

THE FOLLOWERS

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FADE IN:

EXT. DARK FOREST - NIGHT

Dense thicket under a blood moon, alive with the sound of crickets and toads.

SUPER: Outskirts of Milltown, Va.

A GIRL (18) stumbles into the clearing, face covered in dirt, sweat and blood, a CINDER BLOCK in her arms.

LAKE NEWPANA

Water like ink, eerily still.

The girl drops her burden, takes out a CELL PHONE. Her trembling hands navigate the menu, her empty eyes lit by its luminous glow.

She places the phone on a rotted log, kisses a dainty silver CROSS around her neck, takes a short rope from her pocket. Ties one end to the cinder block.

The other end fits around her neck.

She trudges carefully into the water. When it reaches her chin, she stops and gazes skyward.

With her remaining strength, she lifts the stone high.

GIRL
I'm so sorry.

She drops the stone, her head jerked under as bubbles shoot to the surface.

An owl HOOTS, the water idles, then the forest goes silent.

The girl's foot breaches the surface, thrashing and kicking. The final remnants of desperation.

The intensity wanes. The thrashing stops. Her foot stiffens above the rippling water until it quietly submerges.

Dark clouds pass in front of the moon.

EXT. BILL'S HOUSE - DAY

Upper middle-class and well maintained. A POLICE CRUISER sits in the driveway, an SUV by its side.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

BILL DOWNING (38) checks his reflection in the dresser mirror. He touches the grey on the side of his head, and slips on a jacket. Emblazoned on its sleeve --

MILLTOWN SHERIFF.

He sighs, reaches into his pocket and produces a PILL BOTTLE:
Name, birth date, for pain and stress.

He shakes out two caplets, swallows them dry, and turns. The bed sheets are wrinkled and the pillows sit off-center.

Bill gently smooths out the sheets, rearranges the pillows, and flashes a strange kind of smile.

He leaves the room, revealing a framed photo of him and his WIFE on some vacation somewhere. Smiling. Happier times.

An ENGAGEMENT RING sits next to the picture.

HALLWAY

A grey Stetson on his head, Bill peeks into another

BEDROOM

On the bed, his son JAMES (14), hair a mess, locked into a video game, his slender frame hardly fills out his pajamas.

BILL

Gonna wish your old man good luck?

JAMES

Good luck, old man.

BILL

You should go help your Mother. I don't want her doing everything herself.

(no answer)

Now.

James sighs, drops the controller.

LIVING ROOM

Littered with moving boxes.

Hands on her hips in a Spring blue MATERNITY BLOUSE is JESS (36), quietly determined to clean up this mess.

Bill hurries down the stairs as she lifts a heavy box.

BILL

Come on. Stop, stop. James is coming down to help you.

She picks it up anyway, places it on a table, unloads its contents.

JESS

I'm pregnant, not paralyzed.

Bill glances around. Still a lot to be done.

BILL

What's the matter? You don't like to wear your ring while you work?

JESS

Out being cleaned.

Tension as she unwraps dishes, doesn't lift her gaze.

BILL

It's sitting on the dresser. Jess, it's been over a year. Don't you think it's time?

Now she stops, looks him in the eye.

JESS

Time? Time for what? Another affair?

Bill closes his eyes, sighs.

BILL

You hafta bring that up?

She turns away, back to her work.

JESS

You brought it up.

BILL

You wouldn't have moved out here with me if you didn't wanna--

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP on the

STAIRS

James loses his balance as he rapidly descends.

JESS
Are you okay, honey?

JAMES
I'm fine, Mom.

BILL
I gotta go.
(to James)
Come here, gimme a kiss.

JAMES
Aw, come on, Dad...

Bill plants a kiss on James' forehead.

BILL
I love you, buddy. I'll see you
later.

James holds up two fingers.

JAMES
Keep the peace.

BILL
Bye, Jess.

JESS
(doesn't look up)
Bye.

Bill hesitates. Wasn't the response he was hoping for. He crosses to the front door, opens it and slips out.

Jess finally turns, an apologetic glance.

JESSICA
Bill...

EXT. HOUSE - PORCH - MORNING

Bill shuts the door, leans on it and shakes his head.

BILL
Dammit.

INT. POLICE CRUISER (MOVING) - LATER

Bill at the wheel, sips from a styrofoam cup. A low rumble is heard in the distance and he squints out his windshield.

A CAR from the opposite direction, engine races like thunder and clearly speeding. It zips past him with a *whoosh!*

Bill checks his rearview, then his watch. Not today.

EXT. SPEEDING CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jungle green CHALLENGER. Hot car. Even hotter occupant.

LUNA SWEENEY (34) is fury bottled in a hot mess of a woman, wailing at the top of her lungs.

She POUNDS the steering wheel, hair shooting out the open window like primed flames. The car swerves, rights itself, and barrels down the highway.

Seriously gone.

EXT. POLICE STATION - LATER

A modest stone building, not much bigger than a double-wide with two CRUISERS parked on the gravel.

Bill pulls in.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

He enters. Two cluttered desks, two obsolete computers and a file cabinet on the verge of toppling.

Seated at one of the desks is OFFICER MULROY (36), sheened straight features and a perpetually annoyed look.

MULROY

You know what knocking is--?

BILL

Excuse me?

OFFICER KENNEDY (29), boyish, draws water from a nearby cooler. He turns.

A back door swings open, a toilet flushes and out-going Sheriff PAUL JOHNSON (64), big 'ol country boy, waddles into the room.

JOHNSON

Thought I heard someone come in.
Good to see you again, Bill.

(shakes hands)

Boys, this here's Bill Downing,
your new Sheriff.

Mulroy and Kennedy look up, egg on their faces.

Kennedy races over and shakes Bill's hand.

BILL

Where's the rest of the crew?

The three men laugh.

JOHNSON

You're lookin' at it. Not even a
secretary. Although Patty Hanson
works dispatch part-time when she's
not at church.

Bill takes it all in.

BILL

I see.

JOHNSON

Well, come on, Bill. We'll talk in
my office.

They retreat to the office. The door closes. Kennedy sits at his desk, glances over to Mulroy, who fidgets with a pen.

KENNEDY

What's with you?

MULROY

Job should've been mine.

OFFICE

Files and some papers on an otherwise neat desk. Family pictures on the walls, citations. The usual.

Johnson plops on a worn leather seat as Bill finds a folding chair and drags it over.

JOHNSON

You and the missus settled in?

BILL

Getting there. Moving truck came in yesterday. Still a lot to do, though.

JOHNSON

No doubt. I'll give you Tom Sweeney's number. He's the Pastor of our local church. He can probably rustle up some volunteers to help with the furniture. You'll find lots of people 'round here like to lend a helping hand.

BILL

Thanks.

Johnson sighs, gazes lovingly around the office.

JOHNSON

I still can't believe this is it. I sure am gonna miss this place.

BILL

Thirty-five years is a long time.

JOHNSON

Thirty-seven. Longer than I've been married. The time came and went like a fart in a fan factory.
(leans in)
So, what about you?

BILL

What about me?

JOHNSON

You ready to step in?

BILL

Yeah, I think so. I'm looking for a change of pace.

JOHNSON

And a change of pace is what you'll get. We're nothing like Roanoke, that's for sure.

BILL

That's good to hear.

Johnson rustles through some papers.

JOHNSON

There is one thing I wanted to ask you about, though.

BILL

What's that?

JOHNSON

Your psych leave.

BILL

Didn't we go through all this?

JOHNSON

Yeah, we did, but... Psych EVAL is mandatory when you use your gun. Psych leave is requested. Why'd You request it?

Bill grins awkwardly, taken aback. But Johnson's waiting for an answer. Sizing him up.

BILL

You know the woman I shot was pregnant, right?

JOHNSON

Yeah, I know. Nothin' to be ashamed of. You were doing your job.

BILL

(scoffs)

Yeah, well... I thought I was. There was a crowd gathering. They were getting ready to lynch me. Then this woman, she just flies off the handle...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Late. Darkened, welfare houses. Wrong side of town.

A frazzled WOMAN (30s) belligerent and trashy, screams:

WOMAN

Pigs all don't know your place!
What you all doin' here? For what?

Bill, gun drawn, a safe distance away, pulsing blue and red lights flaring on his face.

BILL

Ma'am, you need to step back. Now!

WOMAN

You all don't tell me what to do!

She reaches a hand into her jacket.

BILL

Ma'am, don't do that! Ma'am!

Bill squeezes off a shot, it catches her in the shoulder. A cell phone drops to the pavement. This only serves to enrage her further. She WAILS, charges at Bill.

A struggle. She tries to wrestle his gun away, but the pistol finds its way underneath her chin and--

BLAM! The DEAFENING report shatters the night. A fine mist of blood, skull and hair shoot upward.

Bill falls back, another OFFICER breaks his fall as the WOMAN crashes to the ground.

And the FACES in the crowd. One-by-one. Shock. Disbelief. Anger.

The faces of the other OFFICERS say the same.

END FLASHBACK.

OFFICE

Bill shifts in his seat.

BILL

Why she charged me like that I'll never know, but... Fucked me up a little bit and I felt I needed some extra time. That's all there is to it.

Johnson nods.

JOHNSON

The main thing is you came out of it none the worse for wear. You did your job and went home to your family. You should be thankful.

BILL

I am.

JOHNSON

And now you're here.

BILL

Now, I'm here.

JOHNSON

Well, the good news is you won't run into anything quite like that here. Worst we gotta deal with are fender benders, parking tickets and fishing permits.

The phone RINGS. Johnson raises a finger to Bill, and picks up the line.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Milltown Police. Ted? That you? All right, all right. Slow down, slow down. A what? You're shittin' me. Where? Christ almighty.

Bill looks on intrusively.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(into phone)

No, listen to me. Ted, Ted! Stay right where you are. Ya hear me? Stay right there and don't call anyone else.

Johnson SLAMS the phone onto it's cradle.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Fuck!

BILL

What is it?

Johnson stares at Bill. Disbelief.

JOHNSON

They just pulled a body out of the water.

BILL

A what?

EXT. MILLTOWN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Small town school. A flag flies overhead, a bustling courtyard next to a traffic circle. Kids everywhere.

The sign MILLTOWN has been vandalized to read HELLTOWN. A JANITOR stands nearby with a brush and bucket.

INT. CAR - DAY

Jess behind the wheel. James, shotgun, checks out the window, apprehensive. *Here we go again.*

JESS

You have a good day now.

JAMES

If you say so.

JESS

Don't be like that, honey. It's a fresh start for all of us. It won't be like before. I Promise.

JAMES

You mean like when I used to get beat up every day? Like that?

JESS

Stop exaggerating. You didn't get beat up every day.

Jess smiles, hoping he appreciated the levity.

JAMES

Gee, that makes me feel so much better, Mom.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Kids sit by the water fountain, waiting for the bell.

Among them is BROOKE HAWKE (17), back pack slung across her shoulder. She looks tough holding a cigarette, but one drag can't hide her distaste.

STEVE DOTSON (18), an athletic pit bull of a guy, and he sure as shit doesn't look eighteen. He grabs the smoke from Brooke, takes a deep pull.

James, struggling with his back pack, shuffles past them and adjusts his glasses.

STEVE

That him?

BROOKE

Yep.

James enters the school.

Steve exhales smoke, drops the cigarette on the grass and snuffs it out with his foot as the bell sounds.

EXT. LAKE NEWPANA - SHORE - DAY

Baking in the sun is the bloated, discolored corpse of the DEAD GIRL, stringy dark hair across her half-open eyes, mouth agape. Small pockets of open flesh on her cheek, frayed rope around her neck.

A fly lands on her forehead.

JOHNSON

Catfish've been at her.

Bill, Johnson, Mulroy and Kennedy form a semi-circle, handkerchiefs to their mouths.

Behind them is TED GRISSOM (60s), a stubble-faced bumpkin in a lure encrusted fishing hat.

BILL

Anyone know her?

MULROY

That's Molly Channing.

KENNEDY

Shit. Ed Channing's daughter?

MULROY

No, Carol Channing.

KENNEDY

Isn't that the old actress with those bug eyes?

JOHNSON

Shut up! Both of you. Have a little respect.

BILL

Who's Ed Channing?

MULROY

Sick fuck of a man, if you ask me.

JOHNSON

He didn't ask you. We'll talk later about that later. Right now, you boys take Ted here back to his truck, cordon off the area, and get Chester down here.

Mulroy and Kennedy escort Ted away.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And, Ted? You keep this under your hat now. Wouldn't wanna have to revoke your fishing permit.

TED

Jesus, Sheriff. Why in the hell would you do that fer?

KENNEDY

I think the Sheriff's referring to the incident with the rainbow trout, Ted.

Ted's face goes white. Mulroy snickers. Johnson doesn't tear his gaze from the dead girl.

JOHNSON

We wouldn't want that coming out now.

Bill dons a pair of rubber gloves, squats next to the body.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Still want the job?

BILL

I've seen worse.

Johnson joins him, sighs.

JOHNSON

She got that rope around her neck, abrasions on her arms from lifting that cinder block over there. Went in the water... Done deal.

BILL

You think suicide?

JOHNSON

Yep.

BILL
Yeah, but why?
(points)
She's got ligature marks on her
wrists. She might've been tied up.
Is that indicative of a suicide?

Bill stands, dusts himself, straightens his Stetson and
without taking his eyes off the body --

BILL (CONT'D)
So, who's Ed Channing?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Jess unlocks the front door, bag in her hand.

A sleek black Mercedes pulls up, and out steps TOM
SWEENEY(42), GQ looks in a casual blue blazer and holding a
bouquet of flowers.

SWEENEY
Jessica Downing?

Jess turns, perplexed.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jess hands Sweeney a cup of coffee, sits across from him with
one of her own.

JESS
It's decaf. I hope you don't mind.

SWEENEY
Not at all. Actually, I prefer it.

JESS
I didn't realize members of the
clergy still made house calls.

He takes a sip.

SWEENEY
Mmm. This is great. And, no, I'm
not a member of the clergy. I'm the
Pastor of God's Living Word Church
in town. You might've seen it.

JESS
Can't miss it. It's a beautiful
church.

SWEENEY

Thank you. You a Christian woman,
Mrs. Downing?

JESS

Jess, please. And no. I mean, I was
raised Catholic, but I'm lapsed.

SWEENEY

Oh, a Cath-a-holic, huh?

She laughs, almost spills her coffee.

JESS

Like I said, we're not practicing,
but we do consider ourselves
Christians.

SWEENEY

Oh, you must come to our church
then. We're full gospel. I preach
it all. There's no holding back.

JESS

I'll talk to Bill. He's not much of
a follower, but I'm sure I can
twist his arm if I tried.

SWEENEY

Oh, the benefits are amazing. God's
word can give your family the
strength it needs in these trying
times.

Jess shakes her head, confused.

JESS

Well, these aren't really trying
times... I mean...

SWEENEY

I meant with the move. It's not
easy to just pick up and leave like
you did. I should know.

JESS

Wait, how do you know that?

Sweeney places his coffee on the table.

SWEENEY

Word travels fast. It's not exactly
a secret. Your husband is the new
Sheriff in town.

(MORE)

SWEENEY (CONT'D)

Comes with a certain... celebrity status, if you will.

Jess smiles.

JESSICA

I'd hardly call my husband a celebrity.

SWEENEY

This is Milltown, Mrs. Downing. That's celebrity enough for us.

JESSICA

Fair enough. What did you mean before when you said, 'I should know?'

SWEENEY

Hmm?

JESSICA

About picking up and moving. You said you knew.

Off Sweeney --

EXT. DERELICT HOUSE - DAY

In shambles, surrounded by an over grown lawn. A rusted-out car with four flats in the driveway.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A hoarders dream. Crap everywhere.

ED CHANNING (58), mangy and distraught, sits on a tattered couch, head in his hands. He looks up through watery eyes.

Bill and Johnson stand over him, hats off. The toughest part of the job.

ED

Who did this?

JOHNSON

It looks like a suicide, Ed.

Bill shoots a dismissive look at Johnson.

ED

That can't be.

BILL

Mr. Channing, do you of know anyone
who'd want to hurt Molly?

Johnson glares at Bill.

Ed stares through them, despondent.

ED

Who could possibly want to hurt my
little angel?

JOHNSON

Ed, was Molly depressed? She ever
talk about hurtin' herself?

ED

This fuckin' town has had it out
for me ever since my Maggie passed.
Natural causes, they said. But
there wasn't anything natural about
it.

JOHNSON

Ed, please...

Ed stands, gaining steam.

ED

I ain't talkin' to you. They even
tried to set me up, sayin' I raped
a...

(grits his teeth)
... a school girl.

JOHNSON

It was dropped, Ed.

ED

A school girl. This is just more of
the same.

Ed's anger dissipates. Overcome, he sits down and sobs into
his hands.

Silence, then...

BILL

Mr. Channing, we've contacted the
coroner. Give them a little time
with Molly, then we can take you to
go ID your daughter.

ED
Why can't I go now?

JOHNSON
(softly)
They gotta clean her up first.

Johnson heads for the door, Bill follows, then:

ED
She was pregnant, you know.

BILL
What?

ED
My wife. When she died. She was
pregnant.

Bill meets Ed's troubled gaze, holds it. There's something in those eyes. Something off.

Bill turns and reluctantly leaves.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

A greasy spoon throwback with aluminum backsplashes, scattered patrons and black board specials.

At a booth, in a deserted corner, sits Bill and Johnson.

JOHNSON
After Ed Channing's wife died he went nuts. Spent six weeks at the state hospital. Two weeks after he gets out, he's accused of rape.

BILL
Yeah, but he didn't do it.

JOHNSON
It got dropped. Girl confessed, admitted she concocted the whole story.

BILL
What girl?

JOHNSON
One of his daughter's friends.

BILL

I don't know. This just doesn't add up. Maybe what he said was right. He was set up.

JOHNSON

(chuckles)

Don't think too hard, Bill.

A WAITRESS glides over with a pot of coffee. You might remember her -- Luna Sweeney, the girl from earlier, cursing a blue streak in that green Challenger.

She fills Bill's cup, her green eyes scanning him up and down.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

In all the years I've been coming here you've always filled my cup first. What is this world comin' to?

LUNA

Oh, don't be upset, you old grizzly bear. I still love you.

JOHNSON

Uh huh. Luna Sweeney, this is Bill Downing. Our new Sheriff.

She extends her hand -- blood red nail polish, full red hair and lips -- all the right ingredients.

LUNA

Hell, Sheriff, I knew that. I was just waiting for a proper introduction. Pleased to meet you.

BILL

Same.

LUNA

So, what you guys cookin' up? Big police secret?

JOHNSON

When was your last speeding ticket?

She turns like an actress, looks back seductively.

LUNA

Why, can you fix it?

And she's gone. Johnson sighs.

JOHNSON

Look, Bill. I really wanted your transition to go as smooth as possible for you. But, in light of everything, I'm gonna stay on a little while. At least until all this blows over. You have any problems with that?

Bill doesn't object.

DINER - CHECKOUT - LATER

Johnson lays the check on the counter. Luna takes it, snaps her gum and twirls her hair, top two buttons of her blouse undone.

She glances at Bill.

LUNA

Do I know you from somewhere?

BILL

Me? No, I don't think so.

LUNA

You look familiar.

JOHNSON

Now, honey, Bill is a married man.

LUNA

Just being polite. What's the matter? Are you jealous? Come here...

She reaches out to Johnson, jiggles up his belly good.

JOHNSON

(laughing)

Now, now, now. Goddammit, will you stop that!

Bill watches on, bemused.

Johnson adjusts his shirt and pants.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

We better be on our way. You tell your brother I said hi, and we'll be at his service on Sunday.

LUNA
Will do, Sheriff.
(nods to Bill)
Sheriff.

Bill tips his hat, they head for the doors. Johnson stops, pats himself down. He quickly spins and heads back, his hand outstretched.

Luna sheepishly gives him back his handcuffs and whimpers seductively.

LUNA (CONT'D)
You really need those back? I'm
sure I could find some use for
them.

He shoots her a look, adjusts his collar and trudges past Bill, who locks eyes with her.

She winks, snaps her gum and pops a bubble.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Bill comes in and hangs up his coat. It's late. Nobody up at this hour.

KITCHEN

He opens the fridge, grabs a beer, the day from hell engraved on his face. He takes a swig, it goes down easy.

Bill crosses the room to a table, where a plate of food and a card awaits. He puts down his beer, finds an envelope marked "Sheriff" and opens it. A card.

SO PROUD OF YOU! written inside.

The first genuine smile of the day appears on his face.

BEDROOM

The light is on as Jess is sprawled out in bed, an open book across her chest. He shuts the light, goes into the --

BATHROOM

And turns on the shower. Steam quickly fills the room. He opens the medicine chest, grabs a bottle of pills, shakes it, opens the cap and downs two.

A POP overhead. The light bulb craps out, leaving him in complete darkness, just the sound of the shower.

BILL

Shit.

The adjoining door CREEKS open, and a set of arms wrap around him from behind. He jumps.

BILL (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ!

JESS

Did I scare you, Sheriff?

BILL

Yes!

JESS

Mmm. Let me make it better.

The sound of his belt opening, zipper sliding down. His silhouette leaning against the sink as Jess slowly goes to work on him.

He moans, then reaches for the switch to the dimmer on the HEAT LAMP. The room becomes bathed in a steamy, red glow.

Bill looks down at a mess of hair bobbing at his waist, and puts his hands on Jess' head. He parts her hair and--

Two bright GREEN eyes stare up at him. This is not Jess, it's Luna.

Bill's mouth hangs open, unable to make a sound.

Luna's lips curl upwards -- pointed, razor sharp teeth behind glossy, wet lips. Red scar lines appear on her face, deep and inflamed, from cheek to jaw-line.

She leaps up and buries her teeth into his neck.

He SCREAMS, tries to break free, arms flailing.

The heat lamp bulb POPS -- pitch black -- otherworldly SNARLS fill the room.

In a panic, Bill finds the door knob, jerks it open, and face plants with a THUD into the --

HALLWAY

Pants around his ankles, a light turns on.

James white-knuckles a baseball bat with one hand on the light switch.

JAMES

Dad!

Jess runs out, tries unsuccessfully to process the scene.

Bill, in a cold sweat, squirms on the floor and manages to pull his pants up as he rises.

He waggles a finger to the bathroom and looks in. Empty.

BILL

Wh...Wh...

Jess and James hang on his words in anticipation.

JESS

What?

BILL

Where do we keep the spare bulbs?

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Bill at the breakfast table, puffy-eyed, hardly any sleep.

Jess places an apple in front of him, walks away.

James saunters in, snatches the apple and kisses his mom on the cheek.

JESS

You need a ride to school, honey?

JAMES

No, I'm gonna walk it today.

James heads out, turns back.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Dad, weren't those the boxers I got you for Father's Day?

Bill waves him off, not amused. James leaves, smiling.

JESS

Have a good day, honey.

Door slams. Alone. Jess turns to Bill, arms crossed.

JESS (CONT'D)
 Care to tell me what last night was
 all about?

BILL
 I don't know. It was late, my back
 was hurting, I took some pills.
 They must have been expired or
 something.

JESS
 And that was how you ended up in
 the hallway with your pants down?

Bill shrugs.

Jessica crosses the room with a "hmphh."

JESS (CONT'D)
 Oh, the pastor stopped by
 yesterday. He invited us to his
 church.

BILL
 I didn't know they still make house
 calls.

JESS
 Apparently this one does.

BILL
 And that would be Tom Sweeney?

JESSICA
 Yeah. How'd you know?

BILL
 (bites his lip)
 I met his sister last night.

Bill's cell vibrates on the table, picks it up.

BILL (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Yeah?

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

James strolls past the nice homes in this nice neighborhood.
 Lawn sprinklers shoot to life around him.

He bites into his apple as a car eases up alongside him.

BROOKE
Hey, neighbor.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

James rides shotgun, hands folded in his lap.

BROOKE
I watched you move in. I live
across the street.

JAMES
You do?

BROOKE
Yeah. Makes me feel safe knowing
the town's new Sheriff is just a
stone's throw away. I'm Brooke, by
the way.

JAMES
And I'm invisible. Surprised you
even saw me walking back there.

BROOKE
You're funny.

JAMES
I've been told. So, what subject
you need help with?

BROOKE
Huh?

JAMES
Well, that's how it normally works.
Pretty girl finds nerdy guy,
figures he's super smart. Next
thing you know I'm doing your mid-
term.

Brooke stops at a red light, shots him a nasty glance.

BROOKE
I don't need you to do anything.
I'm near the top of my class in
almost every subject. I don't know
why it is when people see me they
think I'm just another fluffer with
nothing upstairs.

JAMES
Umm... I'm sorry?

BROOKE

You should be. I've been getting that sort of thing my whole life.

JAMES

Join the club. But, you know, for me it's on the opposite end.

The light turns green. Brooke's smile reappears.

BROOKE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap at you like that. It's just...

JAMES

It's okay. I'm sorry, too.

They drive on in silence. Brooke can't seem to shake the smile from her face. James turns.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What?

BROOKE

You said I was pretty.

INT. MORGUE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Bill and Johnson stride down a hall, windows to one side, white tile on the other.

A fit, jovial fella with cropped hair and glasses, moves ahead of them. This is CHESTER DONAVAN (54), coroner and feed store owner.

CHESTER

So, you're telling me we have two Sheriff's now?

JOHNSON

For the time being. All things considered, I'd rather be spreading my toes on Myrtle Beach.

They enter a door into the --

CORONER'S OFFICE

Inside are autopsy tables, chest spreaders and scales. Embedded in the wall is a six compartment freezer.

CHESTER
Still got that place, huh?

JOHNSON
Yup. And you still owe me for a new
kitchen counter top.

CHESTER
Hey, what can I say? Bedroom gets
old after awhile.
(to Bill)
So, you're from Roanoke, I hear.
Why'd you leave? I hear the cops
over there make a good bit of coin.

BILL
Change of scenery, I guess..

Chester scans the freezer wall, grabs the handle of one of
the compartments and pulls it out.

CHESTER
Well, here's a change of scenery
for you.

A BODY with a toe tag. Molly Channing.

BILL
You autopsied her already?

CHESTER
Uh huh. First thing this morning.
Ed Channing roused me out of bed
late last night. Insisted on seeing
her, gave me the go ahead. What was
I gonna say?

JOHNSON
Christ, you coulda called us first.

Molly's face, post mortem -- gray-skinned, dark purple
colorization around the neck, eyes shut.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Well?

Chester exhales.

CHESTER
Suicide. A creative one, I'll grant
you that. Toxicology should be back
in a few days. I'll make an
official report then.

BILL
And your unofficial report?

JOE
Still a suicide, from the looks of it. If you're thinking anything else that's up to you guys to figure out. Johnson'll tell ya, we don't see much of this kinda thing around here.

JOHNSON
Seventeen years.

CHESTER
(nodding)
Yeah.

Bill glances at Johnson. Something doesn't feel right.
Off Molly's gray face --

EXT. MORGUE PARKING LOT - LATER

Johnson and Bill, heading to their cars.

BILL
Looks like suicide's the way to go around here.

Johnson stops abruptly.

JOHNSON
And what exactly does that mean?

BILL
All I'm saying is, God forbid there be a murder in your quiet little town.

JOHNSON
Need I remind you, it's your quiet little town, too. You think I wanna go out with a murder on my hands? After all this time I put in? You must be out of your mind. It's a suicide, pure and simple.

Bill, getting charged, instincts flooding back.

BILL
If you say so, Sheriff.

JOHNSON

As a matter of fact, I do say so.
Do I hafta remind you of why you're
really here? 'Cause you had to use
your gun. Well, boo fuckin' hoo.
Last thing I need is some rubber
squad member tellin' me my
business.

BILL

And what is your business?

JOHNSON

Well, it ain't about babysittin'
you, I'll tell ya that. I got two
other officers I gotta do that for.
Now, you can think what you want,
but I'm still Sheriff here, and
there is but one way this is gonna
go down -- the way I see it.

(then)

How many job offers you have before
this one?

Bill's silence says it all.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

(storms off, then)

Maybe if you'd learned to keep your
gun in your holster and your dick
in your pants things might've
turned out different.

BILL

What?!

But Johnson's gone, leaving Bill stunned.

EXT. SWEENEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Cultured stone siding with many rooms and a Mercedes parked
out front. Money on display.

INT. SWEENEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Sweeney places a bag of groceries on the counter, thumbs
through a stack of mail.

A car engine RUMBLES from outside. He knows the sound and
doesn't look pleased.

A door opens O.S., footsteps in the hall. In the doorway to the kitchen, hands on the trim, stands Luna.

LUNA
Hello, Brother.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Bill enters. Kennedy looks up from a computer screen as Mulroy leans back in his chair, feet up on the desk.

BILL
Johnson here?

KENNEDY
No.

BILL
Just as well. How you coming on the evidence from the lake?

KENNEDY
There's not much. Footprints in the mud all indicate either Molly or Ted. There was nothing else there.

Bill looks over his shoulder at the computer screen.

BILL
Keep looking. And what about this Ted guy?

Kennedy laughs.

KENNEDY
Oh, come on, Sheriff. You can't be serious. You want me to tell you about the trout incident?.

BILL
I'm not sure I wanna know.

Bill feels eyes upon him. He turns, and Mulroy's piercing gaze confirms it.

BILL (CONT'D)
There something I can help you with, Officer?

MULROY

Just wondering how you think you can come in here after a paid vacation and start playing junior detective. Sheriff Johnson's made up his mind about this, and that's good enough for me. Why isn't it good enough for you?

Kennedy's astounded, looks to Mulroy, then Bill, as he starts over to Mulroy's desk.

BILL

And where were you the night of Molly Channing's death?

MULROY

Oh, that's original. They make you see a shrink when you went nuts? I hear that's what happens.

He points to Bill's holster and touches his pistol.

MULROY (CONT'D)

Let's pray you never have to use this again. Might get committed--

Bill swings his leg, knocks Mulroy's chair out from under him.

Mulroy crashes to the floor, and before he can get up, Bill lifts him by the collar and pins him against the wall.

BILL

Are you outta your mind, Officer? You got less sense than a fucking house fly.

Mulroy's feet rise off the floor.

KENNEDY

Sheriff!

BILL

Shut up.

(to Mulroy)

Now, you listen to me. This whole thing with the Channing girl stinks, and I'm not gonna sit around here and be spoon fed shit without doing a thorough investigation first. That girl had a father, and he deserves that much, at least.

He eases off, lets go of Mulroy, who promptly snaps his collar back into place.

BILL (CONT'D)
 (to Kennedy)
 Keep searching. Go back to the lake
 in case there's something we
 missed.

Bill opens the front door, stops, turns to Mulroy.

BILL (CONT'D)
 And ou're rigt. I do hope I'll
 never have to use this gun again.
 You'd be wise to do the same.

He shuts the door behind him.

INT. SWEENEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Luna lowers her hands from the doorway trim.

SWEENEY
 What can I help you with, Lune?

LUNA
 Tom, I'm sorry about the Channing
 girl. If they'd given her enough
 sedative she wouldn't have gotten
 up and just walked out like that.

SWEENEY
 But she did get up and walk out.
 What do you think's gonna happen
 when they find out she was
 pregnant?

LUNA
 They won't.

SWEENEY
 Oh, you think you've got Donavan
 that far under your thumb?

LUNA
 I know I do. He's seen me in all
 my... glory.

Sweeney leans against the counter, shakes his head.

SWEENEY
 My God. When will it ever be enough
 for you?

(MORE)

SWEENEY (CONT'D)

You're gonna fuck this up just like you did in Raleigh. Remember Raleigh?

LUNA

Yes, I do.

SWEENEY

That was a beautiful church. Money coming in. More than we could count.

LUNA

There's more important things than money, Tom.

SWEENEY

For you maybe. You destroyed us back there. And you promised there would be no more death. That this was the last time--

LUNA

She killed herself, Tom! All I wanted was her baby.

Sweeney's had enough, struggling to even repeat the words:

SWEENEY

All you wanted was the baby...
Jesus Christ, listen to yourself.

Luna inches closer.

LUNA

If you could only see the gifts the Prince of Darkness has bestowed upon me, it might cause you to change your mind.

SWEENEY

I'm a man of God, Luna. He protects the righteous.

LUNA

And you are far from that. I watched as you drank from your brother's cup.

SWEENEY

That's a lie.

LUNA

Oh, you know it's true. You can repress all you want, but I was there.

The room darkens suddenly. In the--

DINING ROOM

The lights on a CHANDELIER grow immensely bright. Each bulb POPS one-by-one.

KITCHEN

As Luna approaches him. Her red hair turns inky black, and her face goes ashen and wrinkled. Her green eyes gleam.

Sweeney reaches for a BIBLE on the counter, but as he lays his hands on it, it bursts into flames.

She takes his head and buries her aged, bony fingers deep into his skull.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Flickering light in an otherwise dark room provided by white, waxy candles.

Two ADULTS in BLACK ROBES, hoods covering their faces, carry a crying BABY into an--

ALTAR ROOM

They place the baby atop a pedestal bearing a pentagram. An altar before it -- black candles, CHALICE, a GOAT'S HEAD Pentacle, incense and a piece of white cloth.

BASMENT

LUNA (9) stands just outside the altar room. She looks over her shoulder, where a whimpering is heard.

SWEENEY (13) backed into a corner, sobbing and averting his eyes. Down to his pant cuff, where a small puddle of urine has puddled.

Luna smiles, looks away.

The robed figures pull back their hoods, revealing a MAN and a WOMAN in their forties. The PARENTS.

The woman turns, meets Luna's smile with one of her own, as the man's hand reaches out of sight, then returns with a hideously curved BLACK DAGGER.

He raises it above his head as the door closes.

LATER

Luna drinks willingly from a CHALICE. The WOMAN pulls it away, then hands it to the MAN.

Sweeney, huddled with fear in the corner.

The MAN approaches slowly with the cup, as the WOMAN holds the boy's head still. Blood spills down his face as he's forced to drink. The blood of his newborn BROTHER.

The MAN dips his thumb in the cup, and marks Sweeney's forehead with an inverted cross of red.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SWEENEY'S HOUSE

Sweeney SCREAMS as Luna pulls away, her ghastly appearance returns to normal. She takes strange, robotic steps backwards as she heads for the door.

When she speaks, it's an otherworldly, double-voice -- one her own, the other a husky, gravelly tone.

LUNA

You will not stop me from getting
what I want, dear Brother.

SWEENEY

I won't help you, either.

The door SLAMS shut. She's gone. Sweeney composes himself, pats out the flames smouldering on the Bible.

The last light on the chandelier POPS. Sweeney jumps in fright as Luna's snarling voice fills the room.

LUNA (O.S.)

I don't need a dead man's help.

INT. MILLTOWN HIGH SCHOOL - HALL - DAY

James takes books from his locker. He closes it, turns and a HAND swats the books to the floor.

A young punk, RYDER (17) laughs as he goes past, two CRONIES cackle along with him.

JAMES

Hey!

Ryder stops, approaches, gets in his face.

RYDER

What'd you say to me, dick? You say something?

JAMES

I didn't say anything.

RYDER

(mocking)

Didn't say anything. You think 'cause your daddy's the new Sheriff you get special treatment around here?

Brooke comes from around a corner.

BROOKE

Leave him alone, Ryder.

Ryder takes James' glasses off.

RYDER

Betcha things are looking kinda fuzzy right about now, huh?

Rushing FOOTSTEPS O.S. A HAND settles on Ryder's shoulder, he pushes it off, turns, then--

Steve Dotson twists Ryder's arm hard behind his back, and throws him into the locker.

RYDER (CONT'D)

Well, look who it is. The drop out. You come back to get your GED, or are you applying for janitor?

STEVE

You got a real smart mouth, you know that?

RYDER

Kinda like the opposite of you--

Steve crushes Ryder's face with a single punch. Blood spurts from his nose.

STEVE

Betcha things are looking kinda
fuzzy right about now, huh?

A small crowd gathers. James backs away, next to Brooke, who hands him his glasses.

Steve pulls a bottle of lighter fluid from inside his jacket, and douses Ryder's crotch with it.

He produces a pack of matches, rips one off and lights it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

This little piggy went to market...
(it goes out, lights
another)
This little piggy stayed home...

Ryder's backed against the locker, eyes bugging out. The second match goes out. He lights a third, holds it in front of Ryder's terrified face.

STEVE (CONT'D)

And this little piggy went...

The crowd watches in shock.

Steve pushes Ryder away, who takes off running as the match hits the floor and ignites. A trail of blue flame follows Ryder around the corner, then extinguishes.

Ryder keeps running, arms flailing. His sobs are heard from down the hall.

Steve turns, and with one glare the crowd disperses.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(to James)
You all right?

James nods, scared, but in awe.

Steve looks at Brooke and winks, crosses to the stairs and descends.

JAMES

That guy is the GOAT. Who in God's
holy name was that?

Brooke half-smiles, her eyes on the stairs.

BROOKE
He's my boyfriend.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - LATER

Corner store on picturesque Main Street.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - SAME

James at the cooler, deciding what to buy. He picks out a bottle of iced tea.

STEVE
Hey.

James nearly jumps.

JAMES
Oh. Hey there.

STEVE
What's up?

JAMES
Oh, nothing much. Hey, thanks for earlier, though if I'm honest, I had him right where I wanted him.

Steve smiles.

STEVE
Yeah, I saw that.

James regards the bottle of iced tea.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You're not actually gonna buy that, are you?

JAMES
Well, I know it's got caffeine and some preservatives, but I like the taste.

STEVE
Slip it in your jacket.

JAMES
What?

STEVE

Yeah, slip it in your jacket. That old guy at the check-out ain't looking.

James turns.

The OLD GUY at the check-out ain't looking.

James looks at Steve, smiles, and slips the drink inside his jacket.

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER

Clean sidewalk, loads of specialty shops, apartments above them. Flower pots hang from every street post.

Steve and James stroll past.

JAMES

Last thing I need is for the Sheriff's son to get picked up for shoplifting.

STEVE

Gotta live a little sometimes. It's the excitement of it.

James shrugs, looks to Steve's swollen knuckles.

JAMES

Seriously though, thanks for helping me out back there.

STEVE

Don't mention it. I've been looking for a reason to kick that guy's ass for a long time now.

JAMES

That's funny. I've been getting my ass kicked for a long time now.

STEVE

Why's that?

JAMES

Really? Have you looked at me? Nerdy glasses, acne, slight frame. I look like a skeleton wearing a burial suit.

Steve laughs, looks over as they pass God's Living Word Church. Sweeney's Church. Beautifully landscaped and clean, there's money on display.

STEVE

That's funny, but... You're probably stronger than you give yourself credit for.

JAMES

Said the strong man to the geek.

STEVE

I'm serious, bro. I used to be a pussy, just like you.

JAMES

Thanks.

STEVE

What I'm trying to say is, you don't really know what you're capable of until you've tried. That guy back there - Ryder? Used to torment me all the time when we were younger. At some point I'd just had enough. I remade myself. I became stronger to the point that a little shit like that would never intimidate me again.

A car HORN blares behind them. They turn. Bill's cruiser slides alongside the curb, window rolled down.

BILL

Hey. You okay?

JAMES

Yeah, I'm good.

Steve moves to the car, extends his hand.

BILL

Who are you?

STEVE

Steve Dotson, Sir.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Luna and Jess on the sofa, laughing like old friends.

JESS
So, what did you do?

LUNA
I told him he could go stretch his feet on Kim Kardashian's bed.

More laughter.

LUNA (CONT'D)
No, but, seriously. I've just about given up on finding a man. I've got everything I need anyway. Well, almost.

JESS
Almost?

LUNA
I've always wanted a child of my own. It's the last thing. A husband, not so much, but I don't think I need a partner to be a good mom.

There's a genuineness about her, and Jess gets it.

JESS
You sure don't. My son, James, he's my light. I had three miscarriages before he was born.

LUNA
Oh my God, I'm so sorry.

JESSICA
I guess some mistakes we never stop paying for.
(sighs)
When I was younger I had an abortion. I was a stupid, scared little girl and... I can't help but wonder if one had to do with the other. And now, everything going on with the move and Bill's new job... I just want this to go well, but I'm terrified. I gotta be honest. I'm scared the past isn't through with me yet.

Luna reaches out, gives her a comforting embrace.

LUNA
It'll go well. You'll see.

EXT. BILL'S HOUSE - DAY

Bill and James pull up, exit the cruiser. A freshly waxed green Dodge Challenger parked out front.

BILL
What is this? Grand Central
Station?

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

As Bill and James enter, voices are heard.

LIVING ROOM

Bill fidgets with his Stetson.

BILL
Ladies.

LUNA
Well, howdy, Sheriff.
(to James)
Hey there, young man.

James smiles politely, retreats upstairs.

JESS
(to Bill)
You okay? You look a little green
around the gills.

A thin layer of sweat breaks out on his forehead.

BILL
Yeah, I'm okay. Rough day is all.

LUNA
I heard about Molly Channing. A
shame. She was such a sweet girl.

JESS
Is that the girl who died?

BILL
I can't talk about that.

LUNA
Still so hard to believe it
actually happened here.

Bill grows more uncomfortable by the second.

JESS
There's dinner on the stove, Bill.

Luna gets up.

LUNA
Well, I guess I better be going.
So, we're on for Thursday?

JESS
Hell yeah. I'm always up for a trip
to the outlets.

LUNA
(grins)
And baby clothes!

Jess can barely contain her enthusiasm.

JESS
Yes. Baby clothes.

LUNA
And maybe a new belt for hubby. If
he was able to keep his pants up
you all wouldn't be in this mess in
the first place.

Jess bursts out with laughter.

Bill looks at his shoes.

Luna sees herself out, turns back.

LUNA (CONT'D)
I'll call you.

JESS
Okay, Luna. Thanks for stopping by.

Luna leaves.

Bill edges into the kitchen without a word.

KITCHEN

Jessica comes in, but Bill's nowhere to be found. She looks
outside and finds him sitting on the steps.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

She joins him as he puts the cap back on his prescription bottle.

JESS

So, you had a rough day? You wanna talk about it?

He shakes his head.

JESS (CONT'D)

You know, I owe you an apology. I know you're under a lot of stress and I haven't exactly been easy to deal with lately.

BILL

You don't need to apologize, Jess. You're under a lot of stress, too. I get it.

JESS

You know, I was thinking maybe we could go out to dinner one night. Just me and you, you know? Kinda like a date night. We could--

BILL

They know everything, Jess.

JESS

What? What do you mean?

BILL

I mean everything. The requested leave, the psychiatrist. The woman I killed.

JESS

Well, of course they know all that. That goes down on your record.

BILL

Yeah, but why me?

JESS

I'm not following.

BILL

I mean, there must've been a hundred qualified candidates who didn't request psych leave and have the kind of past I do.

JESS

Well, why not you? You shouldn't keep beating yourself up. You'll make a great Sheriff and you're more than qualified--

BILL

They know about the affair, Jess.

She turns her head sharply.

JESS

You're kidding?

Bill shrugs, shakes his head as Jess stares into the backyard for a long moment.

JESS (CONT'D)

Okay, now that is strange.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - JAMES' ROOM - NIGHT

James paces the floor, stops in front of a mirror and studies his reflection. He rolls up his sleeve and makes a muscle.

Tries to anyway.

On the bed, his phone BEEPS. He picks it up.

INSERT PHONE TEXTS:

Brooke: Hi.

James: Hi.

Brooke: What are you doing right now?

He looks up from the phone, smiles.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Brooke and James stroll the deserted sidewalk, lit by the dusky orange street lamps.

BROOKE

So, once I finish my internship I'll be off the Beckford.

JAMES

That's a good school.

BROOKE

Partial scholarship. If I'd kept running track it would've been full.

JAMES

Why'd you quit track?

BROOKE

Because I wanted to focus more on my academics. I didn't wanna be known just for how fast I can run.

JAMES

Maybe I should join track. I've been running from people my whole life.

Brooke laughs.

BROOKE

You mean getting beat up?

JAMES

Yeah, that too.

BROOKE

Maybe it's time to stop running and stand up for yourself. What do you think?

JAMES

Or maybe it's time to start thinking about living my life in traction.

Brooke smiles, a certain sadness to it.

BROOKE

Who am I to say? I'm leaving for Beckford. I guess you could say I'm running, too.

JAMES

What about your parents?

BROOKE

My mother's an alcoholic. I don't think she even realizes I'm around half the time. And my father... I don't know where he is.

JAMES

I'm sure Steve would miss you.

BROOKE

Steve... Not really. I think once I leave that's gonna be it for me and him. We're too different. His aspirations and mine don't exactly match up well.

JAMES

Have you told him that?

She shakes her head.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well, maybe you should. I don't think he's gonna take it so well, though. Losing a girl like you.

Brooke appears flustered.

BROOKE

What do you like me or something?

The red in his cheeks say it all.

They move on in an awkward silence until...

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I feel like giving you a noogie right about now.

James looks her over. Her raised cheekbones, puppy dog blue eyes. He grins, and looks away.

She leans in for a hug, he puts his hands around her waist. He moves his hand up the back of her head, goes in to kiss her and--

JAMES

Ouch!

He pulls his hand away. It's bleeding.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What the Fuck?

BROOKE

Oh shit, I'm sorry.

She reaches behind her head and pulls out a small box cutter tucked in her hair.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I keep it for emergencies.

JAMES

Damn! Just in case someone tries to
kiss you?

BROOK

No. I'm sorry. It's just for
protection.

JAMES

You don't have an emergency band-
aid in your hair by any chance?

She smiles.

BROOKE

I'll make you feel better.

She leans in, kisses him full on.

ORGAN music rises in the distance...

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

Dozens of people file in, and just keep coming.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

A capacity crowd gazes upon vaulted ceilings, stained glass
and gold trim. A colorful array of flowers line the altar. An
ORGANIST plays a hymn.

Jess and Luna are in one corner of the room, chatting it up.

Luna spots Bill and James in their seats. She waves over.

Bill politely waves back.

Several TOWNSFOLK whisper and point in Bill's direction. You
can barely hear them --

"That's the new Sheriff -- Sheriff, Sheriff, Sheriff..."

James leans in to his Dad.

JAMES

You're a rock star, Dad.

BILL

Or a pariah.

A few rows ahead, Chester Donovan and his wife, GERT (54). He
says something to her, gets up and approaches Bill.

Chester whispers something into Bill's ear, then quickly heads off.

INT. CHURCH - OFFICE - DAY

Sweeney, dressed in an expensive suit, goes over some notes and recites.

SWEENEY

*For I am convinced that neither
death nor life, neither angels nor
demons...*

Sheriff Johnson, in civilian clothes, enters without a knock and closes the door behind him.

JOHNSON

We gotta talk.

Sweeney lowers his notes, annoyed.

SWEENEY

You know better than to barge in on me here. Can't it wait?

JOHNSON

No, it can't.

Sweeney drops his notes on the desk, opens a drawer, pulls out a stuffed envelope and hands it to Johnson.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

That's not what I came here for.

SWEENEY

What then? Another adjustment?

JOHNSON

You gotta take care of your business, Tom. You know what I'm talking about. I don't like murders in my town.

SWEENEY

Keep your voice down.

Sweeney sits in a chair behind the desk.

SWEENEY (CONT'D)

Besides, it wasn't a murder from what I hear. I'm sure you're taking every available precaution to see this has a favorable result.

JOHNSON

It's outta control, Tom. I can only do so much--

SWEENEY

Well, do more!
(looks around)
Do more.

Johnson steps closer.

JOHNSON

I've done everything I can. It's just a matter of time now. I can't control Downing anymore than you can your sister. Guy's a fuckin' Eagle Scout.

A KNOCK on the door. A gray-haired WOMAN pokes her head in.

WOMAN

Sorry to interrupt, Pastor. It's time.

Johnson glares at Sweeney, then slides out the open door, past the woman.

JOHNSON

Ma'am.

Off Sweeney's troubled gaze.

INT. CHURCH - HALLWAY - DAY

Sweeney heads through the corridor like a boxer heading to the ring. The music grows louder, he stops at a door.

His lowered eyes, glazed and far away. He opens the door.

CHURCH - MAIN ROOM

A BAND plays, the CROWD rises to their feet.

Sweeney, Bible in hand, trots before the crowd, smile plastered on his face. He shakes hands, hugs people. Even kisses a baby.

The crowd eats it up.

An AIDE approaches, pins a microphone to his lapel.

Sweeney jogs in place, amped up. He raises the Bible high in the air.

SWEENEY

Is God good, or what!

The crowd roars their approval.

EXT. CORONER'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Rain pelts the asphalt with purpose. A thunder clap BOOMS.

Chester Donovan stands under an umbrella by the doors.

An SUV pulls up. Bill gets out, covers his head with his coat, and runs through the rain.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Freezer compartments and autopsy tables shrouded in darkness, lit by the occasional lightening flash.

Chester clicks on a desk lamp, inserts a key into a file cabinet, pulls out a drawer and fingers through the files.

He takes a folder out and hands it to Bill.

CHESTER

Photos of Molly Channing, post mortem.

BILL

I've seen these already.

CHESTER

Not these, you haven't.

Chester pulls a photo from the bunch and places it on top.

Bill pours over it, a look of disgust on his face.

BILL

Is this what I think it is?

CHESTER

Molly Channing's baby.

BILL

She was pregnant? This baby's torn apart. Why didn't you tell us about this? Did you autopsy it?

Chester swallows hard.

CHESTER
No. I aborted it.

BILL
You what?

Thunder rumbles in the distance.

Chester nods.

CHESTER
Sheriff, what do you know about
Black Masses? Human sacrifice?
Satanism?

BILL
Are you fucking kidding me right
now?

CHESTER
I almost wish I was.

BILL
Almost? You're trying to tell me
someone's going around doing human
sacrifices in Milltown?

Chester breathes out sharply.

BILL (CONT'D)
And what? How many? How long has
this been going on?

CHESTER
Years.

BILL
That makes no sense. Johnson said
there hasn't been a murder here in
years.

CHESTER
There's an underground network
spread out across the country. They
abort babies, legally, and hold
masses right there in the rooms.
Bill, I've seen it. I've seen the
power of Lucifer enter a room and
embody his followers. It's
glorious. If only you could see
it, too.

Bill slams the folder on a desk, scattering the pictures.

He grabs Chester by the shirt.

BILL

You better start talking, or I'm gonna gut you like you did to the baby.

CHESTER

I fucked up with Molly Channing. She wasn't supposed to leave. The sedatives I gave her weren't strong enough.

BILL

And she walked right out and killed herself. Yeah, I'd say you fucked up. Who else is in on this?

CHESTER

You can't do anything. It's perfectly legal.

BILL

It's immoral. And what? You want protection now?

CHESTER

No.

BILL

Then what?
(off Chester's silence)
What the fuck do you want?

A thunder crash as a burst of lightning illuminated Chester's smiling face.

CHESTER

I want you to join us.

INT. POLICE CRUISER (MOVING) - NIGHT

Bill's frazzled. Mind racing. Can't stay focused on the road. He cuts the wheel, blinks furiously and --

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Run down row houses lit by flashing blue and red lights. Smoke hangs in the air.

The trashy WOMAN holds her shoulder as blood seeps through her fingers. She charges.

Bill barely anticipates her. There's a struggle. His gun slides underneath her chin.

Another OFFICER, somewhere OS --

OFFICER (O.S.)
No, goddammit, no!

BLAM! Bright flash...

RETURN TO SCENE

EXT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

The car lumbers along a residential street.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Bill, absorbing what he's learned. Reaches into the glove box, pulls out a bottle of pills. He needs these bad.

He turns the car into the driveway, headlights cut through the pelting rain and settle on --

A girl in the fetal position in front of his garage. She's hysterical. Crying. It's Brooke.

Bill's eyes widen. He jumps out.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Rain splatters down. Bill races to Brooke, who looks like she's been dragged through the mud.

BILL
Jesus Christ, are you okay?

No answer. He grabs her shoulders.

BILL (CONT'D)
Look at me. You're safe now. You hear me? You're safe.

She looks at him, shaking all over.

BROOKE
I-wuh-wuh...wanted to make him
happy.

He embraces her. He knows what's happened without her even saying it.

The outside light comes on. James rushes out.

JAMES
Dad, what's going on?

BILL
James, get back inside.

James' eyes go wide.

JAMES
Brooke.

Bill turns, equally shocked.

BILL
You know her?

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Outside a room is Bill. Solemn. Exhausted. Inside the --

ROOM

Brooke in a hospital gown, in bed. Her MOTHER, late 40s, clothes haphazardly thrown on, sits in a chair next to her, touches her cheek.

CORRIDOR

Bill glances up as Mulroy approaches.

MULROY
What happened?

BILL
Where's Johnson?

MULROY
Probably home sleeping.

BILL
Just great. Do you know Brooke
Hawke?

MULROY
No.

BILL
She was raped. Down at the lake.
Same place we found the Channing
girl.

Mulroy runs a hand through his hair. Here we go again.

MULROY
Jesus. What else?

BILL
Steve Dotson. You know him?

MULROY
Oh yeah. We've seen him at the
station before. Petty larceny,
stuff like that.

BILL
Add rape to his sheet. You need to
find him. Find him and arrest his
ass.

Mulroy nods, leaves with his orders.

Bill takes a deep breath, looks through the door way and
peers inside.

Brooke stares right up at him, her lips part slightly. Their
eyes meet and stay locked.

Then it hits him. A realization as he studies her somber
face.

She knows something. Maybe everything.

She breaks eye contact, and stares out the window.

INT. SWEENEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Morning light filters in. Sweeney's in bed, apparently
sleeping when --

His eyes snap open.

MONTAGE: Sweeney's Morning Ritual.

A few light exercises - coffee and eggs - brushing his teeth, then --

HALLWAY

Sweeney on one knee, pulls back a rug. Two loose floor boards underneath. He removes them, reaches in and takes out an old, dusty cloth about a foot long. Something inside of it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Sweeney's dark Mercedes zooms by and passes a road sign --
CUMBERLAND - 50 Mi.

On the opposite side of the highway --

INT. SUV - SAME

Jess drives, Luna shotgun as country landscape whips past.

Luna fans out a stack of coupons.

LUNA

Baby Heaven, Steve Madden, Coach?
Where do we start?

JESS

Hmm. Madden's always a good start.

They share a laugh.

LUNA

Steve Madden it is.

JESS

I'm starving to death, though. We
should get something to eat first.

LUNA

Anything you say, Mommy.

Luna turns to Jess, baby bump growing by the minute in her maternity dress. She sighs.

LUNA (CONT'D)

Have I told you I always wanted a
baby?

JESS

Yes, I believe you have.

LUNA

I had a surrogate once, you know.

JESS

No, I didn't know that. What happened?

LUNA

Didn't work out.

JESS

Oh. I'm sorry. Do you care to talk about it?

Luna exhales hard.

LUNA

Not much to talk about really. It was a couple years back in Roanoke.

JESS

Roanoke. We used to live there.

Luna stares ahead. Traffic getting heavier.

LUNA

Yeah, I know. Anyway, it was a bad scene. The surrogate, she had some issues, and she... She died. Took the baby with her.

JESS

Oh, my god. Luna, I'm so sorry to hear that.

A horn BLARES as a huge SEMI lumbers past, gaining speed. A payload of tightly secured containers on it's bed.

LUNA

Yeah, I... It was just one of those things. Wanna know how she died?

JESS

I mean, if you feel like talking about it. I don't wanna pry.

Luna's hand rests on Jess' thigh and starts to change: her skin wrinkles, pink nail polish turns black and her nails grow to jagged points.

LUNA

Your husband killed her.

JESS

What--

Jess looks over as Luna's's hair blooms black roots. Deep red crevices appear on her face. Her lower jaw droops off-center, exposing dark, mangled teeth.

Jess recoils in horror. The car swerves left, rights itself. She's pressed up against the door. Tries to move away from this *thing* that used to be Luna.

EXT. INTERSTATE

The SEMI with its payload of containers as a strap SNAPS and a container breaks free. It tumbles fiercely on the road and clips Jess' SUV.

INT. SUV

Jess is in a full blown panic.

JESS

Jesus Christ! Luna! What's happening?

Outside, another container tumbles off the semi and barrels towards them. It strikes the windshield, plastering it with cracks, almost caving it in.

Jess SCREAMS.

Luna speaks in that gravelly tone, like several voices uttering at once.

LUNA

Your husband killed my unborn child.

Jess cuts the wheel. She's fucked. Trying to stay on the road. The car rolls under an over pass. A moment of darkness.

Luna's eyes glow red.

More containers rumbling their way. Horns blare, tires screech.

A container strikes dead on. The SUV careens out of control, goes off the road and flips several times, settling upside down as a lone tire spins.

INT. NURSING HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

SERIES:

A NURSE punches keys on a laptop - an ELDERLY WOMAN rests in a wheelchair - a vase on a table filled with bluegrass.

Sweeney appears from around a corner, coming closer down the corridor with purpose in his steps, the worn cloth from under the floor boards tucked under his arm.

NURSING HOME - ROOM

Quiet and sterile. Nondescript.

Sweeney enters, gives a cursory glance to an ELDERLY MAN, sitting up in bed, frail and silent, watching TV.

In another bed by the window is GAVIN SWEENEY (89), lying in bed motionless, mouth open. His cataract eyes like shattered marbles left to bake in the sun.

Sweeney slides a curtain separating the two men.

SWEENEY

Guess you weren't expecting to see me today, were you?

No answer from the elder Sweeney. Drool runs from the corner of his thin lips.

Sweeney leans in closer.

SWEENEY (CONT'D)

Are you prepared to repent for your sins?

He places his hand on Gavin's dry scalp, eliciting a weak GROAN. Sweeney's lips brush against his ear, as his hand fumbles for something unseen.

SWEENEY (CONT'D)

Pray it with me, Father. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to thee. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners. Purify your hearts, ye double-minded...

Sweeney produces a curved, black dagger from the cloth. *That* dagger. The one that killed his baby brother.

QUICK FLASHBACK:

Young Sweeney and Luna in the darkened, candle-lit room -- the two HOODED FIGURES -- an infant's wails -- one HOODED FIGURE raises the dagger with both hands and...

BACK TO:

Sweeney brings the dagger to the middle of Gavin's chest.

Gavin's blank eyes dart wildly. The tip of the blade pushes through his gown and breaks his skin.

Gavin writhes in pain, but there's nothing he can do. His arms flail weakly at his sides.

SWEENEY

(voice cracking)

Be afflicted, and mourn and weep.
Let your laughter be turned to
mourning, your joy to heaviness.

Sweeney rises. Uses his weight to push the blade in deeper.

Gavin gurgles as his mouth fills with blood.

SWEENEY (CONT'D)

This the blade you used to kill my
brother with. You humble yourself
now in the sight of the Lord, you
sick fuck!

He presses the dagger all the way through. Gavin coughs blood and spittle into Sweeney's face, then --

Breathes his last.

Sweeney recoils, pulls the dagger out and savagely stabs his father again and again as --

The ELDERLY MAN across the way, eyes bugging out, watches Sweeney's murderous shadow through the thin curtain.

Sweeney pulls away, leans against the wall. Breathing heavy as he wipes the blood from his face.

Gavin in bed. Dead. Dagger lodged in his heart.

Sweeney crosses the room, passes ELDERLY MAN on the way out, who silently watches him leave.

Sweeney stops, turns around.

SWEENEY (CONT'D)

(calmly)

Have you repented for your sins,
brother?

ELDERLY MAN furiously nods his head.

EXT. NURSING HOME - ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

The glass doors part as Sweeney casually walks out.

PARKING LOT

He gets in his Mercedes, turns the engine and swings the car around to the entrance of the building, nearly clipping a few PEOPLE in the process.

Shouts of: *"Hey!"* and *"Watch where you're going?"*

Sweeney gets out, a long length of rope in his hands. He ties one end to a stone pylon near the entrance, then retreats to his car and ties the other end tightly around his neck.

A small crowd watches nervously. Cell phone come out.

INT. CAR

Sweeney throws it in neutral. Guns it to the floor boards and hits drive. The tires smoke and SQUEAL. The car takes off like a bullet.

The slack on the rope tightens.

Someone SCREAMS. GASPS.

A gruesome CRACK.

The Mercedes plows into a parked car. The horn BLARES and doesn't stop.

Horrified onlookers run inside. Chaos and shouting.

And the Mercedes. Sweeney's headless body, covered in blood, slumped against the steering wheel.

INT. POLICE CRUISER (MOVING) - DAY

Bill on his phone. Frantic. Just ringing on the other end.

BILL

Goddammit, Jess, pick up!

He clicks off.

EXT. ED CHANNING'S HOUSE - DAY

Bill pulls up, parks next to another cruiser. He gets out.

FIRE DEPARTMENT vehicles line the road.

The house is a smoking ruin. A FIREFIGHTER plods past Bill, followed by Mulroy.

BILL
The fuck happened here?

MULROY
Fire.

BILL
I can see that. Was Channing
inside?

Mulroy nods.

BILL (CONT'D)
You find that Dotson kid?

MULROY
Not yet.

Bill heads to the house, Mulroy puts his arm across Bill's chest.

MULROY (CONT'D)
Sheriff, Tom Sweeney's dead, too.

BILL
Excuse me?

MULROY
He killed his father up in
Cumberland, tied a noose around his
neck, took off in his car and
decapitated himself.

BILL
Fuck.

MULROY
There's video.

BILL
Of course there is.

Bill heads to the house.

MULROY

Wait. There's more. Kennedy's MIA.
Never reported in today. No call.
We can't reach him.

BILL

Are you fucking kidding me?
(he storms off)
Find him, too.

INT. ED CHANNING'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charred walls and furniture. Water drips everywhere.

A white sheet covers a body on the shell of a sofa. Johnson pulls it back -- it's Channing. Or what used to be him.

Bill looks on.

JOHNSON

We're assuming this is Ed Channing.

BILL

You know damn well it's him.
(Bill draws closer)
You knew Molly Channing was
pregnant, didn't you?

Johnson's speechless. He's been made.

A FIREFIGHTER appears and approaches Johnson.

FIREFIGHTER

Sheriff, I just wanted to wish you
congratulations on your retirement.
I--

Bill grabs the Firefighter by the collar, ushers him past Mulroy and out the front door.

BILL

(to Mulroy)
Nobody comes in here.

Bill slams what's left of the front door.

JOHNSON

You don't know what you're getting
yourself into, son.

BILL

How many more were there?
Channing's wife? Was she the first?

JOHNSON

Where are you getting this from?

BILL

I wanna know who's behind all this?

JOHNSON

(to himself)
Fucking Donavan.

BILL

It doesn't matter who told me. It's
going to end.

Johnson whirls around.

JOHNSON

Satan is real.

BILL

Oh, fuck you.

JOHNSON

The first time I heard about it I
was skeptical, too. But when those
first few lives were snuffed out,
the power of Satan rained down on
us like you wouldn't believe. It
was glorious.

Bill shakes his head in disbelief.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

They were breeders. Both
Channing's, and they willingly did
it. She needed virgin souls.
Unspoiled. Killed inside the womb
before they took their first
breaths. If only you could've seen
how strong she became.

Bill grabs Johnson, shoves him against the wall.

BILL

How strong who became?

JOHNSON

You are so naive.

BILL

Who?

Johnson's face goes white. He frees himself from Bill's grip, leans against a charred wall and doubles over in pain.

He raises his head.

JOHNSON

You know who. Hard to resist isn't she? Just like that secretary over in Roanoke. Poor vulnerable Bill.

Johnson draws his gun, levels it at Bill.

BILL

Shit. Johnson.

Bill puts his hands out, inches forward.

JOHNSON

It's too late, Bill. It's too late for me. I was a good Sheriff.

He reverses the gun towards himself.

BILL

Don't do this.

JOHNSON

There might be time left.

BILL

For what?

JOHNSON

Your son.

BILL

My son? What's James got to do with this?

JOHNSON

Not that one. The one your wife carries. She wants it, Bill. Go now. Find the dagger and kill her if you want to save your family.

Bill rushes Johnson as he shoves the barrel of the gun in his mouth and squeezes the trigger.

Bill puts his hands out.

BILL

Fuck! No!

The report is DEAFENING. It blows out the back of Johnson's head against the wall.

Bill loses his balance, falls onto the couch next to Channing's blackened corpse.

Mulroy kicks the door in, gun drawn, eyes darting.

MULROY

Fuck!

Bill's arm gets tangled with Channing's. He falls to the floor, Channing's corpse lands on top of him. A struggle with the dead man ensues, burnt skin peeling off in Bill's fingers.

Bill finally frees himself, crawls --

OUTSIDE

And vomits.

Mulroy rushes into the house. A moment passes, Mulroy exits, falls to his knees next to Bill and vomits.

Both men wretch and wipe their mouths as a gaggle of FIREMEN look on.

Bill squints at Mulroy.

Someone's phone RINGS. Everyone checks their pockets.

Bill puts his phone to his ear.

BILL

(into phone)

Yeah.

His expression says it all. He hangs up, rallies, and makes a bee line for his cruiser.

MULROY

What is it?

Bill, running, turns, gets in his car.

BILL

Get back to the station. Find that fucking Dotson kid, and Luna Sweeney, and Kennedy. Do it!

Bill slams the door and peels out.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

James anxiously paces the floor. His cell phone rings. He holds it to his ear.

BEGIN INTERCUT:

JAMES

Brooke?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Brooke in bed on her phone.

BROOKE

James!

JAMES

Brooke! Jesus Christ, are you okay?

BROOKE

No, I'm not okay. Where are you?

JAMES

I'm home. Where am I supposed to be?

BROOKE

Get the hell outta there!

JAMES

And go where? I don't understand...

BROOKE

Anywhere! Just get out.

(then)

You're in danger. They're coming for you.

JAMES

Who's coming for me? What are you talking about?

There's a loud knock at James' door.

James looks up. The front door. The knob turns, but it's locked. More pounding.

BROOKE

James, what was that?

JAMES
Hold on. Who is it?

BILL
James, open the door.

James slumps in relief. Goes to the door.

BROOKE
James, who is that?

JAMES
It's my father. Hold on.

James lowers the phone. Brooke's voice echoes through:

BROOKE
James, no! Get out of there! James!

He can't hear her.

He unlocks the door. Opens it...

STEVE
Hey, buddy.

Steve Dotson grabs James, applies a choke hold with one hand and grabs the phone with the other.

STEVE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
I'm sorry, James isn't available at
the moment. May I take a message?

BROOKE
Fuck you, Steve!

STEVE
I love you too.

Steve drops the phone to the floor and drags James outside.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Brooke bolts out of bed and goes to the closet. She rifles through clothes.

She checks her phone. Screen's gone dark.

END INTERCUT

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - SAME

Bill runs through the hall, panicked, on the verge of tears.

He turns a corner into the ICU, frantically checking rooms.
Trying desperately to find her--

There she is.

ROOM

A DOCTOR (50s) hovers over her bed.

Her puffed eyes barely open -- an ugly set of stitches close
a wound on her cheek and lip -- a bandage covers most of her
head -- leg in a cast, arm in a cast...

Machines BEEP. An I.V. drips. The TV plays serene images of
fields and waterfalls.

Bill rushes to her side, afraid to even touch her.

DOCTOR

Mr. Downing?

Bill doesn't answer. The room could be ablaze, but everything
means nothing now.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Mr. Downing?

BILL

(trembling)

Did we lose the baby?

The Doctor smiles.

DOCTOR

Baby's fine. Heart rate is normal.
There's no indication of any trauma
to your baby. It's amazing, really.

BILL

And my wife?

The Doctor sighs.

DOCTOR

We had to remove her spleen.

A nerve under Jessica's eye twitches.

Bill can barely support his own weight.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Do you want to sit down?

BILL
No, no.

DOCTOR
She has a mild concussion,
lacerations. We've reset her leg
and arm. She's heavily sedated. All
we can do now is wait, but...

BILL
But what?

DOCTOR
Mr. Downing, people don't just walk
away from something like this. It's
a miracle she's alive. She's very
lucky.

The Doctor turns to go.

BILL
Wait. The passenger. She was with
somebody.

DOCTOR
That would be...
(checks his notes)
...Luna Sweeney.

BILL
Yeah. Where is she?

Grim look on the Doctor's face.

DOCTOR
I'm afraid she didn't make it. I am
sorry. It says here she has a
brother, but so far we haven't been
able to locate him.

BILL
Where is she?

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - DAY

Quiet, sanitized room. A lone TECHNICIAN marks notes on a
clipboard.

A fresh BODY covered with a sheet rests on a gurney.

The TECHNICIAN sighs, puts the clipboard down and opens a refrigerator. He takes out some tupperware, opens a microwave, throws it in and hits the timer.

Behind him, the BODY on the gurney slowly rises. The sheet drops. It's Luna -- face split down the side, jaw dislodged, arm dangles at an odd angle. Dried blood all over.

She carefully cups her jaw and resets it. The ugly wound on her face seals itself.

Her arm SNAPS back into place.

The TECHNICIAN whistles, waiting.

DING! The microwave.

The TECHNICIAN'S head turns sharply. Neck CRACKS. He collapses to the floor.

Luna snorts, spits blood on the floor and wipes her face.

The door to the room opens. It's Steve Dotson. He looks at the dead man on the floor, gazes at Luna and grins.

LUNA
Where's that bitch?

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Bill, out of breath, runs past. Desperate. Pushing people out of the way. He opens the door to the --

MORGUE

Looks inside. The empty gurney. A bloody sheet on the floor. Medical instruments, tables and scales.

Bill steps in.

The fluorescents flicker and buzz.

The TECHNICIAN'S body on the floor, face down beyond the gurney -- it's twitching. Convulsing.

Bill approaches, cautious. Lights going in and out. The room bathed in odd hues.

Three steps away from the TECHNICIAN.

Bill's wiping beads of sweat from his forehead. Trying hard to stay focused. Eyes blinking furiously. He reaches out --

The body lurches, then flips.

BILL

James!

It opens it's mouth and spews black bile across Bill's chest. He recoils, knocked back on his ass.

The JAMES-THING smiles. Gnarled teeth. Crazy eyes.

JAMES-THING

(whisper)

Shoot me... Shoot me.

IT begins to rise, neck twisted sideways. Veins bulging.

Bill crab-walks backwards. Scrambling away.

BILL

No...

The JAMES-THING turns it's body to a slant so it leads with it's head.

Bill backs against a counter. Nowhere to go.

JAMES-THING

Shoot me, you pussy.

It cackles.

Bill reaches for his gun, but before he can pull it out--

The JAMES-THING'S legs give out. It crumples to the floor in a heap.

The lights cut out.

A noise in the darkness. The lights return.

Bill slowly stands, reaches the body to find the JAMES-THING has reverted back to the TECHNICIAN.

Bill looks at the Technician's face. The skin around his neck stretched paper thin and straining with muscle and bone that threatens to break through.

CRASH! Then, a wet, squishy sound.

Bill whips around.

The microwave crashes to the floor. A big pile of lasagna steaming on the tiles.

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Bill at the side of his car, unscrewing the cap of his pill bottle. He opens it.

It's empty.

The sun is shining. Trees sway in a gentle breeze.

Bill slams the bottle to the pavement.

BROOKE
Sheriff Downing!

Bill spins.

INT. CRUISER (MOVING) - DAY

Close on Bill's disbelieving face, phone to his ear.

Brooke sits taut in the passenger seat.

BROOKE
(on the verge of tears)
They wanted me to be a breeder,
but...

Silence. Bill waits.

She lowers her head, ashamed.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I can't have children.
(beat)
I wanted Steve to like me so much.
I loved him. I got pregnant about a
year ago. I wanted to keep it. I
really did. You have to believe me.

BILL
I do.

BROOKE
Steve said the best thing to do was
to get rid of it. How he didn't
want a baby. How I could barely
take care myself. I'd be throwing
my life away.

BILL
So you aborted it?

She nods yes.

BROOKE

But it wasn't like a regular clinic. It was downstairs, at Pastor Sweeney's church. In the basement. There were people there in hooded robes standing around me. Weird incantations, candles... Whatever they did to me, they messed me up for life. I'll never raise a family. I'll never...

Bill takes her hand, leans over and kisses her head.

BILL

Okay, Brooke. Okay.

EXT. BILL'S HOUSE - DUSK

Day's last light fades fast behind the trees.

The cruiser pulls up. Bill gets out and race to the front door of the house.

BILL

Stay here.

The front door is splintered off it's hinges. He goes inside.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - DUSK

BILL

James? James!

He races--

UPSTAIRS

Checking rooms, calling out for his son.

EXT. CRUISER - DUSK

Patiently waiting is a fearful Brooke as Bill climbs back in.

BROOKE

They got him, didn't they?

BILL

Who? Dotson?

BROOKE

You gotta go back and get your wife. Luna's gonna take her, too.

BILL

No. She's dead. She died in a car accident with my wife.

BROOKE

You don't understand. She can't be killed.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Nurse's and Doctor's work.

Around a corner come Luna and Steve Dotson, their pace brisk. Faces determined.

Steve checks rooms. PATIENTS in bed in various states of distress. Tubes, wires. Breathing machines. BEEPS.

LUNA

That one.

They stop. Look inside. A NURSE changes Jess' I.V. bag. The DOCTOR from earlier checks over her chart.

The NURSE spots Luna and Steve in the doorway.

NURSE

Are you family? You're going to need a gown and gloves before you step in.

The NURSE suddenly grabs her own throat, grits her teeth. GASPING.

DOCTOR

Nurse? Are you all right?

He goes to her and she blindly swats at him. She stumbles, knocks over the drip stand. Gurgling, her eyes bug out then roll back in her head. She crashes to the floor.

Steve barges in, pushes the DOCTOR aside. He begins yanking tubes out from Jessica's wrists.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

What are you doing? She can't be moved!

Steve grabs the DOCTOR by the coat and SMASHES him in the face repeatedly. Steve's withdrawing fist is filled with blood. He throws the DOCTOR across the room.

LUNA

You're strong. We get it. I don't have all fucking day.

Steve lifts Jess from the bed, carries her out like a sack of potatoes and exits.

HALLWAY

A cacophony of protesting voices echo.

Luna pierces them with her gaze. It's a Turkey Shoot. One-by-one, they drop to the floor.

Luna stops suddenly stops, senses something.

STEVE

What is it?

LUNA

He's back.

STEVE

Who?

A brave SECURITY GUARD rushes them. Luna casually lifts her hand, swings it to the left, and that's the direction the SECURITY GUARD goes. Off his feet, and through a window.

CRASH!

LUNA

Downing.

EXT. HOSPITAL - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Downing's cruiser screeches to a halt. He gets out, followed by Brooke.

BILL

No. You stay here.

Brooke looks up. SCREAMS!

CRASH!

The SECURITY GUARD'S body demolishes the hood of Bill's car.

The windows blow out. Blood sprays. Glass rains down.

BILL (CONT'D)
Jesus fuck! Alright, come with me.

Brooke's at Bill's heels to the hospital entrance.

Two EMT'S in hats, heads down, roll a gurney with a sheet-covered body past them.

EMT
(to Bill)
Hey, you better get up there. Some
weird shit going on inside.

Bill stops abruptly. Brooke slams into his back.

The EMT's quickly load the gurney into the back of a waiting
AMBULANCE and slam the door.

Bill approaches. He can feel something's not right here.

BILL
What are you talking about?

The EMT's enter the vehicle.

Steve Dotson lifts his head and grins.

EMT
Go up and see.

The ambulance door SLAMS, engine revs.

Bill races to the passenger side, runs alongside the
ambulance as it rolls off.

He tries to grip onto anything for purchase. He slides onto
the hood of the vehicle. Adrenaline kicking in.

He punches the windshield. Over and over again. The glass
cracks, splinters, and through it he can see--

Luna's face -- no longer young and sexy, but old and weak.
Gray, stringy hair. Deep wrinkles and dark circles around her
eyes. Drained. Tired.

INT. AMBULANCE

LUNA
(to Steve)
Get us the fuck out of here!

Steve guns it.

A bloody hand breaks through the windshield. Bill forces his body in. Shards of glass tear him up. He just doesn't care.

He reaches in and grabs the steering wheel.

EXT. AMBULANCE

Bill giving it everything he's got. He grabs Dotson's shirt, legs flailing, trying to hold on.

Steve fights for control of the wheel. He crushes Bill's face repeatedly with his free hand.

Bill squirms further into the vehicle as the ambulance races through the parking lot.

Steve jams the brakes.

Bill goes flying -- across the hood, rolls onto the pavement.

The ambulance -- coming straight for him. Bill slides out of the way at the last second.

Bills rises to one knee and SCREAMS! All the pain. All the anguish. The affair. The SHOOTING of the woman years ago. It all comes out now.

A car skids to a stop next to him. It's Brooke, inside the cruiser. She gets out and goes to him.

Bill pulls his gun and levels it at her.

She SHRIEKS in fear.

Bill's edged face softens slightly. He lowers the gun.

Brooke swallows hard.

BROOKE
Are you okay?

BILL
I'm great.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

A single light barely provides light. Tough to see clearly, but -- there's Kennedy, sitting at his desk, tapping away on a keyboard.

CLICK. From behind.

Kennedy goes to turn and--

MULROY
Don't fucking move.

Mulroy, gun inches away from Kennedy's head.

KENNEDY
Mulroy, what the fuck? What are you doing?

MULROY
Shut up. Where the fuck have you been?

Kennedy raises his hands.

MULROY (CONT'D)
I said, don't move!

KENNEDY
Alright, alright!

MULROY
Spill it.

Kennedy exhales.

KENNEDY
It was that Dotson kid. He's got Downing's son, too. They're in the church. In the basement. I managed to escape, but... It's fucked up. It's some kind of weird Satanist temple in there.

Mulroy cautiously backs away.

MULROY
Who's got the Sheriff's kid?

Kennedy slowly turns.

KENNEDY

It's that preacher's sister. Luna.
Buddy, I need you to listen to me.
Please put down the gun.

MULROY

I don't know what's going through
my head.

Mulroy lowers his gun. Kennedy springs from his chair. In one motion -- snatches Mulroy's gun, forces it to his temple and squeezes the trigger.

BLAM!

KENNEDY

Your own bullet apparently.

His body crumples onto the desk in front of the computer.

Kennedy pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes the blood from his face.

On the floor -- Mulroy's stetson. Top blown out.

Kennedy crosses to a locker, opens it and pulls a police uniform out.

And something wrapped in a white cloth.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

It's darkened shaped draped in a fine mist. Empty, rain-slicked streets.

The sound of an ENGINE RATTLING...

Bill's car pulls up, dead body still embedded into it's crumpled hood, windshield shattered.

INT. BILL'S CAR (PARKED) - CONTINUOUS

Bill sizes up the church, Brooke in the passenger seat.

His eyes never leaving the church, he cocks his firearm.

BILL

Stay in the car.

He opens the door and exits, leaves the engine running.

But he stops, looks into the car from outside, at Brooke.

BILL (CONT'D)
 If things get really ugly... drive.
 As far away as possible.

BROOKE
 But--

And he's gone.

INT. CHURCH - BASEMENT - NIGHT

A dingy, cramped space.

MOVEMENT. Then a WHIMPER...

A MATCH STRIKES. The flame revealing --

Steve Dotson's face as he lights a cigarette while resting on his haunches in front of--

James. Bound to a rolling desk chair with rope.

Steve blows smoke into his face

Eyes fluttering open, James coughs. In a haze, his drowsy eyes adjust, eventually realizing who's in front of him.

JAMES
 (groggy)
 Steve?

He notices the rope keeping him stationary to the chair, his feet also tied together.

STEVE
 Wakey, wakey.

In a panic, he looks to Steve again.

JAMES
 Where am I? What is this?

STEVE
 This is a church. Think you've seen
 the chapel. As to what this is?

Steve smiles, exhales smoke.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 We're gonna kill ourselves a baby.

EXT. CHURCH - AROUND THE BACK - CONTINUOUS

Bill eyes the basement window at ground level. A little tight, but there might be enough room to wiggle inside. As he crouches down--

A FIGURE stands behind him, draped in shadow.

Bill sees the reflection in the window, whips around with his gun drawn--

It's Brooke.

BILL

(hisses)

Jesus Christ! I told you to stay in the car.

BROOKE

I wanted to. I couldn't let you go alone. And I don't know if you noticed, but there's a dead guy with his brains hanging out on the hood of the car and--

BILL

All right, all right.
(off the window)
You got your phone?

BROOKE

Yeah.

She hands it to him. He takes it, types in his number, then gives it back.

BILL

Brooke, I need you to go back to the car.

BROOKE

I can't. I--

BILL

(firmly)

Go back to the car.

(less firm)

If you see anything, call me. You wanna help? This is how. Got it?

She nods hesitantly.

Bill crouches down again, pushes the window down and shimmies his way in.

From inside, he looks up at Brooke.

BILL (CONT'D)

Go.

He disappears.

But Brooke lingers a few moments, reluctant to leave. Finally, she turns to go back and--

Runs right into Kennedy, waiting behind her.

KENNEDY

(smiles)

Hey, Brooke.

WHAM! He clocks her in the face!

INT. CHURCH - BASEMENT - ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jess lies unconscious, bound to a slab. Her ankles raised into the air, legs open. A crude stirrup.

Decrepid and wrinkled, Luna hovers over her. She looks like a thousand year-old hag from a fairy tale.

LUNA

(strokes Jess' head)

It's almost time.

Jess's eyes flutter open, her vision blurred. Naked from the waist down, she finally comes to.

LUNA (CONT'D)

Hello, sunshine.

JESS

(woozy)

Am I... Am I dreaming?

Luna smiles.

LUNA

No.

ADJOINING ROOM DOORWAY

Steve wheels James to see the ALTAR ROOM.

JAMES

Mom!

JESS

James!

LUNA

Hey, handsome.

James recoils when he sees Luna, that ugly smile on her pocked face.

Steve wheels him back from the doorway.

JAMES

Why does she look like that?

STEVE

You of all people should know better than to make fun of the way someone looks.

Steve takes notice as James catches sight of a body on the floor. Chester Donavan.

JAMES

Who the hell is that?

STEVE

Him? That's our abortion specialist. Well, *was*. Apparently he never heard of the term "snitches get stitches."

JAMES

Why are you doing all this? You could walk away right now. Disappear. Nobody would know anything.

Steve shakes his head.

STEVE

It's too late for that. Your father set all this into motion when he shot and killed that poor pregnant lady.

James furrows his brow.

JAMES

How do you know about that?

STEVE

Why do you think your father's here, sport?

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

That baby-killing piece of shit
 couldn't even get a desk job
 anywhere else. Then he gets hired
 as the new sheriff? Think about it.
 We're the reason he's here. And
 he's the reason--
 (points to Jess)
 He's the reason you're here.

James lets that resonate.

JAMES

I don't understand.

STEVE

(leans in close)
 And you don't need to. All that
 matters now is that little piece of
 meat with arms and legs growing
 inside your mother.

Steve backs off slowly to leave the room, never taking his
 gaze off James, who struggles and seethes.

JAMES

No... NO!

ALTAR ROOM

Jess tries to wriggle free when she hears James call out.

Luna laughs softly.

LUNA

I was a breeder once. Got pregnant
 twelve times.

Jess, trying desperately to connect --

JESS

What happened?

LUNA

Let's just say I... I gave them up.
 After a while, you just lose the
 ability. I gave too many up. Too
 much trauma, I guess. Jumbled up my
 insides pretty good. Now I'm paying
 the price.

JESS
 Luna, I'm sorry. I am. Just...
 Please let me and my family go.
 Please...

Suddenly, Kennedy enters with Brooke, barely conscious and hoisted over his shoulder.

KENNEDY
 Gang's all here.

LUNA
 Downing?

Kennedy shakes his head.

KENNEDY
 Not yet--

LUNA
 He's here.

KENNEDY
 (re: Brooke)
 What about her?

LUNA
 Bring her to Steve, then find that
 cocksucker Downing and shoot him.
 In the head, preferably.

Jess gasps, fighting back tears as Kennedy brings Brooke to the next room.

Luna looks down at Jess.

LUNA (CONT'D)
 Looks like we better do this before
 your husband fucks it up.

ADJOINING ROOM

Steve finishes tying Brooke to a chair as she comes to. He positions her right next to James and caresses her chin.

STEVE
 Hey, honey...

She tries to move away.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 What's wrong? Rough day?

Brooke spits bloody phlegm into Steve's eye. Enraged, he grabs her by the throat.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Fucking bitch! I should've fucking
killed you!

JAMES
If you hurt her...

Steve stops, crouches at eye level in front of James, grins coyly.

STEVE
Well, well. I knew you were sweet
on her.
(beat)
What? What are you gonna do? Huh?

He slaps James' face playfully, toying with him.

JAMES
Can't do anything while I'm tied
up, you chicken shit.

Steve laughs. Looks him dead in the eye.

STEVE
Remember when I said you were
stronger than you thought you were?
I was lying. You're weak. And
you're pathetic. And when I DO kill
your little girlfriend here, I'm
gonna make you watch. And then I'm
gonna kill you, but...
(stands up)
First things first.

He leaves the room.

Brooke looks at James and shakes her head. Shakes it again. The box cutter falls from her hair by her feet.

She moves her chair forward slightly, then falls backwards.

JAMES
Are you okay?

BROOKE
Shh...

Brooke on the floor, tied to the chair. Her outstretched fingers grasping. Grasping, then --

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Got it.

ALTAR ROOM

As Luna lights candles around Jess for the ceremony, Steve enters.

STEVE

We ready?

Luna looks down at Jess and grins.

LUNA

It's time. Take care of those two
and make it quick.

STEVE

With pleasure.

Steve rushes back into the --

ADJOINING ROOM

He draws a pistol from his waist and grins gleefully.

STEVE

Time's up, fuckers.

But he only sees Brooke sitting in the chair, no longer bound. James no longer there.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS behind him, Steve turns --

WHAM! James lands a roundhouse, clocking Steve in the jaw and knocking him down.

The gun slides across the floor.

James looks at his fist in shock, then to Steve, who rubs his jaw and smiles.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Well, there you go.

He gets up, punches James in the face, sends him sprawling.

CHAPEL

Kennedy, gun drawn. Tiptoes down the aisle of the dimly lit church, peeking into the pews.

KENNEDY

Sheriff Downing? It's only me,
Kennedy. I think they have your son
and wife. If you come out I can
take you to them.

He continues to peer down each row of empty pews, no sign of Bill anywhere.

ALTAR ROOM

Luna chants by Jess' side.

LUNA

In the name of Satan, ruler of
earth, the one true God, almighty
and ineffable.

She slices her own hand and, with her blood, draws a pentagram on Jess's pregnant stomach.

She goes to a nearby table and there, unwrapped, is the curved black dagger. She takes it and returns.

LUNA (CONT'D)

Forces of darkness, bestow upon me
your infernal power. Open the gates
of hell...

ADJOINING ROOM

Straddled over James, Steve pummels him with blow after blow, busting up the poor kid's face. Toying with him.

STEVE

I'm gonna fuckin' enjoy this.

He puts his hands around James' throat and squeezes.

CHAPEL

Silence as Kennedy continues to search for Bill.

KENNEDY

Come on, Sheriff. Come out before
it's too late...

CLICK. Behind him. Kennedy freezes.

Bill has his firearm pressed to the back of Kennedy's head.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

Sheriff Downing, you gotta come quick. Your family's in danger. You gotta--

BILL

You know, I prayed I'd never have to use this again.

(beat)

Oh, well.

BOOM! He blows the back of Kennedy's head off, blood splatter sprays onto his face.

ALTAR ROOM

Mid-chant, dagger raised, she hears the gunshot and stops.

BILL (O.S.)

Jess?

JESS

Bill!

Luna glowers down at her, snarls.

ADJOINING ROOM

Steve continues to choke the life out of James, veins popping out of the kid's neck, eyes bulging--

CLICK. Behind him.

Steve turns, sees Brooke with the gun fixed on him.

He raises his hands.

STEVE

Brooke, honey. Put the gun down.

He takes a careful step towards her.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I wasn't gonna hurt you.

Another step forward.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 Just put the gun down. I promise,
 once all this is over, everything
 will go back to the way it was.

Then another step forward. But Brooke tightens her grip, a firm expression on her face.

Steve stops.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 I love you. Is that what you wanna
 hear? I... I love you.

A beat. She lowers the gun.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 Now give me the gun.

BOOM! She shoots him in the dick!

Steve falls to his knees, screaming in agony, hands over his blood-soaked crotch.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 Fuck! You shot me in the dick!

Glowering down at him, she points the gun at him again.

BROOKE
 I love you, too.

BOOM! She shoots the rest of his dick off.

Shrieking even louder, Steve squirms around on the floor until --

BOOM! She splatters his brains.

ALTAR ROOM

Brooke and James try to enter the room, but can't. A fierce wind pushes them back.

And Luna, standing near Jess with her gnarly hands outstretched, eyes closed. She appears to control the wind as James and Brooke are pushed far back into darkness.

Luna opens her eyes, grits her teeth.

LUNA
 (whispers)
 Downing.

CHAPEL

Bill, firearm ready, looks down a dark flight of stairs and descends.

STAIRS

He tiptoes in the darkness.

BASEMENT

He reaches a door, light glowing underneath.

He pushes it open and...

EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

But instead of the Altar room...

Bill is back in the decrepid neighborhood where he unknowingly shot Luna's surrogate.

He enters the street. Cop cars all around. An ambulance.

A CROWD of onlookers watch while standing outside of storefronts and apartments.

Bill surveys the area in disbelief. It's all too real.

PERPETRATOR (O.S.)

I'll kill this bitch right now!

Bill spins, sees a MAN, dark hoodie, pressing a gun to the head of a PREGNANT WOMAN from behind.

And this just can't be happening. Not again.

Bill raises his firearm, but hesitates as PERPATRATOR digs the gun harder to her head.

PERPETRATOR (CONT'D)

I wouldn't do that if I were you.
Remember what happened the last
time you did this?

Strained tears well up in his eyes, gun shaking in his hand.

PERPETRATOR (CONT'D)

Don't do it. You might miss. Just
drop the gun, Downing. Drop it and
I promise to let her go--

A tense silence as Bill decides.

WOMAN

Bill! Shoot her! Just shoot her!

Bill furrows his brow, confused.

RUNNING FOOTSEPS. James appears in the illusion and leaps at PERPETRATOR, shoving her to the ground.

JAMES

Dad!

The WOMAN breaks free, falls to the ground.

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM! Bill lights PERPETRATOR up!

Suddenly, the dream scape changes...

INT. CHURCH - ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back to reality. Bill sees Luna, motionless on the floor in a pool of blood.

He hurries over, help Jess to her feet. They embrace, James joining them.

Brooke stands to the side, watching, a longing in her eyes. She exhales sharply, looks around the room.

Suddenly, Jess bends over in pain.

BILL

Jess!

He looks down,, sees her water has broke.

She looks up at him.

JESS

It's happening.

EXT. BILL'S CAR (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

Bill weaves through traffic, the dead body still embedded in his crumpled hood.

Jess breathes in and out, in and out, while holding her pregnant belly.

In the backseat --

James and Brooke. She reaches out, holds his hand.

He looks down at her hand, surprised, then up at her. Deep into her eyes, their faces drawing closer when --

A pounding on the hood of the car. James looks up. Brooke looks forward through the windshield.

BROOKE

Mr. Downing, the body's gone--!

Brooke's window SHATTERS! Luna reaches in and snatches Brooke.

JAMES

NO!!

Bill swerves, hits the brakes and looks into the back seat as the car skids to a stop.

Luna's face in the window, growling, even more terrifying than before. Her hands like claws, ripping out chunks of Brooke's flesh as she screams in agony.

Luna grabs Brooke's head and rips it clean off!

James screams.

BILL

Brooke!

He hits the gas, strips Luna away but she manages to hang onto the door.

And Brooke. Blood spurting from her headless body, but her arms still flailing wildly. One frantic hand grabs James' arm as if trying to tell him something.

Her grip pushes James' hand into her coat. Wide-eyed, horrified, he reaches in and comes out with the dagger.

He regards the dagger, tears and blood on his face as Brooke's arms go limp and her body slumps.

He looks up as Jess looks back.

JESS

James!

Luna swings the door open, squirms inside. Her face a bloody pulp, green eyes shining in their sockets.

LUNA

That baby is mine! It's mine!

JAMES

Oh no it's not!

He thrusts forward with the dagger -- the car screeches to a halt as James and Luna go tumbling into the road, spinning over one another.

Luna wails like a siren of death.

Bill and Jess get out.

STREET

Rain-slicked and dark.

Jess and Bill race to their son, who's on top of Luna as she flails and grasps.

Bill pulls him off to reveal the dagger plunged deep in her chest.

Luna breathes her last, a hollow rattle as her face transforms endlessly -- rotted flesh and worms, gristle and bone. Finally...

Her eyes close as she returns to the beautiful Luna, the red-haired, pure-faced angel she once was.

Her eyes slowly close.

Bill and Jess embrace James, who's beat up but okay.

BILL

You all right, son?

JAMES

Y-yeah... I think so.

He starts to cry. Jess goes to him when--

Luna screams! Lunges forward with a clawed hand and barely scratches Jess's belly.

JESS

Fuck!

She recoils, rights herself and kicks Luna in the head hard enough to knock her back.

This time she's dead. For real.

BILL

Jesus Christ.

Jess lifts her shirt to reveal three scratches on her stomach.

BILL (CONT'D)

You okay?

JESS

(nods)

You better get me to the hospital.

They head back to the car as the scene fades.

OVER BLACK--

4 MONTHS LATER

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Her face glowing, Jess breast-feeds her four-month-old BABY, cradling the child gently.

Bill, in uniform, straightens his stetson and kisses her on the lips on his way out.

James waits in the doorway, smiling, on crutches.

JAMES

You okay, Mom?

JESS

I'm good. We'll be fine.

BILL

Taking James to school. You sure you're okay?

Jess smiles warmly at her baby. Up at Bill.

JESS

Everything's good, Sheriff. You go. Don't worry about us.

BILL

Okay.

Bill smiles, kisses her again. He leaves the room, the sound of a door shutting OS.

As she continues breast-feeding--

JESS

Ow!

She takes her breast away from the baby, touches her nipple and looks at her finger tips. Blood.

Confused, she looks down at the baby's cherubic face. Blood dribbles down it's chin.

BABY'S EYES -- staring right back.

CUT TO BLACK:

The sound of the BABY GIGGLING.

THE END