

EXEC. PRODUCERS: Sam Raimi
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COORD. PRODUCER: Dean Barnes

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AMERICAN GOTHIC

"Ring of Fire"

Written

by

Stephen Gaghan & Michael R. Perry

Directed

by

Lou Antoni6

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#K0613

AMERICAN GOTHIC

"Ring of Fire"

CAST

SHERIFF LUCAS BUCK
GAIL EMORY
DR. MATT CROWER
SELENA COOMBS
CALEB TEMPLE

CHRISTINE EMORY (GAIL'S MOTHER)
PETER EMORY (GAIL'S FATHER)
EVELYN GARDNER.
FLOYD
DAMON
FEMALE DOCTOR
TODDLER

SETS

INTERIORS:

GAIL'S APARTMENT
BEDROOM
BUCK HOUSE
FOYER
LUCAS' BEDROOM
ARCHIVES
SELENA'S HOUSE
KITCHEN
FANCY RESTAURANT
CABIN
HOSPITAL
LOBBY
HALLWAY
MATT'S OFFICE
SHERIFF'S STATION
RECEPTION
NEWSPAPER OFFICE
BURNED-OUT NEWSPAPER BUILDING
CITY ROOM

EXTERIORS:

GAIL'S APARTMENT
BUCK HOUSE
BOARDING HOUSE
PORCH
FANCY RESTAURANT
STREET
CABIN
598 LILAC WAY
TOWN
STREET
WATER
BURNED-OUT NEWSPAPER BUILDING

VEHICLES:

GAIL'S MUSTANG
LUCAS' CROWN VIC

AMERICAN GOTHIC

"Ring of Fire"

TEASER

FADE IN

1 INT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

1

MUSIC OVER

Mahler's Requiem, haunting and bittersweet.

WHITE CANDLES

burn -- dozens of them.

GAIL

hums along O.S. -- we hear water running and splashing. A beat, and then she comes into the room. She's wearing a silk bathrobe or kimono; she's anointing her arms with lotion.

THE WINDOWS

are black and cold -- the shades are still up.

GAIL

shivers, rubs her skin more vigorously, as if to get warm.

GAIL'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Honey? Are you getting ready for bed?

HER MOTHER'S FACE

appears in a window to the left.

GAIL

reacts. She stares at her mother's face with longing.

GAIL

(softly)
Yes, Mother.

It's clear this is not the first time she's seen this face before her.

GAIL'S MOTHER (V.O.)

That's my girl. My darling daughter.

CONTINUED

1 CONTINUED

1

GAIL
Good night, Mother.

MAN (V.O.)
(harsh; sardonic)
Good night, darling.

WHIP PAN to the window on the right.

A MAN'S FACE

floats in the black space.

GAIL

shrinks back; pulls her robe more tightly closed in front of her. She pulls the shade down -- the face disappears at the other window.

GAIL
(worried)
Mother?

But her mother's gone. Gail goes to the first window, starts to pull the shade down.

GAIL'S POINT OF VIEW - LUCAS

leaning against the Buckmobile. Watching her window. Arms crossed in front of him. Not whistling, not smirking -- looking up at her window with a kind of watchful tenderness. Maybe.

GAIL

pulls down the shade. She moves away from the window, her face revealing nothing. She blows out one of the candles, then another -- she pinches the wicks between her fingers. We hear the tiny sizzle of scorched flesh.

2 EXT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LUCAS

2

rock still, looking up. He sees Gail's silhouette moving around the room, the light growing dimmer as the candles go out. Lucas watches and waits.

THE FULL MOON - STOCK

is revealed in a passing fog.

3 INT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

3

The last candle goes out. Moonlight slants across part of the room. Gail, humming again to the music, drops her robe as she passes out of frame.

We hear her soft humming, a bedroom door close O.S., and then the music fading out.

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

4 EXT. BUCK HOUSE - DAY - CALEB

4

stands on the sidewalk, staring up at the house. His old bike lies on the lawn.

CLOUDS

billow overhead, a strong WIND blows fallen leaves across the porch -- a tree branch hammers at a window with a bony fist.

CALEB

lunges himself against the strong wind, until

A HUGE GUST knocks him ass over teakettle -- he rolls toward the front door, helpless as a tumbleweed, until a

HAND

enters frame and picks him up. It's Gail. She hunches down, brushes him off.

You okay?

GAIL

I think so.

CALEB

THE STREET

is quiet and still: windless.

Funny how the wind's only blowing at Lucas' house.

GAIL

Caleb looks up and down the street, sees her point; reacts uneasily.

(pressing)
Don't you think that's funny, Caleb?

GAIL

It's because of the microclimber.

CALEB

The microclimber?

GAIL

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED

4

CALEB

(nodding)
One side of your house is cold as ice, the other's hotter 'n hell -- depending on the exposure of the sun.

GAIL

Oh. The microclimate.
(impressed)
Miss Coombs teach you that?

She picks up his bike, walks it and him away from the house.
As they walk,

CALEB

No. Lucas did.

GAIL

Lucas?

Gail shudders -- briefly, but violently, hearing Caleb mention his name so casually.

CALEB

Yes, ma'am -- he says every mystery can be explained by science.

GAIL

He did, did he. What else does he tell you?

Caleb hesitates, then:

CALEB

He says there're secrets, and only he knows the answers.

GAIL

(to herself)
I'll bet.

She stops, looking back at the house. Thinks.

GAIL'S POINT OF VIEW - HER MOTHER'S FACE

in a window. Smiling sorrowfully at her.

GAIL

makes a decision. She takes some bills out of her purse, presses them onto Caleb.

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED 2

4

GAIL
Know what? I am just dying for
some ice cream.

CALEB
(skeptical)
You are?

GAIL
(staring at the house)
Yes I am -- I would kill for some
fudge ripple right now. And you'd
do me a big old solid if you'd buy
us some.

Caleb watches her, knows he's being jived, but goes with it.

CALEB
All right -- what the hell.

GAIL
(off his swearing)
Caleb!

CALEB
Ma'am?

A beat. Then:

GAIL
Nothing. I'll meet you at Miss
Holt's in a bit, okay?

He nods, pedals off. She turns toward the house, takes a
breath.

CLOSE ON A SMALL PRINTED CALLING CARD

in a brass holder on the front door: Lucas Buck.

GAIL

exhales. Her hand comes slowly out of her purse, gripping a
credit card. She glances over her shoulder, toward the
street, then slips the card behind the lock.

GAIL
(softly)
I must be out of my mind...

As her hand grips the door knob, which suddenly

URNS, and the door opens a few inches. She winces,
hesitates, then pushes the door open.

5 INT. BUCK HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

5

Dark, austere, threatening.

GAIL

slips inside. She quietly closes the door behind her, leans against it. Her heart pounds audibly. Her breath sounds like a roar, as well: her senses are heightened. Ours, too.

FOLLOWING GAIL

as she moves through the foyer. Her heels echo -- she stops, listens, continues...

A BOOKCASE

lined with books. She runs her fingers along the spines.

INSERT - A LARGE FURRY SPIDER

suddenly darts over the top of the books, then disappears behind them.

GAIL

takes down a leather-bound volume, opens it. She turns the title page -- it turns to dust. She flips another page -- it disintegrates, too, then all the pages at once -- they pour down in a fountain of yellow powder.

Gail replaces the book quickly. Her eye goes to a picture hanging over the bookcase -- an old Civil War photo in a black frame. There's a picture light over the frame -- Gail turns it on.

INSERT - CLOSE ON THE PHOTO

A Matthew Brady style image of corpses piled on the battlefield.

RESUME GAIL

staring, then turning off the light. She moves on, toward

A FLIGHT OF STAIRS

She climbs the stairs, her knuckles white on the railing. She stops halfway up -- she can't go on. Then:

GAIL'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Honey? Don't be afraid...

GAIL

(softly)
Coming, Mother...

CONTINUED

5 CONTINUED

5

She continues up, the camera following, to the landing at the top of the stairs.

A SERIES OF CLOSED DOORS

She seems to know which one to open. She goes inside

6 INT. LUCAS' BEDROOM

6

It's dark, the curtains are drawn. An Empire four poster bed dominates the room. A lowboy, also Empire, with a mirror over it. She goes to the dresser, bends down to open a drawer.

THE MIRROR

A FLASH of a figure, a blur. Maybe we imagined it.

GAIL

straightens up, a man's SHIRT in her hands. She strokes the material, catches herself stroking it. Looks in the mirror, watches herself raise the shirt to her face, inhale its odor.

She throws the shirt back into the drawer. Opens

ANOTHER DRAWER

A pocket watch on a blackened chain, a carved wooden face, some dominoes, a box of wooden matches. Papers. Documents. Evidence...as she riffles through the papers, she's suddenly

YANKED off her feet. She makes a strangled cry; the papers flutter to the floor as

LUCAS

carries her to a wall, holds her up against it like a pinned butterfly.

LUCAS

Find what you've been looking for?

He moves her up the wall a bit -- her dress rides up, she's squirming in fear and anger.

GAIL

Don't!

He's pissed, but tightly controlled. He moves his face closer to hers.

CONTINUED

6 CONTINUED

6

LUCAS

Don't what -- hurt you? Why shouldn't I? You broke into my house.

GAIL

You killed my parents:

LUCAS

And you thought you'd found the smoking gun.

He glances down at the papers on the floor.

LUCAS

(scornful)

What journalism school did you go to, anyway -- like I'd keep the documents in my sock drawer.

GAIL

I'm going to get you some day, Lucas. Unless you kill me.

He leans closer; their chins and foreheads are an inch apart.

LUCAS

Is that what you want?

GAIL

What.

LUCAS

You've been in Trinity long enough by now to know what you really want, Miss Emory. And obviously, you know who to come to to get it.

They're too close -- something's got to give. She's breathing hard, her eyes wild.

GAIL

I want the truth.

LUCAS

Then ask me for it.

She tries to turn her head, but she can't.

LUCAS

Ask me, and I'll tell you whatever you want to know. All you've got to do is say...please.

CONTINUED

6 CONTINUED 2

6

GAIL

(tight fury)
Go to hell.

Suddenly, he smiles; he's claimed victory in this round. He sets her down, smooths her dress -- she pulls away from him, furious. Furious with herself.

She storms out; Lucas watches her with satisfaction.

7 INT. ARCHIVES - DAY

7

Gail sits in a study carrel. She's stock still, staring straight ahead. Research librarian EVELYN GARDNER, 60, tough, stout and smart, with the history of Trinity in her head, has been watching Gail with concern.

EVELYN

Gail? Gail, are you all right?

Gail slowly comes out of it. She looks down -- clutched in her hand is the OLD KEY from "Damned If You Don't."

GAIL

What? Oh.
(beat)
I think so. I'm tired.

EVELYN

I wasn't sure if I was disturbing you.

GAIL

(resigned)
Disturbing. Not disturbing. It wouldn't make much difference.

Evelyn watches as Gail dejectedly begins taking down the clippings relating to the Trinity of the post-Watergate Era. Headlines read: "Officer Investigated in Beating" and "Judge Seals Police Brutality Records."

EVELYN

You've been at it, honey. Nobody'd say you haven't.

GAIL

It looks like Lucas Buck killed my parents. I don't know how I'm ever going to prove it -- there are too many dead ends.

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED

7

Gail suddenly realizes her bad pun and we begin to see her mental state when she laughs. Evelyn switches the subject.

EVELYN

When your father's paper was going, he was always gunning for Lucas Buck.

GAIL

Yeah, well, he didn't get him either.

EVELYN

But, that was a real paper, The Guardian. Not like the News-less Guardian today. All advertisements and sports and merry widows making use of their golden years.

(contemplative)

It has been my good fortune to never have encountered a merry widow. All my friends are cranky as hell.

GAIL

And don't let 'em change.

Evelyn snorts. Gail finishes packing up her stuff.

EVELYN

It'd be nice to see someone get out of Trinity.

(dark)

On their own steam, I mean.

8 EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

8

Gail walks toward the porch, her 'Stang's at the curb. Caleb has a model of John Glenn's Mercury rocket.

GAIL

Caleb, how'd you like to run down to Charleston with me?

CALEB

What for?

GAIL

What do you mean, what for?

(off Mustang)

The wind in your hair, adventure...

CONTINUED

8 CONTINUED

8

CALEB

Oh -- robbing banks, sleeping in people's barns, surviving on wild berries and junk food... That kind of stuff...

GAIL

(smiling)
Yeah. The life of the open road --
"Look out people, here come the Temples..."

Caleb enjoys the joke, then goes back to his rocket.

CALEB

I got school tomorrow.

GAIL

We've got schools in Charleston, Caleb.
(more urgent)
We've got Fort Sumter -- birthplace of the Civil War and professional baseball -- the River Dogs.

CALEB

I never heard of 'em.

GAIL

(conceding)
They're only Single A.

Suddenly, impulsively, she sits down on the steps next to him, grabs him, squeezes him. When he pulls away, he sees her eyes are tearing --

CALEB

What's the matter, cuz?

GAIL

(fierce)
You know why I came back here, don't you?

CALEB

(doesn't want to talk about it)
Yeah. To look after me.
(sincere)
And you done a real good job, Gail, I got no complaints at all... so if you've gotta get on back to Charleston, why...

CONTINUED

8 CONTINUED 2

8

GAIL

No!

Her vehemence startles them both.

CALEB

No?

GAIL

Caleb, that was part of it -- and I'm glad it's working out for you here at Miss Holt's... but I still haven't gotten any answers about... you know...

CALEB

Who killed your parents in the fire?

(nodding)

You think Sheriff Buck did it.

GAIL

(surprised)

Yes. I do.

CALEB

Well, he's capable of it. That's a fact.

Said matter-of-factly: she stares at him as he tinkers with the rocket.

GAIL

How do you know that?

(beat)

Caleb?

Slowly, he lifts his head, meets her gaze.

CALEB

My sister told me -- but she's gone away, too!

Abruptly, he jumps up, grabs his rocket, and runs into the house. As the screen door bangs shut, off Gail, looking stricken.

9 INT. SELENA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

9

The clock ticks loudly on the wall -- 8:45. She's wearing quite the little number under her apron, and she hums happily as she

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

9

SLAMS the oven door shut, pours two glasses of red wine. It's going to be a hell of a night; the doorbell rings. She puts down one of the glasses, sips from the other as she slides over to the kitchen door.

SELENA

Must be my...

She throws open the door with a wicked grin.

SELENA

...back door man...

Only to find

FLOYD

the deputy deputy, stiff, wide-eyed as a deer in the headlights. He clears his throat.

FLOYD

Ma'am? Sheriff Buck asked me to inform you that... that he won't...

SELENA

withers him.

SELENA

Won't what.

FLOYD

...be able to join you for dinner, ma'am.

SELENA

(steely)

I didn't know the phones were out.

FLOYD

(not getting it)

Oh, they're not, ma'am -- he just wanted to give you the message, you know... person to person, so to speak.

SELENA

So he sent you.

FLOYD

Yes, ma'am.

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED 2

9

SELENA

(false cheer)
Well then, let me give you a
message for him -- person to
person.

She flicks out a crooked finger, catches Floyd by the shirt collar, pulls him close. She whispers something in his ear.

FLOYD

goes white, then red, then purple... as his eyes pop,

SELENA

pushes him out, slams the door. Her face a mask of rage. She looks at her handiwork -- the plates, the candles, etc. Looks at the clock; flings her glass of wine at it.

Off the shattered, blood-red clock,

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

10 INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

10

Tablecloths, romantic candlelight, a dozen or so other PATRONS quietly dining. Lucas sits by himself: a waiter, DAMON, brings a bottle of wine.

DAMON

Compliments of the restaurant.

LUCAS

(knowing full well)

What'd I do to deserve this, Damon?

DAMON

(fervent)

More than you'll ever know,
Sheriff. Why --

LUCAS

I was kidding, D. -- one thing you
can count on -- I always keep
score...

Damon's smiles dies; he feels the mild threat. As he nods obediently and withdraws,

GAIL

(coming up)

I got your message. Why didn't you
--

LUCAS

(rising)

Evening, Miss Emory.

He pulls out the other chair for her, smiling; she's taken aback by the civility.

LUCAS

Why didn't I what?

GAIL

Just have Ben serve me with an
arrest warrant? Or do you intend
to humiliate me in public?

Lucas laughs pleasantly, if a little condescendingly.

CONTINUED

10 CONTINUED

10

LUCAS

Arrest you for what? Breaking and entering?

(beat)

Please -- sit down.

She sits. Sees the glass of wine in front of her, the place setting, two plates of something mysterious on little toasts.

LUCAS

Come on, Gail -- that's not how I operate.

GAIL

Sure -- why humiliate someone when you can burn them alive?

He doesn't react: he's smiling, almost gently, as he pours her wine. He slides a plate of mystery toast towards her.

LUCAS

Eat something -- you'll feel better.

It throws her.

GAIL

I wasn't expecting to have dinner.

LUCAS

I was.

She takes a toast, hesitates, then takes a bite. it's good: she starts to melt. She takes a sip; she melts a little more. Then:

LUCAS

Go ahead -- ask me. Anything you want.

Lucas watches her, pleased with himself. She pulls out a reporter's pad.

GAIL

Okay. When did you discover the bodies?

LUCAS

For a long time we didn't know there was anybody up there. I'd say around 10:30. P.M.

CONTINUED

10 CONTINUED 2

10

GAIL

Were you alone when you made your discovery?

LUCAS

Yes. It was still quite dangerous in there.

GAIL

Did you have an antagonistic relationship with Peter Emory?

Lucas leans back and thinks a moment. He reaches a decision.

LUCAS

I hate to tell you your business, but there're better ways to go about this.

GAIL

(accusatory)
Oh, so you're not going to answer my questions?

LUCAS

Darlin'. You don't even have to ask questions.

GAIL

(more Lucas b.s.)
What?

Lucas takes her hand in his. She starts to pull away, then relents. Lucas stares into her eyes.

LUCAS

Trust me.

CUT TO

11 EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

11

Selena is stalking by. Buck's Crown Vic is parked in front of the restaurant.

CUT TO

12 INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

12

Lucas slowly lifts her hand and together their hands extract the key hanging from the chain around her neck.

CONTINUED

12 CONTINUED

12

LUCAS

Your mother had it. You've got it even stronger.

GAIL

What's that?

LUCAS

You know what it is. It scares you, doesn't it?

GAIL

Yes.

LUCAS

Because it can show things you might not want to face. I'm going to show you how to make it work for you.

Lucas' hand surrounds Gail's holding the key.

LUCAS

Close your eyes.

Gail closes her eyes. Lucas speaks slowly and hypnotically.

GAIL

This is ridiculous.

LUCAS

Let it come to you. If you chase it, it'll run away. Be very still. Let it roll over you like a wave --

Gail's breathing becomes heavier. She grips Lucas' hand tighter, digging her nails into his wrist --

GAIL

(scared, stimulated)

Oh God. Oh my God.

Gail's head leans back; she bites a lip. Lucas' voice and the sound of diners FADE OUT, and as we move CLOSE TO GAIL'S FACE. Gail opens her eyes abruptly, and SEES --

SMASH CUT TO

13- INT. CABIN - NIGHT - GAIL'S VISION

13

The dinner table is now in a dusty vacation cabin, and Lucas and the diners are gone. Only Gail is there. She stands. Her eyes are wide.

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED

13

The room is dimly lit, except for the regular sweep of a SEARCHLIGHT from a nearby lighthouse through the windows. On the first sweep of blinding light:

She sees CHRISTINE EMORY, her mother, holding something close to her chest. Christine nervously moves across the room, disturbed about something --

GAIL

Mother?

The searchlight passes. Then it's dark again.

On the second sweep of light, Gail sees her mother pull A MUSIC BOX down from a shelf in the cabin. She stuffs the papers she was holding into the box.

Gail watches; then it is dark again.

A door slams. HEAVY FOOTSTEPS, those of a man, come in. Gail hears a cry, then the searchlight sweeps through again --

Silhouetted in the blinding light she sees the dark figure of a man lift a hand and knock her mother to the ground.

GAIL

Stop!

A FOGHORN blasts and it's dark again.

14 EXT. STREET - DAY

14

Caleb rides his bike along the sidewalk, fast. He jumps the curb at the end of the block, shoots into the street.

SCREECH

The Crown Vic smokes rubber, swerves -- just missing him.

LUCAS

(out window)
Careful, son.

CALEB

starts to react, sees

GAIL

riding shotgun, looking away from him. Uncomfortable at being in the Buckmobile.

CONTINUED

14 CONTINUED

14

CALEB

frowns, rides away. Lucas watches him.

15 EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

15

Matt and Gail sitting on the front porch.

MATT

I think you're playing with fire. Sheriff Buck's your number one suspect and you're planning on using him as some sort of psychic tour guide.

GAIL

We made a deal.

MATT

You made a deal.

GAIL

I know what I'm doing.

MATT

You made a deal?

GAIL

Yeah, I made a deal. It's not at all like you think --

MATT

I think you're incredibly naive.

GAIL

Thank you very much. I thought you were on my side.

MATT

I am on your side. I just don't think there are any easy answers here.

GAIL

He said he'll help me find the truth.

MATT

He's a very dangerous, what, man? Manipulator? I don't know.

CONTINUED

GAIL

What else I can do? I feel like history is repeating itself and I can't even stop it. My parents went after him and ... you know what happened.

MATT

Don't let their deaths keep you from thinking straight about this or history will repeat itself.

GAIL

(mad)

I am thinking straight. He's going to hang himself with his own rope. That's the only way to get him.

Lucas approaches from the street.

LUCAS

Doctor Crower. Gail. Maybe I should move in to Miss Holt's and we'd be one big happy family.

(to Gail)

You ready?

MATT

(to Gail)

You're going with him? What? Is this like a date?

GAIL

This is business.

LUCAS

Doctor Crower, life doesn't have to be as confusing as you'd make it out to be. Some things are inevitable, and others you just leave up to fate. You'd be a lot happier if you loosen up and take it as it comes.

MATT

I'll just be right here. Loosey Goosey. On the porch.

GAIL

Matt!

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED 2

15

LUCAS

Oh. I've already asked Gail if she wanted to stay with me -- while her car's getting worked on.

Gail stands and Lucas tries to take her arm just like an old-fashioned escort, but she won't let him.

LUCAS

But she turned me down.

They climb into the car and pull away. Matt stares after them, watching the car roll away.

16 EXT. CABIN - DAY - ESTABLISHING

16

Lucas Buck's car pulls up to a creepy old cabin.

17 INT. CABIN - DAY

17

Gail and Lucas pound open the ancient, rotting door and let themselves in. It's the same cabin from her vision. Bookshelves contain Readers Digest Condensed Books, jigsaw puzzles, knickknacks, "South of the Border" pennants, etc. Cheap, rotting furniture.

GAIL

This is it.

LUCAS

We're the first people here in a long time.

Lucas puts a comforting hand on her shoulder; she pulls away.

GAIL

Don't do that.

She stares all around the room, then, speaking quietly --

GAIL

There was a music box.

She retraces the path that her mother took in her vision. She slowly approaches the bookshelf. Reaches to the top. A FOGHORN blows --

GAIL

It's gone.

CONTINUED

17 CONTINUED

17

LUCAS
It's been twenty years.

GAIL
Everything else is the same.

She starts pulling things down from the bookshelf. Books, games, puzzles, knickknacks go crashing to the floor. Lucas backs out of the way.

The bookshelf crashes to the floor. And, taped to the wall is an old, musty manila envelope, marked "To Whom It May Concern." Gail tears it open and begins to read.

GAIL
Oh my God.

She backs away from Buck, still holding the papers.

LUCAS
I know what's in there --

GAIL
No. You stay away from me --

LUCAS
It says --

GAIL
(angry)
You assaulted my father. You used your uniform, you beat him up, and there were witnesses.

She punches him in the chest, once, twice, then beats him until she's spent.

LUCAS
There. Get it out. Get it all out.

She regains control and backs away from him --

GAIL
You did it.

LUCAS
I beat him up all right. The question you need to be asking, is "why?"

GAIL
(realization)
You killed him!

CONTINUED

17 CONTINUED 2

17

LUCAS

No. I beat him up. There's a difference. And, I was justified.

GAIL

Oh please.

LUCAS

You wouldn't believe me now if I told you. Go see your friend, Doctor Crower. Maybe he'll have some insight.

CUT TO

18 INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - DAY

18

Matt and Gail walk and talk.

MATT

How was your drive? Take a little spin down by the shore?

GAIL

(all business)
As a matter of fact, yes.

MATT

Ah. I can see it perfectly. You pull into the deserted parking lot of a public beach. Pull right up to the pylons so that you're staring out at the water. A few gulls come by to beg for food.

GAIL

Stop it.

MATT

There's an empty life guard tower. It's warm in the car in the sun. He takes your hand. Turns sincerely toward you. And says, (imitating Buck) "Darlin', I killed your folks. Sorry 'bout that. How 'bout a little kiss?"

GAIL

Are you through?

MATT

Maybe.

CONTINUED

18 CONTINUED

18

GAIL
I need some medical records.

MATT
Whose?

Gail is trying to be tough. But it's difficult.

GAIL
Peter and Christine Emory. 1975.
1976. Around then.

Matt is observing her closely.

GAIL
I want anything you have on my
parents.

MATT
Are you one hundred percent certain
you want to look into this?

GAIL
I have to know everything.

MATT
On whose advice. Lucas Buck? This
is part of the larger mystery?

Gail nods. Matt considers a long beat. He stands.

MATT
All right. Meet me in my office.
I'll see what I can dig up.

Matt turns down a different hall. Gail waits. She
nervously fingers THE OLD KEY around her neck --

Suddenly: the STRAINS of "Beautiful Dreamer."

19 INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CIRCA 1976 - DAY - CONTINUOUS

19

The walls are that weird pea green; the furniture is mod
plastic.

There is nobody outside the door. Gail peers down the
hallway and sees

A TODDLER

a preternaturally cute, four-year-old boy, waving for her to
follow him, in a The Shining sort of way.

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED

19

Gail walks toward the baby, who starts ambling away. They turn several corners. More long empty strange vibrating hallways with the sound of "Beautiful Dreamer" just ahead.

The baby turns a last corner. She rounds it and the toddler is GONE. Instead, there is CHRISTINE EMORY speaking with a female doctor. They both wear funky seventies attire.

FEMALE DOCTOR

It's positive.

Christine Emory puts her head in her hands.

FEMALE DOCTOR

It's positive. You're going to have another child.

Christine Emory looks up. Terrible sadness. She stares past the doctor directly at Gail. She reaches out her arms to her daughter --

CHRISTINE

(to Gail)

Forgive me. Please. Gail.
Forgive me --

A DOOR SLAMS SHUT --

CUT TO

20 INT. MATT'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

20

The door shuts. Matt returns with files. Gail sitting in the chair. The key drops from her hand.

MATT

This relates to the fire?
(considering)
How certain are you about digging into this?

GAIL

I don't know what it relates to. I don't even know what it is.

Matt looks down at the old file. Reads.

MATT

Peter Emory was admitted on February 14, 1976. Hmm. Valentine's Day. Concussion, cracked ribs, and one missing tooth.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED

20

Matt flips through some more pages.

GAIL
Anything else?

MATT
(smiles)
Well, going back a little further... he assisted in your birth.

GAIL
What about my mother?

MATT
(reluctant)
There's more. I won't lie to you. It's not pleasant. Frankly, I think you should leave this alone.

Gail shakes her head.

MATT
Christine Emory was also admitted on Valentine's Day, 1976, as well as four other occasions.
(beat)
All of her injuries are consistent with a pattern of domestic violence. I could spell it out, but it's not pretty.

GAIL
That's it? Everything there is?

Gail should seem slightly manic, on a self-destructive, almost fated, course.

MATT
What do you mean? Isn't that enough?

GAIL
I mean, Doctor, what else is in my mother's file.

Matt shakes his head. Gail takes a step toward him.

MATT
It's not going to help you. It's nothing you need to know.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED 2

20

GAIL
It's my family. For better or
worse...it's my family.

MATT
(depressed by this)
Your mother appears to have been
pregnant when she died.
(beat)
I'm sorry, Gail. I'm sorry.

Gail is already out the door.

21 INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - RECEPTION - LATE AFTERNOON

21

Floyd flipping through a fish and wildlife manual. Lucas
tilted back in a chair, hands behind his head.

FLOYD
Says here Civet Cat season is only
twelve hours long.

LUCAS
That's -right.

FLOYD
What the hell's a Civet Cat?

LUCAS
They kill 'em for the perfume.

FLOYD
Who?

LUCAS
Whoever comes in and applies for a
license.

FLOYD
Has anyone ever applied for one?

LUCAS
Not since I've been here. I
believe they're extinct.

FLOYD
Then do I need to keep the forms?

A distraught Gail Emory lets herself in the front door.
Floyd looks up from studying the manual.

FLOYD
Miss Emory? Are you okay?

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED

21

Gail ignores Floyd and cuts straight for Lucas.

GAIL

I want out. I don't want to know any more.

LUCAS

Floyd. Would you excuse us for a moment?

FLOYD

Sure, Lucas. I'll just go out for some cider. Anybody want anything?

LUCAS

Gail?

No response.

LUCAS

No? All right.
(to Floyd)
I'll have an eclair.

Floyd leaves. Lucas stands to escort Gail to a chair.

LUCAS

Please. Have a seat. You're making me nervous.

GAIL

I just want to know who set the fire. It was arson. I want to know who did it? And why? That's all.

LUCAS

There are no half-measures here, Gail. We made a bargain, not half a bargain. The whole truth.

GAIL

I've hurt people before.

LUCAS

Finally, a little honesty from the martyred virgin, Gail Emory. I'll let you in on a secret: Whenever someone's up, someone else is down.

GAIL

I've hurt people close to me.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED 2

21

LUCAS

Who else could you hurt?

GAIL

What do you mean?

LUCAS

I know about that little story you ran about growing up as a foster child.

GAIL

I was a young reporter. I didn't think about what it would do to them.

LUCAS

You had to get at the truth then. You didn't stop. No hiding your head in the sand.

GAIL

Some people think one incident in the past explains a person's whole life. I've never believed in that.

LUCAS

We aren't so different, Gail.

He takes out a pen and scribbles something on a piece of paper that he hands to Gail.

LUCAS

Personally, if it weren't for your little quest, I'd be bored off my ass.

Gail reads what Lucas scribbled.

GAIL

That's our old address.

LUCAS

The past isn't dead, Gail. Hell, it's not even the past.

22 EXT. 598 LILAC WAY - PRESENT DAY

22

Gail parks in front of her childhood house. Sits and stares at it a beat before getting out. It's nothing fancy: just a typical suburban tract home. Gail gets out of her Mustang, stands at the curb. She exhales, closes her eyes. Breathes deeply. Fingers the key around her neck --

FLASH CUT TO

23 EXT. 598 LILAC WAY - 1975 - GAIL'S VISION - DAY

23

Kodachrome-stylized. A 60's panel van in the driveway. Gail stands. She's a bit woozy. The scene plays out in front of her, like a television show: she cannot interact.

A MAN

in khaki pants and shirt (GAGE TEMPLE) comes out of the house, tool box in his hand. He starts towards the panel truck when

CHRISTINE

Gage, wait.

He stops, turns.

CHRISTINE

I forgot to pay you.

He smiles as she comes into his arms. They kiss deeply; she clings to him until he pulls away, walks backward -- reluctantly -- to his truck, gets in and backs down the driveway.

GAIL

(shocked)
Mother!

But her mother doesn't (can't) hear her -- she goes inside, humming softly as

A CAR

flies into the driveway. It's a clean version of the station wagon in the "Damned" junkyard.

PETER EMORY

gets out. He glances at the house, frowns; lights a cigarette.

PETER

Gail?

GAIL

I'm right here...

PETER

(louder)
Gail!

LITTLE GAIL

enters the scene. She walks up to her father, reluctant, but obedient.

CONTINUED

23 CONTINUED

23

Young Gail is frozen with fear. Present-day Gail sees all.

PETER

Come here, honey. I've got a present for dirty girls.

(young Gail doesn't move)

No? Well, Daddy'll just have to come to his good little girl.

Peter Emory steps off the porch toward Young Gail. She strikes a defensive pose, wrapping herself in her arms.

PETER

You're lookin' good, darlin'. Want a drag off daddy's cigarette?

He grabs Young Gail's arm. Takes the cigarette and begins moving it toward her upper arm, just behind the elbow --

PETER

Sometimes you need something to remind you not to play in the dirt.

Young Gail braces herself as he lowers the cigarette toward her arm, as if this has happened before --

GAIL

No! No --

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN

24 EXT. TOWN - STREET - DAY

24

Matt is walking back to the hospital carrying a take-out lunch and Pellegrino.

MATT'S POINT OF VIEW - GAIL

crossing the street. She looks disheveled, distracted and distraught. A car HONKS as it nearly sideswipes her.

Matt goes into the street and gently slips his arm through hers.

MATT

(concerned)

Gail?

GAIL

(not missing a beat)

I went to my old house and saw my dad.

MATT

(worried but calm)

What do you mean you saw your parents?

GAIL

I was standing on the front lawn. And my father walked toward me with a cigarette. As plain as you're standing here.

MATT

(firm)

Maybe we could talk about this at my office.

Matt is leading her out of the street toward the hospital.

MATT

Have you had lunch? I picked up some food. Let's go back and have a little picnic.

Gail nods and follows him.

CUT TO

25 INT. HOSPITAL - MATT'S OFFICE - DAY

25

Matt and Gail enter. Matt spreads the lunch on the desk. Gail isn't thinking about food.

GAIL

You can't even imagine my childhood before they died. It was perfect. My father would take me to the paper on Saturdays. After work, they'd trade stories. I was the only little girl they'd allow in the news room.

(convincing herself)

He was kind. And wise. And loving. It was the real love. The unconditional. I know it.

MATT

I believe you.

GAIL

(slightly manic)

And then. And then. I drove by my house. The old house. The yellow house. Yellow is the cheeriest color. Who paints a house yellow? It's not yellow anymore. It's blue. I saw my father. Really saw him. Not a dream. I wasn't sleeping. He came toward me. And. And...

(tears forming)

He held out his cigarette. He said I was dirty. A dirty girl. He held me down and... and... he... burned me with it...right...here.

She twists around so that she might be able to see that unseeable anatomy behind the elbow.

Matt walks around to examine her arm.

CLOSE ON A SCAR FROM A CIGARETTE BURN

GAIL

See...see?

MATT

There is definitely scar tissue.

GAIL

It means my father... hurt me... on purpose. Hurt a little child.

CONTINUED

MATT

It could mean a lot of things. And I'll tell you what I think. I think you should stay here for a couple of days.

GAIL

(disbelief)
In the hospital?

MATT

If you won't stay here...stay the hell away from Lucas Buck.

(beat)
Go back home and get some rest.

GAIL

I will.
(deciding to)
I absolutely will. Rest would be good. Yeah, rest.

She stands suddenly, distractedly, and heads for the door without saying good-bye.

Just as she opens it, someone knocks from the other side. The door swings and Selena is standing there. This is not sexy, vampy Selena, but serious teacherly, I want to get Dr. Crower under my spell, Selena.

SELENA

Oh, I'm sorry, am I disturbing you two? I can come back later.

GAIL

I was just leaving.

SELENA

A little bird told me you've been a busy bee lately, Gail.

GAIL

I don't understand.

SELENA

Oh, runnin' around is all. Going back north to the big city. Not going back north. Coming. Going. In betweening.

GAIL

(confused)
And here I am going again. Nice to see you, Miss Coombs.

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED 2

25

Gail leaves. Selena sits.

SELENA
(maudlin concern)
How's she doing, Doctor. May I
call you Matt?

He nods.

SELENA
Matt, how is Gail?

MATT
Gail is making some painful
adjustments.

SELENA
I feel like I'm sittin' on the
psychiatrist's couch.

MATT
Well, you're not. What can I help
you with?

Selena moves closer to Matt, perching on the edge of the
desk.

26 INT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - DAY

26

Gail, in a fevered pitch, spreads articles, clippings,
etc. -- everything she has about her parents -- across the
coffee table. Her suitcases and boxes of books fill the
room.

There are some pictures of her as a little girl with her
parents: at birthday parties, on the beach, playing and
having fun. Nothing to suggest the chaos from her visions.

She touches a newspaper dated July 3, 1976. An innocuous
headline: "Bicentennial Celebrations Will Be Biggest Ever."
She grabs the key around her neck. Closes her eyes.

SMASH CUT TO

27 INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - 1976 - NIGHT - GAIL'S VISION

27

A small senior editor's office, with two desks in it. The
door has a one-foot-square glass window in it. Awards,
famous headlines, pictures of Peter Emory playing golf with
Burt Reynolds and Gerald Ford. It's around eight o'clock at
night; no other employees are there.

CONTINUED

27 CONTINUED

27

Christine Emory is happily gathering up her things, tying a sweater around her neck, getting ready to leave when Peter Emory bursts through the door.

PETER

What do you think you're doing,
Christine?

CHRISTINE

(emotionless)

You put out the pages. I judge the
fireworks. That's what we agreed
to.

PETER

You're leaving without telling me.

CHRISTINE

For God's sake, it's a holiday,
Peter. Is the world going to stop
because I left the office before
midnight?

PETER

I know where you're going.

She ignores him and starts from the room. Peter blocks her
exit. He's angry.

CHRISTINE

Get out of my way.

PETER

I think that for this one night
you'll have to miss your quickie.

He grabs her by the arm and yanks her back. Spins her
around against the wall. He leaves, slams the door, and
locks her in.

CHRISTINE

(firm)

Open this door. Right now.

(beat)

Peter! Open the damn door.

She starts to panic. Pounds on the door.

She pounds on the door harder. No response. Now she's far
more panicked than if she were simply locked in an office.

She tries the telephone. The line is dead. She slams it
down.

CONTINUED

27 CONTINUED 2

27

CHRISTINE

Peter! Let me out! Open the door!

There's a glass block wall -- She lifts a chair and hits the block -- the chair shatters. She bangs on the block with the flat of her hand.

CHRISTINE

(screaming)

Peter!

FADE UP: The sounds of "Beautiful Dreamer" being whistled.

CUT TO

28 INT. ARCHIVES - NIGHT

28

The haunting strains of "Beautiful Dreamer" playing on a music box.

Gail heads toward the sounds. She walks between narrow rows of darkened shelves and cabinets. She sees an antique baby stroller, covered with a veil, rolling slowly away. She follows it. The stroller continues to roll away.

The stroller comes to a stop, and Gail catches up.

The warbly music continues. With great trepidation, she approaches the stroller, and looks into it. A dark veil completely obscures its passenger.

Gail slowly lifts the veil...

...inside is the toddler from Act Two. He looks sweet and vulnerable. The small child observes Gail, then speaks -- in an adult's voice --

TODDLER

(adult voice)

Trust your instincts.

GAIL

What?

TODDLER

(adult voice)

Dig deeper! Dig deeper -- don't let me stay in this limbo -- please!

As Gail reaches out to the child... She leaps away as FLAMES burst from the stroller. She SCREAMS.

29 INT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - REALITY

29

Gail sits up in bed, sweating from her vision.

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Someone whistling the tune from her dream.

She gets up, opens the window, leans out -- sees

GAIL'S POINT OF VIEW - CALEB

on the ground, playing G.I. Joe, idly whistling --

GAIL

Caleb.

CALEB

Hey, Gail.

GAIL

What's that you're whistling?

CALEB

I don't know. Is it bugging you?

GAIL

I just wondered where you learned that tune --

CALEB

(reluctant)

I don't wanna talk about it, if that's okay with you.

GAIL

Caleb, have you been having nightmares?

CALEB

Sort of. I been having a weird dream. Not scary, exactly, but the same over and over.

GAIL

Is there a boy in it? A little boy?

CALEB

You know my dream?

GAIL

What's he say? Does the boy speak?

CONTINUED

CALEB

Yeah. He does.

(slowly)

He talks like an old man.

(remembering)

He says he's my brother and that I've forgotten him.

(to Gail)

I don't have a brother, but if I did, I wouldn't forget him.

Gail is shaken. Caleb notices.

CALEB

What's the matter, Gail?

GAIL

I had the same dream.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

30 EXT. WATER - DAY

30

Selena and Matt walk past fishing shacks. A hand-lettered sign reads, "fraish eggs."

SELENA

Every time I pass one of these, I just want to get out my red pen and correct it.

He takes out a pen -- hands it to her without expression. She reacts, amused -- then takes the pen and writes "Live Bate 4 Sail." He smiles, takes his pen back.

MATT

I've had patients who can't read the labels on their prescription bottles.

SELENA

And? What happens?

Selena expects him to continue, but he doesn't.

MATT

They die of overdoses.

Selena swivels to observe the young doctor. He turns to her and smiles.

SELENA

(cheery)
I'm starting to think you're a very strange man.

MATT

You have no idea.

SELENA

And I'm starting to like you.

MATT

You didn't like me before?

SELENA

I didn't know you were strange before. And you didn't let me.

MATT

I wasn't ready.

CONTINUED

30 CONTINUED

30

They're down by the water now. Selena turns into him.

SELENA

Or willing.
(beat)
And now?

MATT

I'm able.

As she pulls him down into the sand, from here to eternity.

CUT TO

31 EXT. BURNED-OUT NEWSPAPER BUILDING - NIGHT

31

Gail stares at the ominous burned-out building. It gives off a weird, evil vibe. She carries a flashlight and looks strangely obsessed.

She runs her hand over the brass name plate, then nervously paces in front of the door, which is blocked off with ancient, rotting police tape.

She touches the key... hears a distant music box playing "Beautiful Dreamer." There's a sense that there's no going back. She flips on the flashlight and goes in --

32 INT. BURNED-OUT NEWSPAPER BUILDING - CITY ROOM - NIGHT

32

The flashlight flickers across the city room. Odd things survived the fire: a few metal desks and trash cans. A water fountain.

She follows the music -- it's not clear if it's in her head, or real -- and it's coming from the Editor's Office on the opposite side of the City Room.

There is no door to the editor's office; only the charred door frame remains. She touches the key around her neck and looks into the room --

Where there was only a door frame, now there is a door. It is as if the fire never happened. On a desk in the editor's office sits an ANTIQUE MUSIC BOX.

She approaches it warily.

She tries to open it. It's locked. She uses her special key, and it opens. Inside are letters. She pulls them out. They're love letters to her mother.

CONTINUED

32 CONTINUED

32

She scans one. As she reads, smoke begins to fill the room.

GAIL (V.O.)

(reading)
"This can't continue because I love
you too much. We'll never be able
to begin our new life until Peter
is out of the way."

She picks up another letter. It's hot now, and Gail is sweating.

GAIL (V.O.)

(reading)
"Darling, fires happen all the time
on the Fourth of July. I'll jam
the doors from the outside. And
you'll be waiting with our
fireworks... the child inside of
you."

The room starts to fill with smoke. Gail is sweating. It's hot. She tries to open the door, but it's locked. Just like in her vision.

She turns -- it's the man in khakis. He's holding his tool box.

GAIL

Who are you?

GAGE

Gage Temple. Your new step-daddy.

He opens the tool box, takes out a length of chain.

GAIL

What are you talking about?

GAGE

You read my letters -- and you're a
smart girl. Like your mama.

He wraps the chain around a set of double doors, snaps a padlock on the ends.

GAGE

So what do you think?

GAIL

It was you! You killed them!

She tries to grab him, but her arm won't move, as in a dream.

CONTINUED

GAGE

Him, you mean. That bastard --
well, he'll never touch you or
your mama again.

He takes a glass jug, unscrews the cap, pours liquid on the ground.

GAIL

But she's here! She's here!

GAGE

(serene)
She's outside, waiting for me...

He strikes a match: Gail realizes she's getting nowhere --
bolts down to

THE GLASS BLOCK WALL

-- sees

CHRISTINE

wordlessly screaming, banging the glass blocks with a bloody hand.

GAIL

Mother!

She throws herself at the wall, hits it, slides down, as

A WALL OF FLAMES

rushes toward camera, behind the glass blocks.

LUCAS

tears the key, and chain, off of her neck, and hurls them deep into the burned-out building.

Gail's hands are in front of her face, and she's on the charred floor in the same position she was in the vision.

Lucas lifts her up into his arms. She is nearly in shock. She holds him tight.

LUCAS

Hey. Hey there. You're okay.
It's all right.

Gail is coming to her senses.

CONTINUED

32 CONTINUED 3

32

GAIL

I saw what happened. Gage Temple was right there. He tried to kill me.

LUCAS

He was a man with a lot on his conscience.

GAIL

You knew he killed my parents?

LUCAS

I suspected. I could never pin it on him.

GAIL

You knew about Gage and my mother.

LUCAS

I found out later. And I understand.

GAIL

It was a loveless marriage.

LUCAS

Gail. Your parents weren't bad people. And they loved you in their own way.

Gail is surprised and appreciative of the kind words. She is melting a bit toward Lucas --

LUCAS

Come on. Let's get out of this useless old wreck.

SLOW DISSOLVE

33 EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

33

Caleb is "flying" his rocket by running up and down the porch when Gail comes up.

GAIL

Hi, Caleb.

He stops his test flights and comes to her side. He looks out at the street.

CALEB

Where's the Sheriff?

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

33

GAIL
I don't know -- why?

CALEB
(shrugs)
I figured you were with him now.

GAIL
(stunned)
No!

He gives her a look: you're lying. He turns, goes inside the house.

GAIL
Caleb...

CUT TO

34 INT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

34

Gail is in bed. We can't tell if she's awake or asleep, talking or dreaming.

The lights are out. The night is surreal, shadowy, hallucinatory. We see only the left half of her bed. We never see Lucas, but it seems like he's right there, in the bed with her --

LUCAS (V.O.)
Talk to me. Tell me what happened.

GAIL
Can I trust you?

LUCAS (V.O.)
Talk to me.

GAIL
She was going to have Gage's baby.
It would have been my brother --

LUCAS (V.O.)
And Caleb's --

CLOSE ON HER FACE

as she contemplates this --

GAIL
Gage wanted to protect her, he wanted to treat her the way she deserved to be treated.

CONTINUED

34 CONTINUED

34

Then Gail seems to understand, and she speaks very softly, with emotion and not a little awe...

GAIL

It was love that set that building on fire.

As this thought resonates in her head, WE PULL BACK, and see that she is all alone in the bed, and she is asleep.

She writhes uncomfortably on the bed, disturbed, and perhaps aroused.

FADE OUT

THE END