Marriot.

OPERATOR'S VOICE

Yes, madam. But we have no guest
here by that name.

Baffled by that, Julie switches off and paces restlessly. She glances up at a swarm of crows congregating on the roof.

ROOFTOP

Julie mounts the roof stairs. The crows scatter airborne over the A.C. unit and resettle behind it, out of view. She starts to move toward the front roof, distracted by...

Max's next-door house. Its broken window.

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - LATER

HIGH VIEW from the front rooftop, an eavesdropper's POV:

Julie talks to Beth across the street, pleading with her.

The babysitter finally relents and approaches the house. Julie veers off down the sidewalk toward...

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE - DAY

A side yard, leading to the broken window. Julie looks furtively around, then steals toward the window. She clears away its glass shards and hoists herself up onto the sill.

INT. MAX'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A shadowy sportsman's abode, furniture covered in sheets.

Julie climbs in through the window. She scans a wall of golf trophies, deer mounts, chiropractic diplomas. Photos of an athletic Max, posing with women. Another photo of Max in scuba gear.

Julie creeps toward a covered desk. She pulls away a sheet, revealing: an arm prosthetic, its hook curved with movable pincers, elastic cables attached.

She picks it up and pulls a cable -- its pincers SNAP at her. Julie tosses it away from her.

She opens a drawer and rifles through its clutter. Postcards of exotic places, casino chips, condoms. Polaroid shots... a sexy *Jessica* in naked poses.

Julie picks one up: the adulterous wife, happily liberated. She stares at it, transfixed. FAINT VOICES WHISPER...

A WOMAN'S SOBS...A MAN'S SNARL, "*Shut up, ya li'l slut!*"

Julie drops the photo and edges back, flushed with fear, the air suffocating her. She retreats to the broken window.

EXT. MAX'S BACK YARD - DAY

Julie climbs down from the open window. She starts for the street, then stops...

A couple of housewives chat on the sidewalk.

Julie backpedals into the back yard, past the trampoline to the Holgraves' wall. She starts to scale it...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hello?

Jolted, Julie loses her footing and lands back on the ground.

Old neighbor Agatha stares at her from a ladder above the wall of the next house over. A British accent...

AGATHA

What are you doing there? Are you trespassing?

JULIE

No...I'm just looking around.

AGATHA

You're the Holgraves' caretaker.

JULIE

Yeah. I'm Julie.

AGATHA

Agatha. Care for a cup of tea?

JULIE

Oh, uh...no. No thanks.

Agatha nods toward Max's house.

AGATHA
Wouldn't you like to know about
him?

INT. AGATHA'S DINING ROOM - LATER

A teapot WHISTLES. Julie sits at a dining table, scanning a clutter of dusty Victorian antiques. Agatha fills two cups through a tea strainer.

AGATHA
It's a special herbal remedy, with
chamomile. Calms the spirit.

She brings the cups over and sits with her, clearing aside news clippings by an old photo album. Julie takes a cup.

JULIE
Thank you.

The old woman dumps endless spoonfuls of sugar into her cup. Julie watches her stir her tea in maddening circles.

JULIE (CONT'D)
You live here alone?

AGATHA
Widowed for twenty-two years. I
usually keep to myself...until this
nasty business with the Holgraves.

JULIE
You mean, Max?

AGATHA
He was always at their house when
when Mr. Holgrave wasn't around...

She leans over the table with conspiratorial eyes...

AGATHA (CONT'D)
With Mrs. Holgrave. I heard those
two at night, like a pair of cats
in heat...and dreadful quarrels,
while those poor children slept.
(shrugs)
Oh, I'm sure Max was bitter over
losing his arm. His career was
finished, after all. But that
man had the devil in him. Then
there was the car accident...

She opens the album and flips through newspaper cutouts.

JULIE
Jessica's accident?

AGATHA
 Jessica and Max, dear. They were
 in the same car together...

She slides over a news photo: a crushed BMW in a canyon.
Jaws-of-life brace open a warped door, firemen leaning into
 it. Bloodied legs protrude from inside.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
 She was dead when they found them,
 but Max was still breathing. He
 died later at the hospital.

JULIE
 My gawd. Did Mr. Holgrave know?

AGATHA
 Not until then. You know what I
 think? He came home and saw them
 together...then he rammed her BMW
 into the canyon with his Mercedes.
 It happened just down the street.

Julie stares aghast at her. Agatha goes on, relentlessly...

AGATHA (CONT'D)
 The perfect murder. Unless there
 were witnesses...the *children*
 perhaps.

Julie rises, starting to feel sick.

JULIE
 I think I should be going.

AGATHA
 Are you all right, dear?

JULIE
 Thanks for the tea.

AGATHA
 Couldn't you stay a while longer?
 It gets awfully lonely here.

JULIE
 I can't leave the kids too long.

AGATHA
 No, of course not. You *must* watch
 over them. Guard them with your
 life.

INT. HOLGRAVE HOUSE - LATER

Julie hurries into the living room and looks around.

JULIE

Beth? Beth, are you here?

No answer.

BEDROOM HALL

Julie hastens down the hall. TV SOUNDS from Sean's room. She starts to knock on his door, then hesitates. Turns and raps lightly on Melissa's door.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Can I have some privacy!

JULIE

Melissa, where's the babysitter?

MELISSA (O.S.)

I haven't seen her.

Julie frowns quizzically at that.

EXT. BACK YARD - LATE DAY

The kids play in the tree house over the torn-up poolscap.

SIDE OF HOUSE

An ELECTRICIAN inspects the open fuse box, Julie behind him.

ELECTRICIAN

This circuitry's way out of date.

JULIE

Well, do the best you can.

A HOUSE PHONE RINGS, from the master bedroom.

ELECTRICIAN

I'll have to turn the breakers off.

JULIE

Okay. I gotta go...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Julie runs in through a shortcut from the bathroom's sliding door. She hastens to the bedside phone and answers it.

JULIE

Holgrave residence.

PETER'S VOICE

Julie, it's me.

JULIE

Mr. Holgrave! I called you at the Marriot, but you weren't there.

PETER'S VOICE

I moved over to Holland Park. Why did you call?

JULIE

I'm having trouble with Sean.

PETER'S VOICE

Is it an emergency?

JULIE

Yeah. It's an emergency.

Silence on the other end. Then...

PETER'S VOICE

Let me talk to him.

JULIE

I think we should talk first.

PETER'S VOICE

Look, Julie. I know Sean can be a problem sometimes...

JULIE

A *problem*? You have no idea...

PETER'S VOICE

Just put him on the phone.

Exasperated, Julie sets the phone down and takes the bathroom shortcut to outside. She stops, reacting to...

Sean, standing there with a dark frown.

JULIE

Your dad wants to talk to you.

Sean stares tensely at the phone, then shuffles over to it. Julie leaves to give him privacy.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

The Electrician switches off the circuit breakers and lifts off the fuse-box casing, exposing a jumble of wires.

Julie crosses to the tree-house ladder and looks up.

JULIE

Melissa? Your father's on the phone. You wanna say hi?

Perched above with her camcorder, Melissa shakes her head.

Julie notices the garden hose lying across the excavation, trembling on full power, its pressure blocked by a knot.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Did you turn the hose on?

MELISSA

Not me. You used it last.

Julie goes to turn it off, then stops, distracted by SEAN'S MUFFLED SHOUTING from inside the house.

She draws close to the living-room glass door and cracks it open, listening to his MUTED, ANGRY VOICE...

SEAN (O.S.)

No, Dad...I'm not gonna do that!

By the side wall, the Electrician sorts through fuse wires. Behind him, the hose vibrates with building pressure.

Julie leans into the living room, straining to hear...

SEAN (O.S.)

You can't make us go live with Aunt Darcy -- I don't WANT to!

The hose knot unravels by itself. The nozzle end suddenly floods on -- a high-powered jet of water shoots out, the hose snaking wildly.

SEAN (O.S.)

You're always avoiding me! You don't give a shit about me...

Julie turns to see the hose twisting out of control. She hurries over to it.

SEAN (O.S.)

It's your fault Mom died!

The fuse box's circuit breakers suddenly SWITCH BACK ON...

SEAN (O.S.)

I wish you were DEAD!

The hose nozzle flies up like a cobra head -- SPRAYS the Electrician and the live wires.

He jerks from a SPARK-FLYING SHOCK -- falls backwards.

JULIE

Omigod!

She grabs the flailing hose and locks the nozzle head.

The Electrician lies dazed on the ground. Julie runs over.

JULIE

Are you okay?!

ELECTRICIAN

Hell no I'm not okay!

From the tree house, Melissa's CAMCORDER VIEW: Julie helps the shaken man to his feet.

JULIE

I'm so sorry...it was an accident!

ELECTRICIAN

Christ, lady -- I could've been killed! I was just lucky...

He switches off the circuit breakers. Julie turns, suddenly worried. She dashes into the house.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Dark, the power off. Julie finds Sean hunched over the bedside, the phone in hand. A voice cracked with emotion...

SEAN

He hung up on me.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Tranquil suburbia. The subdued-lit Holgrave house.

INT. BEDROOM HALL - NIGHT

Julie tries to open Sean's door...it's locked. She knocks.

JULIE

Sean, open the door. Please?

No reply. Melissa emerges from her bedroom, her eyes red and puffy from crying.

MELISSA

You shouldn't let him talk to Dad.

JULIE

What's wrong now?

MELISSA

Darcy is taking us away tomorrow...
Dad's probably gonna fire you.

Brimming with tears, she retreats back into her room and SLAMS the door. Julie stares, heartbroken.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

New ground lights border the excavation. Tiki lamps burn dimly. Cobwebs infest the yard, the sunken hole a muddy pit.

On the patio table sits the half-empty vodka bottle from the freezer. Julie downs a shot glass, stressed out to the max. She speed-punches a number on her cell. ON SPEAKER MODE...

A FILTERED RECORDING, "Hi, this is Terry's Landscaping. Please leave a message." Julie waits for the BEEP, then...

JULIE

Terry...can you come by tomorrow?
I've gotta talk to someone.

She clicks off, in a terrible state. Looks down at...

A white Prozac tablet in her open palm. Conflicted for a beat, she swallows it and chases it down with vodka.

INT. SAUNA - LATER

Tiny and cramped, lit by an orange lightbulb. Julie sits on a wood bench in her bikini, drug-sedated. She lies back, absorbing heat from an electric grid. Closes her eyes...

The lightbulb dims. The heating grid glows *bright red*.

She opens her eyes, squirming in discomfort. Rises to check the timer meter...it's off. Then she turns, glimpsing a DISTANT APPARITION through the door window...

A BLURRED MALE FACE, faintly lit by a flickering tiki lamp. Shadowy, twisted, malevolent.

Julie turns away, fighting off the vision. It's getting too hot inside. She turns back to open the sauna door...

It's stuck. She struggles with it. It won't budge. She slams her full weight against it...

JULIE

C'mon!...

Trapped in a burning oven, she rams harder against it in a growing panic...

Then throws her whole body against it -- WHAM! The door flies open, off its hinges.

EXT. EXCAVATED YARD - NIGHT

Julie beelines to the side entrance and tugs at the sliding bathroom door...it's locked. Fighting fear with anger, she marches around toward the patio...

The ground lights SPATTER OUT. A shroud of moonlit gloom, the excavated turf lit only by tiki firelight.

Julie gropes to get her bearings in the dark, plows through a cobweb. She flails it away and loses her footing into --

The *mud-filled hole*. Her legs sink into gunk, one foot jammed down deep. She topples over, paralyzed, struggling to reach under the mud to free her trapped foot.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Goddammit!...

A DISEMBODIED WHISPER jolts her --

MAX'S VOICE

Shut up, ya li'l slut!

A DECAYED CORPSE HAND JUTS OUT of the mud and GRIPS her leg -- attached to an unseen buried body. In sheer terror, Julie wrenches clear and jumps away from the hole...

She races around the glowing pool, toward the rope ladder...

TREE HOUSE

Julie scrambles up the ladder, then yanks it up after her.

She hides on the platform like a scared little girl, hugging her knees to her chest, her eyes shut tight...

JULIE

It's not real...it's not real!...

Fighting for composure, she peers down over the edge:

The lit pool, undisturbed. Something else out of place...

The *opened jacuzzi*, its tarp completely removed.

POOL YARD - LATER

A flashlight beams over the muddy hole.

Steeling herself, Julie kneels and reaches her hand deep into the mud, searching. She feels something and wrenches out...

A soggy root, the size of a hand. She tosses it aside and rises, fighting for sanity. Her eyes turn toward...

The jacuzzi. Uncovered, its dark waters still.

Julie steps over and stares down at it. She flips a switch. It POWERS UP, working fine, its tub lights flickering on.

A churning froth obscures the bottom. Julie listens to its SWISHING WHIR, her memory jogged...

INT. KITCHEN (FLASHCUT) - NIGHT

The blender's SWISH-WHIR...Melissa YELPS, dropping the glass.

INT. PICKUP IN CAR WASH (FLASHCUT) - DAY

The soap rollers' SWISH-THUMP...Sean panics in the pickup.

BACK TO SCENE

Julie leans over the bubbling cauldron, peering down into the whipped foam. Under the suds, barely discernible...

A FLOATING FACE. It slowly turns, revealing Julie's own death face, gaping up with an "O"-shaped mouth of surprise. The vision fades, clouding under the swirling waters.

Julie flicks off the power, unhinged. The hydrojets clear, revealing an empty bottom. She edges away from it...

SPLASH! Galvanized, Julie dashes over to the pool's deep end and gapes down at --

SEAN'S UNCONSCIOUS BODY, plummeting down to the green-lit bottom. A YOUNG GIRL'S BUBBLED GASP...

YOUNG JULIE'S VOICE

B-B-BILLY!

Sean sinks down to the grinning diver and octopus, his eyes open wide in a trance.

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door flies open, Julie wild-eyed in her swim suit, staring into...

Darkness, Sean asleep in bed. Julie watches him, entwined in twisted bedsheets, his eyelids fluttering in violent R.E.M. She backs away, on the edge of madness.

LIVING ROOM

In a fireplace hearth, soot trickles down from above.

Julie searches frantically for her car keys, then spots them on a table by the couch. She hastens over, jarred by...

SCRATCHING SOUNDS close by. She turns toward --

The *POOL MAN* outside the sliding door, smothered in dirt, his cadaverous eyes fixed on her -- *CLAWING* at the glass.

Julie staggers back in alarm...

The soiled, dead-eyed *GARDENER* appears beside him -- *BANGING* on the door like a desperate zombie, rattling the glass.

Julie grabs her keys and runs madly to the front door...

JULIE

Not real, not real, not real!...

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - NIGHT

Julie shuts the door behind her, gasping for air, staring around the deserted suburban street. Quiet, peaceful.

She hastens down the driveway toward her pickup, close past the parked Mercedes --

A *DECAYED HAND* shoots out from the open car window --

DEAD-EYED JESSICA grips Julie's arm from the driver's seat, her skull crushed in. A *DEATH-RATTLED VOICE*...

JESSICA

DON'T LEAVE THEM ALONE!

Julie yanks free and recoils, gaping back deliriously.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

Julie jumps in, locks the door and jams her keys into the ignition. She stops, her conscience battling impulse...

Then breaks down in broken sobs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - MORNING

Crows crowd the roof's edge, squawking and squabbling.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MORNING

Julie sleeps fitfully across the front seat in her bikini. A *TAP* on the window startles her awake. She peers up at...

Sean and Melissa, outside the passenger window.

MELISSA

Julie, come out. We need you.

SEAN

The power's off again.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - MORNING

A disheveled Julie switches all the dead circuits back on.

INT. DINING AREA - MORNING

At the dining table, Melissa opens up her camcorder. Sean picks at a pop tart. Julie sits across from them in a daze, dressed. Dark-eyed, weary beyond exhaustion.

MELISSA

The neighbors called. Beth didn't come home yesterday.

SEAN

So what. She's run away from home three times. She told me so.

MELISSA

My camcorder's not working.
(eying Julie)
Are you okay?

JULIE

Yeah. Just great. Did you check the battery level?

MELISSA

Duh. No, someone messed with it. Sean, did you hurt my camcorder?

SEAN

Get real. Why would I do that?

EXT. POOL AREA - AFTERNOON

Summery and hot. The kids climb up into the tree house.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Julie watches them from the glass door, deep in tormented thought.

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Julie watches the TV screen, Melissa's "MOM AND MAX" video...

Jessica and Max in the lit pool. A midnight bout of drunken bickering between them, Jessica frantic...

JESSICA

Let's get away from here -- don't
be such a coward!

MAX

Shut up!

He smacks her hard across the face.

Riveted, Julie can't take her eyes off the screen.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Exasperated, she switches it off.

FRONT DOOR

Julie opens the door to Darcy's husband Bob, standing there
with his two pool-ready offspring.

BOB

Surprise!

Corey and Conner bolt inside. Bob hustles past Julie.

BOB (CONT'D)

Y'mind if they take a quick dip?

Julie glares after them. Darcy ambles up the driveway.

DARCY

I talked to Peter. He agreed to
let us take the kids. It's all
been arranged.

Julie gazes dully at her. Darcy glances over her.

DARCY (CONT'D)

You look like hell.

EXT. POOL AREA - AFTERNOON

In the tree house, Sean and Melissa stare down at their
cousins heading straight for the pool. Bob kneels down at
the poolside and tests the water.

BOB

I guess our pool guy did his job.

The boys plunge in. Splashing, frolicking, "Marco...Polo!"

Watching their irresistible fun, Melissa trades looks with
Sean. On an impulse, she quickly climbs down.

Julie and Darcy step outside. Melissa zips past them into
the house. Julie frowns back at her.

DARCY

They need to get away from this house. Be with other kids.

JULIE

Whatever. They're not my kids.

DARCY

You're done here. Think you could pack some travel bags for them?

JULIE

Sure.

Resigned to it, she turns back to the house. Reacts to...

Melissa, hurrying back outside -- in a bathing suit.

JULIE

Melissa? You're kidding...

Surprised by her. Sean descends from the ladder, watching his sister gingerly approach the pool's steps.

COREY

Hurry up, you guys!

MELISSA

I'm not a "guy".

She inches cautiously in, step by step, an epic struggle. Then jumps in -- SPLASH! She surfaces with a gasp.

Julie watches her, somewhat amazed.

JULIE

Way to go, girl. Just stay away from the deep end.

MELISSA

Yeah, you don't have to tell me.

Julie smiles and heads inside. She lingers at the kitchen doorway, eying the whole scene...

Melissa splashes with her cousins. "Marco...Polo!" Sean watches them glumly. Bob and Darcy lifeguard. Everyone preoccupied, Julie forgotten.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Julie rummages in a closet, pulling out suitcases.

The dormant TV draws her eye. She closes the door. Hits the remote, refocusing back on the TV screen...

The pool at night, VIDEOCAMMED FROM the tree house above...

Max and Jessica's quarreling accelerates. He pushes her underwater, stopped by...

SEAN (O.S.)
DON'T YOU TOUCH HER!

MELISSA (O.S.)
Sean, no! Oh gawd -- he's coming!

Max leaps out of the pool toward us, his arm prosthetic swinging by his side. Jessica weeps in the water.

Max snarls furiously up at CAMERA...

MAX
Ya shitty little spies...

He tries futilely to climb the rope ladder, his hand hook preventing him. A lather of rage, his face upward...

MAX (CONT'D)
I'll get you BOTH!

A TELEPHOTO VIEW TIGHT ON his twisted, vicious face.

Julie hits pause, unable to watch any more. She stares at Max's frozen image...

The door opens -- Melissa flies in, all happy and wet.

MELISSA
Hey Julie, come swim with me!

She sees Max's snarling face. An EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM!

JULIE
Oh gawd!...

Sean hurries in from the bathroom's outside door. He stops dead and stares at the screen.

Melissa SHRIEKS hysterically, out of control. Julie powers off the TV and grabs hold of her...

JULIE
Melissa, don't! It's okay, no one's gonna hurt you--

MELISSA
NO, NO, NO, NO!

Sean stands rooted, fixed on the blank TV screen.

Darcy suddenly pops in.

DARCY
What on earth is going on here?!

At the same time, Terry steps inside behind her.

Melissa sees Terry looming in the doorway -- SHRIEKS LOUDER.
Julie clutches her close to her...

JULIE
Melissa, settle down...please...
(to Darcy)
I'm sorry, y'all gotta leave.

DARCY
I'll do no such thing.

Terry turns to Darcy.

TERRY
Maybe you should do what she says.

DARCY
Who the hell are you?

TERRY
That doesn't matter. Julie's in
charge here.

Lost in the commotion, Sean stares strangely at Terry.

DARCY
Sean -- we're leaving. You come
with us right now...

SEAN
No.

DARCY
What did you say?

SEAN
I'm not going! Get the hell out
of our house!

Darcy recoils in shock. Melissa shudders with sobs. Julie
holds her tight, pleading to Darcy.

JULIE
Please go.

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - AFTERNOON

Darcy bustles her family to their SUV, a flustered departure.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Julie lays Melissa on the bed, the girl hyperventilating in trauma. Terry leans in to Melissa, his voice gentle...

TERRY

Melissa? Don't breathe so hard,
okay? Close your eyes and relax.

Melissa shuts her eyes, breathing easier...

TERRY (CONT'D)

That's it...slow, deep breaths.
Thatta girl, you're gonna be fine.

His soothing tone settles her. Julie opens a bedside drawer and pulls out the hidden pouch. Four pills left. She takes out a tablet, leaving the pouch on the bedstand.

TERRY (CONT'D)

What's that?

JULIE

Prozac. My emergency stash.

TERRY

Aw jeez. Give her half a pill.

Julie bites it in half and slips it into Melissa's mouth.

JULIE

It's just a sleeping pill, hon.

Melissa swallows it. Terry turns to Sean.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You okay, son?

The boy stares back at him with confused emotions. Melissa stops shuddering, drifting off. Terry studies her.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Post-traumatic shock.

JULIE

Should I take her to Emergency?

TERRY

Let her rest. Should I stay?

JULIE

No, it's okay.

TERRY

You sure about that?

JULIE
I'm sure. Thanks for coming over,
Terry. I'll call you.

Terry nods. He exits, shooting Sean a trigger finger.

TERRY
You're the man of the house, sport.
Take care of your family here.

Sean reacts curiously to that, his eyes turning to Julie.

EXT. SUBURB STREET - EVENING

Quiet and deserted. Dusk wanes to darkness.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melissa sleeps fitfully, sedated but not at rest.

A quiet vigil at her bedside, Sean gazing at Julie.

SEAN
Is Terry your boyfriend?

JULIE
No, honey. He's gay.

Sean nods pensively. Julie glances at the pill pouch but resists temptation. In control now. She shivers from a chill, rises and opens the bathroom door to outside.

JULIE (CONT'D)
The A.C.'s on too high. I'll be
right back.

LIVING ROOM

She checks the thermostat: completely turned off.

MASTER BEDROOM

Julie walks back in. Stops dead before...

Sean at the powered-on TV, staring at *Max's paused image* on the screen. At that twisted, snarling face.

Julie hurries over and switches it off.

JULIE
Don't look at that, Sean. I'm
gonna burn these videos.

Sean stares at the dark screen, in his own world.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Sean. C'mere...

She takes him gently and sits him down on the bed with her.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You wanna talk to me about him?

Sean lowers his eyes, brooding to himself.

JULIE

I mean, if you don't want to...

SEAN

It's okay.

Julie waits. Sean gazes at sleeping Melissa, saying nothing.

JULIE

You spent a lot of time with Max?

SEAN

Dad was never around. He tore up Mom's pictures, like it was all her fault. If it weren't for him, none of this would've happened.

JULIE

None of what would've happened?

(leans in closer)

Sean, did something happen between Max and your dad? Did...your dad do something bad to Max?

SEAN

No. He didn't do anything.

JULIE

What makes you so sure?

Sean looks at her with anguished eyes.

SEAN

Because...I did.

JULIE

You what?

SEAN

I killed Max.

Julie's eyes widen. Shocked.

JULIE

Honey, don't...

SEAN

I did. Last summer.

JULIE

Sean, you don't mean that.

SEAN

I had to.

He gazes deeply at the TV screen, the memory flooding back...

SEAN (CONT'D)

He was hurting my mom...

EXT. POOL AREA (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

NIGHTMARISH ANGLES, like a home video gone mad...

The kids scramble down the tree-house ladder, drawn to a violent quarrel in the lit, churning jacuzzi.

Jessica pummels at Max with her fists, drunk, out of control. An enraged Max shoves her underwater...

Sean appears at the jacuzzi, wielding his golf club. He swings it wild -- striking Max, a hard blow to the head.

Max flails back in outrage, but Sean swings again and again.

Jessica leaps out of the tub, screaming. She grabs Melissa and flees with her into the house.

Sean, a wild-eyed jumble of anger and terror, gawks at...

A blood-soaked Max, reeling in a cauldron of crimson froth.

He loses consciousness, sinking under the swishing water.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (PRESENT) - NIGHT

Sean's eyes glisten. Julie listens, chilled to the bone.

SEAN

Mom found him later. He drowned.
I saw 'em afterwards...

EXT. ROOFTOP (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

Sean climbs to the rooftop and rushes to the front side, scrambling over the air-conditioning unit. He stares down from the edge. His POV...

Jessica drags Max's limp body to her car, struggling with it. She looks madly around, then shoves him into the passenger side. Jumps in. Drives off fast into the night.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (PRESENT) - NIGHT

Sean's eyes well up, a soul-wrenching grief...

SEAN

I never saw her again. She never--
 (a burst of tears)
She never came back!

He breaks down, convulsing with sobs...

SEAN (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to do it!

JULIE

Oh Sean...

She holds him close to her. Struck by a sudden memory...

INT. AGATHA'S DINING ROOM (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Old Agatha, leaning over the newspaper clippings...

AGATHA

She was dead when they found them,
 but Max was still breathing.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (PRESENT) - NIGHT

JULIE

Sean...listen to me. Max didn't
 drown.

Sean shakes his head adamantly in his tears. The bed lamp
 FLICKERS erratically. Julie grips him.

JULIE

He didn't. He was still alive--

SEAN

No!

He jumps up -- the lamp POPS OUT. Darkness.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I killed him!

JULIE

Sean, believe me -- you didn't.

The TV powers back on: Max's ranting face. Sean fixes on
 it, trembling all over.

SEAN

Leave me alone! Just go away!

JULIE

Sean, you have to listen to me--

SEAN

LEAVE ME ALONE!

He flees out the bathroom doorway. Julie bolts off the bed and races after him.

Left alone, Melissa's eyes open drowsily.

EXT. POOL AREA - NIGHT

The jacuzzi CHURNS ON. The pool vent BUBBLES. House lights FLASH ON AND OFF in chaos. Hanging kitchen pots SWAY WILDLY.

Sean runs out, reacting to the rippling pool. Julie rushes after him. He starts to dash away -- she grabs him.

JULIE

Sean, wait!...

Sean struggles against her...

Kitchen lights STROBE-FLASH. Appliances GO BERSERK.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You didn't kill Max! He was still alive, don't you understand?

She clutches him hard, trying to get through to him...

JULIE (CONT'D)

Your mom found him unconscious, that's why she dragged him to the car -- to take him to the hospital. Max died after the crash.

Sean shakes his head in vehement denial...

House lights FLARE BRIGHT, bulbs POP. Kitchen pots FLY AND CRASH INTO walls and windows.

Ignoring the madness around them, Julie stays fixed on Sean.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Sean, you didn't kill anyone!

SEAN

Yes, I did! He's come back to get me! He's real!

JULIE

He's not real -- not if you don't believe he's real!

Sean darts his eyes around at the churning pool, the swishing jacuzzi, his fear spinning out of control...

SEAN

He's here now. I can feel him...

He bolts for the tree-house ladder -- Julie yanks him back.

JULIE

Sean, don't!

SEAN

He's coming! He's right there!...

He points at the bubbling vent. Julie follows his look...

AIR BUBBLES MASS TOGETHER INTO HUMANLIKE SHAPE, coming toward them, OVER the painted diver's face, DISTORTING IT INTO...

MAX'S FACE, his twisted scowl.

SEAN

No!

He staggers back. Julie holds onto him, persistent...

JULIE

Sean, don't look at the pool --
he's not REAL!

Sean fights to get away. Julie fights to hold onto him.

SEAN

No -- he's gonna hurt you!

Wall pipes SHAKE with horrific force, an overload of water pressure -- rivets POP OUT. Pumped water ERUPTS into the pool, stirring the water into roiling waves.

Julie grips Sean tight, close to his face...

JULIE

There's no ghost, Sean -- YOU'RE
doing it all!

Sean breaks free from her. He runs over and snatches up Julie's shovel. Swings it down against the pool surface, splashing away the BUBBLING AIR MASS...

SEAN (CONT'D)

Go away, you DIRTY PIG! GO AWAY!

JULIE

Sean, stop it!

Sean bashes the water in a demented fury...

SEAN (CONT'D)
DON'T YOU TOUCH HER!

A GEYSER OF WATER SHOOTS OUT of the pool pump -- its metal lid flies up, hitting the base of the tree house.

It bounces back down -- GRAZES Sean's skull. Stunned, he slumps unconscious. Into the pool's deep end.

JULIE

SEAN!

She gapes down, horrified...

The boy sinks unconscious to the pool's bottom. It's Billy all over again.

Julie doesn't hesitate -- she dives in. SPLASH!

UNDERWATER

A HELLISH CAULDRON. Julie powers toward the bottom, blinded by swirling bubbles, fearlessly down toward...

Sean, drifting over the painted diver. She seizes hold of him and swims frantically upward. All around her...

GHOSTLY IMAGES obscured by a watery tempest. The Pool Man... the Gardener... Jessica. Deathly faces with floating hair, their white, pupilless eyes staring at her. And...

MAX in a swirl of blood, flailing wildly, his prosthetic arm reaching out to...

Julie, power-stroking up, Sean in tow, toward the surface...

ABOVE WATER

Gulping in air, she grips the pool ladder. Heaves Sean with all her strength onto the poolside. Sean gags awake and spits water, coughing and hacking.

Julie clings to the ladder -- battered by waves, gushing pump water, a maelstrom of churning bubbles. She loses her hold and submerges...

UNDERWATER

Sucked back down in a swirling current. She grasps the lower rung of the ladder with one hand, hanging on. Weakening, losing her grip on the rung...

A CURVED PROSTHETIC HOOK jerks out to her from behind --

A BOY'S HAND seizes her wrist -- yanks her upward.

ABOVE WATER

Braced on the ladder, Sean wrenches her up to him.

SEAN

Gotcha!

POOLSIDE

Julie sucks in air and climbs over the side, gagging, heaving for breath. Sean collapses beside her, totally spent.

The pool waves and bubbles settle, the pump pressure gone.

Julie pulls Sean into his arms and holds him tight. She stares down at the clear deep end...

No Max, no ghosts, no underwater hell. Just a painted diver and his happy octopus.

SEAN

My head hurts...

JULIE

You're gonna be okay, hon...

A cathartic beat, Julie holding onto him for dear life...

JULIE (CONT'D)

We're gonna be okay.

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julie tucks Sean into bed, both of them dried and changed.

JULIE

G'night, Sean. Sleep tight.

Sean drifts off in exhaustion...

SEAN

G'night, Mom.

Julie sits and watches him sink into sleep. She runs a hand lovingly through his hair. Her weary eyes close, desperate for sleep herself...

RING! The kitchen phone.

KITCHEN

Julie hobbles in, too tired to rush. The ANSWER MACHINE CLICKS ON...

PETER'S VOICE

Julie, I know it's late. You're
either asleep or you've gone home.
I assume the kids have left with
my sister by now.

Julie listens, making no move to pick up the phone.

PETER'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I'm on an early flight. If you
get this message, I'll be back in
the morning. Seven a.m. sharp.

Julie glances up at the wall clock: almost three a.m.

PETER'S VOICE (CONT'D)

We'll discuss our arrangement
tomorrow.

MASTER BEDROOM

Julie flops exhausted onto the bed beside a dormant Melissa.
She slowly closes her eyes...

They pop open, an alarm bell ringing in her head. She sits
up and eyes Melissa, spread out like a corpse, her mouth
wide open. Julie turns to see...

The drug pouch on the bedstand. *Empty* of pills.

JULIE

Melissa?

Shaking her awake. No response, the girl totally limp.
Julie shakes her harder, starting to panic...

JULIE (CONT'D)

Melissa! *Melissa!*

Melissa isn't asleep -- she's unconscious.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Oh *shit!*

She jumps up and snatches the bedside phone. Punches 9-1-1.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOUSE FRONT - PRE-DAWN

Flashing red gumballs, an ambulance in the driveway.

Melissa is carried on a gurney to the ambulance's open rear
by paramedics. An EMS guy packs up stomach-pump gear. In a
frazzled state, Julie hurries to a driver up front.

JULIE

I'm coming with you. Wait up for me, I'll be right back.

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM - PRE-DAWN

Sean lies sound asleep. Julie hastens in to wake him up, then hesitates. Sean snores peacefully, finally at rest, not a trace of R.E.M.

Julie checks a clock: after five a.m. Thinking aloud...

JULIE

He'll be home in two hours.

Making a quick decision, she eases away and lets Sean sleep. Hurries back out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAWN

Window sunlight filters onto Melissa's face in slumber.

Her eyes open, taking in the unfamiliar surroundings. She sits up groggily in a hospital bed. Looks over at...

Julie, fast asleep in a chair.

MELISSA

Julie?

Julie jerks awake. She comes over, tired and aching.

JULIE

Hey. How d'you feel?

MELISSA

Is this a hospital? What am I doing here?

JULIE

Just getting some sleep. Me, too. Do you remember anything from last night?

Melissa nods with heavy-lidded eyes, shifting weakly.

MELISSA

I stole your pills. I'm sorry.

JULIE

Yeah, enough to put a horse to sleep. Why did you do that?

MELISSA

I dunno...I wanted to sleep, too.
You're gonna leave us now?

JULIE

No, sweetie. I'm here as long as
you need me.

MELISSA

But you're not working for my
dad anymore...

JULIE

Never mind that.

Melissa gazes sadly at her, moisture in her eyes.

MELISSA

I wish you were my mom.

JULIE

Oh, hon. Don't wish too hard.
I'm no prize.

MELISSA

I should've told you everything,
but I was too scared. I wouldn't
blame you if you never wanted to
ever see me again...

JULIE

Melissa. I'm *right here*.

She wipes away Melissa's tears, an affectionate beat between
them. Melissa glances around the room.

MELISSA

Where's Sean?

JULIE

He's asleep at home.

Melissa stiffens, frowning at her.

MELISSA

You left him alone in the *house*?

JULIE

Don't worry, your dad's coming
home any time now. He's probably
there already.

Melissa stares inwardly, stricken by this news.

MELISSA

Omigod. We gotta go home.

JULIE

I know I shouldn't have left him,
but Sean's gonna be okay...

MELISSA

No. He's not okay. He's not!

She struggles out of bed, reeling woozily. Julie stops her,
trying to keep her still.

JULIE

Melissa, you have to rest...

MELISSA

You don't understand! I can't
control Sean anymore -- he's too
dangerous! He's totally crazy!

She leans into her, clutching her arm...

MELISSA (CONT'D)

He *is*, Julie! He killed our
mother!

JULIE

What?

MELISSA

Mom was scared of him -- so was
Dad. He left town to get away from
him. That's why Mom died!

JULIE

But...she was with Max...

MELISSA

I know! She was trying to get Max
away from Sean!

Julie shakes her head, confused.

JULIE

But they died in a car accident...

MELISSA

It wasn't an accident -- Sean made
it happen!

Julie stares at her, totally floored. Seized by some new
understanding...

QUICK FLASHCUTS:

EXT. HOUSE DRIVEWAY (FLASHCUT) - NIGHT

Jessica drags Max's body to her car, staring madly around with a face full of fear -- up toward the ROOF.

EXT. CANYON ROAD (FLASHCUT) - NIGHT

Julie stands on the canyon ridge, the scene of the car crash, looking back up the suburban block at --

The Holgrave house in clear view, a FIGURE ON THE ROOF --

SEAN, watching from the edge.

BACK TO SCENE

Julie frowns to herself, sorting out a horrible truth.

SMASH-CUT TO:

EXT. HOLGRAVE ROOFTOP - EARLY MORNING

OVERHEAD VIEW FROM the roof's rear edge. DOWN ON the pool, the unfinished excavation around it.

WE TRACK BACK ALONG the flat, sunlit rooftop, THROUGH a horde of swarming black crows...

PAST the solar panels...the air-conditioning unit...TOWARD the middle of the roof. A place never seen before.

OVER trails of garden dirt and dragged gravel...

PAST a *decomposed corpse*, a chalky face. The DEAD POOL MAN, a drowning victim, speckled with grave dirt...

PAST another *soiled, desiccated body*. The DEAD GARDENER, unearthed, old slash wounds across his throat...

Crows squabble over his corpse. One of them picks at an empty eye socket.

PAST the chimney top...BETH'S BODY, the babysitter stuffed half inside, her back broken, her contorted legs and her head jammed together...

CLOSE PAST Beth's soot-blackened stare, her mouth open in an "O" of surprise...

WE TRACK FARTHER TO the front of the rooftop, TOWARD...

Sean on the roof's edge, surrounded by hungry crows, staring down over the street below...

HOUSE FRONT

His POV from the front rooftop: an airport taxi pulls into the house's driveway.

Peter Holgrave steps out and pays the driver.

Travel bag in hand, he faces his house. Looks up and squints against the sun, trying to make out someone on the roof.

ROOFTOP

TIGHT ON Sean, framed against the rising sun. His face in shadow, his eyes tracking his father. His voice low...

SEAN

Gotcha.

BLACKOUT.

CHILDREN'S VOICES, WHISPERING...

JULIE'S LULLABY SONG, "UP ON THE ROOF".

FADE OUT.