

Amputations

written by

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**PROLOGUE**

EXT. HILL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

An owl hoots.

Leaves of dense trees rustle.

Green foliage for miles.

A dirt road leads up a winding path, but blocked by a gate with a YELLOW SIGN:

*DANGER! ROAD LOCKED BY FORESTRY ASSOCIATION. EMERGENCY VEHICLES ONLY.*

A white Prius pulls up to the gate.

STEVE (20s) drives and MAGGIE (20s) sits in the passenger seat. They both wear puffy jackets, Steve's is yellow and Maggie's is blue. Maggie sports a beanie while Steve went for the beaver cap.

Steve reads the sign.

MAGGIE

Should we turn back?

STEVE

No. We came all this way.

Steve puts the car in park and turns it off. He reaches into the back and grabs a bulky VIDEO CAMERA with a flashlight rigged on top of it. He gets out of the car.

Maggie sits in the passenger seat. She slowly unbuckles her seat belt and exits. Shuts the car door and watches as Steve clumsily climbs over the metal gate.

Steve turns back at Maggie.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Come on. We'll be back in time for Zone Night.

Maggie, hands in her pocket, walks towards the gate. She climbs over and joins Steve up the dirt road.

EXT. DIRT ROAD

Eerie silence, save for a couple breezes that agitate the trees. Their footsteps crunch small rocks and dirt.

Maggie looks up at the sky. A half moon.

The road gets a little less clear, a little more organic.

The way becomes more elusive.

RUSTLE near them. Maggie whips her head to face the source. She exits Steve's side to check.

STEVE

Maggie...

Maggie ignores Steve. Walks into a clearing in the foliage. She pushes aside some wispy branches to reveal

A DEAD GRAY FOX.

Its skeleton visible, rotting flesh just barely covering its bones. Except for the neck up, where its beautiful silver mane, head, eyes, and ears are all intact.

No signs of flies or worms.

Maggie stands still. Petrified.

Steve walks up.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Maggie--

He stops and sees the fox's corpse.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh no...

MAGGIE

(whispering)

I saw this last night.

STEVE

What?

Maggie doesn't face Steve. Keeps her focus on the fox.

MAGGIE

(whispering)

Remember. I woke up in a cold sweat. It was a nightmare. You and I were standing in an open clearing. A bunch of crows descended from the sky, a cloud of black birds. They dove from the air and pecked us. Hundreds, thousands of them.

(MORE)

## MAGGIE (CONT'D)

They started with the back of our necks, aimed for our fleshy arms and abdomens. Thighs, guts, chests. We watched as they needled into our nerves and tendons and pulled them out like string. We said nothing. Maybe I tried to scream, I don't know. We just looked at each other. Eventually we were just... bones. But our heads stayed intact. Perfectly still. And we lied in the grass, rotting in the sun, staring at each other as the birds ascended.

Steve looks at Maggie. He looks at the fox.

He finds some leaves and twigs and piles it onto the fox's skeletal corpse.

He extends his hand towards Maggie. Maggie takes it. They both leave.

The fox's black eyes stare straight ahead. Its jaw agape.

## EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A small wooden house surrounded by a field and some trees.

Mist renders most of the environment inscrutable. Some foliage is made clear when gaps in the fog slink by. Pigs oinking in the far distance.

## INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Small, humble kitchen. Essentially a fridge and a small two-burner stove. A pot on the stove, lid slightly ajar. The fridge is open, with sausages and loose beans on the floor.

## INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM

Small. Cozy.

A full-size bed leaned against a wall with a window. No headboard.

A white light ever so subtly fades in and out through the window. As if headlights were passing through with no car.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Small blood drops on the wooden floor. A record player, at the end of the vinyl, keeps spinning as the needle only picks up static. A fireplace with some burnt-out logs and coal, flame-blackened walls.

Out the window, Steve and Maggie walk past the house.

EXT. FIELD - CONT'D

Steve and Maggie's boots crunch the grass below them.

Steve holds the camcorder and points it into the dark forest.

MAGGIE

It's cold.

STEVE

I know. Just a few more steps.

Maggie and Steve walk into:

EXT. FOREST

MAGGIE

It's probably just a messed-up truck or something.

STEVE

And if it is, we've debunked the ghost theories.

MAGGIE

Okay...

A PAINED MOAN in the distance.

Maggie grapples tight onto Steve's side.

STEVE

(whispering)

It's okay.

The PAINED MOAN gets louder.

MAGGIE

I don't like that.

Steve and Maggie stop. Maggie tightens her grip on Steve.

A SHRILL SCREAM in the darkness.

**I**

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Elegant silver walls surround a string quartet.

A crowd of formally dressed patrons watch as the quartet performs. Behind the musicians, a series of massive black-and-white photographs.

MARA (30s) plays cello. Her yellow silk dress ripples as she sways back and forth.

PAUL (30s), his hands behind his back, paces as he views the various exhibitions.

Mara takes notice of Paul, as she keeps playing the cello.

INT. ART GALLERY - LATER

Paul eats an olive as he stares at a massive print photograph of a man's face, a horseshoe pattern mark on his face.

Mara walks up next to him.

MARA  
Infection.

PAUL  
Hm?

MARA  
I'm guessing it's some sort of skin  
infection that's spread into the  
shape of a perfect horseshoe.

They stare at the photograph longer.

PAUL  
I'm thinking... it's a burn.

MARA  
Huh.

Mara takes a sip of champagne.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Bet you fifty dollars that's an  
infection.

PAUL  
Seems like there's more burn-like  
qualities here.

A man in a golf cap walks by.

GOLF CAP  
Look at the placard.

He leaves.

Mara and Paul read the title of the piece: MAN WITH HORSESHOE  
BRUISE.

PAUL  
You know, I'm beginning to think  
that's an infection.

Paul reaches out his hand.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Paul.

Mara shakes Paul's hand.

MARA  
Mara.

Paul and Mara walk away from the portrait.

PAUL  
Beautiful playing, by the way.

MARA  
Thank you. Are you a photographer?

Paul nods.

PAUL  
My work's here, actually.

MARA  
You took horseshoe?

Paul points to a tiny corner of the gallery, with the words  
LOCAL SPOTLIGHT. A series of bright, over-exposed photographs  
of swings, wheelchairs, printers, wrenches... all kinds of  
stuff. Small framed pictures. Mara leans in.

PAUL  
I'm a smaller figure.

She turns to face him.

MARA  
They're nice.

EXT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Paul and Mara kiss against the steel wall of the gallery.

SERIES OF PICTURES:

- A dinner on a ferry.
- The couple at a photography exhibit.
- Mara playing a bass guitar onstage.
- Paul giving a lecture at a small community arts space.
- Paul's proposal to Mara on a bridge.
- Wedding pics.
- Wedding pics.
- MORE Wedding pics.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A house on a grassy hill. Mostly wooden. Discolored logs.  
Unkempt. A small patio.

They are surrounded by trees. Sounds of distant livestock.

A swimming pool.

Paul drives a beat-up red Pontiac. Mara sits in the passenger  
seat, absorbing the surroundings.

CAREY (55) in a bob haircut and pantsuit, awaits the couple.  
A dishonest smile flashes across her face.

CAREY  
Welcome!

Paul and Mara walk out of the car. Paul wears a black coat  
and scarf. Mara wears a red puffy jacket and a blue cap.

CAREY (CONT'D)  
How are you two doing?

PAUL  
Wonderful.



Mara holds Paul's hand.

MARA  
Just betrothed.

Carey puts her hands on her knees, as if she's congratulating a child.

CAREY  
Isn't that just wonderful!

Mara and Paul look at each other. Yes, it is wonderful.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Carey opens the door and beckons them in.

CAREY  
Come in, come in.

It's filthy. A layer of dust seems to cover everything.

Spiderwebs occupy the corners of the space. The light fixtures misted over with layers of detritus.

CAREY (CONT'D)  
Now, I know it doesn't look like much, but I promise you a fixer-upper can be the most fulfilling project a young couple like yourself can take on.

Mara, with wide, discerning eyes, opens a closet. A couple pieces of ancient baby clothes hanging on the rack. She closes the door.

Paul slides his finger over the countertop that splits the kitchen from the living room. He sees a veritable universe of dust on the tip of his finger.

CAREY (CONT'D)  
And if you like your peace and quiet, this is exactly the place for you. Your nearest neighbor is three miles away, and they're barely home most of the time!

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM

Mara and Paul see a low bed, no headboard, placed flush against a wall with a window. They look outside to the moss-green pool.

A gas lamp next to the bed. Mara rotates a clicking ignition. She takes a lighter out from her pocket and flicks it on the lamp, creating a small luminous flame.

She turns off the lamp.

EXT. HOUSE - POOL

Mara and Paul look down at the pool. They can see their reflection in the growth of God-knows-what on the surface of the water. An ecosystem lid has developed.

Birds chirp from all directions.

Life teems in this forest.

Mara and Paul look at each other. Mara leans in, whispers into Paul's ear:

MARA  
It's perfect.

PAUL  
It's literally perfect.

MARA  
I think we need to jump on it.

PAUL  
I agree. But we don't have the down payment.

MARA  
We have half.

PAUL  
I don't know if you think that's good.

MARA  
Listen. See how she's staring at us? This lady got up at 6:30 to show us this place. A sub six-figure place.

PAUL  
Yeah?

MARA  
She shifted her schedule to a God-awful hour for this tour in the middle of nowhere. They need this place GONE.

PAUL  
That's why we got up so early?

MARA  
It'll be well worth it.

Mara kisses Paul on the cheek. She walks over to Carey, who observes them from the cars out front.

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT

MARA  
Listen, Carey. I'm really glad you took us here, but we were probably looking for something a little more... complete.

Carey nods.

CAREY  
I understand.

MARA  
I'm really sorry. I wish we could, but we might be better off looking elsewhere.

Mara motions for Paul to join her.

CAREY  
Mara. Is there anything I can say?

MARA  
I'm so sorry. We... if we have kids, you know? The nearest grocery store is fifteen miles away, and it's got three shelves.

Mara and Paul walk towards their Pontiac.

Carey speedwalks to Mara.

CAREY  
I'm going to level with you.

Mara stops walking. Paul keeps going to the car.

CAREY (CONT'D)  
The owners are a non-local holding firm and they are DESPERATE to offload this property. You're the first people in two years who've even asked about this place.

MARA

Okay.

CAREY

Here's what I can do. 0% APR for the first ten months of the mortgage. And a slashed rate after that.

Mara pretends to think this over for a moment. She looks at Paul, then turns to Carey.

MARA

That's tempting... but I don't think we can. Thank you so much though.

Mara and Paul get into the car.

Carey speedwalks over to the car. Taps the front window.

Mara rolls down the window.

CAREY

Okay. What will it take?

MARA

I don't want to offend you. You have commission to make, all that--

CAREY

They're going to pay me a flat rate for just getting this place off their hands. They need it gone.

MARA

Hm.

Mara pretends to think about it.

MARA (CONT'D)

How 'bout if we were to go with... half off the deposit?

Carey smiles.

CAREY

Are you ready to take it now?

MARA

For that?

Mara looks at Paul. They nod at each other.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Absolutely.

CAREY  
I'll get the paperwork.

INT. JAN AND MARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A bottle of champagne POPS as the cork goes flying.

JAN (30s), with an undercut, holds the bottle of champagne. A small party of musicians, writers, and visual artists chit-chat as they sip drinks.

Jan pours champagne into Mara and Paul's plastic cups.

JAN  
I am going to miss you guys so much.

MARA  
You're always welcome to visit.

JAN  
Maybe when I enter my adult goth phase.

Jan holds the bottle with both hands.

JAN (CONT'D)  
I'm a scaredy-cat.

Jan, Mara and Paul clink (or perhaps "thunk") their plastic cups together and take a sip.

FRANCES QUINLAN (30s) walks up from behind them.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
Hi.

MARA  
Oh my God, hi!

Frances gives Mara a hug.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
I can't believe you're extricating yourself from society. That's kind of a beautiful thing.

MARA  
Not quite.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
Not quite beautiful or not quite  
extricating?

MARA  
Maybe neither.

Frances takes a cup. Holds it up.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
Cheers to "not quite."

Takes a sip.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
You know, I may need a cello player  
at some point.

MARA  
Are you serious?

FRANCES QUINLAN  
Of course. I'll be sending you a  
letter or something. Tour's coming  
up.

MARA  
That is amazing. Thank you. You  
know who's vibrating right now?

Mara pulls Paul closer to her.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Paul is obsessed.

Paul gives a nervous smile and shakes Frances's hand.

PAUL  
Overstatement. I am glad to meet.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
So you're not a fan?

PAUL  
Trap. They trapped me.

Frances laughs.

MARA  
Paul does have a request for you.

PAUL  
No...

FRANCES QUINLAN

What is it?

MARA

He would LOVE to hear you do  
Laments.

Frances smiles.

FRANCES QUINLAN

As you wish. For the lovebirds.

They grab a guitar from the corner. They tune for a second.  
Without waiting for the surrounding party to die down,  
Frances starts strumming and singing:

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)

*It's a green stripe street lifted  
from me/  
I am free, of two very heavy  
bodies/  
Once we three had slept soundly/  
I couldn't keep them around/  
Fold the blankets down, and/  
Found new sleeping ground...*

The crowd quiets down, but out of politeness rather than  
interest. It's background music. The partygoers still mingle.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)

*Bed-springs squeaking, tires  
squealing away/  
From one another; We all used to be  
lovers here/  
Bodies laying say they'll stay,  
just like boxes/  
Stacked the same way, labeled and  
separated, hey/*

Mara and Paul look at each other. Mara rests her head on  
Paul's chest. Paul runs his hand through Mara's hair as he  
listens to the music.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)

*Go ahead, take the couch I don't  
wanna sit here next to nobody/  
Go ahead, take the fridge, I know I  
don't want you going hungry, yeah/  
Go ahead, take the cat, I know  
you're only gonna be coming back,  
so/  
Go ahead take it all, I know you've  
been wanting to/*

(MORE)

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*Settle down. Has it always been?*  
*Settling down?*

The guests at the party, still involved with their own conversations and jests, begin to move their feet and bump their heads. As if they know the rhythmic chorus is just around the corner.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*One on the left says to the one on the right/*  
*"I could make a very good wife for you"/*  
*One on the right says to the one on the left/*  
*"Let's take this one step at a time"/*  
*One on the right says to the one on the left/*  
*"You know I need you all the time"/*  
*One on the right says to the one on the left/*  
*"I think I changed my mind"/*  
*My insides sing...*

Paul and Mara watch Frances play.

INT. JAN AND MARA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mara and Paul under the covers. Their foreheads touch.

PAUL  
 (whispering)  
 Are you scared?

MARA  
 (whispering)  
 No. Are you?

PAUL  
 ...No...

Mara chuckles.

MARA  
 Right.

PAUL  
 It's such a big thing.

Mara holds Paul's hand.



MARA  
I know. But the place is so  
beautiful.

PAUL  
I'll take too many pictures.

MARA  
Too many.

PAUL  
You'll be writing too many songs.

MARA  
Mhmm. WAY too many.

PAUL  
And playing for Frances!

Mara crosses her fingers and blows a gust of wind into Paul's  
face.

MARA  
Don't jinx it!

Paul kisses Mara's cheek.

A loud THUMP.

Mara and Paul sit up in bed.

Silence.

Mara walks out of bed and cracks the door ajar.

In the apartment kitchen, Jan slides a plate off the counter,  
SMASHING it.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Not again.

Paul joins Mara to watch.

PAUL  
Are her feet going to be okay?

MARA  
She never even ends up with a  
scratch. Sometimes she eats a bunch  
of pop-tarts from the pantry.

PAUL  
Sugar deficiency?

MARA  
I doubt it.

Jan sleepwalks back into her room.

PAUL  
Goodnight Jan.

Mara closes the door.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

The house on a hill. The air thick with fog.

The red Pontiac drives up to the grass.

Paul and Mara, dressed in scarves and wool jackets, step out.

INT. HOUSE - CONT'D

They step into the house.

Mara picks up an old unframed photograph of a woman holding a baby. She puts it back down.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Paul reads from a propped-up cookbook: RUSTIC VEGAN COOKING.

Mara spins a multicolor top on the small dining table.

Paul walks over with a big cast iron pot, Mara places a wooden mat on the table. Paul gingerly places the pot on top of the wood. Mara retrieves two bowls and spoons, and scoops from the pot: a colorful stew of lentils, white beans, and various garden onions.

MARA  
This looks awesome.

PAUL  
Yess.

MARA  
Thank you, Paul.

They dig into their food.

PAUL  
You never did tell me which track  
you were thinking as your single.

MARA

My brain is so fried.. when it really comes down to it, I might as well throw a dart on the track list.

PAUL

I think that'll work. They're all equally great.

MARA

(blushing)

Shut up.

Paul smiles.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Dance-y tune on the record player.

Paul and Mara hold each other and sway. Barely a "dance." Tender.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They lie on the couch, Mara curled up in Paul's arms.

A white light shines on Paul's face from outside through a front window. Paul flicks his heavy eyelids open, but only for a second. He shifts positions. The light appears again.

Paul opens his eyes then shuffles to the window.

Mara stretches in her sleep.

MARA

(sleeptalking)

*Moonstone... gems.*

Mara turns to her side.

MARA (CONT'D)

*Moonstone gems.*

Paul looks back at Mara. The light streams onto the side of his face again.

He looks outside.

No source of light to be found.

He breathes on the window, fogging it up.

Paul returns to the couch, where he picks up Mara and walks her into the bedroom.

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT - MORNING

Mara drinks a cup of coffee on the patio. Paul joins her.

PAUL  
Did you notice a white light out here last night?

MARA  
No.

Mara takes a sip.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Probably a neighbor.

PAUL  
Everyone's so far.

MARA  
Maybe someone's playing a prank.

PAUL  
Respect the pranksters.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mara plays her cello. She makes long, beautiful strokes, but keeps stopping herself in disappointment. Sighing, she scratches a pen on her book full of sketched out notes.

Mara continues to play.

She notices her fingernails tapping a little too much on the cello's neck.

She stops playing.

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Mara clips her nails over the sink.

Paul approaches from behind and holds her stomach. He rests his chin against her shoulder.

He then takes the nail clippers and clips her nails for her.

PAUL  
You still don't get the corners.

MARA  
I'm lazy.

PAUL  
You'll scratch up that cello.

MARA  
I plan on it.

Mara leans her head back.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Deep quiet.

Paul and Mara sleep in the slightly too-small bed.

The glowing white light bleeds through the window. Then  
blinks off. Paul turns in bed. The white light appears again.  
Paul opens his eyes. The light goes off.

Paul sits up. Mara groans as she rustles under the sheets.

Paul gets out of bed wearing his long johns.

EXT. HOUSE - POOL - CONT'D

Paul walks up to the shining white light in the pool.

He stares down. He can't quite make out what it is, but he's  
entranced. The pool's waves create shimmering spindles of  
light on Paul's face. And then...

He falls in.

EXT. HOUSE - POOL - NEXT DAY

Mara calls from inside the house:

MARA (O.S.)  
Paul? Paul?

Mara walks outside in her bathrobe.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Paul?!

She walks around. She finally approaches the pool.

She stares at the water.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Mara walks up behind a podium.

MARA

Thank you all so much for coming. I wish I had more to say here. I tried to get the words down but nothing would come to me. Frankly, anything I had was boring. In lieu of a tortured speech, I give you a series of photographs Paul took, in preparation for a series called "Tags." I hope we can see how he lives on in his work.

Mara leaves the podium as the room goes dark. In silence, a screen shows slides of Paul's pictures: experimental, strange, "haunting." Wisps of farm animals double exposed on images of grassy fields, trash bins, pavement.

As the sparse audience weeps, Mara sits still.

Jan sits next to her, and leans her head on Mara's shoulder.

Mara notices a scuff at the tip of her left shoe.

EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Mara drives the old Pontiac up the hill. She wears a wool hat with ear flaps, and warm gloves.

Jan sleeps in the passenger seat.

She pulls up to the pool. Now covered in a wide vinyl tarp.

She stares at the covered pool.

Her breath materializes into fog in the car.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Jan wipes down the countertops, the couch, and sweeps the floors. Mara sits in a corner chair and rests her head on the wooden table.

MARA

You really don't have to do that.

JAN

Of course I do. Just 'cause you're not in the city doesn't mean you have to live in a pigsty.

MARA

Pigs are naturally very clean... thank you for doing that.

Jan stops cleaning and sits on her knees.

JAN

You always have a place with me.

MARA

I know.

JAN

The walls here barely keep the wind out.

MARA

I'll deal with it.

Jan nods. She stands up and heads into the kitchen with her rag. She wipes down the fridge. She opens the freezer, and whips out a half-drunk handle of WHITE RUM.

JAN

Wuh-oh, what do we have here?

Mara scoffs.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Mara and Jan sit on logs in front of a CRACKLING small fire. They wear parkas. In their hands, steaming sweet potatoes.

Jan takes a swig from the rum bottle.

JAN

We should've gotten foil.

Jan shows her ash-blackened palm and fingers.

MARA

I like the taste.

JAN

You like carcinogens.

MARA

I guess.

JAN

Do you think you'll ever get back  
with the band?

Mara shrugs.

JAN (CONT'D)

How 'bout Frances?

MARA

I'll get back to them.

Jan looks at Mara.

JAN

How long are you going to stay up  
here?

MARA

Who knows. Maybe when the bank  
repossesses.

Mara forces a smile.

She smudges some ash on Jan's nose.

MARA (CONT'D)

I'm glad you're here.

JAN

Me too.

Jan takes another swig of rum. Mara closes her eyes. Feels  
the warmth of the fire.

Jan leans in, kisses Mara.

Mara opens her eyes. She sits entirely still.

Jan looks at Mara's surprised face.

JAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

MARA

No...

Jan puts her head in her hands.

Mara leans in and hugs Jan.



MARA (CONT'D)  
 (whispering)  
 No. I just need some time here.

Jan hugs Mara back.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mara tosses a couple logs into the small fireplace. She throws in some newspaper scraps, lights two matches, and watches the flames settle into a fire. She glances over at a closet, stuffed to the brim with Paul's clothes.

She places a jazz record into the record player.

She sits down. Looks again at the closet. Sighs. Looks back at the fire.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - HOURS LATER

Mara, now in a T-shirt and sweats, absent warm hat and gloves, stares at what is now a smoldering fire, surrounded by glowing embers.

Admitting defeat, she finally gets up and approaches the closet. She pulls out a pile of hoodies, old shirts, and jackets. She looks up.

A corner of a blanket peeks out from a high shelf. She pulls on it, only to have a small wooden box fall and CRASH onto the floor, breaking the copper hinge and revealing a tape recorder and some photographs.

MARA  
 Shit.

She crouches down and picks up the photograph: a creased postcard-sized picture of a woman in her 40s, holding a small baby in her arms. But the baby is shriveled. A little too wrinkly than normal.

A slip of paper behind the weathered photograph. She takes it, reads it:

*BRING THE BABY BACK. PRAYERS TO BRING THE BABY BACK.*

*Love the child, I love the baby. More than anything in the world. If the baby goes, I live in woe, please bring the baby back. My child is precious, brave and lecherous, parasite of flesh and pain. I love the baby, I promise, please bring the baby back. Amen.*

Mara picks up the tape recorder. She inspects it.

She places the tape recorder on a table and grabs a pair of headphones next to the record player. She plugs the headphones into the tape recorder and presses her hands against her ears.

A whirring noise as the tape plays. Then a CLICK.

MOTHER

(whispering, singing)

*Love the child, I love the baby.  
More than anything in the world. If  
the baby goes, I live in woe,  
please bring the baby back...*

Mara leans back.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(louder)

*My child is precious, brave and  
lecherous, parasite of flesh and  
pain. I love the baby, I promise,  
please bring the baby back. Amen.*

Pause. Mara furrows her brow.

Then, on the tape: a baby CRIES.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Savannah!! Oh, Savannah!!!

Crying gets louder.

Mara takes the headphones off.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mara tosses and turns.

She sits up. We see her breath.

EXT. HOUSE - POOL - MINUTES LATER

Mara steps in front of the covered pool in flip-flops and a robe. She pulls out the wrinkled piece of paper from the box.

MARA

*Love the child, I love the baby.  
More than anything in the world. If  
the baby goes, I live in woe,  
please bring the baby back.*

(MORE)

MARA (CONT'D)

*My child is precious, brave and lecherous, parasite of flesh and pain. I love the baby, I promise, please bring the baby back. Amen.*

Nothing.

Mara closes her eyes.

MARA (CONT'D)

*Love the man. I love the man. More than anything in the world. If the man goes, I live in woe, please bring my husband back. He is precious, brave and lecherous, parasite of flesh and pain. I love the man, I promise, please bring the man back. Amen.*

Mara opens her eyes.

Nothing. Again.

Mara takes a deep sigh and walks back in.

Hold on the pool.

A sustained GROAN from the pool, as the vinyl cover vibrates.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Mara holds a portable field recorder and wears a big pair of stereo headphones.

She scans the landscape with the recorder. Hearing wind rustling through the leaves.

She hears a SQUISH. Mara looks down and sees a boot-shaped depression in the mud in front of her. She steps next to the footprint and makes her own print, and sees the size difference.

She looks at the space in front of her, the waving trees.

Mara reaches her right hand out. The tips of her index and middle finger turn pale. She shakes her hand vigorously and stuffs it into her pocket.

INT. HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Mara holds a hand warmer pack. She rubs her right hand on it.

She looks out the window. Watches the spot where her fingertips turned pale.

She looks over at a camera on the table.

EXT. FIELD - LATER

Mara now sees a trail of boot prints in the mud. It ends cold. She stands behind that spot, and SNAPS a picture.

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM

Red light floods the bathroom, with a clothesline running across the ceiling. She places some prints in a bath, and waits for them to develop.

After a few seconds, an image appears: a WISP of a figure.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The picture in Mara's hand, as she sits on the couch.

The picture vibrates as Mara's hand shakes.

She grips her cold right hand with her left.

She crouches in front of the fireplace and holds her hand close to the fire. Too close.

She steps away, her hand unaffected by the heat.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Mara shivers in bed. Her hand is under her pillow. She then rubs her hand against her other hand, breathes warm air onto her palm. She keeps shivering.

Next to the bed, a see-through figure, barely visible. Paul. His skin looks too stretched out for his muscle frame, at risk of falling off.

Mara doesn't notice.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

A boiling kettle on the stove. Mara opens the kettle lid and DUNKS her right hand into the boiling water.

No reaction from Mara.

She grabs a scarf and wraps her fingers and palm.

EXT. CAR

Mara opens the door of the Pontiac and gets into the drivers seat. The car handle immediately is covered by crystallizing frost.

INT. CAR

Mara breathes heavy in the cold. She uses her left hand to turn the keys in the ignition, but we just hear a BURST.

She keeps trying the ignition, nothing happens other than a flooded engine.

Mara looks at the windshield. SLOW PAN to the passenger seat reflection, where PAUL stares out the glass.

Mara whips her attention to the passenger seat. Nobody in the seat. She looks back at the windshield reflection. The skin is sloughing off of his face. Gaps under his eyes reveal patches of muscle and tendon.

MARA  
(shakily)  
Paul...

The ghastly face looks right back at her. His pupils are pale.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Who are you...?

She looks at her freezing hand. Then the crystallizing console, and ignition, and freezing steering wheel.

EXT. CAR - CONT'D

Mara falters out of the car onto the ground. She picks herself up and stumbles towards the small road in front of the property.

EXT. ROAD - CONT'D

Mara rubs her hands together and breathes on her palms.

She looks at her hand, and the scarf wrapped around her hand is frozen solid.

She kneels on the road and SMASHES her hand against the pavement. Cracks form on the fabric on her hand.

She pinches her index finger. It SNAPS right off.

Mara drops her dismembered finger.

Her eyes roll to the back of her head and she collapses on the road.

**II.**

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dark, with flashing lights. People shoulder to shoulder, watching a band playing hardcore punk music.

MARA (30s) plays bass, as she rocks her head back and forth.

PAUL (30s), close to the stage, takes pictures of the band.

Paul holds up the camera, and zooms in on Mara. He snaps a picture.

They begin to play a song. Mara steps up to the microphone.

MARA

Thank you all for coming. We're still getting used to playing all this "live." This track's a new one.

She faces her fellow band members. Counts down, then swings back to face the crowd.

MARA (CONT'D)

*Ha-li-to-sis, decadent wing... you have the nerve to look me in the eye.*

Mara SHREDS on her electric guitar.

MARA (CONT'D)

*Take the time to get to know me, your fucked-up existence is Hellenistic, I don't think I can ever see you, without the nominal feeeeeeeee. Take it, take it, take the time to get to know me, your honorary cystic debt fibrosis...*

EXT. BAR - LATER

Mara leans against the wall smoking a cigarette.

Paul walks out, camera around his neck.

PAUL

Could I steal one of those?

MARA  
(shuffling around her  
pockets)  
Oh. Of course.

She hands him a cigarette. He takes it, sticks it in his mouth.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Here.

Mara flicks open a lighter and ignites his smoke.

Paul backs up and takes a drag. Blows into the sky.

PAUL  
Thanks.

He leans against the wall next to Mara.

MARA  
I better be seeing those pictures  
at some point.

Paul chuckles.

PAUL  
No luck with venue photographers?

MARA  
No nothing. They don't send me  
shit. Even when I ask.

PAUL  
Here. I'll send them right now.

Paul hands his phone to Mara.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Number here.

Mara taps in her phone number.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
There... we go.

MARA  
Oh, lovely.

Mara swipes through the pictures. She laughs.

MARA (CONT'D)  
My face looks huge in this one.



PAUL  
Good or bad?

MARA  
Neutral. It's just interesting.

PAUL  
I noticed the last song you guys  
played in there isn't available  
anywhere.

MARA  
You were into it?

PAUL  
Loved it.

MARA  
I wrote that!

PAUL  
Really?

MARA  
Yeah!

PAUL  
I thought it was great.

MARA  
Here.

Mara pulls up the track in her phone's files. She gives Paul an earbud and puts an earbud into her ear.

We hear the distorted track buzzing in their ears.

Paul bumps his head to the song.

Mara smiles.

Slowly, she leans her head against Paul's shoulder.

MONTAGE OF PHONE FOOTAGE

- Mara playing cello in an orchestra.
- Paul and Mara taking a selfie video at a theme park.
- A bystander's video of Mara proposing to Paul.
- Different angles of the wedding, where Mara and Paul dance.

INT. JAN AND MARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A bottle of champagne POPS as the cork goes flying.

Jan holds the champagne and pours it into Mara and Paul's plastic cups.

JAN  
You guys...

Jan holds the champagne bottle with both hands.

JAN (CONT'D)  
I'm going to miss you all.

Mara hugs Jan. Paul takes a sip of champagne.

MARA  
We'll still be touring.

Jan smiles and pats Mara's hand.

Paul does a double take at someone in the distance.

PAUL  
No way.

MARA  
What?

Paul gestures with his cup at the other end of the living room. Mara looks over.

Sees FRANCES QUINLAN talking to someone at the party.

PAUL  
You guys know Frances Quinlan?

MARA  
(unfazed)  
Yeah. We opened for *Hop Along* a couple times when they came around here.

PAUL  
No fucking way.

MARA  
Wanna say hi?

PAUL  
Maybe. I don't want to shit myself.

MARA

Sure. Join us when you want.

Mara touches Paul's shoulder as she heads over to Frances. Mara and Frances clink their cups together. Mara makes a passing joke and Frances laughs.

Paul smiles and leans against a countertop.

Jan approaches Paul.

JAN

Hey.

PAUL

Hi.

JAN

You excited?

PAUL

I had no idea you guys opened for Hop Along.

JAN

Yeah. I mean about the move though, dumbass.

PAUL

Oh. Yeah, it's scary but we're hyped.

JAN

Makes sense. I hope you guys can make it down here often.

PAUL

I hope so too.

Jan takes a sip.

JAN

Just don't lose yourself in each other.

PAUL

Huh?

JAN

I understand loving each other so much you feel like each others' total galaxies. Sickeningly beautiful. But I need you to be careful.

PAUL  
How do you mean?

JAN  
When I was married... It was a  
shit-show, obviously. But we fell  
into each other. We lost ourselves.  
It took me a long long time to claw  
my way out. Obviously that won't be  
you guys. I know it won't be you  
guys. But you're going to this  
lovely place... I don't know. Just  
keep your feet in the real world,  
okay? Both of you.

Paul nods.

PAUL  
That makes sense.

Paul looks over at Mara and Frances, now talking to a small  
ring of people in the corner.

JAN  
Take care of her, okay?

PAUL  
I think she'd be taking care of me.

JAN  
I know she's tough. But she's flesh  
and blood too, you know?

PAUL  
Yeah.

JAN  
Be okay. I know you will.

Jan puts her palm against Paul's cheek.

JAN (CONT'D)  
I'm going to miss you guys so much.

Jan snuffles. She walks towards Frances and Mara. They both  
welcome her into their little conversational circle.

Mara looks back at Paul.

Paul waves.

Mara smiles. *You're such a dork.*

INT. JAN AND MARA'S APARTMENT - MARA'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Paul and Mara touching foreheads under the covers.

MARA

You didn't want to talk to them at all?

PAUL

I figure I don't need the lyrical mystery of their work to be dashed.

MARA

(laughs)

You're so full of shit.

PAUL

I know!

MARA

Next time I'll shove you in front of them, force you to say "hi."

PAUL

Oh, I would loooooove that.

Paul holds Mara's hand.

He hums the first bit of Frances's song *Your Reply*, somewhat off key:

PAUL (CONT'D)

*Somebody wrote "tender" in the  
novel's margins/  
As if to remind about a precious  
force/  
In the next paragraph, the  
protagonist/  
Sat down on the belly of a dead  
horse...*

A THUMP from outside the bedroom.

Paul and Mara sit up. They walk towards the front door.

Mara opens the door. They spot Jan in the kitchen, whispering on the phone.

Jan kicking a cabinet door is the source of the THUMP.

JAN

(whispering)

I don't need to talk to you.

(MORE)

JAN (CONT'D)  
 I don't need to talk to you. Shut  
 the fuck up, I don't care.

Mara turns to Paul.

MARA  
 It's probably her ex.

PAUL  
 Sorry Jan.

Mara closes the bedroom door.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MORNING

Mara drives the car. She wears sunglasses. Fast-moving leaves  
 create shuttering frames of light on Paul's face as he stares  
 outside.

MARA  
 You know what the first thing I'm  
 going to do up there is?

PAUL  
 What?

MARA  
 Check if the toilet works. With a  
 monster piss.

Paul LAUGHS.

PAUL  
 Oh shit. We have no idea if the  
 plumbi--

MARA  
 If the plumbing works. Yep.

PAUL  
 We are so smart.

MARA  
 We are good at this.

Paul holds Mara's hand as he keeps staring outside.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Mara drives up to the house. Places her foot on the brake,  
 but the car takes entirely too long to stop.

A harsh SQUEAL from the car. Mara and Paul notice this, clench their teeth together.

Mara parks the Pontiac. They both exit the car.

Mara rushes into the house. Swings the front door open.

Paul walks a little slower, and notices the sunlight's reflection on the swimming pool. A beautiful golden sheen off the rippling water.

Paul stares at this for a bit.

A FLUSH from inside.

MARA (O.S.)

It works!

Paul runs into the house.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

Paul opens the door. He swipes a cobweb with his hand and walks around. The warm, wooden interior of the home beckon him. A thin layer of dust covering everything.

Mara ATTACKS him and grapples onto his body with her legs and arms.

PAUL

Whoa!

She's entirely suspended from the ground, supported by Paul.

Mara kisses Paul.

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - EVENING

Paul screws a cracked lens in front of his digital camera. He points it at a large white poster lit by a bright bare bulb. He snaps a picture, and unscrews the lens. He then installs a lens that's covered in spots, and snaps another picture.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Mara cooks a stir-fry of tofu and peppers. The vegan cookbook is open on the counter.

Paul sits at the table as Mara brings the pan over. They serve themselves on their plates.

MARA

How's the series coming along?

PAUL

It just never stops being interesting. And I don't think anyone's going to exhibit it.

MARA

Come on. This is cool stuff. And didn't you say all programming is relationships?

PAUL

That's part of the problem.

MARA

Why?

PAUL

I don't think I've been cultivating those enough at all.

MARA

Oh come on.

Mara holds Paul's hand.

MARA (CONT'D)

Once they see those delicious mold spots blown up on a wall-sized canvas, they're going to be eating out of your hand.

Paul smiles.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A fire in the fireplace is on its last legs. Smoldering coals and incandescent embers: last signs of life.

Paul and Mara sit next to each other holding beers. Paul dozes off, almost spilling his bottle, when Mara deftly takes it out of his hand. She's done this before.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONT'D

Mara dumps the bottles into a basket nearly full of empty beer bottles. She washes dishes when she hears something:

What sounds like a PAINED MOAN in the distance.



She stops the faucet. Looks around. Looks at Paul. Paul shifts on the couch, fast asleep.

The MOAN in the distance. Mara looks out the window.

EXT. HOUSE - CONT'D

Mara walks outside. The wind rustles the leaves in the distance.

The MOAN. Like a corpse deflating.

Mara walks towards the sound.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Mara wanders through the trees. She hears the sound, louder now. She walks towards it.

Hears it again.

Faster.

She rushes through the trees.

Runs through the forest, chasing the sound.

Leaves rustling.

Silence.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The guitar player from Mara's band, JAN, walks up to the microphone.

JAN

This is dedicated to our love Mara.  
Your light will never go out. We  
hope we do your song justice. And  
thank you all for coming to Psycho  
Tent's last show.

The band starts playing.

JAN (CONT'D)

*Ha-li-to-sis, decadent wing... you  
have the nerve to look me in the  
eye--*

Paul in the back of the bar, watching with his hands in his pockets, as the band performs.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Paul walks in his trench coat, hands still in his pockets, wired into his earbuds.

He listens to tracks where Mara sings.

Then a cello solo comes up. He stops in his tracks.

He sniffles. Is he welling up or is it cold? Regardless, Paul keeps walking.

Walking.

Walking.

Walking.

Footsteps that aren't his approach behind him.

He keeps walking.

A woman, LAYLA (30s), in a gray wool coat and short dyed blonde hair, walks up.

LAYLA

Hello?

Paul doesn't hear her. His earbuds streaming music into his ears.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Hey!

Paul keeps walking.

Layla finally catches up with Paul.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Excuse me?

Paul notices, and takes off his earphones. They keep walking.

PAUL

Sorry.

Layla chuckles.

LAYLA

Those might be too loud.

PAUL  
Yeah maybe.

LAYLA  
Did you leave this in there?

Layla holds out a pair of sunglasses.

PAUL  
That's not mine.

LAYLA  
Oh.

Paul takes the sunglasses from Layla and puts them on. He places them on his forehead.

LAYLA (CONT'D)  
Where are you off to?

PAUL  
I'm not sure. Maybe the gyro place.

LAYLA  
Mind if I join you?

PAUL  
Not at all.

INT. GYRO SHOP - NIGHT

Paul and Layla sit at the booth next to the front of the shop. The window has them in full view of passers-by.

Paul pours an absurd amount of hot sauce on his gyro.

LAYLA  
Haven't I seen you take pictures  
over there?

PAUL  
You probably have.

LAYLA  
Seems like an exciting gig.

PAUL  
It is exciting.

Paul licks his fingers.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Problem is I'd want the gig to be a little less gig-like. What do you do?

LAYLA

I am a... video artist.

PAUL

What's that hesitation?

Layla chuckles.

LAYLA

It's just such an annoying thing to say. I feel like everyone in this city who even kind of looks like me "dabbles" in "video art."

PAUL

I don't think it's annoying. Video is cool. A few too many images a second for me, but I respect craft when I see it.

LAYLA

Why weren't you taking pictures tonight?

PAUL

Would've been disrespectful. Memorial show and all that.

LAYLA

Yeah. Makes sense. That is really sad. Did you know her?

PAUL

I was, in fact, her husband. Am.

A beat. Layla struggles to form words.

LAYLA

I'm so sorry, I didn't mean--

PAUL

No, it's fine.

LAYLA

I can't even imagine.

Layla leans in.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

When my dad passed, my therapist told me that I shouldn't just "wait for the day the wounds scab over." That helped me a lot. Might help you.

PAUL

Thank you. I might get that better once I actually understand what my wounds are.

LAYLA

I can't even imagine.

PAUL

I wouldn't want you to.

Layla crinkles the foil wrapping her gyro.

LAYLA

I was going to ask for your number. Now that seems shitty.

PAUL

It's okay. My reception might be spotty in the near future anyway.

LAYLA

Where are you going?

PAUL

A house on a hill. It was supposed to be our artists' loft. Now artist's, singular, loft.

LAYLA

How long are you going to be up there?

PAUL

I think I ate this too quickly. Excuse me.

Paul puts down his cherry-red gyro and walks outside.

Through the front glass, Layla watches as Paul casually opens the trash bin on the curb and VOMITS into it.

Layla doesn't let her gaze break.

Paul walks back inside and sits down as if nothing happened.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 You could send me a letter.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Paul, in a cardigan and jeans, drives up in the Pontiac. The fuel indicator shows a lit-up exclamation point, as the needle points to EMPTY.

The car, as slowly as it rolls, crashes into the mailbox that stops its momentum.

PAUL  
 Shit.

Paul walks out, and looks around at the trees rustling in the wind. Takes a deep breath, then walks into the house.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Paul scribbles a note on a sticky pad. He sticks it on the refrigerator:

"GET BRAKE PADS REPLACED."

He arranges rotting lemon pigs on a table.

Paul positions a DSLR camera rigged on a tabletop tripod. He snaps pictures of these dying lemon pigs.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Paul sits on the couch. He edits the rotting lemon pig pictures on his laptop.

An OINK. He looks outside. A pig wanders around the front of the house. He closes his laptop and walks outside.

EXT. HOUSE - CONT'D

Paul crouches down to the pig. Pets the top of his head.

The pig has a pink tag on its ear.

PAUL  
 You're friendly. Where'd you come from?

PIG  
 OINK.

PAUL  
Here. Wait one second.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN

Paul grabs a bin of apple cores and peels, coffee grounds and other various bits and bobs.

EXT. HOUSE

Paul dumps the contents of the bin in front of the pig. The pig oinks and happily eats the food.

PAUL  
What's your name, buddy?

PIG  
Oink.

PAUL  
Yeah. I'll call you "Oink."

PIG  
Oink.

PAUL  
Where'd you come from?

PIG  
\*Sniffle\*

PAUL  
Well, you're always welcome at my place. Or this little patch here. I wouldn't admit this to any of my friends, but it does get lonely here.

PIG  
Oink.

PAUL  
Thanks. You too.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

Paul puts a CD into the CD player.

A CELLO plays.

Paul swings around by himself.

He paces back and forth across the bedroom.

He climbs on the bed, and runs his hands through his hair.

PAUL  
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

Silence, as he catches his breath. Chest heaving.

After a beat, he hears a lengthy GROAN in the distance. He stops moving. Turns the CD player off.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Paul walks up to the window, and sees the pig asleep.

He looks past the pig. Empty landscape, save the trees.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul is asleep.

He hears the GROAN again.

He shuffles awake, then walks back to the living room in his pajamas.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

Paul looks outside. Nothing. The pig isn't even there.

He digs through the closet and finds an audio recorder. He places it on a stand and plugs it into AC power, and presses the REC button.

He puts two plush earplugs into his ears and goes back into the bedroom.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The GROAN continues.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Paul takes his earplugs out and looks out the window. A peaceful, crisp morning. Birds chirping.

He picks up the recorder, which has been going for 7 hours 23 minutes. He stops it, then plays the file on fast-forward.



Until he gets to a sharp SQUEAL.

He stops the file, then rewinds. Plays at normal speed.

First, a pained slow GROAN. Then, what sounds like a pig SQUEALING. Horrendous. Extended. Painful.

EXT. FIELD - CONT'D

Paul walks outside, looking around, and sees bones on the ground. He follows the trail until he reaches it:

The PIG'S HEAD, dismembered, bloody, with its eyes gouged out.

Paul takes a deep, panicked breath.

EXT. FIELD - LATER

Paul digs a deep hole with a wide shovel.

Wearing gardening gloves, he places the pig's head into the earth, along with its bones.

He covers the hole back up with dirt, then pats it with his shovel.

He then places two sticks crossed into the earth on top of the mound.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Paul stares out the window.

Silence outside. He keeps looking. He makes sure to listen for anything: leaves rustling, distant stray traffic, grass in the wind.

Then, he finally hears it again, the GROAN.

He tries to replicate it with his own mouth.

PAUL  
Hnnnnnnnnnnggh.

Not quite.

Tries it again, slightly differently.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmrrrrrrrr.

Again, not really what it sounds like.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Paul does various groans into the audio recorder.

Then, he sings a C-note.

On his laptop, he loads the sounds and messes with them on a DAW. Slows it down, cuts out parts of the noise, applies reverb.

Then he drags in the sound of him singing the note.

He slows it down drastically, plays it backwards.

PAUL

Hm.

He's got something.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Using all the speakers in the house, he plays this modified note as loud as he can.

Silence.

Silence.

But then, the GROAN.

He plays it again.

The groan responds faster this time. A little clearer.

Plays it again. Now it's clear they're having a conversation. The groan is louder now, getting closer.

Paul grabs an old hunting rifle from the closet, points it at the door. He plays the sound again.

The GROANING creature is close by. He cocks the rifle, but through the window he sees:

MARA. A walking corpse, her eyes completely gone, and her jawbone exposed. Her skull shows through a torn flap on her head, half her hair remains. Completely tattered clothing.

She walks up on all fours, quite quickly.

She opens the door. Paul is no longer as prepared to shoot, as Mara sniffs out the space. She heads for the fridge, where she grabs veggie sausages and leftover beans with her mouth. She keeps sniffing the food, tries a bit, but coughs it up.

EXT. HOUSE - CONT'D

Paul slowly walks outside, the gun still in his hands.

Mara GROANS. She sniffs around.

Paul points the rifle straight at Mara, but his hands shake.

His PHONE ALARM goes off.

Mara whips her head around, facing Paul. She then RUNS on all fours as Paul SPRINTS into the forest. He tries to turn off his cellphone, but can't manage it while running full speed and holding the rifle. He drops the phone into a puddle, abandons it and keeps sprinting into the depths of the trees.

Mara SCREAMS as she runs towards Paul.

INSERT

The groceries scattered on the kitchen floor.

EXT. FOREST - CONT'D

Paul tries to catch his breath, as he spins around the incomprehensible masses of trees and foliage. But he hears Mara's SCREAM. He looks around, trying to find her, then hides behind a massive tree.

He holds his breath as Mara's hurried footsteps get louder.

Mara finally arrives, as she sniffs.

Paul sweats as he has his back to the tree. He hugs the hunting rifle.

Mara sniffs around, goes around the tree and finally reaches Paul's vicinity. She approaches Paul, who closes his eyes and hopes to keep his breath still enough.

As Mara gets close, her teeth exposed... a SQUIRREL runs across the branches close by.

Mara WHIPS around, and chases the squirrel.

Paul keeps his gun close to him, as he walks. But he makes so much noise, stepping on various twigs and branches. Still, Mara is just distracted enough that Paul can slip away.

He looks back as Mara devours a squirrel, blood shooting out of her mouth as she squeezes a tendon with her teeth.

Paul turns around and speeds up his run.

But, as he's almost in the clear, he TRIPS on a nylon rope attached to a tree, meant for climbing.

He falls over, and YELPS in pain. Drops the gun as it FIRES on impact, destroying a nearby fallen tree trunk.

Paul grabs his leg as he writhes on the ground.

Mara, squirrel guts in her mouth, turns around.

She walks towards the source of the yelp.

Paul struggles to get up. Mara's going to be here any second. He looks at the long nylon rope, and creates a loop. He tosses a length of rope across a high branch, and leaves the loop on the forest floor. A trap.

He waits behind the tree.

Waits.

Silence.

But then, Mara slowly approaches from behind. Paul has chosen the wrong spot.

Paul turns around and Mara LEAPS onto him. He tumbles over, KICKING Mara back.

PAUL  
I'm so sorry!

Mara recovers quickly, and jumps onto Paul's leg, which she BITES. Immediately blood spurts out, and Mara chews off a large chunk of Paul's calf.

Paul SCREAMS in agony. He holds onto the tree, with the last of his strength, GRABS the nylon rope and PULLS with his entire body weight.

The loop tightens around Mara's ankle, as she's whisked into the air and hangs.

Mara thrashes wildly, her arms and legs flailing as her ankle is caught on the branch.

Paul looks at Mara. He looks out at the exit of the forest.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(pained)  
I'm sorry!

Tons of sweat on Paul's face. His clothes are stained red.

He drags himself with his good leg and his arms, but he is sweating profusely and losing blood.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(weak)  
I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!  
I'm sorry!

EXT. CAR - MINUTES LATER

Paul drags himself to the Pontiac.

INT. CAR - CONT'D

He climbs inside with all his upper-body might, and places his bloody leg on the passenger's seat. He turns the keys, deactivates the parking brake. But he sees there's no gas left in the tank. He tries the gas pedal, but it can't go.

He then shifts the gear into NEUTRAL, and lets the hill take care of it.

The passenger seat soaks up blood from Paul's leg, as he navigates exiting the property by letting the car glide in reverse.

EXT. ROAD - MINUTES LATER

As the car finally backs out of the field, Paul turns the steering wheel all the way in order to get a sharp angle down. But the car ends up spinning, and instead goes down the road backwards.

PAUL  
Fuck.

Paul looks behind him. The car goes faster and faster down, as he swerves to follow the road.

**III.**

EXT. MARA'S ROAD - EARLY MORNING

Mara lays face down on the side of the road.

A car passes by. Doesn't stop.

LENA (20's) jogs, exhaling early morning fog. She wears a tracksuit with reflector stripes.

She stops in her tracks when she spots Mara on the ground.

LENA

Hey!

Lena sprints towards Mara, then crouches down.

LENA (CONT'D)

Ma'am, are you alright? Ma'am!

She looks at Mara's horribly frozen-over hand.

Her shattered fingers.

LENA (CONT'D)

Oh no.

Lena dials 911 on her phone.

LENA (CONT'D)

Hello? Hi, yes, I have a woman  
lying on the road. Yes, I'll check.

She crouches down and holds Mara's good hand.

LENA (CONT'D)

I feel a pulse. Yes.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - NIGHT

Paul wildly swerves as he keeps his neck craned behind him.

He RUNS a stop sign, nearly clipping a car that HONKS.

Paul holds his chewed bloody leg as he grips the steering wheel. His eyes wander. Vision gets blurry.

He CRASHES into a tree.

Paul's hand slides off the steering wheel.

His head slouches down.

EXT. PAUL'S ROAD - CONT'D

The back of the car is completely destroyed.

Paul passes out in the drivers seat.

A beat.

INT. PIG TRUCK - SAME

LENA, now in overalls and a torn-up baseball cap, drives the truck on the bumpy road.

OINKING pigs in the back. They're packed together.

Lena leans towards the windshield and sees the busted red Pontiac. Smoke flows out of the back of the car.

Lena stops the car. She walks towards the Pontiac.

LENA

Hello?

Lena looks inside. Sees Paul knocked out in the front seat, and his mangled leg.

Lena rushes to open the door. She holds Paul's limp body and drags him into the front seat of her truck.

INT. PIG TRUCK - CONT'D

Lena tears off a piece of her t-shirt and ties off Paul's lower thigh. She zips her jacket over her skin and drives down the hill as fast as she can.

INT. AMBULANCE

Lena, in her jogging outfit, watches as paramedics place a breathing apparatus on Mara's face.

They place her frozen fingers into a container with some fluid in it.

PARAMEDIC

She's breathing. Frostbite's spreading quick.

INT. HOSPITAL

INTERCUT between

Paul, being wheeled through in a gurney as hospital staff and nurses place gauze on his bloodied leg.

NURSE  
Infection's looking rough. Too  
quick to handle.

Lena, also wheeled through in a gurney, has her hand in a warm water bowl.

The same nurse holds her hand.

NURSE (CONT'D)  
We're seeing accelerated muscle  
degeneration.

Paul and Lena get wheeled into their respective rooms.

INT. PAUL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Paul wakes up, shifts in his bed. He's covered in a light blue hospital gown.

He sits up to see Lena, sitting in a chair in the corner of the room.

LENA  
Hi.

PAUL  
(confused)  
Hello.

Paul looks around.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Who are you?

LENA  
I'm Lena.

Lena shakes Paul's hand.

LENA (CONT'D)  
I saved your life, sir.

Paul stretches, some joints pop in his back.



PAUL  
Did you haul me with a bunch of  
pigs?

LENA  
Oh, you heard them.

PAUL  
I was going in and out of  
consciousness.

Paul motions his hand back and forth on his forehead.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Why'd you stick around?

LENA  
I was raised correctly.

Lena shrugs.

LENA (CONT'D)  
You were also at my childhood home.

PAUL  
Oh.

LENA  
I was glad someone had moved in.  
Red Pontiac looks beautiful next to  
that place.

PAUL  
Yeah. Too bad it's totaled.

LENA  
Machines are meant to be used. To  
become hollowed out and tired.

PAUL  
Like us?

Lena smiles and shakes her head.

LENA  
Not like us.

Paul leans over for his water cup. Takes a sip.

PAUL  
I think one of your pigs visited  
me.

LENA  
Sure. They find their way there  
sometimes.

PAUL  
Had a little pink tag.

Lena nods.

LENA  
That must've been Franklin. Is he  
still there?

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL  
I'm sorry. Whatever got me...

Lena purses her lips.

LENA  
The inevitable came earlier.

Paul feels his leg, and he furrows his brow.

He lifts the blanket to see that his left leg is now a stump.

Amputated below the knee. Paul lets out all the air left in  
his lungs.

PAUL  
Shit.

LENA  
I'm sorry.

Paul looks at his leg.

PAUL  
No, don't be. You didn't do it.

Lena steps over and leans in, hugs Paul. Paul squeezes her in  
a tight embrace.

INT. MARA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mara THRASHES awake. She breathes in short, accelerated  
bursts. Blinks rapidly.

Lena, in her tracksuit, walks to Mara's bed.

LENA  
Hey. Hey.

Mara, zero trust in her eyes, looks at Lena.

LENA (CONT'D)  
I'm here to help. You're safe.

MARA  
(shakily)  
Who are you?

LENA  
I'm Lena. I was jogging by, saw you  
and called the ambulance.

Mara immediately notices her hand. It's missing. Her stub  
wrapped in gauze.

MARA  
No. No no no...

LENA  
Hey. It's okay.

Mara looks at her hand, but then faces Lena.

MARA  
Where is he?

LENA  
Who?

MARA  
Did you see Paul? Did you see my  
husband?

LENA  
I didn't see anybody else.

MARA  
He was so close. I could almost  
touch him. He was... right there.

Mara's eyes well up.

MARA (CONT'D)  
Can you take me there? Can you take  
me back.

LENA  
You have to rest.

MARA  
I'll be warmer. I promise I'll  
dress warmer. I'll bring a heater.

Lena holds Mara's face.

LENA

Okay. Okay, take a breather here.  
I'll bring you back. Sound good?

Mara's breathing settles down. She closes her eyes. Plops back onto her pillow.

MARA

*Love the man. I love the man. More than anything in the world. If the man goes, I live in woe, please bring my husband back. He is precious, brave and lecherous, parasite of flesh and pain. I love the man, I promise, please bring the man back. Amen.*

Lena steps back.

LENA

How do you know that?

Mara wipes a tear from her cheek.

MARA

I found it in a photo.

Mara turns to her side, facing away from Lena.

LENA

My mom used to say that.

Mara turns her head towards Lena.

MARA

Really?

Lena nods. She sits on the bed.

LENA

We lived in that house. I was a really sickly child. Every day for months. Years. She was afraid that I would slip away.

Lena shifts.

LENA (CONT'D)

She was a poet. She wrote a little prayer and sang it to me every night.

Lena looks at her fingernails.

MARA  
Did it do anything?

LENA  
I'm still here.

Lena shrugs.

LENA (CONT'D)  
I think the fact that she kept me  
warm and felt the need to write and  
sing songs to me had a lot to do  
with it. So I guess it did do  
"something."

Lena grabs a windbreaker jacket on the corner chair.

LENA (CONT'D)  
I left my number on the thing. Let  
me know if you need anything.

She walks out, but stops at the door.

LENA (CONT'D)  
Stay somewhere warm, please.

Lena walks out.

Mara holds her stub with her other hand.

INT. JAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mara knocks at the front door.

Jan opens. At first sleepy, her eyes immediately widen at recognizing Mara.

JAN  
(excited)  
Oh my God!

Jan looks at Mara's stub.

JAN (CONT'D)  
(concerned)  
Oh my God...

Mara HUGS Jan.

JAN (CONT'D)  
(muffled through Mara's  
hug)  
I'm sorry.

Jan hugs Mara tighter.

JAN (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry.

INT. JAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Jan escorts Mara through the space. The furniture is largely the same as we last saw it, but with a substantial mess.

It's a jovial aftermath. Red solo cups and pizza boxes scattered throughout the living room.

Jan picks up bits of trash into a loose trash bag.

She leans down and gets a bag of chips.

JAN  
Sorry about the mess. Had a party  
here last night.

MARA  
No, I like it. It's good to be back  
with the living.

INT. JAN'S APARTMENT - MARA'S BEDROOM

Jan opens the door to Mara's bedroom. It's eerily neat.

JAN  
Just like you left it.

MARA  
You sure? I never made my bed.

JAN  
I might've taken my liberties.

Mara rubs Jan's back.

MARA  
Thank you.

JAN  
Can I ask...

Mara holds up her stub.

MARA

Oh, this? I saw a phantom of Paul.  
I tried to touch him, and it gave  
me inoperable frostbite.

Jan crosses her arms.

JAN

Wow.

Mara nods.

MARA

I'm gonna have a second in here.

JAN

Of course.

Jan walks to the living room.

JAN (CONT'D)

Good to have you back.

MARA

Thanks. Good to be back.

Mara closes her door. She sits on the edge of her bed. She then sits on the stool next to her cello. From her bag, she pulls out a mechanism that she attaches to her stub. She places the cello bow into a slot on the gadget. Props the cello against her body, then tries to play.

It's not quite right. Shaky, lacking confidence.

She stops. Places the bow on the cello strings again. Pull. Push. Not the resonance she's looking for.

She stops. Tries one more time. This time, mid-stroke, she takes the bow right out of the mechanism.

MARA (CONT'D)

Piece of shit.

She THROWS the device across the room.

INT. JAN'S APARTMENT - MARA'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Mara sleeps in her bed.

An animalistic GROWL.

Mara sits up in bed, straight as a board. She cracks open the window, takes a look into the dark kitchen and living room.

MARA

Jan?

INT. JAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Mara wanders around the living room.

The growl again, but slows down into the same supernatural pained moan we heard in the hill house.

Mara's breathing gets heavier.

She walks to the front door. Opens it ever so slightly. Scans the neighborhood, and sees the owner of a BULLDOG pulling its leash.

BULLDOG OWNER

Melvin, down!

The Bulldog BARKS.

Mara shuts the front door and sits against a wall. She snuffles. Stares at her hand. Then BAWLS.

Jan opens her bedroom door and rushes to Mara.

Jan sits right beside Mara and cradles Mara's head with her arm and holds Mara's shoulder with her other hand.

JAN

Hey, hey.

Jan kisses Mara's ear.

JAN (CONT'D)

You're safe. It's okay.

Tears drip Mara's shirt.

Mara holds Jan's arm tight.

EXT. JAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Paul walks up to the door with crutches. He knocks on the door with his left crutch.

Jan opens the door.

JAN

Oh, hi!

Jan sees Paul's amputated leg.



JAN (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

PAUL

Can I come in?

Jan stares at his leg.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Jan?

JAN

Sorry. Yes, of course.

Jan makes a lot of space for Paul.

INT. JAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Paul sits on the couch. He watches TV news.

In the kitchen, Jan pours Paul a cup of tea.

JAN

Can we address the elephant in the room?

PAUL

I need a shower. I know.

Jan sets a cup of tea in front of Paul. Sits across from him.

JAN

If you ever need to be talked out of going back to that fucking place--

PAUL

I won't need convincing.

Paul picks up the teacup and takes a sip.

JAN

I'm sorry.

PAUL

About what?

JAN

I don't know. I just feel like this whole situation has been such shit.

PAUL

Yeah.

JAN

Sometimes I swear I can see her.  
Just, doing her thing. Walking  
around, listening to music.

Jan wipes a tear with her open palm and sniffles.

JAN (CONT'D)

To me, she's right here. You know?

PAUL

Of course.

JAN

I loved her so much. I still do. So  
beautiful. So vibrant.

Paul extends his hand.

Jan holds it tight. She chuckles through her tears.

JAN (CONT'D)

She would've kicked my ass if she  
saw me this way.

Paul smiles.

INT. JAN'S APARTMENT - MARA'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Paul sleeps in his pajamas.

A glowing white light streams through the window.

Paul shifts in bed. The white light fades out.

For a few seconds.

Then returns, with greater intensity.

Paul opens his eyes, sits up. He shifts to the edge of the  
bed, grabs his crutches and walks to the window.

But as he's about to open the blinds, the light disappears.  
He pauses, but opens the blinds anyway. He squints to see  
what's on the street.

Nothing at first. But then, HEADLIGHTS hit Paul's face. Paul  
blocks his eyes, but looks back out.

Some teens doing donuts down the street in a pick-up truck.

Paul walks out of the bedroom.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MINUTES LATER

Paul, still in his pajamas, approaches the teens with his crutches.

PAUL  
Guys...

The teens keep doing donuts. Two teens watch by the sidelines, cheering the drivers on.

One of the teens wears a ballcap and massive basketball shorts, with a Monster energy drink t-shirt.

The other teen wears a cowboy hat, suspenders, and big leather boots with spurs.

TEEN #1  
Let's fucking go!!!

TEEN #2  
Burn the pavement!

PAUL  
Guys!

The two teens turn around.

TEEN #1  
What?

PAUL  
People are trying to sleep around here, can you give it a rest? It's like four a.m.

The two teens look at each other and scoff.

TEEN #2  
Whatever.

The teens face back to the truck.

Paul stands there, watching the headlights spin.

PAUL  
My wife is dead.

The truck keeps doing donuts.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
MY WIFE IS DEAD.

TEEN #1

Excuse me?

PAUL

We just got married. Found a beautiful house up Fickle Hill. Perfection.

Meanwhile, the truck keeps doing donuts behind them.

PAUL (CONT'D)

She saw a light in the forest, she followed it, and she's gone now. I can't speak to her again, I can't... I thought I could. I thought, maybe this wasn't real? Maybe we could still--

(beat)

I don't give a shit about sleeping, I haven't had a full night for a year now. But I cannot. Look. At those headlights.

The teens look at each other.

They gesture to stop at the truck. The truck stops. They talk to the driver, and the headlights flip off.

TEEN #2

(to Paul)

Sorry man.

Paul waves.

He walks back to the apartment.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Paul, sitting on a bar stool, snaps pictures from the back of the venue but he can't quite get the vantage point of the performers he needs from where he is.

He grabs crutches and hangs his camera from his neck. He approaches the stage, but is PUSHED by someone dancing a little too hard. He falls over, his camera BREAKS into pieces on the ground.

Paul gets himself up with his arms and good leg.

Layla rushes in and helps Paul up. She picks up Paul's camera pieces.

EXT. BAR - LATER

Paul leans against the wall.

Layla smokes a cigarette as she stands in front of him.

PAUL  
I'm sorry about all that. I'm  
getting used to this one-leg thing.

LAYLA  
Why on Earth are you apologizing?  
Jeez. I'm sorry about your camera.

PAUL  
It's okay. It was getting old.

LAYLA  
You are so chill about all this.

PAUL  
Eh.

LAYLA  
You never wrote me back.

PAUL  
Oh, I don't even think I got  
anything.

Layla purses her mouth into a tight smile.

LAYLA  
You had a lot to deal with.

Layla uses her cigarette to motion to Paul's leg.

LAYLA (CONT'D)  
How did that happen, anyway?

PAUL  
An ill-advised hike. And a wild  
animal.

LAYLA  
That's fucked up.

PAUL  
I'm lucky I'm alive.

Layla nods and takes a puff.

LAYLA  
I've got something to show you.

Layla pulls a video camera out of her satchel. She stands next to Paul and also leans against the wall.

LAYLA (CONT'D)  
Panasonic VHX-100. Here.

Layla hands the camera to Paul. He takes the camera. Observes it as if it's an alien object.

PAUL  
I don't know if I've ever taken video on something that wasn't my phone.

LAYLA  
Don't worry, you're a photographer, you'll get this.

PAUL  
I might stick to that.

Paul hands the camcorder back to Layla, but she doesn't accept.

LAYLA  
I'm not saying you can't take pictures.

Layla nudges the video camera back to Paul.

LAYLA (CONT'D)  
It's just another thing in the arsenal. No crutches digging into your pits if you're in the back recording the whole time.

PAUL  
... That's true.

Paul observes the camera again. Turns it on.

LAYLA  
I can get you one that's more reminiscent of a stills camera.

PAUL  
No, no. This is a new thing. I like it.

Paul looks at Layla.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Fresh start.

LAYLA  
Fresh start.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Through found footage of Steve's grainy camcorder, we see Maggie walking into the dark woods. She holds on closely to Steve's side.

MAGGIE  
It's probably just a messed-up  
truck or something.

STEVE  
And if it is, we've debunked the  
ghost theories.

MAGGIE  
Okay...

A PAINED MOAN in the distance.

Maggie tight onto Steve's side.

STEVE  
(whispering)  
It's okay.

The PAINED MOAN gets louder.

MAGGIE  
I don't like that.

Steve and Maggie stop.

Maggie tightens her grip on Steve.

A SHRILL SCREAM in the darkness.

Maggie buries her head into Steve's shoulder.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Let's go home. Please.

STEVE  
I think we're close.

Steve aims his camera around. Foliage blurs through the digital noise of the camcorder sensor.

The pained moan is louder. A SCREAM.

Shakily, Steve points the camera towards the sky.

MARA, hanging from a tree by her legs, SCREAMS at the camera.

STEVE (CONT'D)  
Holy shit...

MAGGIE  
Fuck!!!

Mara DROPS from the tree, glitching the camera out. The camera comes back online, revealing Mara twitching on the ground.

STEVE  
Maggie... run.

Steve and Maggie sprint in the other direction.

They keep running, but from behind hear a set of intense rustling through leaves.

EXT. FIELD

They make it out of the forest. They're breathing heavily.

MAGGIE  
Where's the car?

Mara RUSHES at them from behind. Mara pins Maggie to the ground and SCREAMS in her face.

Steve TACKLES Mara, but Mara gnaws Steve's finger, pulls away from him and CRUNCHES. Blood spurts out of Steve's hand. Steve SCREAMS. He kicks Mara away from him. Mara scrambles and stands on all fours.

Maggie, still struggling to get up, gets her neck bitten into by Mara. Tendons from her neck pull out, caught in Mara's teeth.

Maggie's voice gets weaker, beginning in a scream then waning into a bodyless whimper.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
STEEEEEEEEveeee...

Blood pools in Maggie's mouth. Spills out of her lower lip.

Mara turns to face Steve. Steve kicks his feet and runs into-

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Steve shuts the door and leans his body against it.



THUMP.

THUMP.

THUMP.

Silence.

Then, sounds of Mara scuttling away on the wooden patio.

Steve points the camera out the front window. Mara shuffles into the forest.

Steve breathes out a sigh of relief. The house is entirely dark, save the light on top of the camera. He wedges a loose wooden plank into the door, preventing it from opening.

He walks into the dark house. The camera looks down at Steve's severed finger.

He opens drawers. A small wooden box. He opens it, revealing the photograph of the mother and her shriveled baby. Tosses it aside. He opens another drawer, finds a rag. He places the rag on top of his bloodied hand.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM

He walks into the bedroom. The wood floors creak below him.

In the corner, a glimpse of a transparent figure. Paul staring out the window.

Steve slowly backs out of the bedroom.

Paul turns around, facing Steve.

Steve takes rapid, panicked breaths.

He turns around and runs towards the front door, but the wood lodged into the door prevents him from opening it.

STEVE

Ah!

Steve turns around. Paul is gliding closer to him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(panicked)

Hey man, I'm sorry for coming in--

Paul GRABS Steve's face.

Steve drops the camera. Now from a lopsided angle, we see Steve's eyes freeze over. He uses his hands to try and warm up his head.

Steve SCREAMS, but it turns down to a low moan as his throat and mouth freeze solid. His breathing goes silent.

He collapses onto the floor.

Paul watches him perish.

INT. GREAT AMERICAN MUSIC HALL - NIGHT

A silhouette of Mara adjusts knobs on a mixing board in the back of the venue, overlooking the audience from an elevated platform.

Green light illuminates the stage. Fog descends on the crowd.

Frances Quinlan stands on stage accompanied by their band. They take a sip from a plastic water bottle. Heavy breathing.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
Shout-out to Mara in the back.

Light clapping from the crowd. Wide smile from Frances.

Paul stands behind the audience. A video camera on a tripod captures Frances. Paul sits on a tall seat and adjusts the tripod, smoothly following the performers.

His right leg is amputated right below the knee. A pair of crutches leans against the bar.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
This song is for those we remember.

The piano starts. Then the drums. Frances chimes in, just their vocals at first.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*Hey did you hear me mom?/  
Baby's headed home/  
Against your wishes I went/  
Into the woods alone.*

Frances starts strumming their electric guitar.

From the mixing board, Mara squints. She looks down at the crowd. Did she spot someone?

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*Just look at my face, a vegetable,  
 beet red/  
 I know you gave me money for the  
 motel/  
 But I came here instead/  
 I came here instead...*

Mara steps away from the mixing board. She turns to face JAN, wearing a t-shirt and jeans. Mara kisses Jan.

MARA  
 (yelling over music)  
 I'm gonna go down there.

Jan nods. Grazes Mara's face with her hand. Mara delicately holds Jan's hand against her face, then walks away.

Mara walks downstairs into the crowd.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
*What I wanted when I left you/  
 Brushed by, so close/  
 With the money, I got pretty gone/  
 And bloodied some poor actor's  
 nose.*

Mara walks into the dancing crowd as Frances's voice SOARS.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*ONE NIGHT IN THE PARK, THE PELLET  
 GUN/  
 TOOK OUT AN EYE, I CAME UNDOOO-O-  
 OOOONE.*

As Mara walks through, Paul spots something in his video camera. He looks at the crowd. Grabs his crutches and leaves his video station.

When the concertgoers see Paul walking through, they make space for him.

He spots a woman whose hair color and build looks similar to Mara's. He taps her on the shoulder. She turns around. It's not Mara.

PAUL  
 Oh. Sorry.

Paul turns around. The audience is rowdy. He's lost in a flurry of people enjoying the music.

FRANCES QUINLAN  
 ONE COLLEGE KID CAME TO SEE ME/  
 HE PASSED ME THAT NYLON STRING/  
 ASKED ME TO PLAY HIM SOMETHING/

Mara spins to scan the crowd. All she sees are dancing Hop  
 Along fans. She jumps, trying to spot Paul.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
 SO I TRIED MY HAND AT "BLUES RUN  
 THE GAME"/  
 I BARELY MADE IT THROUGH IT/  
 THEN HE HAD TO GO BACK TO HIS  
 PARENT'S HOUSE UPSTATE/  
 UPSTATE...

Paul limbers along into the dancing people. They sing along  
 passionately to Frances's vocals.

Paul and Mara, just for a second, believe they can see each  
 other.

For just a flash, Mara's eye bleeds. A bead of red drips from  
 her left cornea.

Paul's hair floats, as if underwater.

They both get completely overwhelmed by the audience.  
 Singing, dancing, flowing with the music.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
 What have they done with my jealous  
 one?/  
 Who is gonna TAAAAAALK TRAAAAASH  
 long after I'm gone?/  
 Whe-e-e-en I was young, they used  
 to find me/  
 Pitching horseshoe crabs back into  
 the sound...

Frances's voice enters the stratosphere as Paul and Mara try  
 and approach each other.

But they'll never reach each other again.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
 WHAT HAVE THEY DONE? WHAT HAVE THEY  
 DONE?/  
 WITH MY JEALOUS OOOOONE, WITH MY  
 JEALOUS OOOOOONE/  
 WHE-E-E-E-EN I WAS YOUNG, THEY USED  
 TO FIND ME/  
 PITCHING HORSESHOE CRABS INTO THE  
 SOUND.

The crowd coalesces into an incomprehensible dancing mass.  
The fog obscures the entire venue.

### **EPILOGUE**

EXT. HOUSE - POOL - DAY

A bright sunny day.

Glowing halation through the tree leaves.

Slight breeze moves the grass in waves.

The swimming pool is completely still, glass-like. Some forest detritus has fallen into the water. But no matter: the water is still clear.

EXT. HOUSE - FIELD

The dirt mound with two sticks poking out, forming an "X."  
Oink (Franklin)'s burial spot.

Mara, blood-stained face and clumped, thin hair, drags Maggie's corpse by the neck with her jaw, creating a trail of smeared blood across the grass.

Mara walks on all fours.

One of Maggie's legs are picked clean, leaving nothing but blood-stained bones and some weak rotting tendons keeping the joints together. Her other leg is bitten up, but not nearly as emaciated.

Maggie's shirt is still on, but torn to shreds. Her ribs are exposed through the remnants of a Misfits T-shirt.

Her arms are reduced to skeletal remains that drag on the surface of the earth.

Her head is still perfectly intact.

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT

Mara, Maggie's neck still occupying her mouth and teeth, claw the door with her right arm, expecting it to open.

INT. HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - SAME

As Mara tries to open the door, the wedge of wood that Steve placed in front of it prevents it from opening.

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT

Mara grows more and more frustrated.

She lets go of Maggie's corpse and SHOVES her arm against the door. A little more movement.

Finally, Mara stands up and RUSHES the door with all her strength. The door's wobbly hinges fly off, and the front door falls off its frame.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mara once again takes Maggie's neck with her mouth and drags it into the house, a new blood path forming on the wooden floors.

Mara passes Steve's frozen corpse. His hands glued to his cheeks, his mouth agape in a scream. He looks blue.

As Mara drags Maggie's body, the blood covers letters in front of the door. On the envelopes, they read:

EMERGENCY SHUTOFF NOTICE

Red stains the envelopes.

Mara drops Maggie in the center of the living room.

Mara backs up, and STEPS on Steve's head.

His frozen skull shatters into pieces.

Despite the shutoff notice, the record player keeps spinning. The needle endlessly captures pure static, as it's reached the end of the *Hop Along* record.

Mara digs into Maggie's stomach, fishing out flesh and blood. She takes a spleen in her jaw and squishes her teeth on it, spurting blood everywhere, including on the record.

Paul, transparent, glowing, walks out of the bedroom.

The two bodies ignore each other.

Paul approaches the spinning record player. Paul uses his finger and touches the record player.

It begins to crystallize, freezing in place.

Yet, because of the bump, the needle props up and drops on the vinyl.

As the record and player slowly freeze over, the crackle becomes abundantly prominent.

Frances Quinlan's voice, nearly drowned out by the vinyl artifacts that begin to take over, still sings *Laments of a Mattress*:

FRANCES QUINLAN  
*Tires squealing away from one  
another/  
We all used to be lovers here/*

Mara, startled by the music, with guts still in her mouth, slowly looks at the record player.

She crawls over to the spinning record.

With rigid, crooked movements, Mara stands on two feet. Her forearms shake as she has them in front of her, like a T-rex.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*Bodies playing/  
Stay they'll/  
Stay like their boxes stacked/  
Stay labeled and separated/*

Paul walks away, looks at nothing in particular. He stays still in the middle of the living room, right next to Maggie's corpse.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*Go ahead take the couch/  
I know I don't want to sit next to  
nobody/  
Go ahead take the fridge and all/  
I don't want you going hungry/*

Mara stares at the record. Turns around. Grunts.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)  
*Go ahead take the cat/  
I know you're only going to be  
coming back/  
Go ahead take it all/  
I know how you've been wanting to  
settle down, down, do-o-wn/  
Has it always been? Settling down,  
down, do-o-wn/*

Mara approaches Paul.

Clumsily, rigidly, Mara spins around Paul. Blood dripping from her open jaw.

Paul looks at her, and spins in place. Slowly. His hair floating as if suspended in water. His hands at his side.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)

*The one on the left says to the one  
on the right/*

*I could make, a very good wife for  
you/*

*One on the right says to the one on  
the left/*

*Let's take this one step at a time,  
time, time/*

*One on the right says to the one on  
the left/*

*You know I need you all the time?/*

Paul, in a smooth ghostly movement, reaches out his hand.

Mara looks at the hand, as they keep facing each other.

Mara gently bites the hand with her twitching jaw.

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)

*The one on the left says to the one  
on the right/*

*You know I've changed my mind/*

*I can't help but think/*

*My insides have to sing/*

*Now the weight gets the better of  
me/*

*And my insides have to sing/*

Mara's shaking, gored hand is touched by Paul's gentle cold palm. Some of the blood on Mara's hand crystallizes over, but they don't affect each other too much.

As Mara still has Paul's other hand in her mouth, they keep spinning with each other.

The record progressively freezes over.

Frances slowly gets drowned out by the crackling and the buzzing.

Does it matter?

FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)

(chorus)

*Song for the sad one/*

(MORE)



FRANCES QUINLAN (CONT'D)

*Who say they'll marry they guess/  
She's wearing a white dress if he  
behaves his very best/  
Song for the sad one/  
Who say they'll marry they guess/  
She's wearing a white dress if he  
behaves his very best/  
Song for the sad one/  
Who say they'll marry they guess/  
She's wearing a white dress if he  
behaves his very best/*

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT

We see the front of the house, framed in the very center.

The pool to its side.

The forest to the other side.

The pig's grave out front.

The song continuing to play, overtaken by mechanical artifacts.

FRANCES QUINLAN

*She's wearing a white dress if he  
behaves his very best/  
Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,  
yes, yes, yeah/  
Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,  
yes, yes, yeah/*

Their voice gives way to total crackling. The song rendered un-listenable. But the chorus of mechanical failures takes us into:

CREDITS.

TITLE: AMPUTATIONS.