

WEALDMOUNT HOUSE

Written by

Luke Anthony Walker

luke.ewoods@googlemail.com
+447553814849

INT. AFFLUENT EXHIBIT HALL - NIGHT

The grand opening of a contemporary art show is in full swing. An elegant crowd of art enthusiasts and socialites mingle in the buzzing hall, discussing mesmerizing artworks while black-tie waiters refill their champagne flutes.

Amidst the glamour, JOAN, early 20s, an unassuming tomboy, stands sheepishly by a cluster of litter bins, deliberately distant from the fashionable crowd. Her eyes are fixed on the main entrance, brimming with anticipation.

A YOUNG MAN arrogantly tosses an empty beer bottle into the rubbish bin, ignoring the recycling bin beside it.

Joan is appalled by his disregard but stays silent as he strolls off, oblivious.

Glancing around to ensure no one is watching, she discreetly reaches into the bin and rummages around.

BILLY (O.S.)

What are you doing, Joan?

Joan spins around, relieved to see BILLY, early 20s, a charming bohemian with a rebellious spirit and a heart of gold.

JOAN

Just doing my bit--

She pulls out the bottle and slips it in the recycling.

JOAN (CONT'D)

--or someone else's bit, in this case.

They embrace.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Where've you been, Billy? I was starting to worry you weren't coming.

BILLY

Sorry, car trouble again. Took me a while to get it started this time.

JOAN

I don't know why you keep that hunk of junk.

BILLY

It's not junk. It's vintage, and I
can't afford a new one right now.

Billy swiftly grabs two glasses of champagne from a passing
waiter, handing one to Joan and taking a swig from the other.

JOAN

I assume your "vintage ride" is the
reason you missed yet another
lecture today?

BILLY

Not this time. Something more
important came up.

JOAN

Professor Reid's never going to
give you a pass if you keep missing
his classes, you do realize that?

BILLY

Sure he will. I'm far too talented.

He sips his champagne, scanning the hall.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Speaking of talent, where is the
masterpiece?

Joan scoffs at his remark, pointing bashfully at a painting.

JOAN

I consider myself extremely
fortunate that it's even on display
here.

BILLY

Give yourself some credit. You're a
talented artist, and your work
deserves to be here.

He CLINKS their glasses.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Proud of you.

Billy gulps down his champagne, while Joan sips hers.

BILLY (CONT'D)

So, is he coming?

Joan takes a longer sip from her glass before replying.

JOAN

No. Unfortunately he's busy, as usual.

BILLY

That's a shame. I was hoping to finally meet the man. Next time.

Joan smiles wryly as Billy puts his arm around her.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I know how much you hoped he'd be here tonight.

JOAN

It's fine. I'm used to. Work always comes first. Always has.

Billy sets down his glass.

BILLY

Come with me. I've got something that'll cheer you up.

He takes her hand with a gentle smile and leads her away.

INT. TOILET CUBICLE - NIGHT

Billy ushers Joan into a cubicle and locks the door.

JOAN

What are you doing?

He sets her champagne glass on the cistern.

BILLY

I have something for you.

Billy pulls out a shimmering star-shaped pendant.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I missed today's lecture because I was busy finishing this.

He clasps it around her neck. Joan admires the pendant, twiddling it between her fingers.

BILLY (CONT'D)

A shining star, just like you.

JOAN

Thank you. I love it.

Overwhelmed, she gives Billy a heartfelt kiss.

BILLY

I know I haven't known you long,
but in the short time I have, I've
quickly learned what a kind, smart,
and exceptionally talented
individual you truly are.

He kisses her tenderly.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You just need to believe in
yourself--

(whips out a bag of
cocaine.)

--and this will help.

Joan looks instantly reluctant.

JOAN

You know I don't do that sort of
stuff. My father would be furious
if he knew you were even offering
it to me.

BILLY

Yeah, but he's not here, is he?
Come on, half the people out there
are doing it. Just try a little,
just this once.

He scoops up some powder on his car key and offers it to her.
Joan hesitates.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Trust me. He'll never find out.

His charming smile sways her.

JOAN

Okay, just this once.

Joan sniffs the cocaine off the key, rubbing her nose and
mildly gagging at the taste.

BILLY

And to wash it down.

He hands her champagne. She takes a sip.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Bottoms up.

He tilts the glass, encouraging her to finish it. She reluctantly gulps the rest, a merry smile spreading across her face.

Billy quickly sniffs a couple of bumps himself.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Okay, lets go mingle.

He unlocks the door, takes Joan's hand, and confidently leads her out to the event.

INT. AFFLUENT EXHIBIT HALL - NIGHT

Billy escorts Joan through the yammering crowd.

JOAN
Oh no.

She freezes, staring ahead.

BILLY
What's wrong?

JOAN
Malika Kohli.

BILLY
The critic? Where?

He scans the crowd. Joan gestures to MALIKA, 60s, a pompous vixen and notorious critic, discussing Joan's work with her handsome young companion.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Let's hear what she's saying.

He tries to lead Joan over, but she resists.

JOAN
I don't know, what if it's bad?

BILLY
Come on, she's probably singing your praises. Believe in yourself, remember?

Joan yields to Billy's encouragement. Taking a deep breath, they move toward Malika, positioning themselves within earshot, anticipation palpable.

MALIKA

(to companion)

I became an art critic because I wanted to be an active participant in the conversation about budding contemporary artists, not the conversation about the rough daubing's of inept amateurs riding on the back of their parent's name.

Joan's expression falls.

MALIKA (CONT'D)

Sometimes, the apple truly does fall far from the tree.

Feeling deeply hurt, Joan storms off, unable to bear the criticism.

BILLY

Joan, wait.

Malika and her companion turn, startled by the commotion. Billy defiantly flips them the middle finger.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Fuck you, Kohli.

He hurries after Joan, leaving Malika and her companion in offended disbelief.

EXT. AFFLUENT EXHIBIT HALL - NIGHT

Joan exits, teary-eyed, and leans against a wall to light a cigarette. Billy follows, noticing her distress he puts a comforting arm around her.

BILLY

Don't listen to that hack. The only reason she became a critic was because she couldn't make it as an artist herself. Who gives a shit what she thinks?

JOAN

I do. I give a shit!

She shrugs off Billy's attempt to console her.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I didn't even want to hear what she was saying. Why did you make me?!

Billy is taken aback.

BILLY

I'm sorry. I was only trying to help.

JOAN

Well you didn't!

Embarrassed, Billy glances at a staring passerby.

BILLY

(hushed to Alice)

Look, I know you're upset, but try to calm down, okay? You've had some coke, and you're getting yourself a little worked up.

He reaches for her hand, but Joan pulls away, her frustration mounting.

JOAN

No! I wish your crappy car hadn't started, and you never showed up tonight. You ruined it.

Billy looks aggrieved.

BILLY

Yeah? Well, at least I cared enough to show up, because I don't see anybody else here who does. Not even your own parents.

Joan glares at him, eyes filled with scorn. Billy immediately regrets his words.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Joan. I didn't mean to say that. I forgot.

She flicks her cigarette away and marches off.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Joan, wait. Don't leave.

He blocks her path, desperate to make amends.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Please. I'm so sorry. I'm an idiot. It just slipped out.

JOAN

We're through. I never want to
speak to you again.

She barges past him and takes off down the street.

BILLY

(calls out)

Joan. I'm sorry.

She ignores him, leaving Billy standing there, crushed.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(to himself)

You idiot.

Dejectedly, he heads off in the opposite direction, filled
with remorse.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Joan, tears streaming, climbs into the driver's seat. She
slams the door, starts the engine, and speeds away, a mix of
anger and sadness on her face.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The car gets stuck in traffic. Determined to find another
route, Joan turns down a quiet side street, disregarding the
"Road Works Ahead" sign.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Joan wipes away her tears and turns on the stereo, filling
the car with radio CHATTER.

She lights a cigarette, but it slips from her mouth onto her
lap. Panicking, she frantically pats it out, momentarily
taking her eyes off the road.

Suddenly, she looks up and gasps in fear, clutching the
steering wheel tightly.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Joan's speeding car ploughs through an unmanned roadworks
site, clipping a stack of steel rods and sending them
spiralling through the air.

One rod pierces the windshield, shattering the glass.

The vehicle swerves out of control and slams directly into the side of a parked car, CRASH.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A windowless private recovery room. Joan lies unconscious, connected to medical devices, with ventilation tubes in her nose and a bandage on her forehead.

Regaining consciousness, her eyes flicker open, groggy.

She sees PHILIP, 50s, wearing a highly decorated military uniform, sitting attentively at her bedside, exuding stoicism and composure.

JOAN

Dad?

He moves closer.

PHILIP

I'm here, Joan.

She looks around, eyes filled with fear and confusion.

JOAN

Where am I?

PHILIP

You're in a military medical facility.

JOAN

What? Why? What happened?

PHILIP

Take it easy.

He places a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Tell me, what's the last thing you remember?

Furrowing her brow, she tries to recall.

JOAN

I was driving home from the exhibition, and then...

She trails off, her memory failing her.

PHILIP

You crashed, Joan. Can you remember? Do you recall anything about the accident?

She struggles to recollect and shakes her head, frustrated.

JOAN

What happened?

PHILIP

You drove into a construction zone and collided with a parked car. Unfortunately, your airbag failed to deploy, and you sustained a serious head injury.

She touches the bandage on her forehead.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

You were rushed to a public hospital in critical condition. It was touch and go at first, but you pulled through. Once in a stable condition, I had you transferred to this facility to receive the best possible care.

Processing this, a realization dawns on her.

JOAN

The car I hit. Was anyone hurt?

She sits up abruptly, clutching her thigh in pain.

PHILIP

Take it easy. You've sustained a significant leg injury. A steel rod pierced your windshield and grazed your thigh. The wound is healing, but you must be careful not to tear the stitches. You were incredibly lucky it didn't cause you more harm than it did.

He helps her recline back.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

And don't worry, no one else was hurt in the accident.

Joan sighs with relief.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

But you came very close to losing your life. You don't realize just how fortunate you are to be alive.

He stands authoritatively.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

That's why I've decided to take you away for a while once you're discharged.

JOAN

Away? Where?

PHILIP

To a place where you can focus on your recovery and distance yourself from your current...lifestyle choices.

JOAN

Lifestyle choices? What do you mean?

Philip sighs.

PHILIP

I didn't want to do this now, but I've seen your blood toxicology report, Joan. I know you were under the influence of drugs during the accident.

Joan is speechless. She begins to mutter, but Philip interjects.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

It's okay, you don't have to explain yourself right now. I'm just disappointed. I thought we'd raised you better.

She hangs her head in shame.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Get some rest. I'll inform your doctor that you're awake.

He exits, leaving Joan glumly gazing at the ceiling.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

A top-of-the-line pickup truck cruises a scenic mountainous road, surrounded by lush woodland. The truck bed holds several boxes and a sturdy painting easel.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Philip, in casual attire, sits behind the wheel with an open map on his lap.

Joan, bandage-free, peacefully sleeps in the passenger seat, her head gently resting against the window with a small stitched wound on her forehead.

The truck hits a pothole, jolting Joan awake. She sits up, taking in the breath-taking scenery outside.

JOAN

Where are we?

PHILIP

Not much farther now. We're nearly there.

JOAN

Nearly where though? Can you please tell me now? Enough with the secrecy.

PHILIP

You'll find out soon enough.

She switches on the stereo, finding only static on every channel. Frustrated, she switches it off and sinks back into her seat.

JOAN

This is ridiculous. Why have you dragged me all the way out here? You're completely overreacting to this whole situation.

PHILIP

Am I?

JOAN

Yes. You're trying to control my whole life. No smoking, no phone, no internet. You haven't let me contact anyone since the accident.

(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

I'm not sure if anyone from university even knows what happened. Just let me make one call on your phone or even send a message, please.

PHILIP

I didn't bring my mobile. There's no signal out here, and there's no phone or internet where we're going, sorry. Who do you want to call anyway? One of these new university friends of yours? The ones who turned my daughter to drugs and nearly got her killed?

Joan rolls her eyes in disbelief.

JOAN

You're treating me like some kind of junkie. How many times do I have to tell you, it was a one-time thing.

PHILIP

Every addict has a first time, Joan. That's how it starts.

Exasperated, Joan slumps in her seat.

JOAN

Mum wouldn't have treated me like this. She would've understood.

PHILIP

But she's not here, is she? It's just you and me now kiddo, and I'm going to do what I believe is best for you, okay?

Joan falls silent, her sorrowful gaze fixed out the window.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Listen. I informed the university all about your situation when I deferred your studies, so I'm sure your friends know by now. But it's clear they've been a negative influence on you. First the smoking and then drugs. That's why I'm keeping you away from them while you recover. It's for your own good.

He spots something ahead.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
I believe we've reached our
destination.

Further down the road, Joan spots a secluded, old house
nestled among the trees.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The truck parks in front of the neglected, large property.

Philip exits, retrieves a walking stick from the back, and
helps Joan out. She moves cautiously, struggling with her
injured leg. He offers the walking stick, but she refuses.

Joan looks unimpressed at the sight of the building. She
spots a weathered plaque on the property-'Wealdmount House'.

JOAN
Please tell me we're not staying
here.

PHILIP
This is it.

JOAN
Why did you rent a rundown place
like this? It looks abandoned.

PHILIP
Because I haven't rented it. I've
bought it.

Joan is dumbstruck.

JOAN
You bought it? Why?

PHILIP
To fulfil your mother's dream.

He steps in front of her, grinning widely.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
You know how she always talked
about us leaving the city and
moving to the countryside once I
retired?

JOAN

A couple of times, I suppose. I wouldn't say it was her dream, though.

He gently places his hand on her shoulder.

PHILIP

Well, guess what, kiddo?

She ponders for a moment, then realization hits her.

JOAN

You've retired early?

Philip nods.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Wait, really? You've left the military? Permanently?

PHILIP

That's right, and I want you to come live here with me. So we can fulfil her dream together.

Joan is flabbergasted.

JOAN

Live here? Indefinitely?

He grins hopefully. She shakes her head in astonishment.

JOAN (CONT'D)

You're unbelievable.

She hobbles back to the truck and climbs in.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Take me back home. Now.

She slams the door and buckles up.

Philip taps on her window. She lowers it.

PHILIP

Come on, Joan. All I ask is that you consider it.

JOAN

There's nothing to consider. You've clearly lost your mind.

She unfastens her seatbelt and awkwardly shifts into the driver's seat.

JOAN (CONT'D)

If you won't drive me back, I will.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Joan turns the key in the ignition. Philip swiftly opens the door and snatches it away.

PHILIP

If you think I'm letting you drive again anytime soon, you're sorely mistaken. Besides, you've lost your license.

He pockets the key, sits in the passenger seat, and shuts the door.

JOAN

So what's the plan? Hold me prisoner and force me to stay here for the rest of my life?

Philip sighs, rubbing his forehead.

PHILIP

Listen, Joan. I'm not going to force you to do anything. I had hopes, not expectations. You don't have to live here with me; I just didn't realize you'd be so strongly opposed to the idea.

He places his hand on her shoulder.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

But you still need time away to heal and recuperate. I insist on that, at least. Once you're recovered, I'll take you home. Deal?

She considers.

JOAN

Deal. As soon as I've recovered.

PHILIP

Good.

(opens door)

(MORE)

PHILIP (CONT'D)

And who knows, maybe by then you
might reconsider.

She gives him a wry smile. Philip gets out and heads around
to her side of the truck.

JOAN

(to herself)

Oh, I won't.

Philip opens Joan's door and helps her out.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

The front door creaks open. Philip and Joan step into the
dreary house with rustic furnishings. Philip flicks a couple
of switches, but nothing happens.

PHILIP

Powers off.

He opens a door to an adjacent room, and they both venture
in, exploring.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joan and Philip enter the dimly lit, furnished living room.
Thick curtains veil the room in darkness. Philip pulls them
back, illuminating the dusty décor.

PHILIP

So, what do you think?

JOAN

What do I think?

Joan looks around, unimpressed, while Philip appears
genuinely delighted.

JOAN (CONT'D)

It's a bit...grim, isn't it? I
doubt this is the sort of place Mum
had in mind, you know.

PHILIP

Granted, it needs sprucing up, but
I think it has character.

Joan runs her finger across a dusty cabinet, leaving a trail.

JOAN

If that's what you want to call it.

She scans the lacklustre room, noticing empty spots on the wall where picture frames once hung.

An alarm BEEPS on her wristwatch.

PHILIP

It's time.

Joan retrieves a label-less bottle of pills from her pocket, and tips one out.

JOAN

Is wearing this thing really necessary?

She gestures at her wristwatch.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I'm more than capable of remembering to take a pill twice a day without it.

Philip hands her a bottle of water from his jacket.

PHILIP

It's just a precaution. We don't want you missing a dose.

JOAN

Why? What are they even for?

She curiously examines the pill.

PHILIP

I'm not sure. But your doctor prescribed them, so you better make sure you take them, don't you think?

JOAN

Alright, I was only asking. I never even met this doctor, but fine, I'll keep taking them.

She swallows the pill with a sip of water.

JOAN (CONT'D)

So, what's the deal with this place anyway? Why is all this stuff still here?

(gestures at furnishings)

What happened to the previous owners?

PHILIP

I didn't ask. The property was on the market fully furnished, and at a very reasonable price. I assume the previous tenants either couldn't afford to take everything or simply didn't need it anymore. Good for us though, right?

JOAN

If you say so.

Philip CLAPS his hands.

PHILIP

Right. Why don't you go explore the house while I turn the power on and unload the truck?

JOAN

Okay.

He exits, leaving Joan to survey her drab surroundings.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Philip opens a door beneath the staircase. Steps lead down into darkness. He grabs a torch conveniently hanging on the back of the door, switches it on, and shines it into the gloomy basement.

Suddenly, a heavy THUD resonates from above. Startled, Philip looks up to see Joan on the stairs, smirking.

JOAN

Sorry, couldn't resist.

PHILIP

Very funny.

She limps up the stairs.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

You really ought to be using your walking...

Joan interjects.

JOAN

No.

She continues upwards as Philip descends into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Philip reaches the bottom step and shines his flashlight around the dank room, filled with boxes, old furnishings, and various odds and ends.

The beam lands on a fuse box on the far wall.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Joan reaches the top of the stairs and curiously opens the first door she comes to, revealing a spacious bathroom.

She continues, drawn to a door at the far end of the landing.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan enters the furnished room and notices several marked lines on the door frame, charting a child's annual growth.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Philip opens the fuse box, locates the main power switch, and flicks it on. The ceiling light flickers before illuminating the cluttered space.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A bedside lamp suddenly turns on. Joan switches it off and steps to a window overlooking the front of the property.

Captivated by the stunning view, she suddenly freezes, her unblinking gaze fixed in the distance. Her index finger starts twitching.

Philip appears in the doorway, holding a box.

PHILIP

Which room do you want your things
in?

She doesn't react, still staring out the window.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Joan?

Snapping out of her reverie, she turns around.

JOAN

Sorry, did you say something?

Philip adjusts his grip on the heavy box.

PHILIP
Which bedroom do you want?

She glances back at the view.

JOAN
This one will be fine.

He gladly sets the box down.

PHILIP
This is some of the things you
asked me to bring from your room.

JOAN
Thanks.

PHILIP
I'll bring up the rest.

He exits. Joan opens the box, takes out several books, and a framed photo of a middle-aged woman, placing it carefully on the bedside table.

INT. BATHROOM - DUSK

Joan enters with a folded towel and pyjamas. She sets them down and turns on the shower.

The pipes RATTLE and VIBRATE before water violently spurts out, then settles down into a steady stream.

Undressing cautiously, she removes her trousers, revealing the stitched gash on her thigh. She tentatively inspects it, mindful of the pain.

She examines the wound on her forehead in the mirror. Her attention shifts to the star pendant around her neck, which she twiddles absently, lost in thought.

The mirror steams up from the hot shower, filling the room with a misty haze. Joan reaches for the tap but quickly pulls back from the scalding water. Wrapping the towel around her arm, she reaches back in and turns it off.

The pipes REVERBERATE and CLANG as the water stops. Joan unwraps the soggy towel, and tosses it aside.

JOAN
(scoffs)
"Character" he says.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan peacefully sleeps with an open book on her lap. As she slumbers, she grows restless, her agitation evident. The book slips from her grasp, falling to the floor with a soft thud.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Joan walks along the dimly lit landing. Arriving at the bathroom door, she's surprised to see a bright light shining from beneath it. She reaches for the handle and slowly opens the door.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Joan cautiously steps into the steam-filled room, the shower roaring with boiling-hot water, and pipes JUDDERING and CLANGING.

The door suddenly slams shut behind Joan, startling her. She approaches the misty mirror, wipes away the condensation, and stares at her reflection.

To her astonishment, her reflection begins to move independently. It calmly raises a finger and writes "Evoke Lurking Echoes" backward on the fogging glass.

Suddenly, the reflection silently screams and head-butts the mirror, shattering it into pieces. Joan flinches, instinctively clutching her forehead.

She backs away, staring in horror at the blood on her hands.

Blood gushes from the wound on her forehead, cascading down her face and soaking her clothes. Joan hyperventilates, trembling with fear, then lets out a bone-chilling shriek.

A sharp FINGER-CLICK sound.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan abruptly wakes, her eyes wide as she stares ahead in a trancelike state.

Suddenly, she snaps out of it and gasps, checking her forehead for blood. Relief floods her as she realizes it was just a dream.

Glancing at her wristwatch, she sees it's 3:33 AM. Feeling reassured, she pulls the quilt over herself and settles back down to sleep.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan wakes to the BEEPING alarm of her wristwatch. She sits up sluggishly, muting the sound.

Collecting her bottle of pills from the bedside table, she takes one out, but it slips from her hand and falls to the ground. She scans the floor, but it's nowhere to be seen.

She gingerly gets to her feet, steadying herself on her injured leg before kneeling to look under the bed.

Spotting the pill behind the bedside table, she shifts it aside, and a small picture frame falls out. She retrieves both the pill and the frame, then puts the table back.

Awkwardly getting back to her feet, Joan looks at the framed photo, showing a man, a woman, and a young boy happily posing outside the front of the house.

She pops the pill in her mouth, drinks some water, and stashes the photo in a drawer.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Philip prepares a simple breakfast in the minimally equipped, homely kitchen. Joan enters, half-asleep and hobbling.

PHILIP

Good morning. I've prepared a healthy breakfast for us.

She sits at the table and pours herself a cup of coffee.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Sleep well?

JOAN

Fine.

Philip serves the bland breakfast and sits down.

PHILIP

Take your medication this morning?

She smirks and wiggles her wristwatch.

JOAN

How could I forget?

Philip nods approvingly and digs into his food. Joan opts to sip her coffee.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joan sits on the sofa, engrossed in a book, with a stack of others beside her. Philip enters in hiking gear. Joan glances up, acknowledging his presence.

JOAN

Where are you going?

PHILIP

For a short trek, get the lay of the land.

JOAN

Oh, right. And what am I supposed to do?

PHILIP

You're not supposed to do anything. You're here to rest and focus on your recovery.

He reaches atop the cabinet, retrieving a rifle, grabbing Joan's attention.

JOAN

Where did that come from?

PHILIP

I brought it with me.

JOAN

Why? To do training exercises? You've retired, or did you forget?

PHILIP

It's for hunting. There should be plenty of rabbits and fowl in these woods. This way, I won't have to go into town for supplies as often.

He collects ammunition from a drawer and loads the weapon. Joan gets back to reading.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Need anything before I go?

JOAN

Yeah, how about a TV and some cigarettes? Or at least some books I haven't actually read before?

PHILIP

You can forget about the first two,
but I did see some books in the
basement. Want me to bring them up?

He edges toward the door.

JOAN

No, don't worry. I'll stick to the
books I've got and try not to die
of boredom in the process.

PHILIP

If you're bored, why don't you
paint? I brought your art supplies
from home. The scenery's perfect. I
thought it would be the first thing
you'd want to do.

She doesn't look up from her book, remaining disinterested.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

In fact, I can just imagine an oil
painting of the house hung right
here--

(gestures to blank wall)

--would look great. Really brighten
up the room.

JOAN

Landscapes aren't really my thing,
Dad. Which I thought you knew. I'm
not Mum.

An uncomfortable silence hangs in the air.

PHILIP

Paint whatever you like. The house
was only a suggestion.

Joan stays silent, head buried in her book.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Okay, then.

He CLAPS his hands, acknowledging the tension, and heads out.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

I'll be back later. Won't be too
long.

Philip leaves the property, the sound of the FRONT DOOR
CLOSING behind him.

Joan continues reading but soon grows frustrated. She puts the book down with a sigh and sifts through the stack beside her, rejecting each one.

EXT. BASEMENT - DAY

The light flickers on, illuminating the cluttered space. Joan descends the steps cautiously, eyeing the room. She spots a stack of books atop a box and approaches.

Disappointment sets in as she discovers they're all children's books.

JOAN

Great.

Setting them aside, she opens the box, finding more children's books and games. Among them, she discovers an old portable radio.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Joan emerges from the basement with the radio. Extending the aerial, she switches it on. CRACKLING STATIC fills the air as the radio comes to life.

She wanders around the entrance hall, adjusting the dial to tune in a station.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Joan wanders around outside, frustration evident as she adjusts the frequency, only to encounter persistent STATIC.

An idea strikes her as she looks up at her bedroom window.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan places the radio on the window ledge, tuning it carefully.

Finally, DISTORTED MUSIC breaks through the static. With excitement, she throws open the window and adjusts the aerial, searching for a clearer signal.

A CRACKLY SONG plays over the airwaves. Joan triumphantly pumps her fist.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

From Joan's open bedroom window, CRACKLY MUSIC blares out.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan lies on her bed, lost in thought, idly fiddling with her pendant.

Suddenly, the music cuts out, fading to silence. Disappointed, she opens the back of the radio, adjusts the batteries, but they're completely drained.

JOAN

Great.

Reluctantly, she turns her attention to the easel and art supplies in the corner, considering them as an alternative source of entertainment.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Joan steps outside with a dining chair, placing it in front of the easel and canvas already set up with her art supplies.

She sits down and prepares her paint palette with a focused gaze on the property.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

Philip hikes through the woodland, deep in thought. A sudden RUSTLING nearby snaps him to attention.

He freezes, eyes scanning the undergrowth. Spotting a foraging rabbit, he calmly raises his rifle, targeting the unsuspecting animal, and squeezes the trigger, BANG!

Startled by the gunshot, the rabbit bolts, unharmed.

Surprised by his miss, Philip sighs and resumes his hike, his thoughts still preoccupying his mind.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Joan paints a picture of the house with fervour, her focus shifting between the canvas and her open bedroom window which she is depicting as shut.

Suddenly, she freezes, her unblinking eyes locked onto the house in a trancelike state.

Her hand twitches before it independently resumes painting with precise brush strokes, as if driven by an invisible muse.

She snaps out of it, wincing in pain and rubbing her temple. Gasping in horror, she stares at what she just unwittingly painted: a detailed young boy in a black hat standing behind her bedroom window, his hand pressed against the glass.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Philip returns to the house, hanging up his jacket and heading straight to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Philip enters, finding Joan as he left her, engrossed in a book. He greets her with a warm smile.

PHILIP
Hey, kiddo. How you feeling?

JOAN
Fine.

She remains focused on reading.

JOAN (CONT'D)
You've been gone a while.

PHILIP
Sorry, lost track of time.

He unloads the rifle, placing the ammunition back in the drawer. Joan notices dry paint on her hand and swiftly rubs it off while his back is turned.

After placing the rifle atop the cabinet, Philip's gaze lingers on Joan with concern, sensing something's up.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

Joan looks up and offers a reassuring smile.

JOAN
Yeah.

PHILIP
You hungry?

JOAN

Sure.

PHILIP

I'll make you something. It's important to keep your strength up.

He heads to the kitchen.

JOAN

Oh, do we have any double A batteries?

Philip pauses in the doorway.

PHILIP

Not sure. I didn't bring any. Why do you ask?

JOAN

Just for a portable radio I came across.

PHILIP

I'll have a look around, but if not, I'll get some in a few days when I go on a supply run.

JOAN

Thanks.

She returns to her book, and Philip leaves the room.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

Joan, dressed for bed, walks over to the open window and closes it, apprehension lingering in her eyes.

She looks at the painting on the easel in the corner of the room. Curiosity tugs at her, and she softly breathes on the glass where the boy's palm was depicted.

Relieved to find no handprint, Joan smirks, amused by her imagination.

She collects a bed sheet, covers the canvas with it, then climbs into bed with a book.

A KNOCK at her door. Philip pokes his head in.

PHILIP

Just wanted to say goodnight.

JOAN

Goodnight.

He spots the covered canvas.

PHILIP

What's this? Have you been painting?

Stepping in, he approaches the easel. Joan sits up urgently.

JOAN

It's not finished yet.

He pulls the sheet away, revealing the painting. His eyes widen as he admires the artwork.

PHILIP

It's looking great. Glad to see you took my suggestion on board. What made you change your...

He notices the boy in the window. Joan quickly gets out of bed, grabs the sheet, and covers the canvas.

JOAN

I only started it because I was bored. It's not even that good. I doubt I'll bother finishing it.

She climbs back into bed and starts reading her book.

A silence ensues as Philip suspiciously studies her for a moment.

PHILIP

Do as you please.

He heads out.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Goodnight, Joan.

JOAN

Night.

Philip leaves, closing the door behind him. Joan tries to focus on her book, but her eyes apprehensively drift toward the covered painting.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan tosses and turns in her sleep, her dreams causing restlessness. She grows more agitated, kicking the duvet off the bed.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

The nightmare resumes where it left off.

Blood streams from Joan's forehead, soaking her clothes. She trembles, hyperventilating, before letting out a bone-chilling shriek.

Furious BANGING interrupts, making Joan fall silent. The BANGING grows louder, escalating into heavy THUDS on the door.

Joan instinctively retreats into a corner, arming herself with a shard of broken mirror. Her hand shakes as it tightly grasps the makeshift weapon.

Suddenly, her fear shifts to eerie calmness as she watches blood drip from her clenched fist.

The THUDS intensify, reverberating through the room.

Joan's expression remains detached as she peacefully sits beneath the hot flowing shower, closes her eyes, and slashes both her wrists with the broken glass.

She smiles with blissful relief as blood spurts from her sliced arteries and washes away down the drain.

The door suddenly BURSTS open.

A sharp FINGER-CLICK sound.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan abruptly wakes, her eyes wide as she stares ahead in a trancelike state.

She snaps out of it, gasps, and swiftly switches on the bedside lamp to check her wrists. Relief floods her as she realizes it was only a dream.

Rubbing her temple and taking deep breaths to calm her racing heart, she checks her watch: 3:33 AM.

Suddenly, a SONG plays on the portable radio on the window ledge, loud and crystal-clear.

Perplexed, Joan gets out of bed and tries to silence the radio, but despite her efforts, it keeps playing unabated.

Growing frustrated, she removes the batteries, finally silencing the music.

Returning to bed, she intentionally leaves the lamp on and covers herself with the duvet.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan awakens to the persistent BEEPING of her alarm. She sits up, still half asleep, and silences the infernal sound.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Joan enters, drowsy and limping. A simple, healthy breakfast and a note await her on the table.

It reads: "Gone for supplies. Back later."

JOAN

Great.

Annoyed, she crumples the note and tosses it aside. She sits down and pours herself a generous coffee.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joan sits on the sofa, twiddling her pendant, lost in thought. Suddenly, she stands, determined, and purposefully leaves the room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Joan gathers a pen and paper, sits at the table, and writes: "Dear Billy." She proceeds to earnestly write a letter, pouring her heart out onto the page.

Suddenly she freezes, staring at the paper in a trancelike state. Her hand twitches, then independently resumes writing in an intense yet methodical manner.

She snaps out of it, wincing, and rubbing her temple, gasping at the multiple skulls and crossbones she has sketched over her words. Shook up, she scrunches the letter and casts it in the bin.

A TRUCK pulling up outside grabs her attention.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Philip retrieves a large box from the back of the truck. Joan opens the front door as he approaches.

PHILIP
Hey, kiddo.

She steps aside, letting Philip enter.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Joan shuts the door. Philip notices her unease.

PHILIP
Everything okay?

JOAN
What? Yeah, fine.

He hangs the truck keys on a hook near the door.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Why didn't you wait for me this morning? I could've come with you.

PHILIP
But that would've spoiled the surprise.

JOAN
What surprise?

Philip grins and playfully shakes the box.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Philip sets the box down on the coffee table.

PHILIP
You said you were bored, so...

He opens it, revealing an old portable DVD player, which he hands to Joan before reaching back inside the box.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
There's a whole bunch of DVDs in here. I even got you some books.

He passes her a few examples.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
I got it all from a second-hand store in town. The selection was pretty limited, so I just bought the lot.

Joan smiles appreciatively.

JOAN
Thanks.

She eagerly rummages through the box.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Any batteries?

Philip's expression falls slightly.

PHILIP
Sorry, I forgot.

JOAN
Cigarettes?

He gives her a playful yet stern look.

PHILIP
I thought we could watch some films together. Have ourselves a movie marathon or whatever they call it. What do you say?

Joan looks surprised by the suggestion.

JOAN
I don't think we've ever actually done that together before, but okay.

PHILIP
Well, there's a first time for everything.

He enthusiastically CLAPS his hands.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Right. You pick what we're going to watch first, and I'll this set up.

He takes the player from her and gets busy sorting it out while Joan sifts through the random selection of DVDs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan is curled up on the sofa with a blanket, engrossed in a film. Philip snores beside her. As the movie ends, Joan checks the time, selects another DVD, and swaps the discs.

Suddenly, she hears a CAR PULLING UP outside. Stepping up to the window, she inquisitively peers through a gap in the curtains but sees nothing in the pitch-black.

A CAR DOOR SHUTS, followed by FOOTSTEPS. An outdoor motion sensor light is triggered. Joan catches a brief glimpse of someone approaching the front door.

KNOCKING on the door echoes through the house.

Joan wakes Philip, who grumbles.

JOAN
Someone's at the door.

KNOCKING.

Philip checks the time and reluctantly gets up.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Philip glances through a small window in the front door, checking who's there before opening it. Joan stands out of sight.

DARREN, mid-30s, well-educated and mild-mannered, stands on the doorstep wearing geeky glasses.

PHILIP
Yes, can I help you?

DARREN
I certainly hope so. I apologize for the late hour, but I require a room for a couple of nights. The inn in town is full, so the owner suggested I try the guesthouse at Wealdmount House, so...

Philip interjects.

PHILIP
Sorry, this isn't a guesthouse anymore. You'll have to try somewhere else.

He attempts to close the door, but Darren stops it with his hand.

DARREN

I'm really sorry, but I've been driving for hours, and it's simply too late to find anywhere else. My only option is to sleep in my car, and I fear it's going to be a bitterly cold night.

He removes his hand, signalling his plea.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Is there any possible way you could find it in your heart to accommodate me for the night? I'll pay you of course.

Philip considers it, glancing at Joan, who shakes her head and mouths "No."

PHILIP

Well, I can't in good conscience just turn you away to spend a cold night in your car. Not when we have empty bedrooms upstairs. I'm sure we can put you up for a night or two.

He steps aside, inviting Darren in.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Come on in.

Joan glares at Philip in disbelief.

DARREN

Thank you so much.

As Darren enters, he spots Joan.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Oh, hello.

She offers a polite smile. Philip closes the door, and Darren extends his hand to him.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Darren Taylor.

They shake hands.

PHILIP
Philip Houghton, and this is my
daughter, Joan.

DARREN
(to Joan)
Pleasure to meet you.

He shakes her hand.

DARREN (CONT'D)
I can't thank you both enough for
this. I truly do appreciate it.

PHILIP
What brings you all out here
anyway?

DARREN
I'm here to shoot the wildlife.

Joan frowns disapprovingly.

JOAN
Shoot the wildlife? Are you a
trophy hunter or something?

DARREN
Trophy?

Darren looks confused, then realizes the misunderstanding.

DARREN (CONT'D)
No, I don't mean shoot them dead. I
mean shoot them with my camera. I'm
a freelance wildlife photographer.
My equipment's in the car.

JOAN
Oh, right. Sorry.

DARREN
No need to apologize. I should have
been more clear. I'm actually
strongly against all forms of
animal hunting.

Joan glances at Philip. There's an uncomfortable silence.

PHILIP
Right.

Philip CLAPS his hands.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

(to Joan)

Joan, why don't you carry on with the movie while I show Darren to his room.

JOAN

Fine.

Philip leads him upstairs. Darren glances back, smiling warmly at Joan as she returns to the living room.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan is fast asleep, the lamp casting a soft glow. She starts to restlessly toss and turn.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Joan sits blissfully under the hot shower, bleeding out. The door BURSTS open and two masked intruders in black storm in.

The FIRST INTRUDER forcefully drags Joan out of the shower, pinning her to the ground. She screams, but the intruder muffles her cries with a hand.

The SECOND INTRUDER looms over her, holding a bloody rag with a small hole. Kneeling beside her, the intruder folds the rag lengthwise and tie it around her eyes, blindfolding her.

Sharp FINGER-CLICK.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan abruptly wakes, sitting forward, staring blankly in a trancelike state.

She snaps out of it, releasing a breath she didn't know she was holding and rubbing her temple.

Slowly, she regains her senses, realizing it was just another dream. She looks around the room, reassuring herself she's safe and sound. She checks the time--3:33 AM.

Suddenly, the same SONG plays loud and clear on the radio.

Joan's heart skips a beat, and she looks fearfully at the radio on the window ledge.

She jumps out of bed and frantically tries to silence the radio, but nothing works. Panic rises within her when she realizes there are no batteries in it.

In frustration and terror, Joan lifts the radio above her head, ready to smash it, but the song abruptly stops, leaving silence.

She eyes the radio suspiciously, then places it back on the window ledge before cautiously returning to bed.

Suddenly, STATIC fills the room.

With bated breath, Joan turns back, eyes fixed on the radio. A GARBLED VOICE tunes in.

CHILD
(fearful on radio)
Mummy? Help me, Mummy.

Joan's blood runs cold, listening to the plea for help.

Suddenly, a hand grabs her shoulder from behind, making her yelp. She spins around to find Philip in his pyjamas, half asleep and clutching his chest.

The radio falls silent.

PHILIP
Damn it, Joan. You nearly gave me a heart attack. What's going on? What's all the commotion?

JOAN
Did you hear that?

PHILIP
Hear what?

JOAN
The child's voice on the radio calling for help.

They both look at the silent radio.

PHILIP
I didn't hear any voice. Just you stomping around in here. I thought you said the radio wasn't working anyway.

Joan is agitated and afraid. Philip grows concerned.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
What's wrong, Joan? What aren't you
telling me?

She remains silent, reluctant to answer.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Talk to me.

JOAN
I know you're going to think this
is crazy, but I think this house is
haunted.

Philip's expression contorts with scepticism.

PHILIP
Haunted? By ghosts?

He scoffs, dismissing the notion.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
There's no such thing, Joan.

JOAN
I'm serious. Just before you came
in, I heard a child's voice on the
radio asking for help. And for the
past two nights, the exact same
song has played by itself at the
exact same time, even without
batteries in it.

PHILIP
So, what are you saying? The
radio's haunted?

Realizing he needs convincing, she strides to the covered
canvas and whips the sheet away.

JOAN
That's not all

She points at the boy in the window.

JOAN (CONT'D)
You see the kid?

He peers at the painting.

PHILIP
Yes, I saw it.

JOAN

I didn't paint that. Well, I did, but it wasn't me. It was like something took over my hand and painted it against my will. Then, the same thing happened the next day when I was writing a letter in the kitchen, but that time...

Philip interjects.

PHILIP

Who were you writing a letter to?

She hesitates to answer.

JOAN

It doesn't matter who. What's important is there's something wrong with this house. You have to believe me.

He gently places a hand on Joan's shoulder, trying to comfort her.

PHILIP

It's okay, Joan, calm down. I think I know what's happening here.

JOAN

You do?

PHILIP

Yes. It's your head injury. You're not well. Perhaps you were discharged too early. Your road to recovery may take longer than we expected.

Joan's frustration builds.

JOAN

I knew you'd think something like this. That's why I didn't tell you about any of this earlier. It's got nothing to do with...

Philip interrupts, gentle but firm.

PHILIP

It's late, Joan. You need rest.

JOAN

But...

PHILIP

We'll talk more in the morning.
Goodnight.

He exits, closing the door behind him. Joan is left alone, scared and vexed. She covers the painting with the sheet and curls up under the duvet.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan's alarm BEEPS, startling her awake. She mutes it, groggily gets up, and takes her morning pill with a sigh.

The sound of a CAR BOOT SHUTTING catches her attention. She moves to the window and peers outside.

Darren, holding his sleek camera bag, steps from the boot of his car to the open passenger door. He retrieves a packet of cigarettes from the glovebox, and lights one up, savouring the first puff before putting the pack back.

Joan's eyes light up.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Joan hides out of view at the top of the stairs, peering around the corner. She waits, eyes fixed on the front door.

Darren enters with his camera bag, hangs his car keys on the hook, and heads into the living room, unaware of Joan.

With calculated stealth, Joan descends the staircase, each step carefully placed to minimize noise. Reaching the bottom, she ensures the coast is clear, then swiftly snatches Darren's car keys and slips out the front door, unnoticed.

INT. CAR 2 - DAY

Joan limps briskly to Darren's car. She unlocks it, opens the passenger door, and rummages through the glovebox.

A gleeful smile spreads across her face as she spots the packet of cigarettes. Her excitement grows further when she notices something else tucked away inside: a mobile phone.

She quickly checks her surroundings, then quietly shuts the door and ducks out of sight. Eagerly, she turns on the phone, but her excitement fades when she sees it's pattern-locked.

Undeterred, she breathes on the screen, adjusting its angle to catch the light. Faint fingertip smudge lines appear.

Joan follows them, attempting various patterns until she successfully unlocks the device.

She dials a number but is met with disappointment as the call fails to connect, the signal bar indicating zero.

JOAN

Great.

Frustration washes over her, but an idea suddenly sparks in her mind as she looks up at her bedroom window.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan softly closes her bedroom door, steps to the window, and opens it. She holds the phone up to the sky, intently monitoring the signal strength.

A single bar briefly flashes on the screen.

Encouraged, Joan shifts the radio aside and awkwardly climbs onto the ledge, gripping the window frame. Balancing carefully, she extends her arm, holding the phone aloft, seeking a stable signal.

A solid bar appears. Without hesitation, she hits redial.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The living room is a mess, with dirty dishes and empty beer bottles strewn about. Billy, still fully dressed and dishevelled, is fast asleep on the sofa.

The muffled RING of a mobile phone breaks the silence. Groggily, Billy wakes, his head pounding. He searches for the ringing phone, eventually finding it wedged between the cushions.

The screen displays "Unknown number," prompting Billy to groan in annoyance.

He answers the call, rubbing his aching temple.

BILLY

(on phone)

This had better be good.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan leans out the window, phone to her ear, straining to hear.

JOAN
Hello? Billy? It's Joan.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Billy flumps back on the sofa, irritated.

BILLY
Whoever this is, the reception's
shit. I can barely hear you. I'm
going to hang up now.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan adjusts her grip on the window frame, steadying herself.

JOAN
No, Billy, wait.

She switches the phone to loudspeaker and raises it higher,
trying to improve reception.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Can you hear me now?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Billy alertly sits forward, the signal improving.

BILLY
Joan? Is that you?

He springs to his feet and paces around the room, trying to
enhance the reception.

BILLY (CONT'D)
The signal sucks. Where are you?
What's going on? I've been trying
to get hold of you for days.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan winces in discomfort, but perseveres with the call.

JOAN
I'm sorry. I wanted to call you,
but my father took my phone and
hasn't allowed me to contact anyone
since the accident.

(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

Then he insisted on taking me to this house he bought out in the middle of nowhere to recuperate.

BILLY (V.O.)

(from phone)

Sorry, did you say accident? What accident?

JOAN

The car crash I was involved in. You do know about it, right?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Billy stops pacing, processing the revelation.

BILLY

Car crash? When? What happened? Are you okay?

JOAN (V.O.)

(from phone)

I'm fine, don't worry. But I don't understand. I thought someone from the university would've informed you by now.

BILLY

Nobody at the university knows anything about it either, trust me. All they know is that you quit.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan's puzzled frown deepens.

JOAN

Quit? I haven't quit. My studies have only been deferred until I'm ready to return.

BILLY (V.O.)

(from phone)

That's not what Professor Reid was told. He was informed you'd quit, like permanently. Without reason or explanation.

She scowls, realizing her father lied to her.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Philip calls out from the bottom of the staircase.

PHILIP
Joan, you awake?

With no reply, he ascends the steps.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Billy plonks back down on the sofa, a mix of concern and relief on his face.

BILLY
I thought you quit because of that stupid fight we had. I've been going out of my mind wanting to apologize. I really...

Joan interrupts.

JOAN (V.O.)
(from phone)
You have to come and get me. Take me home.

Billy is taken aback by the request.

BILLY
Alright. But why? What's going on?

JOAN (V.O.)
(from phone)
My father's trying to control my life, that's what's going on. And there's something strange happening in this house. I'll explain everything later. Just come-as quick as you can.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Philip reaches the top of the stairs and proceeds towards Joan's bedroom.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Billy springs into action, quickly locating and putting on his shoes.

BILLY
I'll leave right now.

He grabs his car keys from the coffee table.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Just tell me where you are.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan's face reflects a disheartening realization.

JOAN
I don't exactly know.

BILLY (V.O.)
(from phone)
You don't know where you are?

JOAN
I was asleep most of the journey,
and my father refused to tell me
where he was taking, and he still
hasn't. It was about a four or five-
hour drive north. It's a secluded,
old house in a mountainous region,
surrounded by forest. I think I
must be in the Highlands somewhere.

She pauses, thinking hard.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Wait, the property has a name.
(tries to recall)
Wealdmount. The name of the
property is Wealdmount House. My
father recently bought it. See if
you can find anything about the
sale on...

The bedroom door suddenly opens. Philip spots Joan on the ledge with the phone, interrupting the conversation.

PHILIP
Joan!

Startled, Joan loses her grip on the window frame and falls out, knocking the radio down with her.

In a split second, Philip leaps across the room and grabs her ankle just in time. Joan YELPS in excruciating agony.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The radio and mobile phone SMASH onto the rocky ground below.

Joan dangles precariously out the window, grimacing and clutching her injured thigh as Philip strains to hold her.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Billy anxiously presses the phone to his ear.

BILLY

Joan, you there? Joan?

Realizing the call has been cut off, he tries to ring back, but the line won't connect.

He quickly unearths his laptop from beneath dirty plates on the coffee table, opens it, and types "Wealdmount House Sale" into a search engine.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Philip delicately hauls Joan back inside, her groans revealing her discomfort. He lifts her off the window ledge and gently sits her on the bed.

PHILIP

Who were you talking to?

Joan glares at him, silent.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

I asked, who?

JOAN

A friend from university.

PHILIP

What did they tell you?

JOAN

The truth.

Despite the pain, Joan gets to her feet, pushing away Philip's attempts to help her stand.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I know you didn't defer my studies—you terminated them. You didn't even inform the university of my accident.

(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

Nobody knows anything about it. You lied to me.

PHILIP

Look, I understand you must be upset right now, but please, let me explain.

He attempts to place his hand on her shoulder, but she beats it away.

JOAN

I don't need your explanation. I know why you did it. I just can't believe you actually did. You didn't just hope I'd agree to live here—you planned on it.

PHILIP

I'm sorry I lied, but you have to understand, I was only doing what I thought was best for you.

JOAN

Do you seriously think tearing me away from my life and keeping me here in this place is what's best for me?

PHILIP

I did at the time. But you're right, I overreacted. I only did it because I love you, Joan. You're my daughter, and you needed my help. I even retired early to do so.

JOAN

I didn't ask you to do that. Besides, why now? Why not when I really needed you. Where were you after Mum died? That's when I needed your help, but you weren't there. You just buried yourself in your work, leaving me to grieve all alone.

Philip notices something and points at her leg with concern.

PHILIP

You're bleeding.

Joan looks at her injured thigh, seeing blood seeping through her trousers.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Your stitches must have torn. Sit
down, let me take a look.

He tries to assist her.

JOAN
No!

She shoves him away.

JOAN (CONT'D)
If you want to help, then stop
trying to control my life, and get
out of my room.

Philip puts up little resistance as she forcefully ushers him
out the door.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Joan pushes Philip out and SLAMS the door.

PHILIP
(through door)
Joan, you have to let me check your
wound. It might need re-stitching.

Silence.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Joan?

He KNOCKS softly.

JOAN (O.S.)
Leave me alone.

Philip, resigned, reluctantly walks away.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan sits on the edge of the bed, carefully pulling down her
trousers to inspect her thigh. The wound has partially
reopened, blood trickling down her leg.

A KNOCK at the door.

JOAN
I said, leave me alone.

DARREN (O.S.)
Sorry. It's Darren. The
photographer. Your dad asked me to
bring this med-kit up to you.

JOAN
Oh. Just leave it by the door,
thanks.

DARREN (O.S.)
He told me what just happened. Said
you might have torn some stitches?

JOAN
Yeah.

DARREN (O.S.)
Need any assistance? I have some
suturing experience. Well, I did a
year of veterinary school. I'm
happy to take a look at it if you
like?

Joan anxiously eyes her bloody wound, considering his offer.

JOAN
Okay.

She modestly covers her bare thighs with the duvet.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Come in.

Darren enters, med-kit in hand, greeting her with a friendly
smile. He kneels in front of Joan and gestures at her legs.

DARREN
Which one?

She uncovers her injured thigh, and Darren inspects the
bloody wound.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Yeah, you've definitely torn a few
stitches. It requires immediate
suturing.

He opens the fully equipped, military-issue med-kit.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Shall I proceed?

She nods, falls back on the bed, and covers her eyes with her
forearm.

JOAN

Just get it over with.

Darren prepares the suturing materials.

JOAN (CONT'D)

So, what did my father actually tell you?

DARREN

Just that you recently sustained some injuries in a car accident, and might have just tore some stitches after nearly falling out of a window while using what he can only assume was my mobile phone, which I have since retrieved from outside, broken.

Joan blushes, embarrassed, and sits up.

JOAN

I'm really sorry about that. I only borrowed it to make one call and was going to put it back afterward. I'll pay for a new one, of course.

DARREN

Don't worry. All those years pointlessly paying for insurance is finally going to pay off.

He smiles, putting her at ease.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Though I am curious as to how you knew it was in the glovebox in the first place.

JOAN

I didn't. I came across it while looking for your cigarettes. I saw you smoking one from the window earlier.

DARREN

If you wanted a cigarette, why didn't you just ask me for one?

JOAN

I didn't want to risk my father finding out. He's forcing me to quit.

Darren nods understandingly.

DARREN

I see.

He is ready to begin suturing.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Alright, brace yourself-this is likely to sting somewhat.

He gently sterilizes the wound with alcohol wipes. Joan tenses, cringing in pain.

Darren picks up the prepared needle and thread.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Ready?

She lays back and covers her eyes again.

JOAN

Yes.

With care, Darren pierces the wound and proceeds stitching it back up. Joan winces with each stitch, ill at ease.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Talk to me. Take my mind off it.

DARREN

Okay. What about?

JOAN

Anything.

Darren spots the framed photo of a middle-aged woman on the bedside table.

DARREN

Who's the woman in the photograph?
She's very pretty.

Joan peeks at the photo from beneath her arm.

JOAN

My mother.

DARREN

Thought so. I can see the resemblance.

He clears his throat and focuses on suturing.

DARREN (CONT'D)
So, where is she? Why isn't she
here with the two of you?

She hesitates to answer.

JOAN
She was killed in a hit and run a
couple of years ago.

Darren pauses, feeling her loss.

DARREN
I'm sorry, Joan. I didn't mean
to...

JOAN
It's fine. Lets just change the
subject?

DARREN
Yes, of course. I'm nearly done
here anyway.

He finishes, cutting the excess thread with scissors.

DARREN (CONT'D)
There, all done. Not bad, if I do
say so myself.

Joan inspects the re-stitched wound as Darren packs up the
med-kit.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Though I do advise you take it easy
on that leg. My stitching's
adequate, but I'm certainly no
expert.

JOAN
Thank you, Darren. I really
appreciate it.

DARREN
Anytime.

Joan carefully pulls her trousers back up. Darren politely
averts his gaze, spotting the art equipment and covered
canvas in the corner.

DARREN (CONT'D)
I see you're a painter.

JOAN

Kind of.

He steps up to the painting and gestures to the sheet.

DARREN

May I?

She hesitates, then nods.

Darren pulls the sheet away, admires the painting, and takes a closer look at the boy in the window.

DARREN (CONT'D)

So, this is the boy you involuntarily painted, is it?

She looks surprised he knows.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Sorry. I have to confess to overhearing some of your conversation with your dad last night. It wasn't intentional, but I'm a light sleeper, and you were rather loud.

Joan appears embarrassed.

DARREN (CONT'D)

So, you believe something supernatural caused you to paint this, do you?

JOAN

I don't know-maybe. My father thinks it's nonsense. He thinks its related to my head injury, but I'm not so sure.

(stares at the boy)

I think it's the boy who use to live here, and I fear something bad might have happened to him in this house.

Darren appears sceptical. Joan laughs nervously.

JOAN (CONT'D)

You probably think I'm crazy too.

(smirks)

Maybe I am.

She grows anxious. Darren sits beside her.

DARREN

On the contrary. I've heard of people experiencing supernatural things like this before. I'm not saying I believe in ghosts, and what not, but I certainly don't discount the possibility. It's good to keep an open mind.

They hear a VEHICLE DRIVING AWAY outside.

Joan hobbles to the window, seeing Philip drive off in his truck. Darren joins her.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Where's he going?

JOAN

I don't know.

She huffs and carefully sits back down on the bed.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I can't believe he just left me here with you. No offense, but you could be a serial killer for all he knows.

DARREN

If my presence here makes you feel uncomfortable in anyway, I'll leave right now. I more than understand.

He edges toward the door, showing his willingness to respect her feelings.

JOAN

No, it's fine. Don't leave. Please. I'd really rather not be alone here.

DARREN

Alright then. I'll stay and keep you company until your dad gets back.

He sits beside her.

DARREN (CONT'D)

And to put your mind at ease, don't worry, I'm not a serial killer-not anymore anyway.

Joan chuckles, appreciating the humour.

Darren gestures to the painting.

DARREN (CONT'D)
So, are you going to finish it?

She earnestly shakes her head.

JOAN
I'm too scared to even pick up a pen.

DARREN
That's exactly why you should finish it. You can't live in fear of things that may or may not happen. But if it does, then at least someone will be there to observe you this time, which might help you to understand what's really going on.

She is still reluctant.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Consider it a form of artistic investigation.

He stands and offers his hand.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Come on, I'll be right beside you.

Joan hesitates, then takes his hand, and he helps her up.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Joan sits on a dining chair, engrossed in her painting of the house, her brush moving confidently on the canvas. The picture is nearly complete.

Darren sits beside her, observing patiently. He checks his watch and stands to stretch. Joan pauses, concerned.

JOAN
Sorry, nothing's happening this time. You must be pretty bored by now.

DARREN
Not at all. It's fascinating just watching you work. You're very talented, you know?

JOAN

Thank you. But aren't I keeping you from your wildlife photography?

DARREN

I believe it's fair to say you've piqued my interest. Sometimes the most fascinating part of nature isn't found in the wild, but within the human mind.

He takes out a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and offers one to Joan. Her face lights up with appreciation.

DARREN (CONT'D)

I've been waiting for you to ask for one.

She gratefully takes a cigarette.

JOAN

I've been waiting for you to offer. After smashing your phone, I thought it would be a bit presumptuous of me to ask.

He lights her cigarette and then his own. Joan takes a long, gratifying drag.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Thank you so much. I haven't had one for days. Just don't tell my father. For both our sakes.

DARREN

It'll be our little secret.

She continues painting, casually smoking. Darren sits and watches.

Suddenly, she freezes mid brushstroke, staring at the canvas in a trancelike state. Her lit cigarette falls from her fingers.

Darren looks on with concern.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Joan?

Her brush-holding hand twitches, then independently resumes painting over the picture, erratically flicking the brush back and forth between the palette and canvas.

Darren observes, fascinated, but a look of trepidation soon grows on his face.

Snapping out of it, Joan winces and intensely rubs her temple. She gasps at the sight of the canvas, leaping from her chair and falling.

Darren rushes to her aid, and together they apprehensively stare at the smeary painting of two burnt, shadowy figures standing amidst a hellish blaze of fire.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joan sits on the sofa, twiddling her pendant nervously. Darren enters.

DARREN
It's done.

JOAN
Where is it?

DARREN
Down in the basement.

She resumes anxiously fiddling with the pendant. Darren sits beside her, gesturing at the DVD player.

DARREN (CONT'D)
How about a movie while we wait for your dad? Help take your mind off things.

Joan nods, appreciating the distraction.

DARREN (CONT'D)
I'd say a light-hearted comedy's in order, wouldn't you?

She nods again. He sifts through the DVDs, selects one, and pops it in the player.

EXT. TOWN - DUSK

Philip's truck is parked in front of a row of charming shops on the quaint high street.

Exiting one of the shops with a carrier bag in hand, Philip returns to his vehicle. Once inside, he checks the time, then pulls out a sandwich from the bag and tucks in.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The coffee table is cluttered with dirty plates and empty cups. Darren, lounging on the sofa, watches an action movie with disinterest. Joan sleeps beside him, curled up under a blanket.

She stirs, resting her head on his shoulder. Careful not to wake her, Darren gently adjusts the blanket, cherishing the moment as he gazes at her serene face.

Suddenly, a TRUCK PULLS UP outside. Darren pauses the movie, and intently listens.

The outdoor security light activates, followed by the sound of the FRONT DOOR CLOSING and FOOTSTEPS which pause outside the living room door before proceeding up the staircase.

Darren checks the time, then resumes watching the movie while Joan sleeps on his shoulder.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billy sits on the sofa, fatigued, scrolling through estate agent websites on his laptop. He stops at a picture of a house for sale and zooms in on the weathered plaque reading "Wealdmount House."

His eyes light up as he discovers the property's postcode.

BILLY

Found you.

He grabs his coat and phone, types the postcode into the maps app, snatches his keys, and dashes out the door.

INT. CAR 3 - NIGHT

Billy climbs into his shabby, old car, sets his phone up as a sat-nav, and turns the key. But the engine refuses to comply.

BILLY

No, come on. Not now. Work you hunk of junk.

He keeps trying to start it, but to no avail.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Accepting defeat, he bangs the steering wheel in frustration before getting out and opening the bonnet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Darren sleeps on the sofa, his head resting against Joan's on his shoulder. She stirs restlessly, troubled by her dreams.

The DVD player is on standby, its screen displaying 3:31 AM.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Joan is pinned down by the first intruder in black, her futile screams muffled by the hand over her mouth. The second intruder blindfolds her with the bloody rag as she trembles with fear.

Conspiring in WHISPERS, the intruders provoke a shift in Joan's demeanour from terror to rage. The pipes JUDDER and CLANG in response to her emotions, the shower's water pressure and temperature rising.

Joan screams defiantly, savagely biting down on the first intruder's hand, gnawing their index finger clean off. The intruder falls aside, grasping the bloody stump.

Sitting up, Joan spits out the severed finger, and rips off the blindfold. The second intruder tries to restrain her, but she fiercely headbutts their nose. They collapse, clutching their face.

Seizing the chance, she tries to flee, but the first intruder grabs her arm. Seizing a large mirror shard, she stabs it through the intruder's forearm, causing them to release her.

Joan scrambles to the open door.

Sprawled on the ground, the second intruder weakly raises their hand and sharply CLICKS their fingers.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan abruptly wakes, springing forward, and staring blankly in a trancelike state. Darren rouses, noticing her.

DARREN

Joan? You okay?

She doesn't react, her gaze fixed on something unseen. Darren checks the time, then kneels before Joan, waving his hand in front of her unblinking and vacant eyes.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Joan? Can you hear me?

He moves closer, searching for any sign of recognition.

Suddenly, she snaps out of it, fear evident in her eyes. Startled by Darren's presence, she strikes his face and frantically clambers away.

He falls to the floor, clutching his jaw in pain. Joan rubs her aching temple intensely, realizing what just happened.

JOAN

I'm so sorry, Darren. Are you alright?

DARREN

Yeah, I'm good.

He gingerly gets to his feet.

DARREN (CONT'D)

But what about you? Are you okay?

Joan is suddenly distracted, sniffing the air.

JOAN

Do you smell that?

Darren inhales.

DARREN

No. What?

JOAN

Burning.

The SONG suddenly plays out from the DVD player. Joan's eyes fill with dread.

DARREN

What is it? What's wrong?

She points to the player, the screen still in standby mode. The clock displays--3:33 AM.

JOAN

It's the song.

Darren glares at the silent player, confused.

DARREN

What song?

Only Joan can hear it.

The SONG digitally distorts, morphing into a SOBBING CHILD.

CHILD
(on player)
Mummy? Help me, Mummy.

Joan is fear-stricken.

DARREN
What is it? What do you hear?

JOAN
The boy.

The SOBBING abruptly turns into a blood-curdling SHRIEK of excruciating agony.

JOAN (CONT'D)
He's in so much pain.

Her trembling hand covers her nose.

JOAN (CONT'D)
I can smell him burning.

She looks to Darren for help, eyes full of anguish.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Make it stop. Please, make it stop.

He grabs the silent DVD player, unsure what to do next.

She covers her ears, trying to block out the relentless SHRIEK. In desperation, she snatches the player from Darren and hurls it against the wall, SMASHING it to pieces.

The shrieking instantly ceases.

Joan breaks down, sobbing. Darren stands motionless, shell-shocked.

Philip suddenly bursts in. Joan falls into her father's arms, weeping. He holds her close and gives Darren a scathing look.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Philip helps Joan into bed. She's calmed down but still visibly shaken.

JOAN
You believe me now, don't you? Just look at the painting in the basement. Darren will show you.

He tucks her in.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Something terrible happened in this
house.

Philip places a comforting hand on her shoulder.

PHILIP
Get some rest, Joan. We'll discuss
it all in the morning.

As he turns to leave, Joan grabs his hand.

JOAN
Could you stay? I don't want to be
alone.

He hesitates, then nods.

PHILIP
Of course.

He fetches a blanket, pulls up a chair, and sits by her
bedside.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
I'll be right here. Now get some
sleep.

She rests her head and closes her eyes. Philip covers himself
with the blanket, switches off the lamp, and settles in to
keep watch.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

The dark property is silent and still.

Suddenly, a dim light emanates from the kitchen, casting
shadows on the walls.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan is asleep. Slowly, she wakes, opens her eyes, and
instinctively looks to the chair at her bedside.

Philip is gone.

Alert and vulnerable, she switches on the lamp, gets out of
bed, and hobbles toward the door.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

Joan steps up to Philip's bedroom door and cracks it open before suddenly pausing.

A faint MURMURING VOICE from downstairs catches her attention.

Apprehensively, she limps to the staircase and peers down.

A soft light glows from the kitchen, accompanied by Philip's HUSHED VOICE.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan cautiously descends the staircase, her footsteps light and deliberate, as she heads toward the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joan keeps to the shadows near the kitchen entrance, listening intently.

PHILIP (O.S.)
But will it work?

DARREN (O.S.)
You have to understand, this whole thing is unprecedented. But theoretically, yes, I believe it should.

PHILIP (O.S.)
And if it doesn't?

DARREN (O.S.)
Then we'll have no choice but to reverse it.

Joan edges closer, trying to hear better.

PHILIP (O.S.)
It can be undone?

DARREN (O.S.)
Of course. It's just never been necessary before.

PHILIP (O.S.)
And if it is undone, what then? How do we proceed from there?

DARREN (O.S.)

We'll cross that bridge, if and when we come to it. For now, we follow my suggestion and hope it works.

Philip SIGHS heavily, unknowingly moving nearer to Joan's hiding spot. She retreats back into the shadows, silent.

PHILIP (O.S.)

But even if it does work, she's eventually going to want to leave once she's fully recovered, and I don't know how I'm going to convince her otherwise.

DARREN (O.S.)

Like I said, there are ways to change her mind, though I'd rather not to go down that road if it can be avoided. But whatever happens, it's imperative that you don't allow her to leave this place.

Joan furrows her brow in worry.

DARREN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Now come on, it'll be morning soon, and you look like you could use some rest yourself.

The kitchen light goes out, plunging the room into darkness. Joan bolts quietly, her heart racing with fear of being discovered.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan agonizingly hobbles up the staircase with urgency, moving as quickly and silently as possible. Panting softly, she reaches the landing and hastily steps out of view just before Philip and Darren enter.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

Joan grimaces in pain, clutching her thigh as she struggles along the landing. She's almost at her room when she notices she left Philip's bedroom door ajar.

LIGHT FOOTSTEPS ascend the stairs. Joan hurries back to Philip's door, quietly closing it with bated breath.

Just in time, she darts into her room and softly shuts the door moments before Philip reaches the top step.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan hurries under her duvet, feigning sleep, but her anxious breathing betrays her. She tries to control her panting.

The door handle slowly turns, and Joan's eyes snap open, realizing she forgot something. In one swift motion, she sits up, switches off the lamp, and then lies back down, pretending to be asleep.

Philip enters quietly, moving with stealth. He settles back into the chair, pulling the blanket over himself, and closes his eyes.

Joan stares into the darkness, uncertainty filling her eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan's alarm BEEPS, rousing her from sleep. She sees Philip already up and dressed, patiently seated in the chair beside her bed.

PHILIP
Good morning, kiddo.

She sits up and mutes the alarm.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
How are you feeling?

JOAN
Fine.

PHILIP
How's your thigh?

She adjusts her leg for comfort.

JOAN
A little sore, but it's okay.

Philip leans in, gently taking her hand with loving concern evident in his gesture.

PHILIP
First of all, I'd like to apologize again. Terminating your studies and dragging you all the way out here was wrong of me.

(MORE)

PHILIP (CONT'D)

I had no right to interfere in your life like that. I overreacted, and I'm sorry. But I only did it because I love you. Remember that.

He sits on the edge of the bed, still holding her hand.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

That's why I went into town yesterday and called the university. I explained everything that's happened and got you re-enrolled.

JOAN

Really?

PHILIP

They're expecting you back at the start of the next semester.

He waits for a reaction, but Joan remains unresponsive.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Good news, right?

JOAN

Yes. Great. Thank you.

She subtly withdraws her hand from his, adjusting her position as if her leg is uncomfortable.

PHILIP

That's not all. I also called your doctor, and explained everything you said you've been experiencing since we arrived here. Apparently, it's not uncommon for head trauma patients to exhibit all the symptoms you described, to varying degrees. But he said there's no need to worry--

He pick up her bottle of pills from the bedside table.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

--because that's exactly what your medication is for.

Opening the bottle, he takes out two pills and offers them to Joan.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Simply doubling the dose should
resolve the issue and make it all
go away.

He hands her the medication along with a bottle of water.
Joan silently gazes at the pills in her palm.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Go on then. What are you waiting
for?

She pops them into her mouth and takes a sip of water. Philip
briefly looks away as he puts the bottle of pills back on the
table. Unbeknownst to him, Joan discreetly spits the pills
out and slips them beneath her pillow.

Philip CLAPS his hands together.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Right. Darren has kindly just made
us breakfast. Would you care to
join us or should I bring it up to
you?

JOAN
I think I'll just get some more
rest for now, if that's okay?

She lies down, pulling the duvet over herself.

PHILIP
Of course. Just give me a shout if
you need anything.

JOAN
Okay.

He exits the room, closing the door behind him. Joan
immediately slips out of bed, quietly limps to the door, and
listens intently to Philip's RECEDING FOOTSTEPS.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Philip's footsteps echo as he descends the staircase.

Joan cracks her door open and peeks out. Satisfied the coast
is clear, she tiptoes to Darren's room and slips inside.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Joan creeps into the room, eyes darting. She spots a wardrobe and opens it. Inside, she finds Darren's camera bag. As she pulls it out, she notices something stashed behind it: her painting and the uncrumpled letter she wrote to Billy.

With urgency, she unzips the camera bag, but there's no photography equipment inside, just a small case. She cautiously opens it, revealing a hypodermic needle and several vials of mysterious liquid.

Alarmed, she carefully returns everything to its place and hastily exits the room.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Joan shuts the door gently, leaning against it with a troubled expression. Determined, she moves to the window and gazes out at the two vehicles parked in the driveway.

EXT. MECHANICS - DAY

Billy emerges from the auto shop, car keys in hand, and purposefully strides to his vehicle parked on the forecourt.

Settling into the driver's seat, he sets up his sat-nav, starts the engine with a smile, and swiftly pulls away

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Joan creeps down the stairs, moving cautiously. She peeks around to ensure no one is watching before hurrying to the front door.

Quickly, she puts on her shoes and reaches for the truck keys on the hook.

DARREN (O.S.)
Going somewhere?

Joan jumps in fright, retracting her hand, and spins around to see Darren.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Apologies, I didn't mean to startle you. I'm sure that's the last thing you need right now.

JOAN
It's fine. You just surprised me.

An uncomfortable silence hangs in the air as Joan tries to act casual.

DARREN

I was just on my way up to check on you before I head out to take some photographs. Where are you going?

She hesitates, searching for a plausible answer. Her eyes catch sight of one of her books on a nearby console table.

JOAN

I'm looking for one of my books. Thought it might be in the truck, but you know what?

(scoffs)

Here it is.

She picks up the book, hiding her nerves, and removes her shoes.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I'll just take this back up to my room to read.

Darren subtly blocks her path as she tries to step past him.

DARREN

How are you feeling after last night? Quite intense, wasn't it?

JOAN

Yes, it was. But I'm fine now, thanks.

DARREN

Your dad told me what your doctor said. Must be a relief to finally understand why all this has been happening to you—and to know it's treatable.

JOAN

Yes. It's a relief.

He waits for her to elaborate, but Joan remains silent.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Anyway. Good luck with your photographs. Excuse me.

She moves past Darren as he steps aside, though his suspicions seem aroused.

DARREN

Okay. I'll see you later then.

Joan gives him a faint smile, masking her unease, and ascends the stairs.

Once she's out of view, Darren looks at the keys on the hook, eyeing them with scepticism.

EXT. TOWN - DUSK

Billy's car rolls into town and parks up at the side of the road.

INT. CAR 3 - DUSK

Billy's sat-nav chimes, "You have reached your destination." He looks out the window, doubt evident on his face as he surveys the area. Wealdmount House is nowhere in sight.

He spots a local walking a dog, rolls down his window, and leans out to address the passer-by.

BILLY

Excuses me. I don't suppose you
known where Wealdmount House is by
any chance?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The shower is flowing, gradually filling the room with steam. Joan stands before the misting mirror, fully dressed, staring at her reflection.

A KNOCK at the door.

PHILIP (O.S.)

Joan?

JOAN

I'm in the shower.

PHILIP (O.S.)

I've brought you up some dinner.

JOAN

Just leave it in my room, thanks.

PHILIP (O.S.)

How are you feeling? You've been in your room all day. Everything all right?

JOAN

I'm fine.

PHILIP (O.S.)

Did you take your second dose of medication earlier?

JOAN

Yes.

PHILIP (O.S.)

Two pills?

Joan stares at two pills in the palm of her hand. With purpose, she drops them down the sink drain.

JOAN

Uh-huh.

PHILIP (O.S.)

Good.

(pause)

I'll leave this food in your room then.

JOAN

Okay.

FOOTSTEPS recede from the door.

Joan retrieves the bottle of pills from her pocket and, without hesitation, pours the entire contents down the drain.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Billy's clapped-out car struggles along a winding mountainous road, surrounded by dense woodland. The engine loudly GROANS under the strain.

Eventually, the engine cuts out, and the vehicle judders to a stop. Puffs of smoke rise from under the hood.

Billy steps out of the car and lifts the bonnet. Smoke billows into his face, and he coughs, futilely waving it away before slamming it shut.

Deciding to continue on foot, he grabs his phone from the car and sets off down the dark road.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan lies awake, her gaze fixed on her wristwatch. The moment it strikes 3:00 AM, she gets out off bed, already dressed, and slips out of her room with the utmost silence.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan sneaks downstairs. At the front door, she puts on her shoes and jacket, then reaches for the truck keys on the hook, but they're gone. Dismayed, she frantically searches the vicinity, but the keys are nowhere to be found.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan quietly searches the room, checking shelves, drawers, and cupboards. She pulls up a chair, gingerly steps up on it, and checks the top of the cabinet, but only sees the rifle.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joan continues her hunt with growing desperation. Every drawer and cupboard is open, but the keys remain elusive.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan stands at the bottom of the staircase, apprehensively staring up the steps. Determined, she removes her shoes and quietly ascends.

INT. BEDROOM 3 - NIGHT

Philip lies asleep, snoring loudly.

The door softly creaks open, and Joan slips inside. She scans the dark room, her eyes settling on Philip's jacket draped over a chair.

Stealthily, she approaches the garment and carefully pats it until she finds the keys in one of the pockets. As she retrieves them, they emit a JINGLE, causing Philip to stir.

Joan freezes, anxiously watching him. He mumbles incoherently before settling back into a deep snore.

With a tight grip on the keys, she silently exits the room.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Joan steps out the front door, activating the security light. In her haste, she leaves the door ajar and hurries toward the parked truck.

Unlocking it, she's about to open the driver's door when she spots something on the ground. Curiosity tinged with fear, she kneels awkwardly to inspect it: a children's beanie hat with a skull and crossbones motif.

The SONG suddenly blares on the truck stereo. Joan freezes, eyes widening in dread as she checks the time: 3:33 AM. Apprehensively, she rises and peers through the window.

BANG! A child's palm unexpectedly slaps against the glass from inside the truck, making Joan jump in terror.

Startled, she stumbles, landing awkwardly on her injured leg, a yelp escaping her lips as she clutches her bleeding thigh.

To Joan's surprise, the hand and beanie have vanished, but the SONG persists.

In the dim light beyond the security light's reach, she discerns movement in the shadows. Two indistinct dark figures step into view, their gaze fixed on Joan. The sensor light times out, plunging the area into darkness.

The music abruptly stops. Scurrying FOOTSTEPS approach. Joan scrambles to her feet, wincing in pain, and hobbles back towards the house.

As she triggers the security light again, she flounders, dropping to her knees in distress.

The rushing FOOTSTEPS draw nearer, intensifying her fear. Without looking back, she clammers desperately towards the front door.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan tumbles through the open door, slamming it shut behind her as she collapses to the ground.

Motionless, she stares at the small window, her fearful panting breaking the silence.

As the security light times out, a sudden ferocious POUNDING shakes the front door. Joan springs into action, painfully lumbering into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan retreats in fear, hobbling backwards until she bumps into the chair beside the cabinet.

The incessant POUNDING escalates into heavy THUDS.

With agonizing effort, she heaves herself onto the chair and retrieves the rifle. She collects ammunition from the drawer, and clumsily loads the weapon.

The moment she cocks the rifle, the thuds abruptly cease, leaving the house engulfed in eerie silence.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan cautiously limps towards the front door, rifle aimed at the small window. She pauses and listens intently.

The security light is triggered, illuminating the outside. Moments later, a KNOCK resonates from the door.

Reacting instinctively, Joan fires. A deafening BANG echoes throughout the house as the bullet shatters the window glass.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

Philip and Darren burst out of their respective bedrooms, faces filled with concern.

DARREN

Was that a gunshot?

Philip urgently checks Joan's bedroom, finding it empty. Without hesitation, he darts towards the staircase, Darren following closely behind.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan steadfastly aims the rifle at the door. Philip and Darren hasten down the stairs.

PHILIP

Joan! What's going on?

Startled, she spins around, pointing the rifle at Philip.

JOAN

Stay back!

They both freeze on the steps as Joan skittishly shifts her aim between them and the door.

PHILIP
Take it easy, Joan.

With measured steps, Philip calmly descends the stairs, reaching out a reassuring hand towards her.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Everything's going to be alright.
Just hand me the rifle, okay?

Joan's anxiety spikes, and she aggressively points the rifle directly at his face.

JOAN
I said stay back!

He complies, immediately backing off with his hands raised in a non-threatening manner, trying to maintain a sense of calm.

JOAN (CONT'D)
What's happening? What are those things outside?

PHILIP
What things? I honestly don't know what your talking about, Joan.

JOAN
Stop lying to me! I overheard your conversation in the kitchen last night. You both know what's going on. Now tell me what they are!

Suddenly, her eyes widen in terror as she spots the two shadowy figures standing at the top of the stairs: a burnt man and woman, their entire bodies gruesomely charred.

Joan screams, raises the rifle, and fires-BANG. The recoil knocks her off balance, and she stumbles, hitting the front door and dropping to the ground.

Philip yelps as the ricochet clips his shoulder. He falls to his knees, clutching the wound. Darren rushes to help.

PHILIP
(to Darren)
It's just a flesh wound.

Panicked, Joan sits up against the door, pointing the rifle at the unfazed dark figures.

JOAN

What are they? What do they want?!

Philip and Darren exchange worried glances, unsure of what she is seeing. They look to where she's aiming, but there's nothing there--only Joan can see them.

DARREN

(to Philip)

She's seeing things now. It's exponentially advanced. I don't understand. Doubling the dose should have help--unless...

(it dawns on him)

...she stopped taking the medication entirely.

Darren cautiously approaches her.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Joan, listen to me.

She shifts her aim to Darren, causing him to submissively halt.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Whatever you're seeing isn't real. It can't hurt you.

Suddenly, Joan hears a CHILD'S VOICE.

BOY (O.S.)

(whimpering)

Mummy?

Joan's aim switches to the dark living room entrance.

BOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Help me, Mummy.

A BOY wearing the skull and crossbones beanie steps out of the shadows. Joan lowers the rifle, staring in disbelief.

DARREN

(to Joan)

What is it, Joan? What do you see?

The boy stands before her.

BOY

Help me!

He swiftly raises his palm and spontaneously bursts into flames, shrieking in excruciating agony. Joan shrills in horror, watching the boy burn before her eyes.

DARREN
(to Philip)
It has to be undone. There's no
other choice now.

PHILIP
Do it.

Darren kneels beside her, cupping his hands to his mouth to amplify his voice over her screams.

DARREN
(to Joan)
Evoke lurking echoes!

He sharply CLICKS his fingers.

Joan instantly falls silent, her head drooping as she loses consciousness.

INT. CAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Joan lies unconscious in the driver's seat of her crashed car, head resting on the deployed airbag. A steel rod juts through the cracked windshield. The SONG plays on the stereo.

She stirs, groggily regaining consciousness. She sits up, disoriented, and looks around. There's no visible wound on her forehead, but her leg draws her attention.

Her face contorts in pain as she realizes the rod has grievously grazed her thigh, leaving a bloody wound. She composes herself, unbuckles her seat belt, and tries to exit the vehicle, but the rod impales her trousers, trapping her.

She tears at the fabric, freeing herself but leaving behind a skewered, bloody rag. Despite the pain, Joan grits her teeth and extricates herself from the wreckage.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Joan uses the door to painstakingly pull herself out of the car, the lit cigarette falling to the ground unnoticed.

Peering over her crushed bonnet, she gasps in horror at the devastating sight before her.

A MAN and WOMAN, both in their late 30s, are slumped in the front seats of the car she collided with. The man's lifeless body flops over the steering wheel, blood dripping from his ear, while the woman is semi-conscious in the passenger seat, her head hanging forward.

BOY (O.S.)
 (whimpering)
 Mummy?

Joan urgently leans over her door, spotting the boy with the skull beanie in the seat behind the dead driver.

BOY (CONT'D)
 Help me, Mummy.

Unseen by Joan, petrol leaks from the family's car, trickling towards the lit cigarette on the ground.

JOAN
 (to boy)
 I'm coming.

Determined, she clammers around the back of her car to reach him, using the vehicle to support her injured leg.

She falters, dropping to her knees. The boy presses his palm against the window, his terrified eyes staring directly into Joan's.

BOY
 (to Joan)
 Help me.

The petrol trail hits the cigarette and ignites. The family car EXPLODES in a burst of flames.

The force hurls Joan to the ground, her forehead striking the unforgiving tarmac. The boy's agonizing SHRIEKS echo briefly before fading into silence.

Concussed and dazed, Joan lies flat on her face, her twitching eyes fixed on the smouldering skull and crossbones beanie beside her.

Flashing emergency service lights illuminate the area. Joan's eyes flutter shut as she loses consciousness.

INT. HOSPITAL 2 - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Joan wakes up in a recovery room--not the military hospital. Medical monitoring equipment surrounds her, and a blood-stained bandage is strapped to her forehead.

Philip, in civilian clothes, dozes in a chair beside her.

JOAN

Dad?

He wakes up instantly, concern on his face, and lovingly holds her hand.

PHILIP

I'm here, kiddo.

Disoriented, she tries to make sense of her surroundings.

JOAN

Where am I? What...

Her memory of the accident floods back, and her eyes fill with despair.

JOAN (CONT'D)

The crash. I killed them. They're all dead--and it's all my fault.

Philip hushes her, worried her confession might be overheard.

PHILIP

Shh. Don't worry about that right now.

Overwhelmed with guilt, Joan sobs uncontrollably. Philip embraces her.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Everything's going to be alright. We'll get through this, together.

INT. HOSPITAL 2 - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Joan sits up in bed with fresh bandages. Philip stands over her, his voice firm but quiet.

PHILIP

(hushed)

It was an accident, Joan. A tragic accident. I won't let you ruin the rest of your life because of it.

JOAN

No, I won't do it. You can't make me. I'll just tell the truth. It was my fault, and I deserve to be punished.

PHILIP

(hushed)

Keep your voice down. It's too late anyway. It's already taken care of. It won't matter what you say now. The investigation is closed. It's over.

JOAN

It's not over. It can't be. I'm getting away with murder. Just like them. Just like whoever killed Mum.

PHILIP

Never compare yourself to them. Do you hear me? Never!

Joan turns away, overwhelmed, tears streaming down her cheeks.

JOAN

All I see when I close my eyes is that poor little boy with his hand pressed against the window.

(closes eyes)

The terrified look on his face. As if he knew what was about to happen.

She cringes, reliving the memory.

JOAN (CONT'D)

And the screams. I'll never forget his screams. He was in so much pain.

Opening her eyes, she faces Philip, seeking understanding.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I can't bare it, Dad. I just can't.

He places a comforting hand on her shoulder.

PHILIP

I'm sure it doesn't seem possible right now, Joan, but you will get through this, I promise. There's a Doctor I know who I believe will be able to help you.

A NURSE enters. Joan wipes her tears, and Philip steps aside for the nurse to proceed with their routine checks.

Philip's phone rings. He checks the caller ID.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
 (to Joan)
 I have to take this.

He leaves to answer the call. Joan gazes out the window, her thoughts troubled. As the nurse leans over the bed, Joan spots a bottle of prescription pills peeking from the nurse's pocket.

INT. HOSPITAL 2 EN SUITE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Steam fills the room from the flowing shower. The nurse's bottle of prescription pills lies empty on the floor.

Joan stands at the sink, fiddling with the star pendent around her neck. She wipes the misty mirror and stares at her sombre reflection.

Still in her hospital gown, she steps into the shower, sits beneath the soothing hot water, and closes her eyes with a blissful smile.

INT. HOSPITAL 2 - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Philip enters Joan's recovery room and notices she's missing from her bed. The sound of the running SHOWER from the en suite grabs his attention.

INT. HOSPITAL 2 EN SUITE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Joan slumps in the shower, drifting in and out of consciousness.

KNOCK on the door.

PHILIP (O.S.)
 Joan? You taking a shower?

She doesn't react.

PHILIP (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Joan, can you hear me?

More KNOCKING. Joan remains unresponsive, her eyes fluttering. The handle moves, but the door is locked.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
 Answer me, right now.

POUNING on the door, escalating into heavy THUDS until it bursts open.

Philip freezes in the doorway, heart sinking at the sight of Joan slumped in the shower.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
 (calls out)
 I need help in here!

He rushes to her, dropping to his knees under the flowing water and cradling her limp body. He spots the empty pill bottle.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
 No, what have you done?
 (calls out)
 Somebody help me!

Holding her close, he tenderly strokes her drenched hair.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Joan lies unconscious in the windowless, private room within the military facility. She's hooked up to a ventilator with fresh bandages covering her wounds.

Her eyes flicker open. Philip, in his military uniform, stands beside her. Joan's expression turns despondent as she pieces together what happened.

JOAN
 No. Why didn't you just let me die?

Her gaze drifts around the unfamiliar surroundings.

JOAN (CONT'D)
 Where am I?

PHILIP
 In a military medical facility.

JOAN
 Why?

PHILIP
 To get you the help you need.

He gestures to someone by the door to come forward. Darren, dressed in a suit and tie, steps into view.

DARREN
 Hello, Joan. My name's Doctor Taylor. I'm a psychiatrist who specializes in treating patients suffering from PTSD.

(MORE)

DARREN (CONT'D)

Your dad has informed me all about your situation, and I believe I can help.

He pulls up a chair and sits beside her.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Over the past couple of years, I've been conducting clinical trials on a ground-breaking new treatment, that doesn't merely just help patients cope with their traumatic memories--it erases them entirely.

Joan's expression remains stony and guarded.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Using a combination of hypnosis and a follow-up course of medication, I have successfully isolated and blocked the traumatic memories of every single test subject I've treated, radically improving the lives of each and every one of them.

Joan looks at Philip with scepticism.

PHILIP

It's true, Joan. I've seen it for myself. You can still lead a normal, happy life.

Darren interjects.

DARREN

Although, things are a little more complicated in your case.

Philip sits on the bed, ready to hear the details.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Usually after treatment, the patient is still fully aware of the events that befell them, they just simply can't recall it. But for you, that isn't an option. Not only do your memories of the event need to be blocked, but also everything you've experienced since, including this very conversation. In order for your treatment to succeed, you must never learn of what truly happened.

Philip places a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

PHILIP

(to Joan)

We'll go away together. Somewhere far removed from anything that could possibly remind you of the accident.

Joan fixes him with a cold stare.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

It's a chance at a new life, Joan. One that's free from the crippling pain of your own memories.

She removes his hand.

JOAN

I don't deserve a chance at a new life. I'm a murderer. I only deserve to die. Now get out, both of you.

She turns her back on them, eyes welling up. Darren stands, understanding the difficulty of the situation.

PHILIP

Joan, please. You have to do this, it's the only way.

JOAN

I said get out!

Darren gently guides Philip out of the room. As they leave, Joan curls up, breaking down in tears.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Joan sleeps in her dark room.

PHILIP (O.S.)

(whispering)

What are you waiting for? Do it.

Her eyes flick open. The wall clock reads 3:33 AM. Philip and Darren stand on either side of her bed, unaware she's awake.

DARREN

(whispering)

But it's totally unethical.

(MORE)

DARREN (CONT'D)

Hypnosis is meant to be consensual--
not involuntarily drug-induced.
It's a complete violation.

PHILIP

(whispering)

I have no choice. It's the only way
to save her life.

JOAN

What's going on?

Philip and Darren are startled by her sudden awakening. Joan notices the hypodermic needle in Darren's hand.

JOAN (CONT'D)

What are you trying to do?

She tries to sit up urgently, but Philip restrains her.

PHILIP

Stay calm. It'll be over soon.

JOAN

No, you can't do this.

She struggles to break free, but Philip pins her down.

JOAN (CONT'D)

(calls out)

No! Somebody help me!

Philip covers her mouth with his hand, muffling her cries.

PHILIP

(to Darren)

Do it.

Darren hesitates, conflicted.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Now, Doctor.

Reluctantly, Darren seizes hold of Joan's forearm and injects the needle into her vein. She quickly turns docile, staring blankly in a trancelike state. Philip releases his hold.

Darren scrutinizes her condition intently.

DARREN

Okay, Joan. I want you to
concentrate on the sound of my
voice.

(MORE)

DARREN (CONT'D)

After I count down from three,
you're going to fall into a deep
sleep. And in three, two, one.

He sharply CLICKS his fingers.

Joan's eyes shut instantly, her head drooping as she enters a deep hypnotic sleep.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Joan remains slumped against the front door, unconscious. Only seconds have passed since Darren uttered the phrase.

Darren cautiously reaches for the rifle in her hand. Just as he's about to grab it, she jerks awake and aims the weapon at him.

Darren backs off, apprehensive. Philip, nursing his injured shoulder, rises to his feet.

PHILIP

Easy now, Joan.

Joan's intense gaze pierces Philip as a single tear rolls down her cheek.

JOAN

I remember now.

She swiftly redirects the rifle, placing the barrel under her chin.

PHILIP

No!

She pulls the trigger. CLICK - the chamber is empty.

Philip angrily snatches the rifle and throws it aside. Joan collapses, sobbing uncontrollably. Philip, emotional himself, tries to comfort her.

JOAN

Don't touch me!

He complies, giving her space.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Why won't you just let me die?

PHILIP

Because you're my daughter, and I
love you.

JOAN

If you love me, then kill me.
Please, I'm begging you. Let me
die.

Philip reaches out, placing a hand on her shoulder. She
clings to him, wailing in anguish.

PHILIP

I'm sorry, kiddo. But I can't. I
won't lose you too.

She moans in despair.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

Listen, Joan. Darren can still help
you. You just have to agree to the
treatment willingly. That's why it
didn't work properly before.

(looks to Darren for
confirmation)

Right?

DARREN

In theory, yes.

Darren kneels beside them.

DARREN (CONT'D)

I believe your resistance to the
hypnosis was the fundamental cause
of all the sensory manifestations
you've been experiencing. It's as
if your subconscious mind was
forcing you to remember memories
you didn't consent to forget.

PHILIP

(to Joan)

Just say yes, and all this pain and
guilt will be gone.

Joan considers the offer.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

So, do you agree?

She sits up, composing herself.

JOAN

You said to me before that there's
no such thing as ghosts, but you're
wrong.

(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

These are my ghosts, and they haunt me. But I can bear them no longer. So yes, I agree.

A glimmer of hope appears on Philip's face, and he CLAPS his hands together.

PHILIP

Right. Let's do it.

He nods to Darren, and they help Joan to her feet.

DARREN

Look.

He points to a pool of blood seeping beneath the front door.

PHILIP

(to Joan)

You okay? Are you hurt?

Philip fretfully checks her for injuries.

JOAN

I'm fine. It's not my blood.

Darren opens the front door, and the security light activates, revealing a horrifying scene.

Billy's lifeless body lies on the doorstep, blood oozing from a bullet wound on his forehead.

JOAN (CONT'D)

No!

She falls to her knees beside him.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Billy. No, no, no. What have I done?!

Darren is dumbfounded.

DARREN

(to Philip)

What happened? Who is this?

Philip remains composed despite the grim scene.

PHILIP

It's the friend she called. He must have come for her.

Joan wails inconsolably, cradling Billy's head in her lap, stroking his hair with a trembling, bloody hand.

Darren springs into action, anxious and determined.

DARREN

We need to call an ambulance. But we have no phone. I'll have to drive to the nearest town.

He pats his empty pockets.

DARREN (CONT'D)

I need my car keys.

Darren moves towards the staircase, but Philip quickly seizes his arm, halting him.

PHILIP

We're not calling anybody.

DARREN

What do you mean? There's a dead body on the doorstep. We have to contact the authorities.

He tries to pull away, but Philip tightens his hold.

PHILIP

And what do you think will happen if you do? This is murder, Doctor-- and you're complicit.

Darren frees his arm from Philip's grip, but hesitates to ascend the stairs, contemplating the weight of his words.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

If any of this ever gets out, it'll bring a certain end to your trials-- most probably your entire career.

Darren's internal conflict becomes apparent.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

And what about Joan? Think about what will happen to her.

Darren empathetically gazes at her whimpering with grief and guilt.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

One way or another, without your help, her life is over.

Joan's eyes shift toward the rifle on the ground.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Now please, for all our sakes,
finish what you started, and help
me save my daughter's life.

Joan suddenly seizes the rifle and makes a frantic hobbling dash for the living room. Philip swiftly reacts, disarming and restraining her.

JOAN
No! Let me go! I want to die!

She struggles to break free, but Philip's grip remains firm.

PHILIP
(to Darren)
Go! Get your kit. We'll just do it
like before.

Darren hesitates.

DARREN
But it won't work without her
consent.

PHILIP
What about doubling the medication?
That might still work, right? Now
go!

Reluctantly, Darren bolts up the staircase.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

The door flings open, and Darren rushes in. He retrieves the camera bag from the wardrobe, grabs the case from inside, and bolts back out.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Philip resolutely restrains Joan, overpowering her waning attempts to break free.

Darren hastens down the stairs, opening the case. He carefully fills the hypodermic needle with one of the vials, his hands steady despite the urgency.

Once ready, he approaches Joan, who is fraught with fear.

JOAN
No! Keep away!

Mustering all her strength, she kicks Darren away, letting out a piercing yelp, further injuring her thigh. He stumbles back, nearly dropping the hypodermic needle.

DARREN
(to Philip)
You have to hold her steady.

Philip eases her down to the ground, maintaining his unyielding hold. Darren kneels beside them, firmly seizing her forearm, and lines up the needle.

JOAN
(to Darren)
No. Please, not again. I'm begging you. If you want to help me, then kill me. Please, just kill me!

DARREN
I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

With a heavy heart, he injects the needle into her vein. Joan's resistance quickly fades as she becomes docile, staring blankly in a trancelike state.

Philip releases his hold as Darren carefully assesses her condition, staring deeply into her submissive eyes.

DARREN (CONT'D)
Okay, Joan. I want you to concentrate on the sound of my voice. After I count down from three, you're going to fall into a deep sleep. And in three, two, one.

He sharply CLICKS his fingers.

Joan's eyes instantly shut as she enters a deep sleep, succumbing to the hypnotic suggestion.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Joan stirs awake, finding herself in the passenger seat of the moving vehicle, her head resting against the window.

Philip drives, an open map on his lap. They are both dressed in the exact clothes they wore on the day they first arrived at the house.

Joan sits up, taking in the scenic mountainous landscape enveloped by lush woodland.

JOAN
Where are we?

PHILIP
We're almost there.

JOAN
Almost where? Can't you tell me now?

PHILIP
You'll see soon enough.

He pulls out a fresh pack of cigarettes and a box of matches from his pocket.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Here.
(hands them to Joan)
I made a stop while you were sleeping and picked up a few extra supplies.

Joan looks surprised.

JOAN
I thought you were forcing me to quit.

PHILIP
You're an adult. If you want to slowly kill yourself, then that's your choice. I'm not going to force you into doing anything.

JOAN
You forced me into coming here.

PHILIP
Only because I love you. I know you think I'm overreacting, you're probably right, but I wasn't there for you after your mother died, when you needed me the most. But I'm here for you now.

Joan is taken aback by his admission.

Her wristwatch BEEPS.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

It's time.

She mutes the alarm, takes a replenished bottle of pills from her pocket, pops it open, and tips one out.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

You have to take two now.

JOAN

Two? But I was only taking one in hospital.

PHILIP

Your doctor told me when you were discharged that you have to start taking two from now on.

Joan examines the pills in her palm with curiosity.

JOAN

Why? What are they even for?

PHILIP

Something to do with preventing potential symptoms related to head injury such as yours.

JOAN

Symptoms? Like What?

PHILIP

Just take them as prescribed, and you won't have anything to worry about.

She tips out a second pill and swallows them both with a gulp of bottled of water.

Philip points ahead.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

We've arrived.

She looks out the window and sees Wealdmount House up ahead along the road.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The truck pulls up in front of the property. The little window in the front door is boarded up, and the house name plaque has been removed.

Philip steps out of the vehicle, and retrieves the walking stick from the back. The easel is missing.

Opening the passenger door, he helps Joan out. She winces as she steps on her injured leg, clutching her thigh.

JOAN

It feels much worse than it did this morning.

PHILIP

Probably from being sat in the truck for so long. You'll walk it off. Here.

He offers Joan the walking stick. She reluctantly accepts it, glaring unimpressed at the house.

JOAN

We're not staying here, are we?

PHILIP

This is it.

JOAN

Why did you rent a rundown place like this? It looks abandoned.

PHILIP

It's not abandoned--

The front door opens, and Darren steps out wearing a more rugged style of clothing than before.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

--it's a guesthouse.

JOAN

(hushed)

A guesthouse? You got to be kidding me. Why would you...

Philip shushes her.

DARREN

Hello. Mr Houghton, I presume?

PHILIP

That's correct.

Darren extends his hand.

DARREN

Darren Taylor. We spoke on the phone.

PHILIP

Right, yes, of course.

They shake hands, Philip grimacing from discomfort in his injured shoulder.

JOAN

(to Philip)

What happened? Are you okay?

PHILIP

Just a twinge.

He nonchalantly rubs his shoulder.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

(to Darren)

This is my daughter, Joan.

Darren shakes her hand.

DARREN

It's a pleasure to meet you both.

Joan smiles politely.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Well, come on in. Your rooms are all prepared for your stay.

He leads them toward the house. Joan hobbles along behind, using her walking stick.

JOAN

(to Darren)

Is there anybody else staying here?

DARREN

Only me. Don't worry--

He holds the front door open, welcoming them inside.

DARREN (CONT'D)

--nobody's going to be disturbing you here.

They enter the house, and Darren shuts the door behind them.

THE END