



CHANNEL ZERO

STAIRCASES

#201
"Insidious Onset"

teleplay by
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based on the "Search And Rescue Woods" stories
by Kerry Hammond

4.14.17

OPEN ON A YOUNG WOMAN'S FACE. ALICE WOODS (26). Our lead. Idealistic, smart, strong-willed, hungry. She's eager to be liked, and goes out of her way to make a good impression. Never had much money and her clothes are cheap, but she's put some thought into trying to look put together. *

ALICE
What kind of stories?

WIDER TO REVEAL she's in -

INT. HIP COFFEE SHOP - DAY (D1)

- sitting with **NATHAN** (late 20s, talkative). Her future coworker. He can seem a bit patronizing; he talks a lot because he loves to be the explainer.

NATHAN
Weirdly specific ones. Far as urban legends, I mean... I've been here almost a year now, and the people we work with - you'll see, they tell some crazy stories. Like - for example - you got to the city *when*?

ALICE
This weekend.

NATHAN
Okay, you've probably - you've seen the graffiti, right? The -
(finger quotes)
"Street art." Lot of "street art" in this city. So there's these two "street artists" - and they're tagging a building near the park...

OFF NATHAN TALKING, CUT AWAY TO ILLUSTRATE HIS STORY -

EXT. BUTCHER'S BLOCK - BUTCHER MURAL - LATE AFTERNOON

DOLLY IN FROM BEHIND as a VIVID GRAFFITI MURAL is being painted on a BUILDING. Far above, in FADED PAINT, a sign:

PEACH'S MEATS

The mural shows A FIGURE WITH A WHITE FACE AND BLOOD-RED MOUTH. We'll call this "**THE BUTCHER.**" The artist is **KARA** (18, fearless), painting with grace and skill. **BEN** (18, nervous) is the lookout. Skater style, unwashed, almost homeless-looking.

NATHAN (V.O.)

A guy and a girl. Runaways, on their own. She's into him, but he's kinda shy.

EXT. BUTCHER'S BLOCK - RUINED STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

GLIDING WITH BEN & KARA past OLD CARS, WEED-CHOKED YARDS, DEAD HOUSES. It feels wild, strange. (Note: *The city feels immersive, like a forest, unfamiliar/wild. Tarkovsky/I Am Cuba. Wide lenses, roving camera, natural light.*) They share a JOINT.

BEN

My Grandpa Dale, that's the one on my mom's side? This was his street. I ever tell you what he did in the meatpacking plant? He took out tongues. Cow's head comes down the line, take out the tongue. Thirty years. Probably yanked a hundred thousand ton- *HIC!*

Ben HICCUPS. Then HICCUPS again. Kara laughs.

KARA

I ever show you my secret hiccup cure?

CUT TO:

SHOT: POV PUSH-IN TOWARD THE ENTRANCE TO MEDALLION PARK.

A faded bronze sign: "Medallion Park." THE PARK is sprawling.

NATHAN (V.O.)

So they decide to cut through the park. Which, like, you shouldn't do.

ALICE (V.O.)

It's not safe?

NATHAN (V.O.)

Define safe. At this point it's just a forest in the middle of the city.

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - WOODS/CLEARING - DUSK

Kara and Ben walk quietly through the huge park. It's eerily quiet except for: *HIC!... HIC!... HIC!* It does almost feel like we're in a forest. They enter a CLEARING -

- *HIC! HIC!* as they pass through the clearing. Then -

Kara abruptly kisses him. The kiss lingers. She pulls back. He looks at her, happy but also awkward.

BEN

Was that your hiccup cure?

KARA

Did it work?

A beat. Ben waits. No hiccup. Finally he smiles. But then... his smile turns confused. He's staring at something behind them, the way they came. As Kara turns -

We don't see what they're seeing. But we see the alarm on their faces.

(We hear a faint tuning fork HUM. Maybe just in our heads. And the sound of **FLIES**.)

Instead of cutting to what they see, WE GO BACK TO -

INT. HIP COFFEE SHOP - DAY (D1)

ALICE

What do you mean, a staircase?

NATHAN

Believe it or not, this is a thing. Staircases in the park. I've even heard cops talk about it. Old-timers on the force, they'll tell you - if you see one, just keep walking. Don't stop to look at it, don't go near it, and whatever you do, don't go up it.

ALICE

What's so scary about a staircase?

Off her question, we GO BACK TO -

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - CLEARING - DUSK

Ben starts backing away from the offscreen staircase (which we do not see at all). From nearby, the sounds of **FLIES** and the **HUM** continue. Ben looks queasy -

INSERT FLASH - Maddinized footage - distorted and trembling, swarming with **FLIES - some kind of **NIGHTMARISH HUGE ROBED ENTITY**, with the head of a **GIANT FLY** except it has **HUGE RAM'S HORNS** - call this thing **THE PESTILENT GOD**. We will see it again, but just a glimpse now, and back to -**

BEN

Let's get out of here.

KARA

Look how *white* it is. We gotta tag it.
It's virgin!

BEN

No way. Let's go.

Kara hesitates but lets him pull her onward into the trees...

WE START TO PAN AROUND TOWARD THE OFFSCREEN STAIRCASE, but before we get to it, CUT TO:

*
*

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - WOODS - NIGHT

Dark out now. Ben and Kara walk quickly through the trees.

*

There's a faint CRACK behind them. They both look back.

KARA

Um... ?

*

THEIR POV: PAN ACROSS dark trees... tapestry of shadows...
then - A JOLT as we realize we're looking right at someone!

A **SMALL FIGURE** crouched in the foliage. The size of an eight-year-old. Wearing a **HOMEMADE, OLD-FASHIONED HALLOWEEN COSTUME WITH A MASK** (google "*Haunted Air*" to see examples).

BEN

No. Uh-uh. No way.

KARA

(to the kid)

Hey! It's ok.

*

It scuttles sideways, behind a denser bush and out of sight.

BEN

Ok. I'm out of here.

*
*

Ben takes off. But Kara cautiously approaches the tree.
Closer. Closer. Closer -

*

Until she comes around the tree and sees: Nothing. The kid is gone. Off Kara, unnerved... CUT TO -

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Ben emerges breathless onto the sprawling playground. It has a weird grandeur. Lit by sodium lights, eerie and stark. **DENTED SLIDES. SWING SETS. Weird PLAYGROUND HORSES.**

Ben walks quickly across the playground, glancing back...

But then he stops. Seeing a Small Figure on the playground. It too wears an old Halloween costume - and holds a MEAT-TENDERIZING MALLETT. *

Ben hesitates, freaked. Steps left. The Figure moves to follow. He steps right. The Figure mimics. Ben freezes. Then -

BIRD'S EYE SHOT: Looking directly down at Ben as he BREAKS LEFT, sprinting - and three **SMALL FIGURES** come running from different directions, converging for the kill! -

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - WOODS - SAME TIME

Kara alone in the woods - hears Ben's SCREAMS. The screams are CUT SHORT. Kara starts hurrying toward the sound.

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Kara emerges onto the playground where Ben was just attacked.

HER POV: Eerie stillness and sodium lights. Cautiously she walks onto the empty playground. *

She looks around, disturbed. *What the fuck happened here?* - *

CLOSE ON: CRISP MACRO SHOT OF A DROPLET OF BLOOD - *

- clinging to some kind of white surface. Slowly, slightly PULL OUT AND BOOM UP TO REVEAL: *

OUT-OF-FOCUS WHITE STAIRS, rising up toward top of screen. Deeply out of focus, we can see a blood trail continue to BEN'S BODY, which is being DRAGGED UPWARD BY... SOMETHING. *

And we hear a simple repetitive: *HIC... HIC...* As his unconscious body spasms with the hiccups that have returned. *

HIC... HIC... HIC... Over this, our season title card: *

CHANNEL ZERO: STAIRCASES

ACT ONE

EXT. HIP COFFEE SHOP - DAY (D1)

Alice steps out of the coffee shop with Nathan. This neighborhood used to be rough but is now a bit gentrified.

ALICE

Thanks. It's really helpful to talk to someone before I start... and thank you for paying for coffee, I'm sorry about that...

NATHAN

No, no. So why here? Why Garrett?

ALICE

I read that article in Mother Jones -

ALICE (CONT'D)

"Worst Little City You Never
Heard Of."

NATHAN

"Worst Little City You Never
Heard Of."

They laugh as they start walking up the STREET.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Oh, you're going this way too?
Where are you staying?

ALICE

Well, our Airbnb is very bomb
shelter chic. But we're moving into
a place I found on Craigslist...
Haven't met the landlady yet but she
seems cool.

NATHAN

"We." That's - boyfriend? Roommate?

ALICE

I live with my sister.

NATHAN

Huh. Are you like, BFFs? *

ALICE

Well, we're... *sisters*. We've been
living at home, taking care of my mom -
(avoiding that subject) *
- long story. Anyway. When I got *
this job, she came...

NATHAN

She's younger, I'm guessing?

ALICE

Older. She's really smart...

Off Alice's face, thinking about her sister, CUT TO -

EXT. SUMMER HOUSE REALM - MEAT ORCHARD - DAY

CLOSE ON: ZOE'S FACE. As we hear Alice finish her thought -

ALICE (CONT'D) (V.O.)

She's just... figuring things out...

This is **ZOE WOODS** (30), Alice's sister, and she's staring at something. Fascinated. She is standing in some lush, fragrant ORCHARD. (Note: Many episodes from now we'll learn that this orchard is on the grounds of the "Summer House." It should be shot in the same way as those sequences.)

REVERSE TO REVEAL SHE'S LOOKING AT - A BLOSSOM ON A FRUIT TREE. But this is no ordinary tree, and no ordinary blossom. Instead of fruit, this tree bears -

HUMAN FINGERS. Yes, emerging from the blossom are a CLUMP OF FINGERS, curled... *What the hell?* Zoe leans in, mesmerized.

The FINGERS SLOWLY MOVE, curling and uncurling like anemones sensing something close. Zoe cocks her head and then -

From behind her, not far off, an INTENSE, MALEVOLENT **BUZZING SOUND**, like the wings of a GIANT FLY.

Zoe turns sharply but before she sees its source -

INT. CRAPPY AIRBNB STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY (D1)

- **Zoe wakes up.** She's curled on a ratty futon in the "bomb shelter chic" Airbnb where she and Alice are crashing. Suitcases open on the floor. It's cramped and messy and dark. *

If Alice is the idealist, Zoe is the fatalist. Jaded, tough. She has a wounded quality. But she is smart and perceptive.

Zoe looks about the cramped studio, lets the dream, the BUZZING sound, FADE from her head - Zoe shakes her head, trying to clear it. Some things don't fade. *

JUMP CUT: Zoe sits on a ratty couch at a coffee table and CRUSHES an Oxycodone pill with a kitchen KNIFE. She arranges a BUMP on her thumb, SNORTS it - *

Zoe CLOSES her eyes, feels the drug WASH THROUGH HER... *

JUMP CUT: MUSIC plays on Zoe's phone. Zoe sits on the same couch at the same coffee table. There's an aluminum KITCHEN COLANDER on the coffee table but we don't know why. *

Zoe has a LACE KITCHEN NAPKIN over her head and it COVERS her face. *

Zoe SWAYS to the music and the MUSIC WASHES THROUGH HER like the drug did. *

Then the sound of ALICE'S KEY IN THE LOCK and Alice enters, returning from coffee with Nathan - *

Zoe looks to the door. Zoe still has the napkin on her head. *

ZOE
Who goes there?

ALICE
(with humor)
And why do you have a napkin on
your head?

ZOE
I'm not sure it's a napkin.
Theoretically it could be a doily.

ALICE
A doily goes on a plate or under
cake or some other dessert.

ZOE
A napkin it is.

There's an affectionate, sisterly vibe between them. But that
doesn't mean Alice isn't a little suspicious about, well, the
napkin on Zoe's head.

ZOE (CONT'D)
How was coffee?

ALICE
Informative.

ZOE
Did he fall in love with you yet?

ALICE
Only you think I'm lovable.

Alice flops down beside her sister on the ratty couch.

ZOE
Did you tell him what today is?

ALICE
Totally irrelevant.

ZOE
(starts singing)
*Happy birthday to you. Happy
birthday to you. Happy-*

ALICE
Stop. No.

Their tone is no less affectionate than before. But there's
deeper meaning, motive, to Alice's birthday disinterest.

ZOE
Too late. Ta da!

Zoe lifts the COLANDER like it was a silver dome in a fancy restaurant revealing... a CUPCAKE with GREEN ICING.

Alice actually gets a little agitated, like for some reason the idea of the birthday is genuinely traumatic.

ALICE
Zoe, I told you not to -

Zoe finally REMOVES the NAPKIN, finds and holds her sister's gaze. Then, with more love and affection than you expect:

ZOE
Hey! Happy birthday, little sister. You're awesome. I'm okay. Mom is... with people who know how to take care of her. Best of all? We have each other. And *all* that is reason to celebrate.

Alice looks at her sister for a beat. Then smiles.

ALICE
If you say so.

Zoe indicates the cupcake on the coffee table. Alice relents, takes a bite, chews and assesses and then -

ALICE (CONT'D)
Omigod. It's *horrible*.

She takes the napkin and deposits the cupcake bite from her mouth into the napkin.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Pack your stuff. Let's go meet our new landlord.

MONTAGE: ALICE'S CAR/GARRETT STREETS (DRIVING) - DAY (D1)

ALICE'S POV: Various shots through a SLIGHTLY CRACKED WINDSHIELD, giving us a further portrait of Garrett to a SONG PLAYING FROM THE RADIO.

City streets, working-class neighborhoods. A **CONVENIENCE STORE**. A **DOLLAR STORE**. A **CHURCH**.

An abundance of GRAFFITI, showing MOUTHS and BLOOD. CUT TO -

EXT. 421 DEWLAP STREET - FRONT YARD - DAY (D1)

Alice's car pulls up outside 421 Dewlap. The CAR is a really fucked-up old thing, with a sun-damaged hood. Last legs.

421 Dewlap Street is a two-story house that was once nice but looks a bit run down. The whole street is like that. Alice and Zoe get out, looking around.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (O.S.)
Welcome to the neighborhood.

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (40s?) sits on the steps, daintily sucking a lollipop and wearing old-fashioned tinted sunglasses. She's wearing a brown velour tracksuit from the '80s. She gets up and comes to welcome them, no hurry. Alice brightens up.

ALICE
Hey! I'm Alice.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Your car's a real piece of shit, Alice.

ALICE
Um, yep, well... it got us here, I guess. Anyway, thanks so much for renting us your upstairs. Hey, is it ok if I give you the utility check when I get my first paych-

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Now, listen. Couple things you should know. *This* neighborhood? Safe as mama's lap.

As Alice talks with her, Zoe eyes the Woman silently. Noticing small details: Her LEATHER GLOVES. Her WATCH, which is shattered and broken. Her FILTHY SNEAKERS...

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (CONT'D)
But up *that* way? Uh-uh. That place is damned as the devil. Some real bad spirits in Butcher's Block. Not even the rats get out alive.

*
*
*
*

The Woman keeps gesturing with the lollipop for emphasis.

ALICE
Butcher's Block. That's a neighborhood?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
They'll cut you up like a pizza and eat you in slices.
(abruptly remembering something)
Hey - you got any scissors?

ALICE

What? No, I don't think so...

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(to Zoe)

You got any scissors?

ZOE

What do you need scissors for?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Cut my bandages off.

Alice glances at Zoe, alarmed.

ZOE

What bandages?

The Woman looks at them incredulously, as if they must be blind. (To be clear, she has no bandages.) But then -

LOUISE (O.S.)

Leave them alone!

LOUISE LISPECTOR (50s) is emerging from the house. She is regal, blunt, and cynical, with no patience for fools. And she is the owner of 421 Dewlap street, not the Woman (who will now be known as "**SCISSOR WOMAN**").

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I told you not to hang around here.

ALICE

Wait - are you Louise?

LOUISE

I'm your landlord, yeah.

(to Scissor Woman)

Go away, Diane.

Scissor Woman stalks off, suddenly snarling/indignant.

SCISSOR WOMAN

I was trying to HELP.

LOUISE

(to Alice and Zoe)

She's harmless. Just... don't give her scissors.

Alice and Zoe share a baffled/disturbed glance - and Alice starts to go to the car.

ALICE

I'll get our things.

LOUISE

Hang on.

Alice turns, startled by the blunt tone.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

The deposit check.
(off Alice's puzzled look)
It bounced.

Zoe raises her eyebrows. Alice looks small and scared.

ALICE

Oh. I'm - I don't know what's going on. I'm so sorry. I'll call the bank tomorrow and figure it out - I was sure I had just enough in there -

Louise is waving a hand, disturbed by the embarrassing apologetic tone from Alice -

LOUISE

Stop, stop. Give it to me when you get paid. Come inside.

Off Alice's intense relief -

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/STUDY - DAY (D1)

Alice and Zoe follow Louise in. The place is cluttered, full of notebooks, cookbooks, knickknacks. And lots of **TAXIDERMIED ANIMALS**. Squirrels, birds, a raccoon.

Alice looks around. A little unnerved, but eager to please:

ALICE

This is cozy.

Louise goes into the KITCHEN (O.S.). Alice looks at a couple **FRAMED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES** (from the *Garrett Times*) on the wall. The bylines: "Louise Lispector."

ALICE (CONT'D)

I Googled you and saw you were a reporter...

LOUISE (O.S.)

Yep. Believe it or not, that used to be a job.

Alice leans closer to a **FRAMED STORY** from the 1980s. It has photos: **B&W IMAGES OF A YOUNG MAN**. Candid/family photos. The Man is in his 20s, boyish, smiling. He looks innocent.

ALICE

I read this piece about your brother. It was really powerful.

LOUISE (O.S.)

I didn't realize it was online.

Alice goes to a nearby DOORWAY and looks into a **SMALL STUDY**.

ALICE'S POV: THE STUDY. A DESK, a MAP OF GARRETT with PINS in it, piles of NOTEBOOKS and DOCUMENTS - Louise is doing some kind of project here. *What is this?* Alice stares, fascinated.

ALICE

Do you still write? Is this your study?

Louise reappears holding a small bowl... and quickly comes over to CLOSE THE STUDY DOOR. *Off limits.*

Zoe smiles, amused at this. Alice backs away.

LOUISE

Researching a book. Local history.

ALICE

Sorry. Um, didn't mean to pry. I'm-
Ah.

Alice JOLTS - because on the table beside her is a **HAIRLESS CAT** which looks like a weird pink mole rat alien. Zoe laughs.

LOUISE

That's Andre... Come here, honey.

The cat runs toward Louise. She puts the bowl down for him.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You should get to know the city. You're going to be a social worker, right?

ALICE

Family advocate. We work with low-income families, people who might slip through the cracks, and educate them about the system, so they can use it to their advantage.

Alice is eager to talk about this. Her pride and idealism shining through. But Louise sees it as naivete. She smiles, a little amused.

*
*

LOUISE

That's optimistic.

*
*

Alice senses her skepticism and feels defensive. But Zoe smiles, sort of amused. Liking Louise and her cynicism.

*
*

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Shall we?

*
*

Louise smiles, gesturing to the stairs. Off Alice, smiling politely but a little wounded -

*

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY (D1)

Alice and Zoe come upstairs, carrying BOXES and BAGS, looking around, to slightly DREAMLIKE, EERIE MUSIC... Taking in the shabby interior, faded wallpaper. MUSIC CONTINUES OVER -

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - ALICE'S BEDROOM - DAY (D1)

Alice enters her bedroom. A bed, a desk, a chair, a dresser. Some odd paintings. She puts her bags down, puts some of her things on the desk, and arranges them neatly, OCD-style.

Her cell phone VIBES. She looks at it: "NO CALLER ID."

She side-buttons it, ignoring the call.

Then she looks around. It's late afternoon and rich sunlight pours in the window. Alice goes to the WINDOW and stares out:

HER POV: THE CITY OF GARRETT in the distance, mysterious and strange, eerie magic hour light suffusing and obscuring it.

OFF ALICE, her face bathed in the golden light, squinting a little as she looks out...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A CIRCULAR CUTTING EDGE NEEDLE -

- as it pierces ANIMAL FUR. Someone is sewing the HIDE of a dead animal together. Methodical, strange...

CLOSE ON A DEAD RACCOON'S FACE.

Absent eyeballs, mouth open in a sharp-toothed grimace. What is going on here? REVEAL WE ARE IN -

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY (D1)

- Louise's overgrown back yard, which stretches far back to a FENCE. Near the back porch -

Louise is doing taxidermy, calm and focused. Her hobby. All those taxidermied animals in the house were homemade.

Alice emerges from the back porch and sees this. Watches for a moment, fascinated.

Louise glances up (but keeps working) as Alice approaches.

ALICE
Sorry I got a little defensive.

LOUISE
Don't worry about it.

ALICE
Can I talk to you about my sister?

LOUISE
Sure.

Throughout this, Louise continues to work. Alice watches her closely, trying to gauge her reaction.

ALICE
It's like I said on the phone. I just want to fill you in a bit more.

LOUISE
She seems like a normal girl.

ALICE
Most of the time, when she's on her meds - she is. The other thing is, just fyi, she's in recovery. No drugs, no alcohol. So, if you could avoid offering her a drink or anything like that.

LOUISE
I drink alone. *

Louise is blunt. The conversation could be over, but Alice feels the need to say more - *

ALICE
Sorry. It's just, I take care of her. So...
(trails off)
There's no need to be afraid of her or treat her differently. *

Louise turns to her, a little exasperated. *

LOUISE
I don't care. We're not going to bond. I'm not your mom. I'm not your aunt. I'm your landlady. I just take your check every month. *

(MORE) *

LOUISE (CONT'D)
There's a reason I didn't have
kids... it was a choice.

*
*

She returns to her taxidermy. Alice, a little stunned,
manages a nod... CUT TO -

*
*

EXT. GARRETT STREETS - DAWN (D2)

Alice JOGGING, a different morning, earbuds in... we HEAR THE
MUSIC AND FOLLOW HER as she takes in the streets of Garrett.

She sees a YOUNG KID GNAWING A CHICKEN BONE, staring at her.
She smiles. The kid stares back. FADE TO -

I./E. NATHAN'S CAR/BUTCHER'S BLOCK (DRIVING) - MORNING (D2)

SHOTS of a collapsing, deserted landscape. It feels like the
worst parts of Detroit, with burned-out, deserted houses.
There are A FEW PEOPLE visible - sitting, watching.

Nathan (from the teaser) drives. Alice rides shotgun. She's
eating an apple - breakfast.

ALICE
Thanks for picking me up.

NATHAN
First day, first case... figured
I'd fill you in on the way over...
Doctor reported signs of child
abuse and neglect, now CPS might
remove the kid. Pretty standard for
Butcher's Block.

ALICE
That's where we're going?

NATHAN
It's where we are. Past Chine Street
up here, we're in Butcher's.

Alice looks out and sees: A DISTINCTIVE GRAFFITI MURAL on an
abandoned building. Then we realize -

It's the same mural Kara was painting in the teaser (although
Alice and Nathan don't know that of course) - the white-
face/red-mouth figure we'll call "The Butcher." (When we see
it in the future, we'll know we're entering Butcher's Block.)

ALICE'S SUBJECTIVE POV: The BUTCHER MURAL. Majestic, ominous.

Then she sees the faded "PEACH'S MEATS" sign far above it.

ALICE

What is "Peach's Meats"? I've seen those signs all over.

NATHAN

The whole city was built around their meatpacking plants. Butcher's Block is where workers lived. Believe it or not, the city used to revolve around it.

(then)

You know what a sacrifice zone is?

ALICE

"Sacrifice zone"?

NATHAN

It's an environmental term, usually. Means an area that's totally drained. No resources, no economy, no hope. That's Butcher's Block. It's just leeching resources, so the city just left it alone to die.

Alice gazes outside. Surveying the forgotten land.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Hey, we come here in pairs, okay? Don't ever go into Butcher's Block alone. Or at night.

Off Alice, staring out the window...

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY (D2)

Nathan's car parks outside a dilapidated old house, once nice. It looks like no one lives here. (*Note: Tanya's house is right by Medallion Park. We can't see this from here, but her back yard borders the edge of the park.*) They get out.

NATHAN

Let me do the talking. Since it's your first day and all.

Nathan walks up to the door. Alice looks around. Then - she sees a bit of motion: SOMETHING RED lurking beside the house:

A Little Boy, wearing a RED, OLD-FASHIONED DINOSAUR COSTUME.

A dirty pajama-style onesie, with a floppy hood that conceals most of his face. This boy is watching Alice, but when she sees him, he disappears behind the house.

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

Alice?

Nathan's at the front door with **TANYA** (20s), who's noticeably but not extremely PREGNANT. With an unnerved glance at where she saw the boy, Alice heads toward them...

*
*

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (D2)

Small, cluttered. Tanya sits, smoking angrily. Arms crossed. She doesn't trust them, feels under attack.

TANYA

This is bullshit. I *never* harmed that child.
(calls)
Isaac??

LITTLE FOOTSTEPS run up the hall. The Little Boy in costume appears in the doorway. But now we'll call him **ISAAC** (8) - he's Tanya's son. Alice notes that the FINGERS ON HIS LEFT HAND ARE BANDAGED.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Tell them what you told the people.
How you got bit.

ISAAC

Playing in the park.

Alice waves hi to Isaac. He shyly waves back. Then runs off.

TANYA

I told him stay out of there. I can't watch him every second. But kids, you know - they fuck around and get hurt.

Alice glances at Nathan, who subtly gestures at her not to speak. She resists the desire to.

NATHAN

We take no position on what you did or didn't do. We're here to adv-

His lawyerly tone does not endear him to Tanya.

TANYA

"What I did or didn't do"? I just told you, he got *bit* by a dog. He's making up stories to get attention, saying this or that bit him - and they start acting like *I* did it.

NATHAN

Please calm down. Right now it's ab-

ALICE
(cutting Nathan off)
I used to fall down stairs.

Tanya and Nathan look at her, like *what the fuck*.

ALICE (CONT'D)
When I was a little kid. My mom was busy, we were broke, she never had time for me... my sister got what little attention there was. So I used to fall down the stairs to get a little for myself.
(shrugs)
Kids fuck around and get hurt. I believe you.

A beat. Finally, Tanya looks at Nathan and gestures at Alice.

TANYA
See? She gets it.

Nathan reluctantly smiles.

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY (D2)

Alice and Nathan emerge and descend the porch. As Nathan goes to the car, Alice hears something and turns to see -

- Isaac, in his red dinosaur costume, kneeling in the dirt beside the porch and playing with a stick.

She looks at Isaac's bandaged fingers. His worried eyes. She senses something is wrong. She walks over to Isaac.

Nathan notices and just watches carefully. Alice stops in front of Isaac, smiles.

ALICE
Hey. I'm Alice. How's it going?

Isaac shrugs. Alice notices something: the TAG on the collar of his dinosaur costume. Something scrawled on it in marker.

She kneels to look closer. It says, in shaky handwriting:

Smart mouth

ALICE (CONT'D)
"Smart Mouth"? Is that your nickname?

Isaac shakes his head.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Is this a hand-me-down?

ISAAC
I found it in the park.

Alice looks more closely at the costume: It's really dirty.

ALICE
Like, on the ground?

ISAAC
On the playground. It's by my fort.

ALICE
Hey. Isaac. Was it a dog that bit you?

ISAAC
(looks up at her)
What do you think is gonna happen
to me and mom?

Alice is on the spot, unsure how to answer. But wanting to be a reassuring, optimistic figure. A beat, then she smiles:

ALICE
I think... everything is going to
work out ok.

Isaac smiles back - a little uncertainly.

INT. LOUISE'S STUDY - LATE AFTERNOON (D2)

With Louise, in the private room Alice got a glimpse of earlier. Now Louise stares at a MAP OF GARRETT with PINS in it. Medallion Park is in the center. PHOTOS of various people are pinned nearby. One is the man pictured in Louise's framed article that Alice noticed earlier (Louise's brother).

Louise is studying this intently (*and we're wondering what the hell it is*) when - she hears CREAKING in the ceiling. Breaking her focus. Some deliberate movement happening just above her. She looks up at the ceiling and we CUT TO -

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME (D2)

- where we find Alice, in old gym pants and a t-shirt, doing YOGA in her bedroom. Frozen in place, concentrating.

Then her phone VIBRATES - incoming call.

She breaks her pose and locates her phone. Looks at it - and freezes. The caller: "MOM." Alice answers reluctantly.

ALICE

Hello?

NORA (V.O.)

Allie? I've been trying to call you.
I wanted to tell you happy birthday.

She's in her 50s or 60s. Sounds sweet, vulnerable, pleading.

ALICE

That was last week, Mom. But thank you.

NORA (V.O.)

I know, I just... How's your
sister? Are you taking care of her?

ALICE

Of course I am.

NORA (V.O.)

Where are you?

ALICE

I told you. We moved.

NORA (V.O.)

I know, but where?

ALICE

It's only a day's drive.

NORA (V.O.)

(not accusing; sad)
You don't want to tell me.

ALICE

Mom...

INTERCUT:

INT. ST. MARY'S PSYCH HOSPITAL - SAME TIME (D2)

Alice and Zoe's mom **NORA** (50s) sits at a BREAK ROOM table. She looks loving but a little hollow, drugged. A **BURLY MALE NURSE** supervises her phone call.

It is clear: Alice and Zoe's mom is in some kind of psychiatric institution.

NORA

Allie... I wasn't myself!

ALICE

I know, Mom. Believe me.

NORA

I'm sorry.

From the hallway, we can hear PATIENTS ARGUING.

ALICE

I have to go.

NORA

Wait - wait! Honey. I need to get out of here.

ALICE

I don't control that. And... you're there for a reason.

NORA

(hurt; admonishing)

Allie! I wasn't myself. You just don't understand because you don't know what it's like - let me talk to Zoe.

ALICE

She's not here.

NORA

Well give me her number. You don't get to decide.

ALICE

No, it's not good for her! I have to go -

NORA

Allie - where are you? Tell me wh-

Alice ends the call and tosses the phone away like it's burning. She stands there for a beat, recovering.

END INTERCUT.

INT. LOUISE'S STUDY - SAME TIME (D2)

With Louise, again, looking up at the ceiling. As if she heard everything.

EXT. BUTCHER'S BLOCK - ALLEY - LATE AFTERNOON (D2)

CLOSE ON: A GREEN PLASTIC YO-YO as it DRAGS along asphalt. *

REVEAL: Isaac on the move, dragging his yo-yo by the string, walking it like a dog. He plods down the middle of the street, still dressed in the same RED DINOSAUR costume. *

Then reveal, approaching from the other direction - *

Scissor Woman. This seems slightly ominous. Is she a danger to him? But Isaac doesn't seem afraid... *

And as they pass each other, Scissor Woman points her finger at him in a fond gesture. He points a finger back. They know each other. She's fond of him. *

SCISSOR WOMAN *

Hey. *

He looks at her. *

SCISSOR WOMAN (CONT'D) *

Stay safe out there, little man. *

Isaac nods solemnly and continues on his way. Off the two unlikely friends, going their separate ways... *

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATE AFTERNOON (D2) *

Zoe is standing alone, smoking. Thinking. She looks up as -

Alice comes outside. Alice smiles at her, raises her eyebrows... and says nothing about their mom's phone call.

ALICE

Hey.

(nods at yard)

Louise said we could have a garden. *

The overgrown yard stretches far back to a FENCE, shaded by an old tree. The area at the back feels distant and isolated. Alice looks over the yard, assessing its garden-worthiness.

Zoe smokes, silently watching Alice pace around.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Would you eat pumpkins?

ZOE

(amused)

Sure, why not.

Alice goes toward the back of the yard. As she gets close to the fence and the tree, she hears a RUSTLING.

She stops. Sounded like something is in the yard with her, behind that tree. She comes closer.

She looks behind the tree - and sees nothing. But... there's a HOLE IN THE FENCE where something could have escaped.

Alice hears SOMETHING on the other side of the fence. Someone is back there. She looks closer: In the fence gaps, she can see the SILHOUETTE OF A CHILD crouched on the other side.

She steps closer and the child moves slightly, tracking her. She moves again. The child moves again.

Alice turns to Zoe, who looks at her strangely. Alice beckons. Zoe crushes out her cigarette and walks over.

Alice gestures toward the fence/child - but when they look over, the outline is gone. No one behind the fence.

ZOE (CONT'D)

What?

Alice walks over to the back fence and steps up on an empty planter to look over it.

ALICE'S POV: THE ALLEY BEHIND THE BACK YARD - Nothing there. No kid. A dirty alley.

Alice hops back down, troubled. Was she... imagining that? The thought scares her. She looks at Zoe.

ALICE

There was a little kid back there.

Zoe looks at her, half-smiling, like Alice is nuts.

ZOE

Are you pregnant? ...Or just finally losing it?

ALICE

Not funny.

Alice walks back toward the house, shaken/annoyed.

I./E. NATHAN'S CAR/BUTCHER'S BLOCK (DRIVING) - DAY (D3)

DRIVING SHOT: The Butcher Mural. We're entering Butcher's Block... OVER THE **POV DRIVING SHOTS**, VOICEOVER -

NATHAN (O.S.)

Axe just fell. Court order. CPS is coming this morning to remove Isaac Marcus.

ALICE (O.S.)

Just like that? They just come to the house and take him away?

ON THEM: Nathan drives. Alice rides shotgun.

NATHAN

Yep. And we're gonna be there when it happens.

Alice looks disturbed. Off that -

NATHAN (CONT'D)

No one said this job was chicken soup for the soul.

Off Alice, preparing herself, CUT TO -

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (D3)

Alice and Nathan stand before Tanya. She paces back and forth, anxious. Nathan tries to prepare her.

NATHAN

There's nothing you can do to change what's going to happen here today.

Tanya is more hollow-eyed than before. You can feel her stress. Oddly, she seems to be struggling to pay attention to Nathan and Alice. She keeps looking around like she's scared.

TANYA

You think I don't know that?

Alice, whose back is to a wall, HEARS SOMETHING behind her - a rustling in the wall. Like dust falling/settling.

NATHAN

When CPS gets here, the cops may be with them, and it's important you don't resist. Our job is to help you use the system to get your son back.

TANYA

(distracted, edgy)

I wish they'd just get here and take him someplace safe. When are they gonna get here?

Alice glances at Nathan, surprised. He is too. Tanya seems anxious for Isaac to be taken away... as if he'll be safer somewhere else.

NATHAN

You... want them to take him?

Tanya suddenly seems to understand she's said something weird. She looks at them, then looks down quickly, covering.

TANYA

I just mean, if they're gonna do it, do it.

ALICE

You've explained everything to him?

Tanya ignores her. She LIGHTS A CIGARETTE and turns to look out the BACK WINDOW uneasily, as if afraid. Alice watches - *what has her spooked?*

NATHAN

Tanya.

Tanya flinches slightly. Nathan is taking out some papers.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I need you to sign a couple forms...

As this conversation happens, Alice sits back. Her head is near the wall (right where she heard SLIGHT SOUNDS earlier). And - WE PAN OVER, THROUGH THE WALL, INTO -

INT. TANYA'S LIVING ROOM - INSIDE THE WALL - CONTINUOUS (D3)

- Where, shrouded in near-complete darkness so we can barely see it, something is lurking in the wall right behind Alice's head.

Some kind of HUNGRY, CHILD-SIZED **HOMUNCULUS**, a pink-fleshy thing with an open, dribbling mouth like a monstrous baby. It smells Alice. It wants Alice. As it leans forward and LICKS THE WALL just behind where her head is -

ACT TWO

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (D3)

Alice suddenly sits forward and stands up while Nathan and Tanya continue to go over the documents.

Alice unobtrusively steps away. That feeling of something wrong here is nagging her. She steps into -

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (D3)

- and walks down the narrow hall toward an open door at the end, from which she can hear Isaac packing. *

She stops, hearing a SLIGHT SOUND in the wall nearby. *Is that thing tracking her?* *

She takes a few steps forward *and the sound follows her*. As if on the other side of the wall. Mimicking her movements. *

She stops. Softly approaches the wall. Presses her palm to it. *Waiting. Listening. Nothing.* *

She knocks lightly on the wall - AND THERE'S A SUDDEN SCRAMBLING AND SCRAPING like a large animal inside the wall scuttled away. Alice freezes in momentary terror, before deciding to follow the sound. *

A slow, tense DOLLY with Alice, following the sounds. Toward a SLIGHTLY OPEN DOOR at the end of the hall. The sounds disappear into that room. *

Alice pushes the door open and goes into - *

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - ISAAC'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS (D3)

- where she sees Isaac standing over an old duffel bag in his small, cluttered room. On high alert. His red hood is down and she can see his unkempt little kid hair. *

The room is messy, falling apart. Discolored wallpaper peeling off. And a **HOLE IN THE BEDROOM WALL**. (The same size as the hole Alice saw in Louise's backyard fence.) Inside it, only darkness is visible. *

ALICE
Did you hear that? *

He looks at her with wide doe eyes. As if afraid to speak. *

ALICE (CONT'D)
Is there something in the walls? *

He pauses before nodding. *

Before Alice can respond, there's a SOFT THUMP in the bedroom wall. Moving around the room. Alice looks over. That wasn't just dust settling. *

Isaac is looking at the wall, too. Eyes wide.

ISAAC
Sometimes I go stay in my fort when I get scared. *

Isaac points out the window. Alice looks.

ALICE'S POV: TANYA'S BACK YARD. Totally overgrown, scrubby. Scattered kids' toys. The back of the yard is bordered by scrubby trees which are the edge of Medallion Park.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
My fort's under that tree.

PUSH IN on THE TOP OF A **DISTINCTIVE GNARLED TREE** (we'll see it again later) silhouetted against the cloudy sky.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
When I'm gone... will you make sure
nothing happens to my mom?

ALICE
(even more alarmed)
What would happen to your mom?

Isaac hesitates. Before he answers - again there's a sound: A SCRAPING in the bedroom wall. CLOSER TO THE HOLE IN THE WALL. *

BUT NOW WE HEAR A RASPING GROAN. Not quite human, but not quite the house settling, either. Alice jolts around and stares, deeply unnerved now. Calls - *

ALICE (CONT'D)
Nathan?

FOOTSTEPS. Nathan appears in the doorway. A little alarmed: *What is Alice doing in here?*

NATHAN
What's going on?

Alice puts a finger to her lips. She points to the wall. Nathan is like, *What the fuck?*

ALICE
(whispering)
There's something in the wall.

Loudly, disbelievingly: *

NATHAN
Um...what? *

Alice holds her finger to her lips sternly. *Shut the fuck up!* *

Nathan raises his eyebrows at her. *

Alice steps slowly over to the wall. Isaac tenses, as if he's scared for her. *And there's nothing.* *

And then a slight SQUEAL, as if something hurt itself. It's got Nathan's attention now. *

NATHAN (CONT'D)
It's a raccoon. *

SHOT: FROM INSIDE THE HOLE - Alice edges toward the hole. Craning her head to try seeing further into the wall.

ON ALICE - moving closer... Nathan now uneasy. He steps toward her protectively. *Maybe that's not a good idea...* *

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Hey.

OUT OF FOCUS (and unnoticed by Alice or Nathan), ISAAC - A RED BLUR IN THE BACKGROUND - creeps toward the exit. Oh shit. This kid knows something's wrong. *

But Alice steps closer to the hole. Cautiously leans forward - she's going to put her face close to it to look into the walls (*Don't fucking do that!!*) but just before she does -

A SOFT CLICK. Alice and Nathan turn as the bedroom door closes behind them. *The hell -* *

Nathan tries to open the door - but it's locked!

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What the fuck -

ALICE

Isaac? *

Then, horribly - TANYA STARTS SCREAMING out there in the house. Pure panic and terror - *

NATHAN

What's going on??

The SCREAMS continue - bloodcurdling - as Alice frantically tries the door - locked - and starts KICKING it in vain.

Nathan pulls her back and SLAMS his shoulder against it with no effect except to hurt his shoulder -

Then the SCREAMS STOP. Ominous silence.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Ms. Marcus??

No answer. A beat. Then Nathan KICKS the door again. AGAIN. AGAIN. AGAIN. Finally one last KICK and the LOCK SPLINTERS out of the latch, the door BANGING OPEN. Alice rushes into -

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (D3)

- and sees nothing. Nathan follows. They run into - *

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS (D3)

Nathan and Alice rush in, see the room empty. *

Tanya's cigarette lies STILL SMOLDERING on the floor, as if she just dropped it.

Then BANG BANG BANG! - Alice looks up at the jolt of pounding from the front door...

LUKE (O.S.)
POLICE!

Off Alice and Nathan, bewildered...

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - ZOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Zoe's in bed. Taking a nap, or trying to. Tossing and turning. The curtains are closed but pale eerie light comes in, slightly unnatural. We can hear some kind of DISTANT CONVERSATION from outdoors, far-off voices talking... Then Zoe feels something strange. She sits up, takes her hand from under the sheets...to find it BLOODY.

SLOW PULL BACK TO REVEAL - BLOODSTAINS SPREADING all across the white sheets around her. From under the sheets...

With a gasp she yanks the sheets aside to see - the bed is full of SEVERED FEET. She's lying in a bloody garden of them. Like a bed of roses, but... not. The pattern is oddly beautiful. As she looks at it, mesmerized -

INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM - BACK TO REALITY - DAY (D3)

- **SHE WAKES UP** with a jolt. In an empty bed. The light is normal. The world is quiet. She sits up and sighs.

Her room is sparse - she has barely unpacked. She opens her suitcase on the floor and takes out a small hidden pouch containing an RX BOTTLE with the label scratched off.

It's OXYCODONE, the pills inside crushed into a ROUGH POWDER.

She pours some out on the table... then looks at her hand, which is TREMBLING. Then she snorts some. Then more.

She closes her eyes, feeling a little peace. *Despite what Alice thinks, Zoe is not clean...*

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY (D3)

Zoe stands in the back yard, smoking a cigarette. A little glazed. Staring at the fence. There's a kind of LOW HUM audible - in her head. The Oxycodone.

In the b.g. OUT OF FOCUS Louise comes outside.

LOUISE
Mind if I join you?

Louise comes into focus. Holding a hand-rolled cigarette. Zoe holds up her lighter, lights it for her. Louise closes her eyes, takes a drag. Zoe realizes it's not a cigarette.

ZOE

Gonna let me hit that?

LOUISE

Your sister said you were clean.

Zoe shrugs. *Nope*. Louise hands it over. Zoe takes a drag.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Do you still have symptoms, or do the meds control that completely?

(off Zoe's startled look)

Your sister told me. You didn't know that?

Zoe nods, processing that for a second. *What the fuck, Alice*. Resenting Alice a bit for treating her like that.

ZOE

Of course she did.

Zoe takes another drag, stewing on that.

ZOE (CONT'D)

The thing about Alice is... We never had any money, our dad took off when we were little, and our mom, well... I pretty much raised her. She used to want to be me.

(beat; a drag)

My brain was like this perfect red apple. And when I was 26, a little... *bug* that had always been there woke up and started to eat its way toward the surface. They call it "insidious onset." Basically the beginning of the end of you.

(beat; a drag)

Twenty-six. Same age our mom had her first symptoms, too.

LOUISE

It runs in your family.

ZOE

Alice and I spent the last couple years taking care of her. At home. Couldn't afford anything else. Now... the taxpayers got it.

Louise doesn't reply, just looks at Zoe compassionately.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Anyway. Alice used to look up to me. Now she has to look out for me.

A hint of guilt and self-loathing in that. Zoe takes a drag of the joint, then says defensively -

ZOE (CONT'D)

But she doesn't know what it's like to live with this.

LOUISE

(re: the joint)
Whatever helps.

She smiles at Zoe. They are establishing a bond.

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (D3)

Alice and Nathan are surrounded by a **CPS WORKER** and **TWO COPS** - **LUKE VANCZYK** (late 20s) and his partner **TODD**. Luke is young but jaded. He really doesn't want to be here, and doesn't particularly take Alice seriously.

LUKE

So, CPS is about to remove the kid, the mom knows it, and they both just up and ghost?

ALICE

No, no - something *happened* to them. They were abducted.

LUKE

(doesn't believe it)
Uh-huh.

ALICE

You didn't hear her screaming.

NATHAN

Alice, when you think about it-

LUKE

She didn't want CPS to remove the kid, so she ghosted. Happens all the time. You're new here, huh?

ALICE

What does that have to do with anything?

LUKE

You'll get used to it.

ALICE

What the hell happened to *protect*
and *serve the community*?

TODD

This isn't really a "community."
It's more like a... persistent
infection.

Luke just kind of nods distractedly, like that's harsh but
what can you say? He checks his watch, glances at Nathan.

LUKE

I'll let you know if they turn up.
I was supposed to be off the clock
an hour ago - I gotta get home and
feed my dog.

ALICE

(incredulous; losing it)
Is this - are you a real cop?

TODD

His dog's deaf.

LUKE

You gotta stomp on the ground so he
can feel the vibration.

Alice is like, *What the fuck?* The cops start to leave.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Anyway. Have a good day.

TODD

(glancing back)
If you were smart, you'd go back
wherever you came from. The people
you came here to help? They're not
worth it.

Off Alice, helpless, as they leave.

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (N3)

Establishing. PUSH IN on Louise's house. Very late. CUT TO -

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - NIGHT (N3)

CLOSE ON ALICE'S FACE - EERIE PALE YELLOW under porch light,
a SLOW-MOTION STORM OF MOTHS AND NIGHTTIME INSECTS in the
f.g., swarming madly by the light. Alice's face is troubled.

*

ZOE (O.S.)

How can you know for sure?

WIDER TO REVEAL - Alice stands on the back porch, looking out into the yard. Zoe leans against the wall nearby, smoking. The yard full of shadows.

ALICE
Because I was there.

ZOE
You can't always trust your own perceptions.

That subtly touches a nerve with Alice. A beat.

ALICE
It's just them. No one else. A mom looking out for her kid, and something bad happened to them. And someone has to do something ab-

A DISTINCTIVE RING TONE from inside the house. Alice and Zoe look toward the door.

ZOE
(to Alice)
Who's calling you this late?

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (N3)

Alice enters to see her CELL PHONE lying on the coffee table, lighting up. She hurries over to it to answer - then freezes as she sees the caller: "**TANYA MARCUS.**" Alice grabs it -

ALICE
Tanya??

No answer. Raspy **CHILDLIKE BREATHING**. It sounds terrified.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Isaac?

Zoe appears. Recognizes the name, startled. Mouths/whispers:

ZOE
[Dinosaur kid??]

ALICE
Isaac, is that you?? Are you okay?

WEIRD CHILD VOICE (V.O.)
I need help.

Then a click. Call ended. Alice, stunned:

ALICE

It's a landline - that was from the house.

Alice is Googling "Garrett PD." Hits the phone number, DIALS. RINGING... RINGING... RINGING...

POLICE DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Precinct 5, please hold.

Alice STARTS TO SPEAK but before she gets a word out, she gets put on hold with TERRIBLE MUSIC.

Alice is staring across the room at the OPEN DOOR OF LOUISE'S STUDY. In the shadows within, she can see Louise's desk, stacks of paperwork, folders, a map of Garrett...

The CONNECTION GOES DEAD. Silence. Alice hangs up the phone.

ALICE

I have to go back there.

ZOE

At night? By yourself?

ALICE

Stay here. I'll be back soon.

ZOE

Don't tell me what to do. I'm your older sister.

Zoe's going with her.

ACT THREE

I./E. ALICE'S CAR/BUTCHER'S BLOCK (DRIVING) - NIGHT (N3)

Alice and Zoe driving. We pass a building with the old "Peach's Meats" sign painted onto it.

They drive past the BUTCHER MURAL - the sign that we're entering Butcher's Block.

Off Zoe's disturbed look -

EXT. TANYA'S STREET/TANYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT (N3)

Alice and Zoe park on Tanya's street, uneasy. Butcher's Block looks ominous at night. Darkness and destroyed houses.

ALICE

Look. There's nobody even here to mess with us.

Alice and Zoe start toward Tanya's house.

SCISSOR WOMAN (O.S.)
Welcome to the neighborhood!

Alice and Zoe jump and turn to see - Scissor Woman emerging from darkness, coming at them. Still wearing her sunglasses - but now her appearance is jarringly different - the track suit is partially open, haphazard, revealing scarred flesh underneath and, bizarrely, an AMERICAN FLAG BIKINI worn as underwear. Something GLEAMS in her hand - a PAIR OF SCISSORS.

*
*
*
*
*

SCISSOR WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (smiling joyfully)
 I cut off my bandages! See?

She holds up her hands to reveal they are **covered in bloody gashes**. She has sliced herself up severely. Alice jolts -

ALICE
 Oh my god -

SCISSOR WOMAN
 Lemme get yours...

- and starts right for Alice holding the scissors!

INSERT FLASH - Nora in place of Scissor Woman - Alice seeing a jolting memory of her mother -

Oh SHIT - Alice flinches backward -

ALICE
 No no no stop! -

SCISSOR WOMAN
 Come here honey!

She lunges for Alice's face with the scissors - a terrifying moment, she's right in our face with those scissors -

And Zoe leaps to protect Alice, grabbing Scissor Woman's arm -

Scissor Woman now turns her attention to Zoe -

SCISSOR WOMAN (CONT'D)
 Your eyes! You poor thing, they covered up your eyes -

She tries to get at Zoe's eyes with her scissors, pushing Zoe back against the car as Zoe tries to fend her off -

Scissor Woman inches from Zoe's face, a sickening and surreal experience, Zoe grabbing her wrist to keep the scissors away -

As Alice rushes over to try to pull Scissor Woman off -

SCISSOR WOMAN (CONT'D) ALICE
Shhh shh shh let me just take Let go of her!
them off for you -

- when an **ANGRY MAN** shouts from darkness up the street -

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)
SHUT THE FUCK UP, I'MMA COME OUT
THERE AND SLIT YOUR BRAIN FOR YOU
IN A MINUTE.

Hearing the voice, Scissor Woman looks up, concerned...

SCISSOR WOMAN
Where are you? I'm coming!

Forgetting about them, she heads up the street focused on the voice. Leaving Alice and Zoe stunned.

ALICE
Come on -

Alice grabs Zoe's arm - Zoe seems deeply shaken up - and quietly hustles her up on the porch, to the front door.

She tries the knob - unlocked. They rush inside -

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS (N3)

- and shut the door behind them. Silent beat. Catching their breath. Some of the lights are still on inside the house, but it feels deserted and silent.

Alice looks around. The empty, dirty living room. The LANDLINE PHONE - a cheap cordless, the handset lying on the floor like it was dropped there.

Alice looks back outside, making sure Scissor Woman is gone. Zoe looks at her hands, smeared with Scissor Woman's blood.

ALICE
She's gone.

Alice looks back at Zoe, sees how badly shaken she is.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You okay? Did she cut you?

ZOE
(pulling it together)
It's her blood. I'm ok. I'm ok. I
just - need to wash it off.

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT (N3)

Zoe hurriedly washes Scissor Woman's blood off her hands, her breathing ragged. Her hands are shaking.

She looks at her reflection in the mirror and we go a little subjective here, TWITCHING IN AND OUT OF FOCUS.

She FLINCHES - something hurting her head, as if something's been broken open. And -

INSERT FLASH - A FLESH NIGHTMARE - THE FOOTAGE DISTORTED AND TREMBLING, AS IF SWARMING WITH FLIES (we should use Guy Maddin / Evan & Galen Johnson technique to create this)...
Zoe is having a vision of some awful place.

NOW REVEAL A FIGURE: A tall, terrifying figure with CRACKED, SNOW-WHITE SKIN and a BLOODY RED MOUTH - THE BUTCHER. He is close, staring right at Zoe/us but we only glimpse him before -

We're back with Zoe at the mirror as she gasps, backs away, chokes back a sob. She's breaking down...

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - ISAAC'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME (N3)

ALICE (O.S.)

Isaac?

Alice enters the bedroom where she talked to Isaac. His bag remains on the floor where she last saw it, half-packed.

She looks around at the empty room. Then to the WINDOW.

HER POV: TANYA'S BACK YARD. Now it is night but we'll recall that we saw this POV earlier, in daytime. PUSH IN ON THE TOP OF A DISTINCTIVE GNARLED TREE against the dark sky. Alice saw it before, when Isaac told her he goes out there to hide...

ALICE - remembers that too. Makes a decision.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Zoe?

Alice turns and we FOLLOW HER -

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (N3)

- down the hall to the bathroom. Alice opens it, going into -

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS (N3)

- to reveal Zoe kneeling on the floor, in the middle of a full-on panic attack, holding her orange RX bottle and trying to crush up Oxy to snort it, but with her shaking hands she is having trouble -

*
*
*

She looks up at Alice, who freezes. Puts a hand to her mouth. Hurt at the sight of her sister in distress - and startled/disturbed at the drugs.

Zoe looks up at Alice, guilt and shame in her eyes. After a beat, desperate, incredibly vulnerable. *

ZOE
I need it. *Please.* *

A beat of painful, conflicted silence for Alice. *

She kneels and helps Zoe crush the last of the Oxy so she can snort it. Zoe does, then closes her eyes in relief. Alice just watches her. *

They don't need to say anything. Alice just knows she needs to get Zoe out of here. She helps Zoe to her feet.

ZOE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry...

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT (N3)

Alice approaches the front door, leading Zoe. She's holding Zoe's arm, but Zoe's trying to pull herself together, and she pulls her arm away.

ZOE
I'm ok now... I'm fine...

ALICE
Did you... hear things?

ZOE
This was different. It was like - pressure all around my head. Then it like - *popped*, and I saw something - I'm ok now. Wait. I just need a cigarette.

Alice is reaching for the front door, but stops. Zoe gets out a cigarette and shakily lights it. Alice watches, worried.

ON ALICE'S FACE. Thinking.

QUICK FLASHBACK (N3): ALICE'S POV OF THE DISTINCTIVE GNARLED TREE against the dark sky in the back yard.

QUICK FLASHBACK (D3): ISAAC, this afternoon, about to say something - *

Zoe looks back at Alice with a silent question: *What?* *

ALICE

This afternoon... he said when he's
scared, he goes to hide in his
fort.

Zoe knows what Alice is thinking. And also sees how
conflicted she is, reluctant to leave Zoe behind.

ZOE

I'll be ok.
(then)
Really. Go.

Alice hesitates, then nods.

ALICE

I won't be long.

Off Zoe, watching Alice head toward the back door...

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER (N3)

Alice emerges from the back of the house. The yard feels like
a wild, deserted place.

The edge of Medallion Park borders the back yard. She looks
behind the tree-line, at the silhouette of the DISTINCTIVE,
GNARLED TREE.

She shivers although it isn't cold. Uneasy, she hurries to
the back of the yard - hesitates - and then leaves the yard,
disappearing into the park...

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - SAME TIME (N3)

Left alone, Zoe smokes. She closes her eyes as if needing to
steady herself. Trying to self-calm.

Then she opens her eyes - and stops. She's looking through a
dirty window beside the front door.

ZOE'S POV THROUGH WINDOW: In the high grass in front of THE
HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET, a CHILD is standing still and
watching Tanya's house.

A child in a **RED DINOSAUR COSTUME**. The hood is up, shrouding
the kid in darkness. We can't see if it's Isaac. It's a
supremely spooky image.

Zoe, freaked but knowing that this is the kid Alice came here
looking for, fumbles to get her phone out. No bars.

Urgently she heads for the back of the house.

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT (N3)

Zoe emerges from the back of the house, just where Alice was a moment ago. Zoe looks around for Alice. But she's gone, disappeared into the night.

Zoe, cursing under her breath, hurries back inside.

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT (N3)

Zoe returns to the front door. Looks out the WINDOW. Red Dinosaur is still standing there, looking at the house.

Zoe hesitates, then opens the front door and steps -

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS (N3)

- out onto the front porch. Back into the eerie night. In a whisper-shout, not wanting to attract attention -

ZOE

Isaac?

At the sound of her voice, Red Dinosaur Kid hunches a little as if scared. Then he runs off through the high grass -

ZOE (CONT'D)

Wait!

- but he disappears into the darkness between two houses.

Zoe is frozen, torn. She does *not* want to go off into the darkness alone. But the kid... *Shit*.

Making a decision, she steps off the porch and hurries into the night, following the Red Dinosaur Kid...

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - WOODS/SHED - JUST BEFORE DAWN (D4)

Alice moves through the dreamlike darkness. There is an almost fairytale feel to the woods and the moonlight.

It is still night but the darkness is thinner. Dawn coming. We hear a lonely, eerie BIRD. The world just beginning to wake up. Alice hears a SOUND up ahead, a cracking branch. Stops. Listens. Further RUSTLING.

A small SHAPE, like a child, moves in the trees.

ALICE

(quietly)

Isaac?

Nothing. She hurries on.

Up ahead - THE GNARLED TREE. The sky behind it is now DARK BLUE, growing lighter by the moment. Alice draws closer.

Alice emerges from the woods to a slight clearing, facing - **THE GNARLED TREE** -

- under which stands a **DILAPIDATED WHITE GARDENING SHED** of some kind. Long disused. This is Isaac's "fort." It looks ghostly, a little highlit in the thin dawn light.

Alice approaches slowly. The woods around her are holding their breath. She looks around, feeling watched. Then hears RUSTLING from within the shed. Whispers:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Isaac?

More rustling. She edges closer, uneasy. Then she slowly opens the door and looks in...

ALICE'S POV: THE INSIDE OF THE SHED. Isaac has made a little fort. Candy bar wrappers and clothes, and makeshift weapons (AIR GUN, KITCHEN KNIVES, etc). But no Isaac.

Only a **BEADY-EYED POSSUM**, which looks up at her and HISSES -

REVERSE ON ALICE - As she jolts backward, startled. Then relaxes. Both relieved and disappointed. As we see...

Over her shoulder, unnoticed, a **FIGURE** emerges from the woods behind her. Not a child - an adult. Watching her. Off that -

ACT FOUR

EXT. BUTCHER'S BLOCK - ALLEY - JUST BEFORE DAWN (D4)

Zoe moves uneasily down an alley between two WRECKED HOUSES.

Looking for Red Dinosaur Kid. This is the way he went.

Zoe is wide-eyed. Tense. Doesn't want to be here. She stops, peering forward into the dark yards ahead. The milky pre-dawn light gives everything a sleepy quality.

She's about to turn back, when she glimpses RED DINOSAUR. Crouching under a streetlight up ahead.

Against all her instincts, Zoe continues on...

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - SHED - DAWN (D4)

BACK WITH ALICE, where we left her - unaware of the FIGURE visible behind her.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

Morning.

Alice gasps, spins around. To see the Figure behind her -

A **SOFT-SPOKEN MAN** (60s). His presence is disconcerting, but he's just a bit too old to be truly threatening. Endearingly ruffled, with bright, kind eyes. His clothes are a little out-of-date, but he looks comfortably wealthy.

Alice stares at him cautiously, unnerved. It's almost dawn magic hour. Makes everything look otherworldly.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (CONT'D)

Sorry to make you jump. I saw you coming through the park.

ALICE

Who are you?

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

My name's Joe. How about yours?

ALICE

What are you doing out here?

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

Don't worry. I won't come any closer. I'm just a guy taking a walk.

ALICE

In the middle of the night. In Medallion Park.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

My family used to own this park. It might sound stupid, but I've never felt unsafe here. And I like walking at night.

ALICE

You... owned the park?

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

Before it was a park. I played hide and seek here as a kid. I've been all over the world, but this city's always been home.

ALICE

(guarded)

I'm new in town.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

(soft laugh)

It seems underwhelming, I know. But when I walk through Medallion Park, I'm in two worlds at the same time. The place you see... and the place I remember. To me it's still the city that used to be great. And could be again.

His voice is gentle, oddly calming. Alice is staring at him as if a little confused and mesmerized.

ALICE

You believe that? The city could come back?

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

Of course. But it won't be my generation. Everyone I grew up with is irrelevant now. Young people like you are the heart of the city.

(smiles)

We're close to where my house used to be. It's a playground now.

Alice clocks this - *Isaac could be hiding at the playground.*

ALICE

How close?

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

I'm going there now.

He starts to walk away, toward the far side of the clearing.

ALICE

Hang on.

He looks back.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Can you show me the way?

*

The Soft-Spoken Man smiles.

EXT. BUTCHER'S BLOCK - DESERTED STREET - DAWN (D4)

Zoe emerges from between two houses. Still in pursuit of Red Dinosaur Kid. A *Don't Look Now* sequence...

There: She sees him up ahead. Much further down the street. Walking away from her. No hurry. Loud whisper:

ZOE

Hey! Isaac!

Nothing. Red Dino keeps walking. Zoe hesitates, then hurries after him. Keeping pace. It's almost as if he's leading her somewhere. *This is fucking weird. Why won't he turn around?*

Suddenly Red Dino breaks sideways, runs down another street. Zoe picks up speed, giving chase.

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - WOODS - DAWN (D4)

In the magic hour dawn light, FOLLOW Alice as she follows the Soft-Spoken Man... dreamy, eerie...

EXT. BUTCHER'S BLOCK - EDGE OF THE PARK - DAWN (D4)

*

Back with Zoe, hurrying more quickly, looking for Red Dinosaur Kid. No sign of him until -

She comes around a corner. Sees him up ahead, a good distance away. Running toward THE EDGE OF MEDALLION PARK.

*

Zoe follows. As she gets closer, more of the park comes into sight. Overgrown.

*

ZOE'S POV - Red Dinosaur running toward the park... where we REVEAL:

*

A **WHITE STAIRCASE**. (We hear a faint tuning fork HUM. Maybe just in our heads. And the sound of FLIES.)

*

*

The staircase is fancy, with thick railings. At the top (25 feet up) there's a **DOOR**. Stark, eerie. The wrongness of it is disorienting.

*

*

*

Zoe stops, staring. *What the fuck?*

*

Red Dinosaur stops at the bottom of the stairs and kneels. He's doing something, but we can't see what...

EXT. MEDALLION PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAWN (D4)

FOLLOW Alice as she follows Soft-Spoken Man onto the very same sprawling playground we saw in the teaser. *Where poor Ben was bludgeoned with hammers.* We tense up for Alice, afraid she's being led to the same fate...

But the Soft-Spoken Man just stops in the middle of the playground, as if relishing the air.

Alice looks at the swing sets, the playground horses. Magical in the dawn light. But no sign of Isaac or anyone else.

ALICE

Your house used to be right here?

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

(quiet)

It was a beautiful house.

PUSH IN on Alice's face as the Man speaks. She listens almost longingly.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (CONT'D)

We had acres and acres. You could get lost in it. There was an orchard. Gardens. Even a chapel. And at the center of it all, our house.

INSERT SHOT - The house he's describing, vivid and real as if conjured from the past. A MANSION (Peach Mansion) at the heart of an estate.

Back to the Soft-Spoken Man, looking at Alice. Wistful -

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (CONT'D)

I had two daughters who were not much younger than you are then. I loved them very much. They were good. Strong-willed. Devout. And their lives were snatched away too soon - right on this land.

*
*

ALICE

I'm sorry.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

Thank you. I don't know you very well, but I have a sense that you are very much like one of them. Charity.

ALICE

That was her name?

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN

(nods; then)

Why did you come here?

Alice hesitates. For some reason she feels compelled to answer honestly.

ALICE

To Garrett? Because... I want to make a difference. I want to help.
(then)

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
And because my sister and I are
looking for a fresh start.

At the mention of "sister" he becomes subtly more interested.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN
You must be very close.

ALICE
We are.

The Soft-Spoken Man looks at her. His gaze is so direct that it's disconcerting, like he can see into her. Quiet, firm:

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN
It was good to meet you.

He turns and walks away. Alice watches him disappear into the trees, into the gray light. Off her, puzzled and intrigued...

EXT. BUTCHER'S BLOCK - EDGE OF THE PARK - DAWN (D4)

*

BACK TO ZOE... She gets closer to the Staircase, which seems to glow in the dawn. There's a TUNING FORK HUM in the air - the closer she gets to the staircase, the louder it gets.

At the base of the Stairs crouches Red Dinosaur, his back to Zoe, the red hood up over his head. Sound of BUZZING FLIES.

*

ZOE
Isaac... Isaac?

She creeps closer. He still won't turn around. He's doing something but we can't see what.

Zoe comes up right behind Red Dinosaur. Reaches out. Very uneasy - and as she touches his shoulder, he turns around -

REVEALING - not Isaac but THE **CHILD/HOMUNCULUS CREATURE** we glimpsed hiding in the wall, that PINK-FLESHY THING WITH THE OPEN, DRIBBLING MOUTH LIKE A MONSTROUS BABY. The original owner of the Red Dinosaur costume.

This is "**SMART MOUTH.**"

Its eyes are closed, almost blind. Its mouth is BLOODY -

And now she sees what it was doing: EATING A STRAY CAT, COVERED IN FLIES. Zoe JOLTS BACK, shocked.

Zoe SCREAMS and tries to RUN.

Smart Mouth drops the Dead Cat. From the folds of its costume it produces a MEAT HAMMER and starts WALKING AFTER HER.

Zoe flinches, lightheaded - the pressure in her head.

INSERT FLASH - THE PESTILENT GOD. Maddinized footage.

Zoe staggers, falls on the cracked asphalt. She holds out an arm, trying to defend herself -

ZOE'S POV: Smart Mouth looming over her, holding the meat hammer. Then - behind it, OUT OF FOCUS:

A RED SILHOUETTE appears. Slowly coming forward, looming over Smart Mouth. And it comes into focus, becoming clear:

It is a PERSON MADE OF RAW FLESH AND MEAT. We will call this thing a "**MEAT SERVANT.**" It is glistening, awful, hyper-vivid, and FOLLOWED BY FLIES -

As Zoe recoils in horror - *is that real?? what the fuck???* - Smart Mouth raises the hammer -

- but the Meat Servant grabs its wrist. Like a teacher stopping a misbehaving child.

Smart Mouth makes a HISSING WET ANGRY sound, mouth gaping in protest. But the Meat Servant just turns and leads him away.

And Zoe watches in a state of shock as the Meat Servant leads Smart Mouth up the **STAIRCASE** toward the **WHITE DOOR** -

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAWN (D4)

Full dawn now. It's light out. Zoe, staggering weakly back to the house, white as a sheet - as Alice comes outside and sees her sister, distraught.

ALICE

Oh my god -

But Zoe collapses on the porch, falling to her knees and shaking helplessly.

Alice comes to her and kneels beside her, putting her arms around her sister. Holding her, comforting her.

Alice looks around the streets, sees nothing - no threat.

So she just keeps holding her sister reassuringly, and in that embrace we can see all her protective love.

ACT FIVE

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - MORNING (D4)

Alice helping Zoe out of the car, toward the house. Slight SLO-MO, reflecting Zoe's shattered/shocked state of mind...

DOLLY IN SLOWLY toward Louise's house.

INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM - MORNING (D4)

Zoe enters her bedroom, looking broken. Alice follows, closes the door. Zoe leans against the wall. Then pulls herself together - a little - and starts PACKING UP HER SUITCASE which is lying on the floor. She has barely unpacked.

ALICE

Where are you going?

ZOE

Home.

(off Alice's silence)

I need to get out of here. This place is... *triggering* something... and things are fucked up inside or outside my head. Maybe *both*.

*

*

She's scared to tell Alice about what she saw.

ALICE

How long have you been using again?

ZOE

It's a fucking coping mechanism. I will get clean again. First we have to get out of here.

ALICE

And go... *home*? Where she - did what she did? You think *that's* healthy?

ZOE

What are you so scared of?
(then)
You think I don't know?

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm not living in that house -
(then)
- I'm not going back there -

ZOE

(anguished; accusing)

I GET IT. Now you're the same age I was. Same age mom was. You think I don't know every time you look at me, you're praying she didn't pass it to you too? And you wake up every day *terrified* it's the day you go crazy. Your worst fear is that you're going to become me. Isn't it?

Alice is quiet, at a loss. She looks lonely and afraid. Zoe's words are clearly true. Quietly, with just the faintest hint of pleading, Alice says -

ALICE

You can't leave. You need me.

ZOE

Or maybe you need me.

Alice is silent, hollow.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I *hate* living with this. I would do anything to get rid of it, I'd pay any price. But taking care of me gives you a purpose, doesn't it?

Alice doesn't answer. Zoe closes her suitcase.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Okay. Well. I'll take the bus.
Happy birthday.

She drags her suitcase out past Alice. Off Alice, listening to the THUNK, THUNK, THUNK of the suitcase down the stairs...

INT. LOUISE'S STUDY - DAY (D4)

Louise works at her desk by the map of Garrett. Amid all her stacks of papers, notebooks, research. A KNOCK. She sits up.

LOUISE

Yes?

The door opens cautiously. Alice, looking exhausted.

ALICE

Zoe left.
(off Louise's look)
She decided the city's not for her.

Louise doesn't really care that much. Keeps working.

LOUISE

Seemed like she had lot of weight on her shoulders. You're staying, right? You can cover the rent?

ALICE

Yeah.

Alice's voice is a little emotional and Louise finally looks around. Manages to offer her a sympathetic smile. She'd like Alice to leave now. But Alice doesn't...

ALICE'S POV: The MAP and the PHOTOS all over the wall. Her gaze drifting across all of it.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What is all this?

Louise looks at her. Hesitates. Then, somewhat reluctantly...

LOUISE

My book. Everything I've been researching. It's about what happens in Butcher's Block.

ALICE

What happens in Butcher's Block?

LOUISE

People go missing.

Now Alice is paying more attention. Scanning the photos pinned to the map... noticing one in particular, and -

INSERT - SHOT OF THE FRAMED NEWSPAPER STORY LOUISE WROTE, SEEN EARLIER (D1), WITH A PICTURE OF A YOUNG MAN - LOUISE'S BROTHER. The same photo that's pinned to the Garrett map.

ALICE

Isn't that your brother? The one you wrote about?

LOUISE

When I wrote the story of his disappearance... I imagined the end came in some alley in Butcher's Block. Killed for a few dollars by someone he was trying to help. Then I realized there were others like him. Who won't be missed.

ALICE

How'd you dig this up on your own?

LOUISE

I decided to look. What the police make it their business not to see, I see.

*

ALICE

What's happening to these people? Do you think... someone's responsible?

*

LOUISE

It can't be just one person. It's been going on too long.

(then)

But it could be one family.

ALICE

And they pass down murder like an inheritance?... Or disease?

LOUISE

Maybe killing is the family business.

ALICE

I guess this would be the city for it. "Peach's Meats"?

LOUISE

Exactly.

Alice looks at her, unsure what she means. Louise points at a wall behind her - at a **FAMILY TREE OF OLD PHOTOS**. Alice looks at the family tree, starting at the bottom.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

That's the Peach family. In 1952 they all disappeared. The plants closed down and the city withered. But I think some of them are still around.

Alice is still studying the family tree. Looking at a picture of a 30-something man named "Robert." Early 1950s. *

ALICE

Still around doing what?

LOUISE

Killing. I think it started with the patriarch. I think he was the first.

Alice now raises her eyes to the top of the family tree, the final photos - and she freezes. Seeing something very unsettling. We don't reveal it yet. In a strangled voice:

ALICE

...Who is that?

LOUISE

That's him. Joseph Peach.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO TO REVEAL: It is a photo of the Soft-Spoken Man. It's labeled "Joseph."

Alice is frozen in shock. *The Soft-Spoken Man is somehow identical to Joseph Peach. What the fuck?*

LOUISE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Of course, he'd be almost 130 if he
were alive today, so someone else
must have taken over for him.

KEEP PUSHING IN ON THE PHOTO... then DISSOLVE TO -

EXT. BUS BENCH - DAY (D4)

- where Zoe drags her suitcase to a bus bench and takes a deep breath. We're not far from Louise's house. There's no one else visible on the street. Zoe lowers her head, puts her hands over her eyes. Exhausted.

But while her eyes are closed, a SHADOW crosses over her.
Someone sits down beside her but we don't see who.

STRANGER (O.S.)
Hello.
(Zoe doesn't hear/notice)
Excuse me.

Zoe opens her eyes and looks up, revealing the stranger:

It's the Soft-Spoken Man. Now formally known as **JOSEPH PEACH.**
He smiles at Zoe.

JOSEPH PEACH
Do you know where this bus will
take you?

ZOE
Central station. To another bus.

JOSEPH PEACH
That building has beautiful bones.
(then)
I'm Joe, by the way.

ZOE
Zoe.

JOSEPH PEACH
(smiles)
Nice to meet you, Zoe.

END OF PILOT

*