DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

FADE IN:

EXT. THE BLACKWOOD MANSION - DUSK

A horse-drawn carriage clip-clops down a cobblestone street at sunset. CAMERA PANS to reveal a wrought-iron fence, and behind it, an imposing Victorian mansion perched on a hill.

Superimposition: PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND - AUTUMN, 1910

Golden light sparkles on the windows of the house, which is surrounded by flower beds and shade trees. In the distance, the rooftops, chimneys and steeples of downtown Providence.

As the light turns blood red, CAMERA CLOSES IN on one of the ground floor windows where a man is standing, watching the sun disappear.

He closes the curtains.

CUT TO:

INT. BLACKWOOD MANSION LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The man goes to a desk in the middle of a magnificent library. He wears a smoking jacket and rimless glasses. This is EMERSON BLACKWOOD, 54, every inch the well-groomed patrician.

He tidies up his desk, surveys the floor-to-ceiling collection of books and turns out the light.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Blackwood's housekeeper, MRS. TYSON, 65, stands at an enormous stove in the kitchen, basting a roast chicken. She hears a GROAN, then a THUMP.

She goes to investigate.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Tyson hurries down a corridor, past a bathroom door, which is closed. She stops as she hears another sound, an agonized MOAN. Then the sound of PLIERS hitting a tiled floor.

(CONTINUED)
The housekeeper returns to the bathroom door and timidly knocks.

    MRS. TYSON
    Is everything all right, sir?
    (no answer)
    Mr. Blackwood, are you unwell?

The door opens. Blackwood’s face is white and shining in sweat. He props himself up on the door frame.

Mrs. Tyson’s eyes widen when she sees that he’s holding a bloody handkerchief to his mouth.

    MRS. TYSON (cont’d)
    What on earth - ?

    BLACKWOOD
    It’s all right, Mrs. Tyson... don’t worry yourself.

    MRS. TYSON
    Shall I call a doctor?
    (seeing the pliers)
    What have you done, sir - come sit down...

He waves her off. His reassuring smile is hideous - he’s missing two teeth and blood runs over his lips.

    BLACKWOOD
    Some well water from downstairs, bring some up. In a jug, near my easel.

The woman backs away, bewildered.

    MRS. TYSON
    Right away, sir - !

She runs down the hall; Blackwood exits the bathroom and slowly follows.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

An unusual, small EBONY DOOR at the top of a steep wooden stairwell opens and Mrs. Tyson reaches in and tries the light switch. Again and again. Nothing. Muttering, she squeezes through, reaches for the bannister and starts down.

Suddenly, she screeches and drops from view. Her body thuds to the ground far below.

CAMERA LINGERS... two of the steps have been removed.
INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - LATER

Candle light flickers on Mrs. Tyson’s agonized face. She’s lying face up on a cement floor and Blackwood is standing over her, his expression impassive.

MRS. TYSON
No light... I - I didn’t see the steps -
I didn’t...

BLACKWOOD
There are no steps there, Mrs. Tyson. I removed them.

He seems remote, devoid of humanity. He brings up a FRAMING HAMMER and kneels next to her.

BLACKWOOD (cont'd)
Now, pray, stay still- they don’t care for shattered teeth-

He carefully opens her mouth. His hands are shaking, but he manages to place the edge of a CHISEL against one of her front teeth.

He whacks his hammer down on the chisel-

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - LATER

Blackwood’s flickering candle illuminates a stone chamber, filled with paints, brushes and reference books.

On the walls, graceful drawings and watercolors depict animals and plants. A large MURAL of some kind is partly blocked.

Blackwood sets the candle near his easel and places several bloody teeth on a porcelain tray.

Blackwood gravely approaches a brick FIREPLACE that dominates the far end of the room.

THE PIT

Part of the hearth has collapsed, exposing a rock-walled pit. Blackwood leans over it and listens.

A low susurration, like distant wind, rises up from underground.

(CONTINUED)
Blackwood is trembling. The teeth clatter as he lifts the tray and places it a few feet down on a ledge.

**BLACKWOOD**

I - I brought you something to eat. They’re not young teeth, I know, but please, accept them. In exchange... for him.

Sibilant, high **VOICES** reply.

**VOICES**

He’s down here... with us! Do it. Do the thing and you may see him.

Eyes filled with tears, Blackwood produces an ornate, silvery-handled **STRAIGHT RAZOR** and brings it to his throat.

Another voice now, a childish **HISS**:

**VOICE**

Do it, Father. Do what they say...

Blackwood smiles an uncertain smile and presses the cold steel blade to his sagging skin.

**BLACKWOOD**

Child- child- I’m on my way.

With a single, swift stroke — the blade-

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. A JUMBO JET - DUSK**

Flying through a fiery December sky filled with pink cumulus clouds.

Superimposition: **WINTER, PRESENT DAY**.

**INT. JUMBO JET, FIRST CLASS CABIN - DUSK**

Only a couple of sleek businessmen are visible. A soft **CHIME** sounds as a red light comes on over seat 2A.

**SALLY**, a girl of seven, sits there, alone. Pale skin, huge dark eyes. On her chest, a badge reading **SALLY HURST - UNACCOMPANIED MINOR**.

A small gift-wrapped box sits on her tray table.

(CONTINUED)
When a FLIGHT ATTENDANT appears...

SALLY
Are we over Kansas yet?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(smiling)
Almost, honey. Why?

Sally stares at her package.

SALLY
Mom said I— I’m not supposed to open this until I’m over Kansas.

Amused, the FLIGHT ATTENDANT looks at her wristwatch.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Three... two... one! We’re over Kansas now.

Sally solemnly unwraps the package. It’s a box of CRAYONS.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(cont’d)
What fun! Do you like to draw?
(Sally nods)
What a nice Christmas gift - !

SALLY
(a shake of her head)
It’s a goodbye present.

INT. JUMBO JET, FIRST CLASS CABIN - LATER

Sally’s sad profile is reflected in the window as she bends over a sheet of white paper, drawing circles within circles - an ever-expanding tunnel of dark colors.

Dissolve to:

INT. AIRPORT BARNES & NOBLE - DUSK

The T.F. Green (Providence) Airport bookshop is filled with customers and Christmas decorations. A display stand holds dozens of copies of a fat new best-seller.

On the front cover, a wedding-cake plastic bride and groom, and the title: YES, DO US PART. On the back, an actor-like photo shows a man in his late thirties, draped in the proverbial tweed jacket.
KIM RAPHAEL, 25, pert and smartly dressed, smiles a secret smile and takes a copy of the book to the cashier.

The CASHIER is reading a copy of her own.

CASHIER
(ringing up the sale)
I just love him. I’ve read all his books.

KIM
Me, too.

CASHIER
(bagging the book)
For a guy, he writes great female characters.

KIM
I know. I’ve read it twice.

CASHIER
(puzzled)
But it just came out today.

KIM
(a grin)
I got up extra early.

Kim is intrigued by a cute TEDDY BEAR on a shelf behind the counter.

INT. ARRIVALS AREA - SAME

People and drivers wait, many holding signs.

Carrying the book and the TEDDY BEAR, Kim joins ALEX HURST, 37, the author on the book’s back cover.

KIM
(shows him the Teddy bear)
Someone wants an autograph.

ALEX
(relieved)
Perfect. Looks like a real Teddy.

KIM
Pedigreed. And that’s not all I found.

She shows him the book.
ALEX
They had one?

KIM
A whole rack. Front of the store, no way around it...

Alex examines the book.

ALEX
Oh, man. Gives me butterflies. Anyone else buying? No, don’t tell me.

She glances at his wristwatch, frowning.

KIM
Plane’s in. Where is she?

Alex studies the photo on the back of the book.

ALEX
Jesus. That jacket.

KIM
It’s perfect. GQ with brains.
(looking off-screen)
There she is.

SALLY
Accompanied by the flight attendant, Sally appears. She’s in a brand new winter coat and blue woolen hat. In her hand, her crayon drawing.

Alex digs into Kim’s tote bag and brings out a vintage Polaroid camera.

ALEX
Sally! Hi, kid!!

When Sally turns, he takes a FLASH PHOTO.

ALEX (cont’d)
Wow, what a tall thing you are!

Kneeling, he gives her a hug, then shows her the Polaroid picture.

ALEX (cont’d)
And who’s this? Watch what happens - !
Sally looks at the emerging picture of herself. Then she spots the stuffed BEAR peeking out from behind a sign, a hand making it wave hello.

The hand belongs to KIM. Alex puts the photo in his pocket.

ALEX (cont’d)
(points to the Teddy bear)
Sally, that’s— uh — Barry the Bear, and Barry says—

SALLY
Is she your girlfriend?

ALEX
You bet she is.

SALLY
Aren’t you going to introduce us?

Kim lowers the stuffed animal and smiles at Sally.

KIM
Hi, Sally. I’m Kim... and, the bear... the bear’s still nameless, actually.

Sally takes the Teddy bear and puts it under her arm without looking at it.

SALLY
Thank you.

ALEX
How about “Nameless”? Nameless the Bear?

There is an awkward silence as Sally and Kim size each other up.

ALEX (cont’d)
Well. We’re on carousel two, ladies.

They start walking.

KIM
I like that drawing, Sally. You made it on the plane?

SALLY
I hate it. They made me keep it.

KIM
Because it’s beautiful, that’s why. What’s in the backpack?

(CONTINUED)
Sally shrugs her shoulders.

SALLY
Stuff-

KIM
Should I carry it for you?

Sally shakes her head and pointedly maneuvers away from Kim’s hand.

SALLY
Dad, can we buy some chips? I’m hungry.

Kim follows, a step behind father and daughter.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PROVIDENCE – DUSK

Kim drives a nice BMW on I-95. A few snowflakes drift down.

INT. THE BMW – CONTINUOUS

Alex turns around to look at his daughter, who is munching potato chips in the enormous back seat.

ALEX
Look at that. Real snow, Sally!

KIM
Wet, cold snow. Not the plastic kind you have in Los Angeles. If it sticks, we can make snowballs.

Alex hands the Polaroid camera to Sally.

ALEX
You want to try this thing? It’s fun. From the old days, when photos came on paper.

Sally looks through the camera’s viewfinder and sees a PACK OF CIGARETTES tucked above the sun visor.

SALLY
You shouldn’t smoke. It’s bad for you.

KIM
You’re absolutely right. I promised myself I’m not going to smoke the whole time you’re here.

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
(to Kim, impressed)
Really?

KIM
Really.

ALEX
(to Sally)
Congratulations, Sally, you’re making history here.

SALLY
What time is it in L.A.?

ALEX
We’ll call Mom from the house, okay?

SALLY
I’m supposed to call her right away.

Alex sighs and hands her his phone.

ALEX
You just push star 6—

SALLY
(interrupting)
I know.

EXT. THE SUBURBS - NIGHT

The BMW cruises down wintry tree-lined lanes, past stone walls and imposing mansions.

From within the car, the sound of a phone ringing and WOMAN’S VOICE on an answering machine.

WOMAN’S VOICE
Hi, everyone. You’ve reached Joan Hurst and the ever-lovin’ Sally, the wonder girl. We can’t come to the phone right now, so—

CLICK. The phone call ends.

INT. THE BMW - CONTINUOUS

Sally exhales onto her window, fogging it over. With her finger, she draws an endless spiral, around and around...
ALEX
Sally, the house. There’s the house.

Wiping the fogged window, Sally sees...

EXT. THE BLACKWOOD MANSION - NIGHT

The building from the prologue, partially hidden behind scaffolding and sheets of plastic. A few contractors’ TRUCKS are parked out front. Illuminated from within, the billowing sheets seem to encase the structure in an amniotic sac.

ALEX
And the tower up there, that’s my office. The upstairs porch is off your room.

In the driveway, tarping over some lumber, is HARRIS – Ernest Hemingway as a handyman in a red-checked shirt.

Kim parks and switches off the engine. Inside the house, HAMMERS are banging. Harris approaches as Alex climbs out.

HARRIS
(to Alex)
Illsley brought your lumber. All the way from Vermont. I had half a mind to send it back. You pay top dollar you expect better quality. Take a look at those knots, Mr. Hurst, and-

Seeing Sally, the man falls silent.

ALEX
Mr. Harris, this is Sally, my daughter. Sally, say hi to Mr. Harris.

She squirms uncomfortably under the man’s hard gaze.

SALLY
I’m trying Mom again -

Alex takes the phone from Sally’s hands and leads her to the front door.

ALEX
Let’s go in first, honey. And mind your step, there’s wires and wet paint.

Harris keeps watching Sally all the way up the walk. He’s grim.
KIM

(noticing this)

Don’t worry, Mr. Harris. She’ll settle in. That’s the plan, anyway.

INSIDE

The place is a hive of activity: construction workers and painters perch on ladders and scaffolding.

A middle-aged woman in an apron approaches with the telephone. This is MRS. UNDERHILL, the cook.

MRS. UNDERHILL

Mr. Hurst. It’s Mr. Armitage.

ALEX

Sir Charles.

MRS. UNDERHILL

Yes, sorry. He’s just landed in New York.

She gives the phone to Alex.

ALEX

(into phone)

Charlie? They let you through security?

(laughing)

Don’t blame me! I’m not the one with the suit of armor...

As Alex moves off, Mrs. Underhill leans down to greet the little girl.

MRS. UNDERHILL

And you must be Sally! I’m Mrs. Underhill and I’m ever so happy to make your acquaintance.

SALLY

(looking away)

Hello.

An awkward pause. Sally is gazing at fanciful ANIMAL HEADS in the antique plaster moldings. Their eyes have all been gouged out.

Kim ushers Sally through the foyer to a set of DOUBLE DOORS.

KIM

So. We’re putting everything back the way it was when this house was new.

(MORE)
KIM (cont'd)
I have the original blueprints. Come on, I'll show you.

A WORKMAN is sanding the base of the doors, which are heavily scratched. Sally stops to look.

SALLY
Is there a dog?

KIM
No, honey.
(following her gaze)
Somebody had one, once upon a time. Here's my favorite room.

She rolls back the doors.

INT. THE LIBRARY - DAY

Sally has a look around the splendid hexagonal chamber. The walls are still lined with Blackwood's books.

The desk is in the same place, now piled high with Kim's files and blueprints. On a nearby shelf, her collection of late-20th Century kitsch: lunch boxes, thermos bottles... and more Polaroid cameras.

KIM
The books are really old. The paintings, too. You see all the animal pictures? They're by Emerson Blackwood, a man who once lived here. He was very famous.

Gorgeous OIL PAINTINGS adorn the walls; they are late 19th century animal studies - true-to-life yet romantic.

Sally stares at the picture of a snarling bobcat.

KIM (cont’d)
We started a year ago. The place was a mess... Watch this!

She pulls a bookshelf toward her. It trundles out on old iron rails, revealing a second bookshelf just behind it.

Kim stands on the bottom shelf. Giving herself a little push, she glides across the room.

KIM (cont’d)
Hang ten, Sally...!

Sally watches but never cracks a smile.
KIM (cont’d)
(stepping off)
You want to try it?

Sally shrugs, then looks back, wondering where her father went. She spots him sitting on the stairs in the foyer, telephone glued to his ear, deep in conversation.

KIM (cont’d)
(patient smile)
Maybe later, then.

Mrs. Underhill waves from the kitchen corridor.

MRS. UNDERHILL
Does anybody like chocolate milk?

SALLY
Me!

Kim brightens, seeing a ray of hope in Sally’s enthusiasm.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY
Sally drinks a glass of chocolate milk and takes a look around the kitchen.

It’s full of restored, old-fashioned equipment: hooded stove, walk-in refrigerator with wooden door, butcher block table.

MRS. UNDERHILL
(to Kim)
I’ve left a nice stew for dinner. You can just heat it up. Does she like lamb?

KIM
(to Sally)
How does that sound, Sally?

SALLY
I don’t eat meat.

Alex walks in and hears this.

ALEX
What are you talking about, Sal? You’re mad about lamb chops!

SALLY
I stopped. You can ask Mom. She said it was up to me. I decided.

(CONTINUED)
ALEX

(wry smile)
Is there anything else we should know about?

SALLY
I’m allowed to go online by myself. I brought my own shampoo. And I already have a teddy bear.

(Alex looks puzzled)
It’s at home. You gave it to me when I had my tonsils out.

She primly sets down her empty glass of milk.

INT. THE FOYER - DAY
Alex carries Sally’s suitcase, trying without success, to take her hand.

ALEX
Did Kim show you everything? There’s nooks and crannies, great hiding places...

(gesturing)
The Christmas tree will go here in the front hall, where everyone can see it.

(to Kim)
Did you show her the paintings?

(to Sally)
Emerson Blackwood was a great artist. Maybe you could copy one of his pictures.

He leads them through the enormous DINING ROOM. A workman is patching the plaster work, doing his best to restore the eyes on more damaged animal heads.

ALEX (cont’d)
We’re going to have a fancy dinner party in here.

KIM
A meatless dinner party.

SALLY
(almost a sob)
I don’t feel well.

Alex kneels and tenderly feels Sally’s forehead. She leans close and puts her mouth near his ear.

(CONTINUED)
SALLY (cont’d)
(whispering)
I’m sick. Really, really sick. I want to go home.

Setting down the suitcase, Alex scoops up the little girl.

ALEX
Oh, princess, I’m sorry. How about we pop you straight into bed? We found an extra special one, it’s called a four-poster.

They start up the massive double STAIRWAY. CAMERA moves to-
- a blank, smooth area of plaster between the stairs, near the floor. WAITING.

INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM

The child’s bedroom is enchanting. Classic Victorian chintz and ruffles, with antique toys and a shelf full of books.

Alex deposits Sally on a high canopy bed.

ALEX
Now, look up... See? This is a bed with its own roof! And these...
(he shows her the side curtains)
...make a little tent. Do you want to try it?

No reaction from Sally.

ALEX (cont’d)
And. We’ve got some critters to keep you company at night. Check this out.

He turns on a bedside light. The shade slowly rotates and animal shadows glide over the walls.

Sally barely looks at them.

KIM
How about a story? I— I found a few books that I loved when I was little –

Sally hops down from the bed and heads straight into the BATHROOM. She locks the door.

Kim and Alex exchange a worried look. He signals that it’s okay - they can deal with this.
INT. THE BATHROOM - DAY

To Sally, the bathroom fixtures are huge porcelain monoliths. She looks in the mirror; she fights back tears.

ALEX (O.S.)
Sally, honey, come on. Let me in.

She pulls the chain and the toilet roars.

SALLY
No. I’m all right.

IN THE BEDROOM

The door to the bathroom opens and Sally comes out.

KIM
Sally — were you sick?
(to Alex)
She looks pale.

A beat of silence and then-

SALLY
(to Alex)
Are you going to marry her?

Kim looks at Alex. She knew this was coming — and suddenly, here it is.

ALEX
Tell you what, Sally. That’s a heck of a question.

SALLY
Don’t marry her.

ALEX
Why not?

SALLY
I don’t want you to.

KIM
Jesus! Do I get a say so?

ALEX
(to Kim)
Sorry.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
In this family we get straight to the point. Must be in the genes.

(to Sally)
See, honey, grown-ups sometimes need a way to tell each other—

SALLY
You and Mom are never getting married again.

ALEX
Whoever told you we —

SALLY
Nobody told me! I guessed it!

Alex goes to embrace her, but she wriggles away, faces Kim.

SALLY (cont’d)
Mom said you were young and pretty. Well, I don’t think you’re pretty and you’re old. Real old.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

The dark silhouette of the building is punctuated by a single, warmly-lit window on the second floor.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The master bedroom is sumptuous, complete with working fireplace. Alex is propped up on the king-size bed, watching television.

CHARLIE ROSE is interviewing SIR CHARLES ARMITAGE, 70, an English literary lion.

ALEX
(calling out)
Here it is - Kim, this is it -

Kim comes out of the bathroom in her pajamas. She wears a GOLD CHAIN around her neck; a TEARDROP PEARL dangles from it.

Alex turns up the sound as Sir Charles responds to a question:

ARMITAGE
(on TV)
...making Yes Do Us Part especially interesting.

(MORE)
ARMITAGE (cont'd)
We all thought we knew Alex Hurst from his legal thrillers, but here he is, working at a higher level. I always say that if you can draw on your own life—not its particulars, but its emotions—you'll find your real voice.

CHARLIE ROSE
His ex-wife doesn't see it that way. She's threatening a lawsuit. Invasion of privacy, defamation—

ARMITAGE
—which is absolutely fine. Just in time for the U.K. printing.

Alex chuckles at this.

ALEX
The old fox. He doesn't miss a trick. And Joan will freak out.

KIM
Turn it off.

Surprised, Alex looks at her face. His smile fades; he clicks off the TV.

ALEX
Kim—come here. *(she hangs back)*
Come on, get over here.

He pats the bed and she slowly approaches.

KIM
I was a disaster.

ALEX
You were not.

KIM
In the fairy tale, this is the castle and I'm the evil stepmother.

ALEX
Please. You were great today.

KIM
Alex, I warned you. She wants her Mom. And God knows, I'm not Mom material.

Alex moves closer to her. Turns off the lights. Strokes her hair.

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
She's all mixed up. Smart, though. Did you see the way she looked you over? Tough little cookie.

KIM
I told you. Kids don't like me.
(muttering)
Especially this one. The stuffed bear-

ALEX
Barry-

KIM
-whatever the hell that was. That didn't work.

ALEX
That's not true. She likes it. I saw it in her room.

KIM
In her bed?

Alex shakes his head.

KIM (cont'd)
See, mister Big Writer... you don’t know the first thing about girls. We like something, we take it to our bed. An unfortunate habit.

Alex kisses her; she responds.

INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
The bedside lamp shade slowly turns; the shadow animals move over the walls.

Sally’s bed has been shrouded by the big, protective side curtains. She sticks out her head, listening.

She hears faint VOICES from the heating duct... and realizes it’s Alex and Kim. She gets out of bed and covers the grill with a pillow.

The Teddy bear sits on the dresser. Sally gazes at it, considering for a moment. Then she gets her Barbie doll and climbs back into bed, deliberately leaving Teddy out in the cold.

FADE OUT.

(CONTINUED)
EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Half a dozen CROWS dot the big, bare trees. They start cawing as a small figure in a thick sweater and mittens explores the snow-dusted property.

It’s Sally, patrolling the high iron FENCE. She turns her gaze to the WEATHER VANE atop the house.

WEATHER VANE

It’s shaped like a human hand, with an extended index finger pointing into the wind.

IN THE GARDEN

Sally spots Harris puttering in the woodpile outside the CARETAKER’S COTTAGE. For a moment, the old man and the girl stare at each other.

Kim is standing on a ladder near the main house, mounting a carved wooden eagle under one of the eaves.

KIM

Sally, come see this bird. We found him in the garage. He’s going to live right here, where he can stare down all the neighbors.

Sally goes to the fence and forlornly gazes out at the road, gripping the bars with her mittened hands, like a miniature prisoner.

Kim sighs in exasperation and —what the hell— lights a cigarette.

SALLY

reacts as she hears a VOICE, like the wind whistling through the bare trees.

VOICE

Sssaa... lllly....

She turns around: no one there. The wind rises again... and MORE VOICES call out to her.
BEHIND THE HOUSE

A rough-looking, unrestored area behind one wing. Dead brambles and old garden monuments are piled up against the walls.

Sally comes around the corner. Glancing around, she plunges into...

A SHRUBBERY MAZE

She moves through the thick branches of a little tunnel full of thorns.

Kim is calling for her, but she keeps going.

INT. THE LIBRARY - SAME

Alex is carrying a heavy stack of old volumes. He looks out the window at...

KIM

...who wanders around the grounds, calling for Sally.

She approaches the library window, shrugging her shoulders and gesturing: the child is gone.

EXT. GROUNDS - LATER

Alex and Kim wade through the stiff underbrush behind the house, calling for her.

HARRIS

observes from the cottage.

HIDING

Sally keeps herself hidden until the adults have gone by. Then she pushes on to the house.

Near the foundation, she finds a boarded-up window. She squints through the old planks and the dirty glass.

She leans closer, cupping her hands around her eyes as she makes out a few vague shapes.

A HAND reaches down and grabs her by the collar!

(CONTINUED)
It’s Harris. His look is terrible.

HARRIS
What are you doing there??

She gasps as he roughly lifts her out of the brambles.

EXT. GRAPE ARBOR - MOMENTS LATER

In a barren grape arbor, Harris deposits her at the feet of Kim and Alex.

ALEX
(seizing her)
Where were you???

SALLY
(stammering)
I — I was here!
(a look to Kim)
Ask her. She saw me.

HARRIS
(to Alex)
You better keep her out from behind the house. She could fall in, we’d have a hell of a mess.

ALEX
Exactly. Sally, there’s pits. Old wells...

SALLY
I found a basement.

KIM
There is no basement.

Sally tears free of the old man.

SALLY
There is one, I saw it!

ALEX
Sally. Stop it. Kim is right. Some houses don’t have them...

SALLY
(overlapping)
This one does!
ALEX
...Kim’s an architect, she should know.

KIM
(patient)
Come on, Sally. Show us.

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EXT. BEHIND THE HOUSE - DAY

Alex uses a rusty sickle to hack his way through the underbrush to the place where Sally was hiding.

Behind her, Sally and Kim are watching.

KIM
This house has a name, did you know that?

SALLY
Houses don’t have names.

KIM
Some old ones do. This house is called FALLEN MILL. You know why?

(she gestures at the garden)
The English colonists had a mill here and it tumbled into a sinkhole.

SALLY
What’s a sinkhole?

KIM
A hole in the ground. It opens up, all of a sudden. The mill was gobbled up, without a trace. There’s caves and tunnels right below us. That’s why most of the houses here don’t have cellars.

SALLY
Tunnels- to where?

Alex, unseen, closer to the building, calls out.

ALEX
You’re not going to believe this!

SALLY
(triumphant)
See??!!
INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Light pours in through the stained glass windows over the grand double stairwell. Alex and Kim explore the walls, knocking and pushing.

   KIM
   This makes no sense. I checked the blueprints and every photo—

   ALEX
   If it’s dead storage, it could have been walled off.

   KIM
   We could always dig down outside, break through the foundation wall...

Alex taps on the plaster... puts his ear to it... then moves off. A moment later, the area BULGES ever so slightly.

CRACK!

Sally comes close.

   SALLY
   Look!

The adults join her and look down at a fresh crack in the plaster.

BETWEEN THE STAIRS - LATER

On his knees, Alex uses a small sledge hammer to break through the wall. Stripping away the old lath, he reveals a smallish EBONY DOOR with a Gothic arch, rich carvings and ornate hardware.

A door out of a fairy tale. Locked.

   SALLY
   (fascinated)
   Open it up, Dad! Let’s go in there!

   KIM
   Just a minute, Sally.

Kim locates a keyhole, almost invisible amid the heavy carving.
INT. KIM’S OFFICE – DAY

Kim’s rummaging through her desk as Harris hovers nearby.

HARRIS
Miss Raphael, it’s just what it looks like. Nothing. Just leave it alone, all right?

KIM
It’s not nothing. If you knew about it, you should have said something. Harris, how long have you worked here?

HARRIS
All my life, Miss.

In the bottom drawer, Kim comes up with a huge cluster of keys on a key ring.

KIM
(holding out the keys)
Then you’ll know which one fits that lock, won’t you?

HARRIS
No, Miss. I sure don’t. We threw that key away years ago. When we closed it up.

KIM
You– closed it up? Why?

Harris won’t answer. Exasperated, Kim leaves the room.

BENEATH THE STAIRWELL

Alex tries the keys, one by one. Harris stands nearby with Kim and Sally.

HARRIS
Miss Rebecca, she had me do it.

ALEX
(trying more keys)
Rebecca Blackwood?

HARRIS
Yes, sir. Last of the family, she wanted it this way. Please.

(CONTINUED)
CLICK. The door opens. Alex leans inside and peers down the steep wooden STAIRWAY.

ALEX
But why, Harris? What’s the big secret?

HARRIS
No secret. Just bad memories, I figure.

Alex stands up and smiles at Harris.

ALEX
But I’m a writer, Mr. Harris. You can’t expect me to walk away from a mystery—

HARRIS
(interrupting)
You’d best keep your little girl away from there, that’s all I can say.

Harris walks off. Alex glances around for Sally, but the child is already on her way down the steep, narrow stairs.

SALLY
Come on, Dad. Don’t you want to see?

Kim and Alex exchange a hopeful look, encouraged by Sally’s enthusiasm.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

Sally enters a dilapidated room with wood paneling and peeling wallpaper. Daylight filters in from the window high up on one wall.

Alex and Kim come down to find her lifting off the roof of an Edwardian-era DOLLHOUSE, a homemade model of Fallen Mill.

SALLY
It was a playroom! I bet there’s dolls!

Kim’s flashlight beam finds a few raw canvases and a roll-top desk. Kim opens some drawers.

KIM
Watercolor tablets... pastels... specimen jars...

(realizing)
Blackwood worked in here —!

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
Fantastic. We’ve opened King Tut’s tomb.
(to Sally)
Sally— How would you like your own art studio?

SALLY
Yes! There’s an easel!

ALEX
(to Kim)
We should go through everything. You know what a sketchbook – a page of a sketchbook would be worth?

Sally pulls down a gray, stiff sheet, unveiling a massive FIREPLACE. It’s been bricked up. Kim runs her fingers through the layer of dust on the high mantel.

KIM
We’re right below the living room. This must connect to the fireplace upstairs.

ALEX
And share the same chimney.

KIM
Why would they brick it up?

SALLY
I found another door! I can fit inside...!

Alex sees an IRON DOOR below the raised hearth. He tries it.

ALEX
No, honey. It’s an ash pit. Where they cleaned the cinders out. It’s been bolted shut.

Kim takes Alex aside. She points to some dark stains on the floor. Alex kneels and takes a closer look.

ALEX (cont’d)
It’s paint. Just paint.

She looks around, suddenly uncomfortable.

KIM
Let’s get out of here, okay? Close it up, lock it, leave it. When summer comes, we’ll clean it out.
ALEX
What are you talking about? You’re the designer, get creative. This is a great room...
(nodding at Sally)
Somebody likes it down here.

While they talk, SALLY HEARS A NOISE inside the ash pit.
She moves closer...

A POV FROM INSIDE
SOMETHING SMALL inside sees Sally looming up like a giant.
BACK TO SCENE

...as Sally hears little feet SCURRYING away. She knocks on the ash pit door, then puts her eye close to the grate.

ALEX (cont’d)
Come on, honey. We’re out of here.

As they go upstairs, Sally glances back over her shoulder, half-convinced she’ll see something.

As the ebony door closes, the room goes dark. CAMERA closes in on the ash pit.

Something whispery and quick moves inside.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

The four-car garage is a vast cavern alongside the main house.

At a workbench in the back, behind Kim’s BMW, Sally paws through some tools and comes up with a massive crescent WRENCH and a can of OIL. She wraps them in a dirty towel.

EXT. GARDEN PATH - DAY

She scampers back to the house, carefully avoiding HARRIS, who’s up on a ladder, hanging shutters.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

The sliding door to the library is open. Alex is on the phone to his American editor.

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
Larry, please. Sir Charles’ opinion is like word from on high. I’ve invited him here, a dinner in his honor.

(pause)
An English edition is all well and good, but with his blessing we can have our pick of publishers.

He doesn’t notice Sally slipping past the open doorway.

FOLLOWING SALLY

Sally walks with studied nonchalance toward the grand staircase. She catches a glimpse of Mrs. Underhill, busy in the kitchen.

Rounding a corner, she bumps into Kim.

KIM
There you are! Look what I have!!

Kim shows Sally a Victorian children’s book, full of illustrated recipes.

KIM (cont’d)
Look- I thought we could bake scones- old fashioned ones. I promised Mrs. Underhill we wouldn’t make too much of a mess–

SALLY
I can’t. I- I’m busy right now.

Kim sees Sally’s holding a rag behind her back.

KIM
What do you have there, Sally?

SALLY
Toys. Just toys.

She edges past Kim and starts up the big staircase.

SALLY (cont’d)
To play with my new Teddy. He likes to go camping, and we’re going to make a tent.

Sally escapes to her room. As Kim heads for the kitchen–

CAMERA HOLDS...

...and SALLY reappears on the upper landing. She steals down, goes down to the EBONY DOOR. She quietly opens it, goes through and just as silently closes it behind her.
INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

Kim leans against a counter, watching Mrs. Underhill preparing a salad, complete with julienne carrots and decorative radishes.

KIM
I could never do that.

MRS. UNDERHILL
It’s nothing, really. I used to make this for my kids. A fun lunch. See?

She arranges a few vegetables into a smiley face with celery stalk hair.

KIM
How old are your children, Mrs. Underhill?

MRS. UNDERHILL
Oh, they’re all grown up now. But they still remember the “funny face food”...

KIM
If I tried that, I’d wind up scaring the child half to death.

MRS. UNDERHILL
Don’t say that. Here, you try it. Make some radish eyes. Mind the knife, it’s quite sharp.

Kim takes the knife, starts peeling a radish.

MRS. UNDERHILL
(cont’d)
That’s it. It just takes a little time. All children love to laugh. Then comes the trust, and the love.

(beat)
It’s a slow process. You just keep at it.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Downstairs, Sally fits the wrench onto a bolt holding the ash pit door. With all her strength, she tries to get it loose. No luck.

She gets an idea. She positions the wrench, then kicks it, moving it an inch.

Progress. She uses the same method to loosen two more.
The last one, however, is too tight. After trying a few times, she gives up.

*That scurrying sound again!* Sally backs away. Finding a wire coat hanger, she unbends it and sticks it through the slot.

From inside, the hanger is like an enormous, probing lance.

Sally pokes around some more, when—

—suddenly, the coat hanger jerks through her fingers...! Something pulled it in!

A LAUGH— small— raspy— but unmistakably human!!

Sally retreats again, but then, curious as Alice, she comes back to the grate.

Laughter again— this time echoed by several cackling voices— and the light patter of small feet.

    VOICE
    Sssa... leee... Open the grate—

    VOICES
    Yesss— Yess— Open it— let us out... Set us free—

A YELL from upstairs:

    KIM
    Sally! Lunch!

Ignoring this, Sally squirts some oil onto the last bolt. When she tries once more, it finally turns with a SCREECH.

She uses the wrench to unscrew it.

    VOICE
    Sssa... leee... Set us free—

    VOICES
    We will play with you— Show you such places— Come closer— let us tell you a secret—

She puts her ear close to the grill. The trembling coat hanger emerges from the ash pit, its freshly sharpened tip closing in on her ear... and ear drum.

    KIM
    *(o.s.)*
    Sally?
Sally pulls away. Instantly, the coat hanger is gone and the last bolt comes out all by itself.

CLANG! The iron door hits the floor. A scurrying of little feet—
A gust of wind lifts her hair as Sally leans into the opening and looks into a deep shaft.

On a ledge a few feet down is a small porcelain tray full of GNAWED TEETH. When she takes one of the molars, the tray tumbles into the depths. At length, a faint echo as it hits bottom.

She examines the tooth, seeing how it’s scored and chewed.

Alex appears at the basement door.

ALEX
What are you doing down there?

Sally pouts; just when things were getting interesting. She pockets the tooth.

SALLY
I heard something.

ALEX
I don’t doubt it. A house like this, there’s probably a whole village of mice—

SALLY
But I heard a voice—

ALEX
Goblins, then! Come on, girl, time to wash up.

She leaves—

— and CAMERA pushes into the gaping hole. Now it can discern a dozen silhouettes and the faint gleam of little, wet eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY
Alex and Kim watch helplessly as Sally shoves her plate away. The timeless drama: children and food.

The smiley face on the salad platter now looks like a mockery.
KIM
(the good sport)
You don’t like it?

SALLY
I don’t feel good.

ALEX
Sally. They made this specially for you, try and eat it.

(silence)
What about the cucumbers? You used to love cucumbers? What if I eat two for every one you gobble up?

Kim shoots him a look; he’s treating her like a three-year-old.

ALEX (cont’d)
(oblivious)
Hear that? Crunch crunch, delicious...

Sally rolls her eyes. Mrs. Underhill watches sadly from the kitchen door.

MRS. UNDERHILL
I’ll bring some chocolate milk.

KIM
No. Thank you, Mrs. Underhill. Maybe she should eat this... or leave the table.

Instantly, Sally hops off her chair and runs to her room.

ALEX
Damn it, Kim. You don’t issue ultimatums.

KIM
I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it that way–

ALEX
Well, that’s how she heard it. So much for lunch. From now on, let me take the lead, okay?

KIM
Fine.

ALEX
(sigh)
Look. It’s not personal— there’s a natural testing, it would go on with any child, any new parent.
KIM

"New parent?"

(she thinks it over)

Yeah, I guess that’s me now. And why not?
Such a natural role for a woman: motherhood. The holy measure of kindness and competence...

(beat)

Well, let me tell you this: I had enough trouble getting over my own childhood to have to deal with a someone else’s, thank you very much. I am doing this for you, not me. I didn’t ask for it.

She gets up and walks out. Alex plucks a carrot stick out of the salad and chews it unhappily. Mrs Underhill smiles-

MRS. UNDERHILL

There’s plenty of cucumbers left, sir-

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BLACKWOOD MANSION - NIGHT

Late at night. The house is a mound of dark brick, against a deep, starry sky. The weather vane hand slowly swings to point toward the rising moon.

A thin cloud slices the moon, like a razor over an eye.

INT. UNDER THE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

In the shadow of the grand stairwell, the ebony door moves gently. The doorknob quietly rotates... left... then right...

Working from the inside, something pushes the key from the keyhole and catches it on a piece of old newspaper. Then it’s pulled under the door.

Somewhere, a TELEPHONE rings. A moment later, the little door OPENS.

INT. THE LIBRARY - NIGHT

The PHONE in the library rings persistently. Alex hurries in and takes it.

ALEX

Hello?

(an angry whisper)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
ALEX (cont'd)
No, you can't— She's asleep. We're three hours ahead, remember?

Something in the house goes CLUNK; he peers out into the gloomy front hall. He can't see anything.

He sits down at the desk, unaware of the small SHADOWS hurrying past his legs.

ALEX (cont'd)
Please, Joan. She just arrived. Give her a chance to adjust.

(pause)
I never said that. You did. "More than I can handle," those were your exact words.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Upstairs, Sally’s bedroom door is open. She’s in her pajamas, leaning against the bannister, listening.

ALEX (O.S.)
Well, that depends on your definition of Christmas. I’m fully prepared to keep her on, enroll her in a local school, 'til we get a judgment. It wouldn’t necessarily affect the outcome.

On the wall just below Sally... more odd shadows, moving quickly. She doesn’t see them.

ALEX (cont’d)
Look, take some time, discuss it with your lawyers.

(pause)
Of course she’s happy! Okay, up and down, but happy. What’s this “no meat” bullshit? Your idea?

A moment later, the shadows run behind her. Then, a CLICK...

Sally looks back at her bedroom door... which is closed now.

SALLY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sally re-enters the bedroom, sits on her bed and kicks off her slippers.

The bedside lampshade animals parade around the room - but now they include other silhouettes. Strange, spindly arms and legs, bald heads, big bellies...
Hearing WHISPERS, Sally places the pillow over the heating grate as before. But this time the voices continue, close at hand.


VOICES
(whispers)
Sally! Silly Sally!

Sally jumps, then looks around. Flings open the bed curtains. No one there. After a moment, she rummages in the sheets.


SALLY
Hey! Where’s my Barbie?

VOICE
(louder)
Sally doll! With usssss-

Sally whirs: the TEDDY BEAR is staring at her from the shadows. Sally’s jaw hangs open.


SALLY
(marvelling)
Did—did you speak to me?

The Teddy bear points directly at her!!

VOICE
Speak, Sally wants the bear to speak!

TWISTED LITTLE CLAWS puppet the bear paw this way and that.


VOICE (cont’d)
Come, Sally... play! Sally play...!

Sally turns on her night light. A CHORUS OF SQUEALS and a SCURRYING NOISE as the bear tumbles to the floor.

Sally picks it up. Pokes skeptically at its mouth.

More SCURRYING.


VOICES
No light- No light, it hurtssss usss-

Sally obliges. Some giggling and the rush of tiny footsteps.


SALLY
Who are you??


VOICES
We are many-

(CONTINUED)
SALLY
Many- ?
VOICES
And many more down there-
SALLY
What are you?
VOICE
Hungry!
VOICES
We are hungry!!!
SALLY
I have food!
VOICES
She has food- yesss- Sally is food-
SALLY
Let me see you...

TITTERS from under the bed. Eyes bright, she slowly kneels down—

SALLY (cont'd)
I won’t hurt you... I promise!

Ouch!! a SAFETY PIN is stuck in her knee. She pulls it out. A drop of blood oozes up.

A giggle somewhere... then —

VOICE
Come, Sally. We want to play.

As she lifts the bed’s dust skirt, she finds her Barbie doll. It’s head has been torn off and is lying a foot away.

Another PIN is sticking out of its EYE.

Suddenly, her bedroom door opens and Alex enters.

ALEX
What are you doing out of bed?
SALLY
I– I hurt my knee.

He tenderly picks her up, turns on the light- gives her knee a kiss.

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
Then you stay tucked in, where it’s warm
and safe.

As he puts her back to bed, he finds something under the pillow.
A small tooth.

ALEX (cont’d)
Sally! Did you lose a tooth?! Show me!
Smile at Daddy!

Sally smiles reluctantly.

ALEX (cont’d)
Where? I don’t see —

SALLY
It’s not mine. I found it-

Alex rolls the tooth in his fingers, studying it closely.

ALEX
Here in the house?

SALLY
(nodding)
In the basement.

Neither of them see the bedside lamp sliding. Something is
pulling the electric cord.

As the lamp nears the edge of the table...

SALLY (cont’d)
Can I talk to Mommy now?

ALEX
No, honey, not now. It’s really late.
Mommy’s asleep.

He pensively puts the tooth back under her pillow.

ALEX (cont’d)
There. We’ll see what happens. Maybe the
Tooth Fairy will come...

The lamp topples over. Alex lunges and manages to catch it just
before it hits the floor.

ALEX (cont’d)
Whoa – ! Did you see Daddy save the day?

(CONTINUED)
Sally looks around, eyes wide, cheeks flushed. Alex replaces the lamp and glances at his daughter.

ALEX (cont’d)  What about this light? On or off??

SALLY  No, no. Leave it on-

He smiles and obeys, lingering for a moment at the door.

ALEX  Could you... maybe try to be friends with Kim?

(whispers)  She’s really nice. Give her one of your paintings.

After a moment, Sally nods.

ALEX (cont’d)  Good. In a few weeks, a new school, new friends, you’ll have fun here, I promise.

He leaves and closes the door. Sally looks around the room... sees no one, hears nothing.

She hides beneath the covers. And, there, lying in her immense bed, she looks like a castaway in a remote island of sheets.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BATHROOM - DAY

Kim emerges from the shower, puts on a robe and goes to the window. She peers out into a frosty morning.

KIM’S POV

Sparkling ice coats the trees in translucent armor. Harris is working directly below, chipping at the front path.

EXT. FRONT PATH - DAY

Harris drinks a last swallow of coffee from his THERMOS and heads for the house. As he opens the door, Alex intercepts him.

ALEX

Have you seen my keys?

(CONTINUED)
HARRIS
In the dish, by the door.

ALEX
(bewildered)
That’s right. So, what is this? Now they’re gone.

Harris quickly checks the table near the door. Full of concern, he drops to one knee and looks around.

HARRIS’ POV
CAMERA PANS along the baseboards and under the table. Nothing out of the ordinary.

ALEX (cont’d)
yelling
Kim! I’m going crazy here!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – DAY
Kim enters the master bedroom and starts getting dressed.

ALEX (O.S.)
Do you have the car keys?

KIM
You had them last night!

The mirrored ARMOIRE door is partly open. Kim reaches inside, then stops, shocked at a discovery.

Her silk blouses and dresses hang in shreds, razored into ribbons.

INT. SALLY’S ROOM – DAY
Kim enters, furious, and stares down at the child.

Sally stands next to her bed, her face suffused with joy. She holds out her hand, showing off a new treasure, a big silver coin.

SALLY
Look! It worked! She was here! A silver dollar! She left a whole sil—

Kim can barely contain her rage. She shakes the coat hangers and destroyed clothing in front of the child. (CONTINUED)
KIM

What have you done?

Sally’s eyes widen in fear.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Beams of richly colored sunlight slant down through the stained glass windows. Kim has laid out the garments on the desk.

Sally sits on a big chair, like a defendant in the dock. Alex leans over her.

SALLY

(crying)

I didn’t do it! I didn’t do anything!

ALEX

Don’t lie to us! You’re only making it worse. Razors are dangerous, Sally! Show me your hands... did you cut yourself?

Sally holds out her hands, a picture of helplessness.

SALLY

No! No!

ALEX

It was a mean, hateful thing to do. How would you like it if someone cut your best clothes or your new Teddy bear?

Sally’s wails grow louder.

KIM

(to Alex)

What makes you think it was a razor? A pair of big scissors—

ALEX

No. My straight razor’s missing. The one from Portobello road.

(sharp, to Sally)

Sally! Look at me!

SALLY

I want to go home... Let me go home...

She runs away- leaving her SILVER DOLLAR behind.

In spite of everything, Kim is touched. She knows the child is lying, but she feels pity for her.

(CONTINUED)
She picks up the silver dollar and signals for Alex to follow her.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

In the hall, they confer quietly as Sally sobs in the background.

ALEX
Jesus, Kim. I’m so sorry. I think I’m in over my head here.

KIM
If it was your razor, we have to find it. As soon as possible. Do we let her calm down, or just ask her?

ALEX
Not now, I don’t think she can think straight. God, your Jaeger blouse... that was over four hundred dollars.

In the other room, Sally’s sobs continue, more quietly now.

KIM
What do you want to do?

ALEX
I- I don’t know. For now, I say we just let the storm subside. Maybe she’ll sleep, or snack.

She shows him the coin-

KIM
And this-

ALEX
I didn’t do it-

KIM
C’mon-

ALEX
I didn’t. Maybe Mrs Underhill-

Kim pockets the coin-

KIM
I’ll ask her-(beat)
It’s almost ten o’clock.

(CONTINUED)
If you still want to go, there’s a spare set of car keys in the bureau upstairs.

ALEX
I’ll call Sir Charles, tell him we’ll be late.

INT. LIBRARY - SAME

Left alone in the library, Sally hears a merry GIGGLE. Then high-pitched laughter from SEVERAL VOICES.

She gets off the chair and looks around. Just then—

Alex appears in the doorway, putting on his jacket.

ALEX
We have to go out. I want you up in your room, understand? Now. No TV. No telephone. You need anything, you ask Mrs. Underhill.

Sally stares at her shoes.

ALEX (cont’d)
When we come back, we’ll talk about what you did. I won’t be mad, I promise. But you think about how it happened, and what you need to say to Kim.

(pause)
And Sally. When you’re ready, you have to show me where that razor is. Til then, you’re not to touch it. Can I trust you?

Sally stares at him— he doesn’t believe her.

ALEX (cont’d)
Can I trust you??

Sally nods.

EXT. BLACKWOOD MANSION - DAY

The BMW comes down the driveway with Alex and Kim on board. The dark, wet house rises behind them like a wall.

CLOSER
Her eyes swollen and red, Sally peers down from her window.
INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Underhill rummages through the kitchen drawers as Harris refills his thermos.

MRS. UNDERHILL
(muttering)
First, my best scissors disappear. Now a meat fork...?

Harris tenses, in some private panic.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

Sally is there in the dark.

She unfolds a napkin and deposits some dry cereal next to the open ash pit.

SALLY
(whisper)
You said you were hungry... Do you like Cheerios?

A SOUND from below as something starts climbing up.

SALLY (cont’d)
(she eats a Cheerio)
See? Delicious...

VOICES
Delicious... yes... Sally delicious.

SALLY
I got the silver dollar-

VOICES
Then the exchange isss done-

She glances down the chute, hoping to see something.

SALLY
...did you do something very, very bad? You have to answer, if you want to be friends...

VOICES
Best friends. Yesss-

A buzz of laughter from the ash pit. Then, the lights snap on.

(CONTINUED)
Sally faces...

HARRIS

He enters the room.

HARRIS

Hi, Sally. How are you?

SALLY

F- fine, thank you.

HARRIS

I thought I heard you talking to someone. Were you?

(paused)

It’s okay, is someone else here? Tell the truth.

SALLY

N-no... there’s nobody here...

Harris spots the ash pit door lying on the floor. He nervously licks his lips.

HARRIS

I’ll tell you what: let’s see how fast you can move.

(off her puzzled reaction)

That’s right, try to go up those steps just like a mouse, tippy toe so no one can hear you. Go on, now, off you go.

Sally carefully gets up, and uneasily tiptoes to the stairs. When she glances back...

...his look is terrifying.

HARRIS (cont’d)

Go to your room, child- Go!! And never come back down here-

She flees. Cursing, Harris throws down his tool belt and takes out a wrench. He moves to bolt the iron door back on.

The LIGHTS flicker and go out. The studio door SLAMS shut. Something STEALS his TOOL BELT.

Little hands snatch a SCREWDRIVER, a BOX CUTTER, PLIERS-

Seeing SHADOWS moving around the baseboards, Harris MOANS.

(CONTINUED)
VOICES
(whispery confusion)
You said, you said. Harris, you promised.

He lunges for the door. Something cuts him off, jabbing at his fingers with a screwdriver.

Wire coat hangers whip out of the dark, tearing at the man’s face and clothes. He yelps.

HARRIS
Don’t. Please. I haven’t said a thing!
Nothing—!

Sharp steel tips plunge into his neck, drawing blood.

A darting, tiny figure runs up his back with a silver-handled straight razor. SWISH—

...BLOOD splashes onto his collar. He shrieks, flails...

Something swipes at his ankle, stabs his foot.

Harris falls to his knees, toppling a heavy bookcase.

A dozen small, shadowy THINGS swarm over his legs, jabbing and chattering. They rip his shirt, exposing white flesh that is quickly running with blood.

FOOTSTEPS echo from the stairs. The creatures disappear, quick as roaches.

The door opens. It’s Mrs. Underhill.

Harris, a panting vision of blood and raw flesh, staggers out.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - DAY

Pursued by Mrs. Underhill, Harris bursts from the kitchen and runs through the garden. He enters the grape arbor, then collapses.

Mrs. Underhill spots Sally coming. She intercepts her...

MRS. UNDERHILL
Look away, Sally. Look away..!

...and quickly turns her from the bloody snow.
INT. LAW OFFICES - DAY

In a foyer lined with legal books, Alex and Kim consult a trio of high-priced ATTORNEYS. Various documents are spread out on the polished table.

ALEX
With all due respect, I think it’s better so little time has gone by. Joan’s a wreck, Sally’s in a panic—

LAWYER
In your opinion.

ALEX
—and we’re catching it before it gets any worse.

LAWYER
Catching it? How?

ALEX
We’re going to consult a therapist.

KIM
We are?

ALEX
Joan wanted a professional opinion, fine. She’s going to get it.

LAWYER
Careful. Could be more grist for her mill. If she’s really moving on the defamation front.

ALEX
I don’t care. I wrote what I wrote, I had the time of my life.

(sudden grin)

There I go again. Sorry.

LAWYER
We all read the book, Alex. You autographed my copy.

The attorneys chuckle.

LAWYER 2
(to Kim)

Would therapy be a problem, Miss Raphael?

(CONTINUED)
KIM
(a glance at Alex)
No. I— I do think therapy’s a good idea. Maybe for all concerned.

LAWYER
How’s your relationship with Sally? We know her mother can’t handle her.

KIM
Working on it...

ALEX
She’s doing a great job.

KIM]
(half smile)
I’m a bit of an amateur, actually.

LAWYER 2
Okay, therapy or not, a custody fight is completely unpredictable. I’ll give you both some blunt advice. For starters, get married.

(gazing at Kim)
A judge will regard a married woman as one short step from a mother.

At that moment, an assistant leans in from the doorway.

ASSISTANT
Excuse me, Mr. Hurst? You have a phone call on line one.

LAWYER
You can take it in my office, Alex—

They exit. Kim watches through a glass partition as Alex takes the call. She looks inside her purse and finds the silver dollar. Distractedly, she examines it—

And now, for the first time, she notices—

—it’s not just any silver dollar. The coin is old. Most of the relief has been worn away, but a date is still visible:

1809.

She looks back at Alex. Who is now agitated and on his feet. Something is wrong. Terribly wrong.

CUT TO:
EXT. BLACKWOOD MANSION - DAY

Alex and Kim pull up in the BMW. Police cars are parked in the driveway.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

A couple of PLAINCLOTHES COPS are interviewing Mrs. Underhill; uniformed COPS are on their way up from the basement.

Mrs. Underhill obsessively mops the kitchen floor, even though the blood is all gone.

PLAINCLOTHES COP
What about outside? Did he say anything once he was outside?

MRS. UNDERHILL
Nothing I could make out.

She sweeps the mop at the policeman’s shoes, forcing him back.

MRS. UNDERHILL
(cont’d)
I had my hands full, I couldn’t—

Alex comes into the kitchen.

MRS. UNDERHILL
(cont’d)
Oh, Mr. Hurst! Thank God...

ALEX
(to the cops)
Gentlemen, I’m Alex Hurst. Mr. Harris is my employee.

PLAINCLOTHES COP
Mr. Hurst, did Harris ever exhibit any signs of depression?

ALEX
You think he attempted suicide?

INT. THE STAIRWELL - DAY

Kim runs upstairs looking for Sally.
INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM – DAY

She’s not in her room.

Kim looks out the window and sees a blue dot – Sally in her woolen hat and coat – sitting alone in the garden.

EXT. GARDEN – DAY

The crows are perched in the naked trees, setting up their raucous chorus as Kim cautiously approaches.

KIM

Hi.

Sally barely acknowledges her presence.

KIM (cont’d)

Were you scared?

Sally nods.

KIM (cont’d)

Want to talk about it?

Sally holds her ground, shakes her head: NO.

KIM (cont’d)

Okay.

The two share a moment in silence. Then–

KIM (cont’d)

Let’s go over there.

SALLY

Why?

KIM

There’s something I’ve been meaning to show you.

SALLY

(flatt)

What?

KIM

A trick I know.

(off Sally’s look)

How to walk on water.
THE FROZEN POND

Kim stands in the middle of a frozen pond.

KIM
Come on out here... You can see fish.

Sally tentatively walks out onto the ice... inch by inch...

KIM (cont’d)
Come on, like this... Stride, glide... and slide!

She parodies a figure skater, slipping her feet around and waving her arms.

Concentrating on not falling, Sally tries it, too. Pretty soon they are both skating around. Sally likes it, but she won’t permit herself a smile.

KIM (cont’d)
Yes, that’s right! Now, Peggy Fleming, skate over here and look down! Did you know that fish sleep?

SALLY
(looking down)
I don’t see any.

KIM
You look carefully. It’s really deep, this pond. It’s from an underground river that runs right under the house. This is a special, magical place. See anything?

Sally gets on her knees and peers intently through the ice.

SALLY
Is... is Mr. Harris going to die?

KIM
No, Sally. He’s going to get better.

SALLY
He was bleeding real bad. His skin- was open- I could see it cut-

After a long beat.

KIM
Tell me... what do you think happened?

(CONTINUED)
No answer.

Sally sees Alex standing at the side of the pond, watching and listening. She gestures for him to stay put.

SALLY
I don’t know...
(still looking down)
I... I didn’t cut your clothes. I swear to God, I never touched them.

She suddenly looks up at Kim. Her lower lip is trembling, but she doesn’t cry.

And then it happens: instinctively Kim embraces the girl and Sally clings to her. And they stay out on the ice with Alex observing from the shore.

ALEX’S VOICE
Eighteen oh-nine- I see it—

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex uses a magnifying glass to inspect the silver dollar.

ALEX
You didn’t ask her, did you— Mrs. Underhill?

KIM
Not yet. But where would she get a coin like that?

ALEX
For all we know, it could be worth something, despite its condition.
(beat)
And the timing of all this— you realize we can’t call off the dinner...

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Their voices carry on as Sally sneaks out from her bedroom. Using a FLASHLIGHT, she tiptoes downstairs to the...

LIBRARY

Alone in the enormous room, Sally turns on a desk lamp and dials the phone. Her mother, JOAN, answers.

(CONTINUED)
JOAN (O.S.)
Hello? This is Joan Rayburn speaking...

SALLY
Mommy?

Background noise on the phone: Joan’s in her car.

JOAN
Hi, darling! Where are you?

SALLY
Daddy’s house. I don’t like it here. Can I come home?

JOAN
Oh, baby, don’t say that! You’ll break my heart. You remember what the judge said... it’s not allowed.

SALLY
It’s cold. And my bed is too big—too high. I think I’m getting sick. It’s in my chest.

She coughs a little bit.

JOAN
(amused)
Sounds like the flu, all right.
(beat)
Shouldn’t you be in bed? Where’s Daddy?

SALLY
I don’t know. I’m all alone here...

JOAN
Well, you remember this— you have to tell the judge when he asks you—that you were all alone— and cold— and—

On the phone, in the background: a car HORN, happy people CHATTERING.

JOAN (cont’d)
(to someone else)
Stuart! Wait up...!
(back to Sally)
Honey, you go to bed now, okay? Don’t be afraid... Christmas only lasts a minute, so you hang in there. You’ll be back home before you know it. I think about you every single day! And I love you.
Sally hangs up, alone in the enormous room. She sits on the big chair behind the desk.

Suddenly: little FOOTSTEPS.

She looks around: NOTHING. Then, a soft, hoarse whisper—

VOICE
Sally... Turn off the light. Don’t be afraid... Don’t be afraid of the dark.

SALLY
Where are you? What are you? Let me see you!

(whirling around)
Did you hurt Mr. Harris?

VOICE
He’s old. Old fool. We’ll play with you... young thing.

Something behind her grabs the hem of her nightgown. Sally struggles as it tugs fiercely, insistently.

She picks up the desk light, shines it at the floor.

CHORUS OF VOICES
We won’t hurt you. Never hurt you. We like you. We want to take you someplace nice...

A hideous little hand - almost a claw - is pulling at her. Seeing it, Sally drops the light and runs away.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kim awakens to find Sally, curled up at the foot of their bed. She glances over at Alex, who is deep in slumber.

INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kim carries Sally back into her room and gently tucks her in.

SALLY
(sleepily)
Stay here, stay with me...

KIM
(touched)
I’m right here.

(CONTINUED)
SALLY
Even while I’m asleep. Don’t turn off the lights....

Kim is puzzled by the urgency of the plea.

KIM
I’ll stay.

SALLY
I don’t want them to come any more.

KIM
Who, Sally?

Sally turns away, shrinking down under the covers, hiding her face.

SALLY
The... little things. They live in the basement. They gave me the silver dollar. But they’re mean...

Kim frowns in concern. She gently strokes Sally’s hair.

KIM
Well, I’m standing guard. Nothing will get by me.

SALLY
Promise?

KIM
I promise.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM - STILL LATER

Dead of night. The animal shadows move. Soon, other weird shadows are coming up from the ventilation duct.

Light footsteps pitter-patter on the wooden floor. Things scurry in the darkest corners, like cockroaches in a kitchen.

The bedside light slides off the edge of the table and hits the floor. Sudden darkness.

Sally sleepily gropes for Kim’s hand. Can’t find it.

SALLY
Kim?

(CONTINUED)
She opens her eyes... and sees the Teddy bear, inches away.

CHORUS OF VOICES
(overlapping whispers)
A silver coin for every tooth— Sally eat candy all day! But usss?? Ussss?? We’re hungry, Sally, Sally... Hungry for Sally-

The bedsprings CREAK. Dark things crawl over the foot rail and onto the comforter, like raiding miniature soldiers.

Something yanks the Teddy bear off the bed.

Sally sits bolt upright and sees shapes coming under the covers! Kicking her legs, she retreats to a corner and pulls a flashlight from under the pillow. When she turns it on...

...the naked bottom of a creature disappears from view.

SALLY
Kim!!
(looking around)
You - you broke my light - !?

CHORUS OF VOICES
We have a better one! Down there - cookies, candy... lemonade rivers and candy trees-

Another voice now. Deeper, somehow familiar:

BLACKWOOD’S VOICE
...and my son! He is a child. We have many, many children like you. You will keep them company- and we see them all at dinner time-

Wide-eyed, Sally uses her fingers to cover the flashlight.

Little by little, the figures climb back up...

HOMUNCULUS

Suddenly, Sally sees something headed right at her.

It’s a seven-inch HOMUNCULUS, its wizened, ugly little face FULLY REVEALED and somehow familiar. A gash is open at its throat; when it smiles, several teeth are missing.

It’s BLACKWOOD, transformed.
BLACKWOOD

Yes! My son wants to play with you!
(turning)
We call him Digit!

A smaller homunculus hops out from behind him, grinning, licking its chops. The pale flesh and sparkling eyes are malevolent and knowing.

It wields the silver straight razor like a broadsword.

CREATURE

Now! Cut now!!

As Sally’s light strikes their eyes, the things YOWL and retreat.

Sally SCREAMS and sweeps the room with the light beam.

TINY FIGURES, armed with knitting needles and kitchen knives, swarm over the floor. They’re everywhere!

SALLY

Daddy! Daddy...!

The ventilation grate CLANGS shut as ALEX enters the room and turns on the light.

Sally keeps screaming. Pulling on a robe, Kim hurries into the room behind Alex.

SALLY (cont’d)

They came... they were on my bed! They’re horrible, horrible, old things!!

Alex cradles the child as Kim finds the broken lamp.

SALLY (cont’d)
(to Kim)

Where were you? You promised to stay!!

ALEX

Shhh. Easy, easy... it was just a dream, Sally. You had a nightmare.

SALLY

It was not! Don’t say that!! My bear, look what they did to my bear!!

Alex looks at Sally’s Teddy bear: slashed and ripped apart!

CUT TO:
INT. RECEPTION AREA - THE NEXT DAY

Mrs. Underhill bustles through the room to answer the DOORBELL.

A towering Christmas tree has been set up. Evergreen garlands adorn the walls. Christmas lights twinkle everywhere.

CATERERS arrange long tables and buffet bars around the dining room.

AT THE FRONT DOOR - DAY

Opening the door, Mrs. Underhill finds a middle-aged man with a briefcase and a plastic milk crate filled with TOYS. This is DR. UTLEY.

INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM - DAY

Sally, in jeans and a sweater, sits on the floor face to face with Dr. Utley. The toys are scattered about; Sally is busy with crayons and drawing pad.

DR. UTLEY

Your Dad tells me art’s your favorite subject. I wish I could draw.

Utley produces a small moleskin notebook and readies a fountain pen.

SALLY

(busy sketching)

Drawing is easy. The other kids make the head too big. And the hands too small.

Dr. Utley glances at the wooden legs of the bed, which are freshly scarred with scratches and scrapes.

DR. UTLEY

When you say “the other kids” Sally, do you feel they’re different from you??

Sally pauses her drawing and glances at him.

SALLY

You’re different. Mom sent me to a shrink back home, in California. He asked me lots of questions, like what’s my favorite color.
DR. UTLEY
(smilng)
And- what is your favorite color?

By way of reply, Sally holds up a very dark crayon.

DR. UTLEY (cont’d)
What is that? Purple?

SALLY
Violet- and black.

He discreetly scribbles a note. She shields her drawing from view.

SALLY (cont’d)
Don’t look. I’m not done.

DR. UTLEY
These little things you saw...

SALLY
...that live in the basement.

DR. UTLEY
Yes. What do you think they are?

SALLY
Fairies.

DR. UTLEY
(nods gently)
But- scary ones.

SALLY
(nodding)
Or Gnomes. Whatever they are- they know my name. They say my name over and over: "Sally, we want you, Sally, we want you."

(finishes her drawing)

Here. This is what the worst one looked like. It has a scar- it’s the smartest of them all-

She holds up her drawing.

It’s a rather impressive interpretation of the Blackwood homunculus, with sharp teeth and crazy red eyeballs. It’s holding a razor and has a scar on its throat from ear to ear.

DR. UTLEY
Wow. Very, very scary.
(studies the drawing)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
And- that scar- where do you think it came from??

SALLY
I dunno-
(beat)
It’s okay to keep that. I can draw another one.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

Alex is behind the fireplace, refitting the ash pit door, carefully tightening each bolt. Kim sits on the stairs, studying Sally’s drawing.

Dr. Utley reads from his notes.

DR. UTLEY
"Wrinkles... claws... fangs... missing fingers." She has individuated each of them. And then there’s this obsession with teeth...

(looks at his notes)
She claims to have found a little tray, filled with baby teeth. Right inside that fireplace. Did either of you see anything like that?

KIM
God, no.

ALEX
Wait.

Alex pats his pockets, then locates the TOOTH Sally hid underneath her pillow. He gives it to Dr. Utley.

ALEX (cont’d)
A molar, right?

DR. UTLEY
(takes a careful look)
With gouges...? It looks gnawed.
(puzzled frown)
Her imaginary world, its inhabitants... It’s all quite elaborate, as detailed as any I’ve encountered.

Alex is tightening the last bolt.

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
I think Harris may have told her some kind of horror story. She’s young, impressionable, and most of all, unhappy.

Through the window, Kim can see Sally standing over the frozen pond, peering down, searching for fish.

ALEX (cont'd)
(finishes the bolts)
There. This thing is closed up tight. Nothing like a dose of reality to calm us all down.

EXT. FROZEN POND - DAY
Camera rises above Sally. Below her feet, under the ice, schools of dark fish dart back and forth.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN PROVIDENCE - DAY
The BMW crawls through impossible traffic. They’re barely moving.

INT. THE BMW - DAY
Alex is at the wheel. He glances at his watch, then over at Kim.

ALEX
We’re going to be late. Do you have your phone?

KIM
(cold)
No.

He HONKS his horn in frustration.

ALEX
I’m taking the next right. If we stay on Benefit Street, we’ll be here all day—

KIM
So what? You don’t need to do this.

ALEX
I’m not walking out on an event of this size! You take it for granted, just because Sir Charles—

(CONTINUED)
KIM
(interrupts him)
Okay! Okay! Enough. I get it.

(pause)
Alex, how much do you know about the Blackwood family?

ALEX
Not much, not yet. Why?

KIM
You heard what Harris said. About the heirs, the sealing of that room. He was warning us. That basement — it shouldn’t even be there. We opened it up and now Sally’s made it her nightmare place.

ALEX
And you feel guilty. Please.

(pause)
Kim— it’s the house of a lifetime. And you’ve done a magnificent job, you’ve made it into a home...

KIM
(shaking her head)
Sally’s looking for trust, Alex! Until she trusts us, that house will never be a home. Meanwhile, we’re just wasting time.

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EXT. HOTEL — DAY
They arrive at the downtown Hilton. A VALET rushes forward to take the car.

NEWS PHOTOGRAPHERS come running and start taking pictures of Alex. Kim is jostled aside.

She stands apart for a moment, then fights her way back.

KIM
I’m not going in.

ALEX
(signing an autograph)
What are you talking about? They’re holding a seat for you.

KIM
I’ll be home tonight —

She tries to go, but Alex seizes her by the arm.

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
No. If you’ve got something in mind, you tell me about it.

KIM
But you’re busy at the moment, aren’t you? Sir Charles is waiting. The public is waiting. And you mustn’t disappoint them.

More FLASHES from the news cameras. He puts on a smile as Kim firmly pulls free and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY
CAMERA tracks across the room, through the dusty half-light.
The BOLTS on the ash pit door all rotate together and drop to the floor in unison.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY
Sally walks down the hall towards the big bathroom, carrying her towel, shampoo and toy fish.

As she passes under the carved arches and columns, the gnomish wooden faces seem to acquire new menace.

GRATES & GRILLES
She is followed by a horde of dark figures, trooping behind the baseboards, intermittently appearing behind the heating registers.

THEIR POV FROM INSIDE
Sally’s bare feet are walking, walking...

...as the Lilliputian hunters follow, carrying straight razors, safety pins, nails...

IN THE KITCHEN - SAME
Mrs. Underhill is fixing dinner.
INT. THE BATHROOM - DAY

Sally climbs into the tub of steaming hot water. Feeling exposed, she closes the shower curtain.

Reassured, she sinks in and launches her plastic fish toward the end of the tub.

**SALLY**

Swim, fish. Until the water freezes-

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Holding a small PACKAGE, Kim sits in a crowded waiting room; she watches a young MOTHER trying to comfort her fussy infant.

The woman directly opposite her is reading a copy of Alex’s book.

A NURSE appears and motions for Kim to follow.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Kim enters and sees someone whose head is completely swathed in bandages.

**NURSE**

You have a visitor, Mr. Harris.

The bandaged head swivels toward the door. Harris is hooked up to a drip and a heart monitor.

**NURSE (cont’d)**

*(whispering to Kim)*

He’s under sedation.

Kim approaches the bed and puts the package in the patient’s hands.

**KIM**

I brought you some books... I mean, on tape, books on tape. There’s one by Alex, read by Anthony Hopkins...

Harris moves weakly, restless and agitated.

**HARRIS**

The child...
KIM

Sally?

HARRIS

Is she out of the house...?

Kim’s heart sinks. This is exactly what she feared he’d ask.

KIM

Soon. In a few days.

(pause)

Do you have headphones? If you don’t, I’d be happy to—

He blindly seizes Kim’s hand.

HARRIS

Get her out of the house. Now.

KIM

But why, Mr. Harris? What’s going to happen?

He turns his head away, unwilling to face her questions.

KIM (cont’d)

Please, don’t scare us. I’m sorry for whatever happened to you. What was it, Mr. Harris?

The bandaged head rocks slowly back and forth.

KIM (cont’d)

Why was that room sealed, Mr. Harris?

The old man’s pulse picks up on the machine nearby. He speaks slowly, softly...

HARRIS

Because... that’s where they are and that’s where it happened. I loved that family. I was loyal to them. I don’t want it to go on. Not again...

KIM

Where what happened?

He feebly scribbles on a piece of paper. Kim frowns; he’s writing odd numbers. She can’t make head or tail of them.

KIM (cont’d)

“Lot 11-24”?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

HARRIS
The Public Library, the Blackwood collection. Go... Read. Find out for yourself. And--

(beat)
Get her out--

CUT TO:

INT. THE BATHROOM - DAY

CAMERA SURVEYS the empty bathroom, coming to rest on the bathtub, which is concealed by the closed shower curtain.

From within, the SOUND of Sally, humming.

The mirrored door of a medicine cabinet opens...

From inside, a pair of shrunken little hands guides a coat hanger to the light switch.

CLICK. Darkness.

Sally stops humming and opens the curtains, just a crack, to look out.

Nothing in sight, just shadows, then--

---the dreaded scuttling sound again.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Kim enters the REFERENCE ROOM of the Providence Public Library. Utter silence except for the creaky floors.

She walks past long rows of desks with brass lamps and green glass shades.

MAIN DESK

She shows the numbers to a LIBRARIAN, an attractive young guy in a turtleneck and black jeans.

KIM
Does this make any sense? I mean, is it fiction, reference or history--?

LIBRARIAN
Special collections. Right this way.
INT. SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ROOM - DAY

The librarian guides her to a shelf of rare books. He double checks the book numbers.

LIBRARIAN
Here we are. Lot 11-24. Long time since anyone requested these. They’re beautiful books—

He hands Kim three large volumes bound in Morocco leather.

LIBRARIAN (cont’d)
(smiling at her)
What are you, at Brown? Art major?

KIM
I’m an architect. I’ve been working on the Blackwood house.

LIBRARIAN
Now, that’s a privilege.

Kim opens the books, which are full of drawings.

LIBRARIAN (cont’d)
Personally, I think Emerson Blackwood rivalled Audubon. We have several original watercolors upstairs. Most are at the Fogg in Cambridge...

Kim pauses at a spooky image: a grey-white face, peering out from an earthen tunnel...

INSERT: THE BLACKWOOD DIARIES

Dozens of horrifying illustrations of gnomish creatures. Delicately rendered, surrounded by notes in a cramped, tiny hand.

Exquisite, but morbid.

BACK TO SCENE

Astonished, Kim sits down at a reading table. The LIBRARIAN eagerly peers over her shoulder.

LIBRARIAN (cont’d)
It’s pretty ironic. For a committed realist, I mean, for someone who insisted on drawing only from life. Then, at the end of his life, he does these.
The drawings represent a weird world of caverns and little inhabitants: fairies and gnomes... pale and leprous.

LIBRARIAN (cont’d)
They became an obsession. Now, I’m thinking Rackham. Or Dulac, the suppressed drawings. Have you ever read Machen??

Kim shakes her head.

LIBRARIAN (cont’d)

Kim deciphers a few words:

KIM
“Wrinkles... claws... teeth...” Oh, God. (to the librarian)
I’d like to check these out, please.

LIBRARIAN
Sorry. Non-obtanium. These are unique, not for general circulation. Not for reproduction, either.

Kim’s face registers her worry and disappointment.

LIBRARIAN (cont’d)
But-
(whispers)
I’ll do some Xeroxing for you— if you promise me a tour of the house...

They head back to the main hall.

LIBRARIAN (cont'd)
Did you ever find his mural?

KIM
A mural? Where?

LIBRARIAN
In the house, supposedly. It’s a famous rumour, but if you do, I’d love to see it.

(beat)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
LIBRARIAN (cont'd)
You know, he committed suicide in his studio. After his youngest child disappeared-

A shiver goes up Kim’s spine.

INT. THE BATHROOM - DAY

Sally holds the shower curtains shut. The moving SHAPES on the other side are whispering:

VOICE
Cut her. I want to cut her — now —

CHORUS OF VOICES
(overlapping whispers)
No, no, wait! Too soon —

Sally’s toy fish bumps against her knees, as if offering encouragement. She suddenly scrapes back the shower curtain:

Nothing.

She steps from the bathtub, puts on her robe and heads for the door.

The linen closet door hinges open, as do grates and cabinets.

From each hiding place, a leering homunculus appears. Each is armed with a fork, a hanger, a knife...

VOICE
Not soon...! Now!

They charge, with SCAR, the Blackwood homunculus in the lead. Screaming, Sally jumps away. The Blackwood thing hacks at her feet.

She throws the bath mat over them, and dives into the tiny linen closet.

INSIDE THE LINEN CLOSET

Blades slide in from under the door; the doorknob rattles.

Sally screams, louder.

INT. THE KITCHEN - SAME

Mrs. Underhill hears her. Dropping her work, she runs out.
Mrs. Underhill goes as fast as she can. On the way up, a couple of WORKMEN join her.

The Homunculi slide the bolt on the door, LOCKING IT.

Sally tugs on the inner doorknob with all her might, but slowly, inexorably, the door is pulled open.

She grabs a curling iron and jabs it at the opening.

The creatures use a hunk of soap to keep the door ajar. They crowd around it, chattering, peeking through.

Sally keeps them at bay while they try to slice and stab her.

Sally’s darting little fingers manage to snatch away a STRAIGHT RAZOR! She uses it to fight back!!

A voice from the hall:

MRS. UNDERHILL (O.C.)
Sally, what is it?! Open the door...

SALLY
(screaming)
Help me! Help...!!

The workmen begin slamming into the bathroom door. The wood is thick, refusing to give.

The homunculi joyfully tear at Sally’s fingers and arms. They lunge at her face when –

The door finally breaks off its hinges. LIGHT pours in.

Instantly, the creatures flee. Mrs. Underhill finds Sally in the little cupboard, hysterical and crying.

CUT TO:
INT. HILTON HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE from a big crowd.

A SECRETARY trots down a side aisle and up a short flight of stairs to the STAGE. Not daring to go further, she gestures urgently to the guests seated in the spotlight.

Hundreds of FANS and REPORTERS laugh warmly as Alex, on the dais, smiles out at them.

ALEX
(in full flow)
...a critic who’s worse than any ex-wife
or divorce attorney. Sir Charles? You
want to defend modern marriage?

Also onstage: SIR CHARLES ARMITAGE, a lordly snob in a blue double-breasted suit and Hermès tie. He leans over his microphone.

SIR CHARLES
Not yours, dear boy.

The audience ROARS its approval. Alex and Sir Charles grin at each other.

ALEX
Not fair, sir. I just might re-marry...

Alex finally spots the secretary waving in the wings. Uh-oh. He abruptly gets up from his chair.

ALEX (cont’d)
...after a trial separation.

As he goes offstage, Sir Charles shoots him an astonished look.

SIR CHARLES
(to the crowd)
We have here an author who never seems to
run out of imagination. Even while he
runs out on me.

More laughter from the audience. During this, the SECRETARY drags Alex aside. Hands him a mobile phone.

CUT TO:
EXT. BLACKWOOD HOUSE - DAY

Kim gets out of a TAXI, surprised to find the driveway filled with police cars, their red and blue lights hitting the snow.

IN THE LIBRARY

From the foyer, Kim sees Alex in the library, conferring with half a dozen POLICEMEN.

ALEX
It's just a possibility, but after all, she's her father's daughter. I deal in fiction all day long- I'm not ruling anything out.

PLAINCLOTHES COP
Fine, but we'd still like to check with her mother. If you're not willing--

Alex sighs and picks up the telephone.

ALEX
No, no, I'll do it. It makes perfect sense. It's just awkward, that's all.
(checking his watch)
It's five o'clock in California. I'll try her cell phone.

Kim hurries on.

INT. SALLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Kim opens the door. Finding the bed empty, she runs down the stairs.

IN THE LIBRARY

Alex is on the phone to Joan. The police wait, listening.

ALEX
No, I mean within the last four hours.
(pause)
I see. Was your phone on the whole time?
(pause)
Okay, but do me a favor and check the machine at the house.
Alex makes eye contact with Kim as she enters the library, but stays on the phone.

**ALEX (cont’d)**

Stay calm, please, we both know what this is about. She’s upping the stakes, that’s all.

*(pause)*

Joan, just check the machine, okay? Use another line, I’ll hold.

*(to Kim)*

She’s hiding from us. I know she is.

Kim bolts out of the house.

**EXT. FROZEN POND – DAY**

Kim trots to the frozen pond. No sign of Sally.

Mrs. Underhill comes up, wrapped up in a warm coat. She’s been crying.

**MRS. UNDERHILL**

I’m sorry, Miss. I was doing my best— I couldn’t calm her down... So many cuts! I turned away for a moment...

Behind them, policemen are fanning out, looking through frost-covered bushes.

Kim runs back toward the house.

**INT. BASEMENT STUDIO – DAY**

Kim bursts in and looks around the underground space.

**KIM**

Oh, Jesus...

Once more, *the door is off the ash pit!!*

She goes over for a closer look.

The hole in the hearth gapes at her, looking for all the world like a screaming mouth.

Leaning close, Kim’s hair blows, stirred by a cold wind. A FLAPPING sound makes her jump.

It’s a strip of loose, brown WALLPAPER, dangling on the opposite wall.

*(CONTINUED)*
She pushes away some old boxes and savagely peels off the wallpaper, uncovering a MURAL — a strange, treeless landscape.

She moves back, like a museum-goer, trying to make sense of it.

**KIM (cont’d)**

* (gasp)

**THE MURAL**

In the shadows of a sinuous ravine, gnarled little hands are pulling a young boy underground. He is screaming as he sinks into a black pit.

**INT. THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Alex comes into the room. Kim is distraught.

**ALEX**

Where have you been?

**KIM**

Blackwood had a son! At age eight, he disappeared through that hearth.

**ALEX**

Great, thank you. You’re a big help. *(seeing the open ash pit)*

Who the hell’s been down here?

With sarcastic fury, he leans close to the opening.

**ALEX (cont’d)**

*(yelling)*

Okay, Sally! We know you’re in there, you can come out now!

*(to Kim)*

What took you so long? Do you have any idea what’s going on here?

**KIM**

*(bitter)*

Yes. I’m seeing Joan’s husband. Here he is, straight from the California divorce court!

**ALEX**

God damn it, Kim!
KIM
A year later after losing his son, Blackwood took his own life! Right in this room, Alex! That’s why they had Harris brick up the fireplace. The pit was here even before Roger Williams and the Baptists— the “open mouth” the Indians called it—

ALEX
Enough! I don’t appreciate your timing.

Kim pulls the Xeroxed pages from her shoulder bag.

KIM
In his diary, he writes about little wicked things. Here, listen:
(reading)
“Subhuman, perverse, and clever... living underground —”

ALEX
Stop. Don’t do this.

KIM
For centuries, parents have left milk teeth under the pillow. In his diaries, Blackwood says it began as some kind of pact made by Pope Sylvester II on the last night of the year 999. It was an offering to these ancient beings. He believed they fed on bones and teeth— and in exchange they left ancient silver pieces—

ALEX
Great. Now we’ve got the tooth fairy as a suspect. Please stop—

KIM
(reading)
“Every house has them! If something is lost or misplaced, it’s them, they take things...” He believed they dragged children down to—

ALEX
I said stop!!

Finally, she does. They stare at one another.
ALEX (cont’d)
I love my daughter. She’s in trouble ... but it is not a secret tribe of little demons.

Kim wordlessly points to the mural.

Alex slowly turns to take it in. As he reacts, one of the COPS comes down into the room.

UNIFORMED COP
We’ve found her footprints. In the snow, in the back yard, by the fence.

Alex looks at Kim in relief and vindication. She looks away, feeling foolish and confused.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUSY ROAD - TWILIGHT
Dusk. Traffic sizzles by on wet pavement.
Sally walks, shivering in the rain, wearing her little backpack.
A police car passes by, then stops.
The girl stops too, her breath trailing into the cold air.
The back door opens: out come Alex and Kim. They rush to the little girl, just as a jumbo jet ROARS somewhere overhead. As Alex embraces his daughter, she looks up at the clouds as the deafening sound recedes.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT
A couple of COPS sit in front, driving through suburban streets, on their way back to the Blackwood house. A police RADIO mutters quietly through bursts of static.
Riding in the back seat: Kim, Alex and Sally.

ALEX
Where were you going?
No answer from Sally. Kim watches her attentively. She is very pale.

ALEX (cont’d)
Sally, listen to me... no matter what crazy stories Mr. Harris told you...
(MORE)
ALEX (cont’d)
(Sally looks at him)
Fairies are not real. They’re just stories, for little kids at bedtime... But not for you. Got it?

SALLY
They are real. With knives and sticks and razors. They’re all over the house. I had a fight with them. See?

She shows Alex her fingers and arms, covered in Band-aids.

ALEX
No, they are not real. Not in the dark, not in the light of day. (examining her wounds)
Sally... Pain is scary. I know— I know how you must feel— how you must hurt. But... whatever’s troubling you right now, we’ll fix it. I promise.

EXT. THE BLACKWOOD MANSION – NIGHT

The police car pulls up and stops at the front entrance of the house.

ALEX
This house is just a big old building, that’s all...

Sally gazes up at it, feeling as if it’s ready to swallow her whole.

Suddenly, she bolts. Alex sprints after her and manages to grab her by the collar. She starts screaming and flailing.

Kim hurries over, trying to comfort the child. To her surprise, Sally tears free of her father and wraps her arms around her neck.

SALLY
No, no, I don’t want to go in there! Please... don’t make me go in there—!

With the cops watching impassively, Kim carries the pathetic child up the front steps and back into the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN – DAY

A bright, sunny afternoon.

(CONTINUED)
Mrs. Underhill expertly filets a salmon into wafer-thin slices, arranging them on a tray.

She leaves the knife on the table.

THE RECEPTION AREA

Mrs. Underhill carries the tray into the reception area, where a big U-shaped table has been brought in. CATERERS are setting up a bar and a coat check area.

Alex comes down the MAIN STAIRCASE, a telephone pressed to his ear. He’s freshly showered, and wears a terry-cloth robe.

ALEX
No, I’m not counting on it, but Sir Charles was on the phone to Los Angeles—
(pause)
They’re friends, yes. Gould is CEO now but still head of the studio. Evidently he’s reading the book and he likes it.
(pause)
Good. See you later.

He hangs up and strolls among the staff, checking on the elaborate place settings and rented china. He stops at the beautiful salmon plate.

ALEX (cont’d)
(to Mrs. Underhill)
Can I? Just one little piece?

MRS. UNDERHILL
(scolding)
Don’t you dare!

Alex obeys as she goes back to—

INT. KITCHEN

Mrs. Underhill opens the fridge and brings out another salmon. She places it on the carving table but...

The knife’s missing. She looks around. No sign of it.

In fact, ALL THE KNIVES ARE GONE.

She kneels and checks underneath the table: nothing there. Then, she hears a scratching noise.

She spots a knife on the floor, disappearing around a corner.

(CONTINUED)
MRS. UNDERHILL

Sally?

She hears a SNICKER. She moves into the—

DINING ROOM

— and stops short.

MRS. UNDERHILL

Oh, my God...

Long scratches run along the fine wooden floor.

MRS. UNDERHILL

(cont’d)

Child, child, what have you—

She sees the tip of one of the knives tapping, taunting... luring her along.

THE RECEPTION AREA

Various WAITERS and CATERERS are there, oblivious to the trail of scratches that the old woman follows. Alex calls out to her.

ALEX

Is anything the matter, Mrs. Underhill?

She shakes her head, and manages a smile. Alex’s attention goes back to the CATERERS.

MRS. UNDERHILL

Follows the trail to the small EBONY DOOR. It’s half open.

For a moment, she pauses, glancing back at the busy staff. No one pays her any mind.

CAMERA MOVES PAST HER...

...to find one of the top steps missing.

A small figure runs a wire along the steps. The wire grows taut: a TRAP!!

Mrs. Underhill tries the light, but the switch has been smashed to pieces.

(CONTINUED)
MRS. UNDERHILL
Sally. Come up here this instant! You know your father—

The woman starts down—

—her foot trips on the wire—

— and she drops out of view. A sickening THUD... and the ebony door closes silently.

IN THE BASEMENT

The old woman tries to stand, her forehead bleeding. But as she does so—

—a knife slashes her Achilles tendon.

With a shriek, she falls again. Her head cracks down near the opening of the ash pit.

Dozens of little fingers grip her clothing and hair. One shoe flies off. She is brutally yanked—

—through the narrow opening!...

...her back snapping as she’s pulled in.

Gone.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE IN THE RECEPTION AREA

No one has noticed a thing. A CHRISTMAS TUNE STARTS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A rigid, tight-lipped Sally is dressed in velvet and lace. Kim, in a dressing gown and curlers, is brushing Sally’s hair, counting the strokes.

KIM
Four, three, two, one. There. See? It’s the last ten brushings that make it shine.

(CONTINUED)
When she takes a HAIRPIN from the dresser, she discovers the SILVER DOLLAR and Alex’s ornate, silver STRAIGHT RAZOR.

She slowly shows it to Sally.

SALLY
I took it back! From them. They stole it.

KIM
Sally... this is not a toy.

SALLY
I need it! To fight back! Please...

KIM
(pocketing the razor)
No.

Kim studies Sally’s pale, frightened face.

KIM (cont’d)
(after a beat)
I have a better idea. Just for tonight.

She offers the child the POLAROID CAMERA.

KIM (cont’d)
It has fresh film inside. If they come back, take a picture. Then we’ll show your Dad.

Sally locks eyes with her, shakes her head, dead serious.

SALLY
They don’t like bright lights.

KIM
Good. Then they’ll go away while we make a plan. Sound good?

Sally dubiously takes the camera and looks it over.

SALLY
(thinking)
How do you work it?

KIM
Let me show you.
EXT. THE FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Now in a dark suit, Alex opens the front door to greet some guests.

Behind him, other arrivals are shedding hats and coats, chatting happily.

FLASH! Sally leans out from behind her father and takes a photo of the visitors.

The adults chortle and pat her on the head.

She takes the picture and stuffs it in her pocket.

ALEX

(to Sally)

What are you doing, honey?

SALLY

You’ll see.

INT. THE LIBRARY - SAME

A few of the well-dressed GUESTS wander into the library, admiring the period decor and the original art.

A fire crackles in the hearth; WAITERS circulate, offering flutes of champagne.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

Alex glances over at the bar, looking for Kim. He’s ambushed by an older woman.

OLDER WOMAN

Congratulations, dear Alex. Top of the charts as usual.

ALEX

(kissing her cheek)
Hi, Doris. Don’t you look festive...

Flash! Sally takes another photo. Doris laughs, surprised.

ALEX (CONT’D)

(cont’d)

(to Sally)

Easy, honey. Some people don’t like to be photographed.

(CONTINUED)
SALLY
I don’t care. Kim said I could.

ALEX
How about you go upstairs and tell her to get moving. We have a houseful and I’m getting desperate...

(seeing another guest)
Ah, Dr. Utley... here’s your prettiest patient...

He turns, but Sally is across the room, clutching her trusty camera. She’s on the prowl, checking everywhere.

DR. UTLEY
I got your message. Can we talk tonight?

ALEX
Tomorrow. But visit with her, keep an eye on her moods. Kim and I, we’re both out of answers.

NEAR THE STAIRS
Sally warily slows down, feeling herself watched. In the Christmas tree... amid the ornaments...

...evil little faces are grinning at her! She quickly raises the Polaroid. FLASH!

The Polaroid picture pops from the camera. Sally takes it, waiting for the photo to develop. Meanwhile, she double checks the Christmas tree. Now, the figures are gone.

The DOORBELL rings.

INT. THE FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS
In the front hall, Alex greets SIR CHARLES.

SIR CHARLES
This house is absolutely fantastic. I had no idea.

ALEX
As they say: to the manor born. Is Lady Evelyn with you?

SIR CHARLES
Coming by taxi.
Sally runs up, holding her half-developed Polaroid photo. It features a jumble of Christmas tree branches... and a half-hidden DEMONIC FACES...

SALLY
Dad—! Look—

ALEX
Not now, kiddo.

SIR CHARLES
Hello there, young lady. You look just like your father.

Sally is riveted by the emerging photo... evidence! She thumps her father on the leg.

SALLY
Dad!!

ALEX
You know what I’d like, Sally? A nice photo of Mrs. Underhill. Could you do that for me? And ask her where she’s been.

SIR CHARLES
So, where’s this beautiful Kim of yours?

Alex laughs and hurries off.

ALEX
On her way.

Sir Charles leans over Sally, craning his neck to see her photo. She turns away and quickly pockets it.

INT. SALLY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex enters the child’s bedroom and is bewildered by what he finds: Kim, in jeans and a sweatshirt, packing Sally’s suitcase.

ALEX
Have you totally lost your mind?

KIM
Why take a chance? At best, at best!—Sally’s slipping into Emerson Blackwood’s dream world, and we’re standing by.
ALEX
Nobody’s standing by! Get yourself changed, for Christ’s sake! Everyone’s here -

KIM
She had this.

Kim hands him the straight razor.

ALEX
Finally. Thank God.

KIM
And this.

She shows him the silver dollar.

KIM (cont’d)
You still can’t explain the date-

ALEX
(frowning)
Joan. Her house is full of antiques-
(seeing Kim’s skepticism)
No! Don’t start with the “ancient tooth fairy” thing, okay? Not now – Sir Charles is here, he’s waiting – there’s food on the table –

KIM
She’s your daughter, Alex!

ALEX
Yes! And ever since she was tiny, she saw Joan manipulating – getting her way...

KIM
Fine! Whatever! Send her back to California, where she’ll feel safe... and sell this house! I’m sorry we ever found it -

There’s a quiet KNOCK on the door. A CATERER leans in.

CATERER
Excuse me, Mr. Hurst... should we serve the dinner now?

ALEX
Dammit! Where’s Mrs. Underhill?

Behind him, Kim is zipping up Sally’s suitcase.
INT. RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

Dinner is underway.

Seated next to Sir Charles and across from Dr. Utley, Sally tries to behave while glancing nervously around. The Polaroid camera is next to her plate.

DR. UTLEY
(to Sally)
Aren’t you going to take my picture? Here I am, all dressed up...

Sir Charles smiles at Sally.

SIR CHARLES
I know what Sally’s doing. Santa might show up, and she wants the proof.

At the head of the table, Alex stands and raises his glass. Next to him, Kim’s chair is empty.

ALEX
Does everyone have something to drink? (winking at his daughter)
Not you, Sally...

Warm laughter as people raise their glasses.

Sally feels something pull her napkin to the floor. Sir Charles picks it up for her and Sally puts it on her lap again.

ALEX (cont’d)
I’d like to toast all kinds of things tonight, starting with this wonderful room full of wonderful people. (another wink at Sally)
Both big and small.

Again, adult chuckles. And again, something pulls Sally’s napkin, insistently, urgently...!

She pulls back.

ALEX (cont’d)
Here’s to all my oldest friends, who, I’m proud to say, are my severest critics...

Sally’s in a tug of war — !

ALEX (cont’d)
...friends who can look me in the eye...

(CONTINUED)
Peeking under the tablecloth, she stares directly into the wizened face of one of the HOMUNCULI!

ALEX (cont’d)
...and say, Alex, Chapter 3 is grotesque.
No one will believe it.

The creature lunges— and thrusts its paw into Sally’s pocket, grabbing the Polaroid photo!

Sally jerks back, upsetting a water glass. The neighboring guests turn, murmuring. She grabs the camera, looks under the table again.

The gnomish thing is there, ripping the picture to shreds. Grinning, it retreats, step by step.

Alex is irked, but keeps going...

ALEX (cont’d)
(to Sally)
Some critics are even more eloquent, aren’t you, darling.

UNDER THE TABLE

Ducking down to floor level, Sally sees movement in the curtains near the library door.

She scrambles past adult legs and shoes, fast as she can.

ALEX

Pauses as a Polaroid FLASH illuminates the tablecloth, X-raying the guests’ legs.

Murmurs ripple through the dining room.

ALEX (cont’d)
(flustered)
Well. Um, yes. Someone said not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
Maybe we should revise that...

INT. THE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Sally enters the enormous room filled with books. Her father is audible in the background.

The big library door SLIDES SHUT. It’s DARK in here...
INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME

Kim is in her bedroom, packing her own bag. She can hear the sound of LAUGHTER from below.

INT. THE LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Sally sprints for the light switch, turns it on.

A heavy volume tumbles to the floor, all by itself. Something small and quick flits behind the books.

VOICE
Be one of us, Sally— one of us.

SALLY
(tensing)
Come out, then, I’m ready.

She whirls as a couple more books fall on the opposite side of the room. She is surrounded.

VOICE
Sally play?

It’s SCAR—

SALLY
Yes, I want to play, Scar.

A movement in the darkest corner: two imps are perched on top of an encyclopedia!

Sally furiously runs toward them, and fires the Polaroid. FLASH!

When she looks up, they’re gone.

SALLY
carefully rolls the enormous bookcase aside...

...then another. Unbearably, they reveal nothing... Then-

CLICK. The lights go out again.

SWISSSH!!

One of the COAT HANGERS rips her dress. Another one hooks her collar.
She's suddenly face to face with one of the HOMUNCULI - SCAR: the Blackwood thing - its gappy teeth gleaming.

She screams, and pushes on a row of books...

...pinning the thing until it SQUEALS. It pushes back!

The POLAROID falls and flashes. SCAR scurries away-

INT. THE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Kim quietly comes down the grand staircase, suitcase in hand.

She hears a CRASH.

THE SAME NOISE...

...draws Alex and the guests towards the library. Alex tries the sliding door, but it won’t move.

Sir Charles strolls up, concerned. Appalled, Alex pounds on the door.

ALEX

Sally! Open this door!

IN THE LIBRARY

...the game continues.

More and more BOOKS are thudding to the floor.

The two creatures scamper up the walls, knocking down a couple of Blackwood paintings with the CRASH of broken glass.

SCAR hops onto Sally’s back, like an overgrown spider.

She screams and grabs at it, but it nimbly avoids her hands.

It pulls her hair, leans forward and scratches her neck with a needle.

Enraged, Sally throws it off. It scoots away. Another CREATURE clings to the far end of a book case. It leans out and leers at her.

She heaves the sliding bookcase with all her might.

It carries the screeching HOMUNCULUS down the rails.

Sally runs alongside, pushing faster and faster...

(CONTINUED)
...trundling the massive bookcase like a locomotive...

BOOM!!! into the far wall, crushing and grinding, cracking the plaster.

After a second of silence, a loud POP echoes through the room. One of the WAITERS, armed with a pry bar, breaks the catch on the double doors and rolls them apart.

Light spills into the room.

ALEX AND THE GUESTS

...find Sally leaning against the bookcase, panting. She’s a mad thing, hardly aware of them.

ALEX
Sally? Honey?... Look at me...

When he turns her to face him, they hear a SCUTTLING sound...

Instinctively, several guests look around the room.

Someone turns on the lights...

SIR CHARLES
There’s a broken window, Alex. You’ve had a raccoon in here, I think...
(surveying the damage)
...maybe a whole family.

Kim elbows past the guests.

Takes Sally’s face in her hands.

KIM
What happened, Sally? Was it them? (Sally nods) Did you take a picture?

Sally tears free, grabs the Polaroid picture.

It’s a single blurry image: Sally screaming.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BLACKWOOD MANSION - DAWN

There’s a lone Volvo parked near the front steps; a wan, gray sky signals the coming of dawn, and with it, the promise of snow.

(CONTINUED)
A flock of crows squats in the bare trees behind the house. Suddenly, they start CAWING. With a noisy flapping of wings, they all take off at once.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAWN

From the upstairs landing, Kim looks down at Alex and Dr. Utley.

DR. UTLEY
No coffee, thanks. And none for you, either. You should go to bed, get some rest.

ALEX
I don't think I can. Doctor—she—
(fearing how it may sound)
There's a bloodstain in the library... On the wall. But—it—it could be a rat, right?

DR. UTLEY
Look, Mr. Hurst—She's going to sleep most of the day... if you want, I can prescribe something for you, too.

ALEX
No. Thanks. I think I'll make some breakfast. I'll concentrate on scrambled eggs. With a cup of de-caf, okay?

Kim wearily walks down the hall to their bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sally is in their bed, asleep. Kim picks up a bottle of TRANQUILIZERS. Screws the cap on tight.

At the window, she glances outside; a snowstorm has begun. Kim shuts the blinds as Dr. Utley's Volvo pulls away.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

A thin, high wind is howling; snowflakes clatter against the windowpanes.

Alex wades among the books, which are scattered everywhere. He does his best to clean things up.

Gathering his courage, he rolls back the big bookcase and studies...

(CONTINUED)
...the BLOODSTAIN on the wall.

He plucks something off the floor - a tiny HAND, with wrinkled skin and only three fingers.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - LATER

Alex studies the horrible mural.

Tying a flashlight onto a coil of clothesline, he kneels at the open ash pit and counts off estimated yards as he pays out the rope.

ALEX

(muttering)

31... 32...

Eventually, the entire rope is used up.

ALEX (cont’d)

(disbelieving)

A hundred feet...?

As if in reply, the eerie WIND wafts from the pit. Alex twists the rope around, making an attempt to shine the light on the walls down below.

INT. UNDERGROUND - SAME

Underground, the LIGHT misses a myriad of homunculi by mere inches. The busy, whispering things cluster in the shadows, pressed against wet rock.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Kim enters behind Alex, holding the diary pages. Hearing her...

ALEX

(startled)

Jesus Christ - !

(recovering)

You scared the hell out of me!

Kim glances at the figure of the child in the mural.

KIM

Well, this is a scary place.

(seeing something)

What’s that?

(CONTINUED)
ALEX
On the table? A hand. A paw - I’m hoping a rat, a weasel...

KIM
No. Not that -

Letting the rope dangle, Alex follows her gaze across the room.

Lying in the corner: MRS. UNDERHILL’S SHOE!

CUT TO:

INT. THE STAIRWELL - LATER

Alex and Kim sit opposite the double staircase; they stare at the little ebony door, which is open and looking ominous.

Kim takes Mrs. Underhill’s shoe from Alex’s hands.

KIM
She wouldn’t just leave, with no explanation, no note.

ALEX
What in hell do I say to the police?

KIM
What do you care? We show them what there is and that’s it. You have to stop trying to figure things out and start protecting your child. Stop being a “rational adult” and start being a goddam father!!

He rubs his face and heaves a huge, tired sigh.

ALEX
We can’t stay here- not like this. I wrote the damn book, let someone else promote it.

(looks around)
And to hell with this house. We’re leaving. All three of us. Together, Kim. Now-

He springs to his feet. Goes under the stairs and kicks the ebony door shut. Wedges a foot stool under the knob.

CAMERA LIFTS to reveal several pairs of shining eyes watching from a heating grate just above their heads.

FADE TO BLACK.

(CONTINUED)
FADE IN:

EXT. THE DRIVEWAY - LATER

Snow still falls steadily. Alex shovels a path from the house down to the garage.

He pauses to glance up at the late afternoon clouds; no sign of any letup. Clicking a REMOTE CONTROL, he opens the garage door.

INT. THE GARAGE - DAY

He tries the BMW. Cold battery... it won’t start...

Then, suddenly, it catches.

Leaving the car running, Alex returns to the house.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

A very sleepy Sally is being dressed by Kim. A trio of MUGS of hot chocolate are steaming on the night table.

Covered in snow, Alex enters and picks up their suitcases.

ALEX
(to Sally)

All set, sleepy head?

(to Kim)

We’ve got six inches out there. Give me a few more minutes.

(back to Sally)

Remember I promised snow? Well, like they say, be careful what you wish for.

Kim offers him a mug of cocoa. He takes it.

EXT. GARAGE - DUSK

Alex methodically clears the driveway down to the GARAGE.

He turns. Somehow, the garage door has closed. He curses under his breath and uses the RC to open it again. There.

INT. GARAGE - SAME

Alex walks past the running BMW, glances up at the overhead door motor, and places the RC on the workbench.
He pulls out a plastic box of tire chains.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME

Sally, fully dressed in her wool hat, coat and mittens, is stretched out on the bed, half sunk into the pillows. She sleepily looks over at the window.

A new blast of wind rattles the window panes and sends the snow swirling on the outer sill. It’s dark out now.

SALLY
Where are we going?

KIM
A hotel, a big one. In downtown Providence.

SALLY
Don’t leave me here...!

KIM
Sally! Never, never, never. This time and every time, I’ll be right by your side. (taking her hand) You go back to sleep, honey.

Sally gazes gravely at Kim, her eyelids fluttering. She yawns.

When the girl’s eyes finally close, Kim tries to take the POLAROID CAMERA from her hand.

No use, the girl instinctively holds on.

Kim smiles. Then a NOISE: the plastic sleeping pill bottle has been knocked to the floor.

Kim turns and carefully looks around: no one’s in the room.

She retrieves the pill bottle from under the bed. She has a good look under there too, just for good measure.

Finally she gets up and puts the cap back on the pill bottle. Gulps the last of her hot cocoa.

When she puts the mug down, CAMERA closes in on it--

At the bottom of the mug, a residue of crushed pills.
INT. THE LIBRARY - NIGHT

All the lights are out. A CHORUS of excited, sibilant WHISPERS echoes from the huge library fireplace.
There, a pack of chattering figures climbs into the room.

INT. THE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The troupe of little beings mounts the main staircase, armed with a ball of TWINE.

INT. THE GARAGE - NIGHT

Clouds of exhaust smoke pour out of the open garage door and into the night.

Alex sits on the floor, fitting the chains onto the car. Suddenly, he hears the garage door closing again.

It shuts with a dull BOOM; the garage is completely dark.

He gets up, goes to the workbench and gropes for the RC. It’s gone. He curses and turns on the BMW headlights. The garage is swirling with exhaust smoke.

Alex shuts off the car engine and fetches a stepladder. He drags it over and climbs up to reach the garage door’s manual release.

He doesn’t notice a length of clothesline wrapped around one of the ladder legs.

EXT. BEHIND THE HOUSE - NIGHT

In a dark corner of the rear veranda, the homunculi rip the circuit breakers from the fuse box. SCAR takes hold of the wires!!

SPARKS leap out into the night, lighting up their gruesome faces.
The lights go off inside the house.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME

Kim tenses. She pulls a flashlight from the night stand and turns it on.

(CONTINUED)
After trying the wall switch, she quietly opens the door to the hallway.

Nothing.

Feeling dizzy, she glances back at Sally, who is sleeping peacefully.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Kim leans unsteadily into the darkened corridor, using her lighter to see in the dark.

She hears movement and looks up: the CARVED ANIMAL FACES on the friezes seem malignant now, alive and gleeful. She blinks her eyes, trying to bring things into focus.

The dark, wizened carvings open their eyes...!

Kim hears more movement; using her lighter, she looks again.

Now the “carved” figures are gone. She staggers briefly, feeling ill.

INT. THE GARAGE - SAME

Alex’s fingers are about to release the garage door trip lever when—

—the ladder is pulled out from under him!

He falls hard.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

In the hallway, Kim hears the faint sound of the car STARTING AGAIN.

Looking out a window, she can see the garage roof. When she throws open the sash, snow swirls in.

    KIM

Alex?!

No answer. Nothing but the distant purring of...
THE CAR

-inside the garage, spewing more carbon monoxide fumes. Alex lies unconscious near the ladder.

INT. THE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Hurrying now, KIM trips on the TWINE stretched tight across the top step.

Kim grabs the bannister... but she isn’t strong enough. She falls in silence, pitching, tumbling, rolling...

...all the way down to the next landing. Drifting into darkness, she FINALLY SEES THEM.

Watching from the bottom of the stairs with gleaming, triumphant eyes. They start marching up, closer and closer. SCAR AT THE FOREFRONT!!

SCAR

Little girl-

CHORUS OF VOICES

Little girl... little girl...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sally stirs and lifts her head. She squints uncertainly; the room is somehow askew.

She hears tiny footsteps. Reaching out in the dark, across the bed, she knocks over a mug.

SALLY

Kim...?

Kim is gone, again.

SALLY (cont’d)

Nooo!

(yelling)

Kim! Where are you!?

Panicking, she grabs her Polaroid and staggers out of bed, clutching the walls, trying to keep her balance. She tries the light switch, then, groggily moves on. The whole world is spinning.
Daddy?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Heavily drugged, she stumbles down the hall. Her legs are weak as she reaches the...

UPSTAIRS LANDING

Disoriented, Sally turns at the faintest noise. She fumbles with the Polaroid, FLASHES it again. Pathetic.

Now the laughter starts, from all over the enormous reception area. Mocking her.

CHORUS OF VOICES

Nobody wants her... Nobody likes her.

Sally’s alone—

At the top step she looks down, seeing Kim at the base of the stairs, splayed out like a forgotten marionette. Blood is puddling around her head.

SALLY

Kim—!

As she steps forward, the twine retreats into darkness. She impulsively grabs it, fighting the things on the other end.

SALLY (cont’d)

No—! You can’t—!

ZZZZTT!!! They pull it from her hands, leaving a nasty burn on her palms.

Weeping now, Sally starts down, step by unsteady step, clutching the bannister. CAMERA follows, detailing the journey of her naked feet down the dark staircase.

On the next landing, the girl wobbles over to Kim.

SALLY (cont’d)

Kim, wake up... Wake up, please!!

SNICKERING from below.

CHORUS OF VOICES

(taunting)

Wake up, Kim. Wake up.
Kim MOANS and stirs. Ignoring the blood, Sally collapses next to her and holds tight, like a frightened, newborn animal.

INT. THE GARAGE - NIGHT

Alex gets to his knees, confused and coughing. He lurches to his feet and pulls on the car doors. Locked.

He gropes his way through the noxious fog. Tries the garage service door: also locked.

He grabs a wrench and breaks a window.

EXT. THE GARAGE - SAME

Alex tries to reach the doorknob. Something slices the back of his hand.

He screams as blood spurts out. A deep cut. He tries again, endures the agony of CUT after CUT, and is finally able to open the door.

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alex bursts into the big, dark kitchen. All the gas burners are on, casting a weird, blue shimmer on the walls.

A FLASH from the hall.

He runs toward it, tripping on pots and pans, forks and knives. The place has been trashed.

As he nears the door, WHAM: it slams shut. He struggles with the lock: useless. It won’t give. He pauses, hearing tiny VOICES, then something sliding... and sees more FLASHES from under the door.

Panting, he cautiously looks through the keyhole.

ALEX’S POV

Kim lies at the base of the stairs!! Where’s Sally?

ALEX

Kim!?... Jesus, oh, Jesus!!

He gets up, pounding the door. Just then, unseen by him--SWISH!!! a KNITTING NEEDLE pokes through the keyhole!
ON THE OTHER SIDE

Standing on top of each other, the creatures retract the needle and ready it again. Such fun.

IN THE KITCHEN

Alex pounds on the door.

ALEX

Kim!... Sally?! He takes another look through the keyhole...

C.U.: ALEX’S EYE

The KNITTING NEEDLE stabs through the keyhole, into his cheek!!!

He staggers back, screaming, as blood flows.

INT. THE STAIRWELL - SAME

A ROPE cinches tight around Sally's ankles. Her little body is pulled in sharp jerks down the steps; her head bangs in cruel, sickening thuds.

SCAR yanks the rope and commands the others to follow suit—grunting—growling.

Foot by foot, she is dragged across the reception room. They are taking her to the ebony door.

Half-conscious, she lifts her head and snaps a picture. And another. Each POLAROID FLASH disperses the creatures, but they soon regroup and pull again.

INT. THE KITCHEN - SAME

Alex hurls himself against the door, again and again.

He crosses to the drawers, opening them all, looking for a useful tool. He finds a heavy, old MEAT MALLET.

He whacks it against the lock. It starts to give!!

INT. RECEPTION AREA - SAME

Sally tries to grab onto everything that goes by: chairs, tables, rugs...

(CONTINUED)
She’s too weak to hold on.

The homunculi carry on, relentlessly nearing the door. Guided by SCAR.

They swarm under the foot stool and carry it away.

KIM

...bleeding profusely, crawls after Sally, flashlight in hand.
She cries out in pain with each movement: her leg is broken.

KIM

Hang on, Sally—!

Up ahead, the child is dragged down the basement steps.

ALEX

...has managed to destroy the lock. Using his fingers, aching and slippery with blood, he tries to disengage the locking mechanism.

The KNITTING needle sinks deep into his hand.

Alex SCREAMS, but won’t quit. The needle stabs again, lodging between the finger bones.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Kim hobbles down the stairs. Sally is being hauled across the room.

The rope stretches from her ankles to the open ash pit: the homunculi are now pulling from below.

Kim grabs a knife and heads for the rope.

Sally’s body keeps lurching, closer and closer to oblivion. She clings to Kim, crying...

SALLY

No, no, no... I don’t want to go!

KIM

I’ve got you, Sally! I’m here...!

Sally’s flailing hand pulls off Kim’s gold chain and pearl pendant.

(CONTINUED)
Kim saws with the knife, desperately cutting as best she can. She promised; she will not give up.

SNAP: The rope parts. Sudden SILENCE.

Kim shines her light onto the fireplace. Like a collection of bats, weird little faces gather in the ash pit opening. The blinking eyes swivel onto Kim and narrow in anger. SCAR laughs—

A wheezy, raspy, evil little laugh.

Snarling, an entire ARMY of homunculi floods into the room! More and more pour up from below and overrun the floor, the walls—

Dozens of lances and knives slice Kim’s clothes and flesh.

She staggers to her feet and stabals back, slashing and cutting. But the hooks sink deep into her skin and latch onto her clothing.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - SAME

Upstairs, Alex finally gets the door open.

He hears a SCREAM from the basement.

Strewn across the floor, like Hansel and Gretel's bread crumbs... he sees a trail of POLAROID PICTURES.

He follows them to the stairwell, through the ebony door.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Alex enters the room. For a moment, no one seems to be there. Then, a WHIMPER from the corner.

Sally’s there. They embrace.

Kim is gone.

Uncomprehending, Alex picks up the fallen flashlight and peers into the darkness of the open ash pit.

Not a sound.

Only shadows.
EXT. BLACKWOOD HOUSE - DAY

A taxi cab is parked in front of the house. Alex finishes loading a couple of suitcases into the trunk.

He looks over the snow-covered property and sees a small figure in the farthest corner of the garden.

EXT. GARDEN - SAME

Sally stands on the frozen pond, looking down at the fish.

She deposits a small bouquet of flowers and kneels on the ice.

SALLY
(tiny whisper)
Thank you, Kim.

She leaves.

INT. THE CAB - DAY

The cab pulls away with Alex and Sally inside. In her hand, she holds Kim’s gold chain and its pearl pendant.

Sally looks back. She sees-

EXT. THE BLACKWOOD MANSION - DAY

A dark hulk against the gray, heavy sky.

CAMERA moves closer, inspecting the stone and timber details.

Whispery voices hiss:

CHORUS OF VOICES
When? When will they come? When will we get them?

A new VOICE, Kim’s — but aged and distorted— joins the whispers:

KIM’S VOICE
Soon. Soon... They will forget... They will come back... We have all the time in the world. All the time in the world...

FADE OUT
THE END