



**FRESH BLOOD SELECT**

# AN OCTOBER WEDDING

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October 7, 2016

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**FADE IN:**

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - LIBRARY - SUNSET**

TIME CARD: 3 Years Ago

A modern, empty reading room.  
Autumnal light falls on dusty bookshelves.  
A large window frames a back yard by the woods.  
A table sits out back with streamers twisting in the wind.  
Voices SING HAPPY BIRTHDAY from just around the corner and--

We do not cut away.  
We do not move outside.  
We are trapped here for one long take.

OUTSIDE, in the window, parents carry a cake to the table.  
They look around. Walk away. Searching.

CORA (O.S.)  
Joan? Joan, where are you?

INSIDE, **JOAN WHITMAN** (20s) slinks out of the curtains.  
Bright-eyed. Bookish. A shrinking violet about to bloom.  
In a modern shirt-dress with RUNIC TATTOOS on each wrist.  
She hides under a desk, holding a small GLOBE.  
She spins the globe. Taps on it.  
The door OPENS.

CORA (O.S.)  
There you are!

Her sister **CORA LEE WHITMAN** (20s) walks in.  
Outgoing. Athletic. A sunflower in summertime.  
Same modern shirt-dress. Same runic tattoos.

CORA  
I've been looking all over for--

JOAN  
You didn't find me. I'm not here.  
Go away.

Joan spins the globe. Taps on it again. Sulking.  
Cora shuts the door and sits with her.

CORA  
Where's the globe sending you today?

JOAN  
Switzerland.

CORA  
Oo, can I come with?

JOAN

Only if you can keep up. As soon as I get off the plane, I'm climbing the Matterhorn.

CORA

Then can we ski down the mountain?  
And go get Swiss hot chocolate?

JOAN

With you, of course.

Cora puts her head on Joan's shoulder.

Joan smiles.

While OUTSIDE...

In the window behind them...

The woods move... *Something is coming...*

JOAN

Mother and Father are giving me the deed to the homestead, aren't they?

CORA

...Yes. They are.

JOAN

So you got a car for your fiftieth birthday and I get to run the family ranch. You go wherever you want but I'm stuck here.

(off Cora's look)

What is it?

Cora goes to speak-- then pulls out a gift-wrapped BOX.

CORA

Happy birthday.

JOAN

Cora! You shouldn't ha--

CORA

Open it.

Joan opens it as...

OUTSIDE...

In the window...

In the distance...

A row of **cloaked figures** emerges from the woods...  
Red robes... identical white masks... watching...

INSIDE, Joan opens the box to find a DSLR camera.

JOAN

Oh my gods! How did you--

CORA

For our trip to Switzerland.

JOAN

But I was just talking, we're not really--

CORA

Look in the box.

Joan looks as...

OUTSIDE, the row of **cloaked figures** walks toward them...

INSIDE, Joan pulls out a ROLL OF CASH and PASSPORTS.

JOAN

Cora Lee, where did you--

CORA

We can go anywhere you want--

JOAN

Where did you get this?

CORA

I got a job in town, saved up, paid a counterfeiter--

JOAN

You got a job in town? That's against the edicts! What if Mother saw you--

CORA

Listen to me! If you ever want to see the world we have to leave now!

JOAN

What are you talking about?

CORA

I-- I eavesdropped on the Council of Elders and they're going to--

AUGUSTUS (O.S.)

There's my birthday girl!

**AUGUSTUS** and **OCTAVIA WHITMAN** (50s) enter.

A boisterous man at war with his mind-- Lear in the storm.

A fierce queen of the home-- reminiscent of Lady Macbeth.

Their FATHER and MOTHER bearing the same wrist tattoos.

Bringing a present.

OCTAVIA

Did you two start opening presents  
without us?

Cora jumps to her feet-- kicking the box behind her--

CORA

Oh, no, it's nothing much, just--

AUGUSTUS

Well, I can't wait anymore-- Here!

He shoves his PRESENT at Joan.  
She takes it-- but he won't let go.

AUGUSTUS

You know how much I love you, Joanie?

JOAN

Yes, Father.

AUGUSTUS

You know you're my compass, my North  
Star, and I'd be lost without you?

JOAN

Father!

OCTAVIA

She knows, Augustus! Let her open it.

AUGUSTUS

Alright-- but act surprised, okay?

Joan tears the wrapping as...  
OUTSIDE, the **cloaked figures** come halfway across the yard...  
INSIDE, Joan opens the present to find...

A white MASK with hands over the mouth-- THE SILENT ONE.

JOAN

What is it?

AUGUSTUS

I know it's early. I didn't get mine  
until my Hundred-and-First birthday.

OCTAVIA

But you've been such a good and  
faithful daughter, so we decided--

AUGUSTUS

It's your Masking Day today!

Joan stands.

Turns.

Looks--

OUTSIDE, the **cloaked figures** are right at the window--

INSIDE, Joan stifles a scream--

JOAN

Father, I-- I don't think I'm ready--

AUGUSTUS

Nonsense! Of course you're rea--

CORA

We can still go, Joan. We can--

OCTAVIA

Go? Go where?

JOAN

But Cora, I--

CORA

Right now, Joan--

AUGUSTUS

What are you girls--

CORA

Now!

The sisters RUN FOR IT AS--

**THE KINSMEN** enter.

Seven figures in red robes and identical masks.

Blocking the door.

Finding Cora's box.

Handing it to Augustus.

AUGUSTUS

Cora. Oh, Cora. How could you--

CORA

I hate you! *I hate you!* Don't make

Joan do this! Don't you--

Augustus flicks his hand--

Two Kinsmen DRAG CORA AWAY-- out the door-- out of sight--

CORA (O.S.)

No! Let me go! NO! JOAN! JOA--

JOAN

Cora! Stop it! Let her g--

Octavia SLAPS Joan--

## OCTAVIA

Today is the day you become a woman,  
Joan Marie Whitman. Now kneel.

Joan kneels.

The Kinsmen HUM in unison.

Circling Joan.

Blindfolding her.

Passing around a staff and two masks--

A mask with hands over ears for Augustus-- THE DEAF ONE--

A mask with hands over eyes for Octavia-- THE BLIND ONE--

Augustus SLAMS DOWN THE STAFF.

The **HIGH ELDER** (60s) enters.

Everyone bows their heads.

He makes his way to Joan.

Gaunt. Long, black robes. A uniquely ornate mask of crimson.

Looming over Joan's reddening face.

## HIGH ELDER

(low, thick, menacing)

Who kneels before the True Family?

## JOAN

A child who seeks her inheritance:

the Three True Gifts.

## THE KINSMEN

**True Sight, True Hearing, True Touch:  
the gifts of the powers of the mind.**

## HIGH ELDER

Do you swear on your blood, on the  
blood of your father and of the first  
fathers, that you will hold sacred  
and secret these Three True Gifts?

## JOAN

I s-swear.

The High Elder unsheathes a DAGGER--

Joan hears it-- moves to flee--

Octavia and Augustus hold her down--

The High Elder raises the dagger--

Joan struggles and--

*The High Elder cuts his own hand.*

The Kinsmen produce a BOWL to collect his blood.

## HIGH ELDER

You were a child who seeks. Now you  
are a woman who is found. Drink.

The bowl is handed to Joan.

Joan swallows hard... then sips the blood.



The staff SLAMS down--  
The Kinsmen take away the bowl-- rip off her blindfold--

HIGH ELDER

Rise! Rise and take your rightful  
place among us as... the Keeper.

The High Elder hands Joan her birthday gift mask.

JOAN

High Elder, what does the Keeper do?

The High Elder points over to--  
The Kinsmen dragging in A BLOODY, BEATEN MAN.  
This is **EMMETT**, 40s. Brilliant. Tough. Half-dead.

EMMETT

Please... I'm sorry...

JOAN

Oh my-- Are you alright? What-- What  
happened to him? Who is he?

The Kinsmen pass around a photo of Emmett-- A PRESS BADGE--

HIGH ELDER

He is an Outsider. A journalist.

EMMETT

I won't... tell anyone... if you...  
let me go I--

Emmett grabs onto Joan's shoe--  
Octavia kicks Emmett-- HARD-- shutting him up--

OCTAVIA

We caught him taking pictures of us.  
Writing about us.

**THE KINSMEN**

**The silence must be kept.**

JOAN

...What do you want me to do?

HIGH ELDER

Earn your birthright. *Empty his mind.*

**THE KINSMEN**

**The silence must be kept.**

JOAN

No! That could kill him! I can't--

OCTAVIA

Hush. You're a woman now. You'll make  
a fine Keeper just like your Father.

JOAN

Father, you've done this before?  
You've... killed people?

AUGUSTUS

I kept this family safe. Now you will  
too.

The Kinsmen HUM... lay hands on one another...  
Revealing the same RUNIC TATTOOS on their wrists...  
Their left hands touching their left neighbor's tattoo...  
Their right hands clasping their right neighbor's throat...

JOAN

What is this? What are you doing?

HIGH ELDER

Endowing you with your inheritance.

**THE KINSMEN**

**True Sight, True Hearing, True Touch:  
the gifts of the powers of the mind--  
Seythra!**

A circle of hands link to touch the High Elder...  
As Augustus and Octavia lay hands on Joan...  
*And Joan moves against her will...*

JOAN

What-- what's happening to me?

*Joan fights it but her hands reach out...  
Her left hand touches Emmett's wrist...  
Her right hand grabs Emmett's throat...*

JOAN

Stop! Don't make me do this! Please!

**THE KINSMEN**

**Blood of my blood. Hand in my hand.  
Thoughts in my mind-- Drekka!**

*The Kinsmen press thumbs into each others' RUNIC TATTOOS...  
Both Joan and Emmett gasp... rolling their eyes back as...  
A hazy image becomes SUPERIMPOSED OVER THEIR BODIES...  
Flashes of Emmett hugging HIS SON at graduation...  
More of his memories flit by...  
Making Emmett convulse.  
Each memory a paroxysm of pain.  
He spits up blood-- shaking-- dying--*

JOAN

No!

Joan snaps out of it--  
Shoves Emmett away--  
The hazy image vanishes--  
Emmett catches his breath--  
The High Elder grabs at Joan and--

JOAN

I said NO-- Hrinda!

Joan slides her thumb between RUNES on her WRIST TATTOO--  
*Everyone FLIES BACK as if pushed by an invisible force--*  
They all stare in awe.

OCTAVIA

Joan, what are you doing?

AUGUSTUS

Maybe she's right. Maybe she's not  
ready and we should--

HIGH ELDER

No! She must finish the ceremony! She  
must empty the Outsider's mind or--

CREAK-- all heads turn--  
Joan is already at the door-- camera in hand--  
*Suddenly sick-- her ears bleeding-- her health drained--*

HIGH ELDER

Walk out that door and you are cast  
out of the True Family.

A beat.

They step toward Joan--  
She RUNS-- and for the first time WE MOVE--  
Trucking back on Joan and following her out to--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Joan careens down the hall-- feverish-- off-balance--  
Kinsmen chase behind her--

AUGUSTUS (O.S.)

Wait, Joanie, don't go! Please--

Joan rounds a corner-- wincing-- doesn't stop--  
The Kinsmen behind her TRIP on their robes--  
She bolts out to--

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Joan keeps running--  
 Disoriented-- lurching--  
 Pushing herself forward--  
 Clutching her camera--

CORA (O.S.)

Joan! Don't leave me, Joa-- No! NO!--  
 JOAN COME BACK PLEASE THEY'RE--

Her voice is cut off by--  
 A loud CRACK--  
 LIGHT FLASHING out of the house--  
 Joan doesn't look back--  
 Uncontrollable tears streaming down her face--  
 Running and running and running and running and--  
THIS HAS ALL BEEN ONE LONG, UNBROKEN TAKE UNTIL WE--

CUT TO BLACK.

JOAN (V.O.)

Dear Cora Lee.

**EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

Joan points her camera through branches.  
 Watching the Whitman House through the lens.

JOAN (V.O.)

I'm coming back for you.

She gathers her courage--  
 Strides toward the house--  
**Kinsmen** emerge ten yards ahead--

**THE KINSMEN**

**We hear you, Joan Whitman.**

Joan stifles a cry--  
 Ducks behind a tree--  
 Silence.  
 Joan inches her neck around to see--  
 The Kinsmen stand still. Their heads cocked to the side.

JOAN (V.O.)

But they won't let me near you.

**THE KINSMEN**

**Hleetha!**

The Kinsmen slide their thumbs across their wrist tattoos--  
 Snap their heads in her direction--

**THE KINSMEN**  
**Blood of my blood. Hand in my hand.**  
**Thoughts in my mind. We hear you.**

They lope after her--  
 Joan RUNS--

**EXT. WOODS - DAY**

Joan walks now.  
 Tired and alone.  
 Stops at a stream.  
 Drinks deep.  
 Takes a beat.  
 Turns to head back--

JOAN (V.O.)  
 Every time I tried to come back,  
 every time I thought about you--

Twigs SNAP ahead of her--

**THE KINSMEN (O.S.)**  
**We will hunt you. We will catch you.**  
**We will become you.**

Joan sprints into the trees--

JOAN (V.O.)  
 They found me. They pushed me back,  
 farther and farther away from you.

**EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT**

Joan stands at the forest's edge.  
 Grave eyes fixed on a glowing police station.

JOAN (V.O.)  
 I went to the police.

She walks to the station.  
 Hands shaking.  
 Heart pounding.  
 Reaching for the door--

JOAN (V.O.)  
 But I knew. I knew if I told them  
 anything they would come to our home,  
 our family would run off with you,  
 and I'd never see you again.

She walks back into the night.

**EXT. ROAD - DAY**

Joan hikes beside a highway.  
Getting to know her camera.

JOAN (V.O.)  
So I had to go away. I had to go  
where they couldn't follow me.

The skyline of an urban metropolis sprawls out before her.  
She takes a picture.

**INT. GUN STORE - NIGHT**

HANDGUNS glisten in a glass case under buzzing lights.  
Joan places a hand over the glass.

JOAN (V.O.)  
Where they couldn't stop me.

She focuses on a handgun's price tag: \$375.00.  
Her eyes narrow, determined.

**INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY**

Joan pushes a mop at dawn.  
A COOK leaves her something on the counter: a few \$20 bills.

**I/E. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT**

A LANDLORD walks Joan past sketchy rooms to--  
A shitbox. She hands the Landlord cash and shuts the door.

JOAN (V.O.)  
Where I could plan.

She tapes up a MAP-- BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE WHITMAN HOUSE.  
She writes on it-- sketching ways to sneak inside.

**INT. RESTAURANT - BATHROOM - DAY**

The Cook watches Joan scrub a nasty toilet bowl.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Joan puts money behind her lens cap.

JOAN (V.O.)  
Where I could get stronger.

She does PUSH-UPS.  
 Prison-level intensity.  
 Dripping sweat.  
 Falling down.  
 Fire igniting in her eyes.  
 Forcing herself back up.  
 Muscles shaking.  
 Doing one more push-up.  
 Then another.  
 And another.  
 Unstoppable.

**INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY**

Joan cleans stacks of dirty plates.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT**

More money gets stuffed behind the lens cap.  
 Joan PUNCHES the wall-- again and again--  
 Hitting a life-size drawing of a CLOAKED MAN.

JOAN (V.O.)  
 Where I could prepare.

She sews something with pins in her teeth.  
 Holds up a newly sewn RED ROBE--  
 Lays it down by a WHITE FACE MASK.

**INT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

Joan wipes down tables.

**INT. GUN STORE - NIGHT**

Joan takes out a thick wad of cash from her lens cap.  
 Approaches the glass case full of HANDGUNS.  
 Tingling with anticipation.

TIME CARD: 2 1/2 Years Ago

JOAN (V.O.)  
 And in a few short months, I had  
 almost everything I needed to come  
 back for you. But...

SALESMAN (O.S.)  
 How can I help you?

A gruff SALESMAN, 30s, walks up behind the case.

Joan points at the handgun marked \$375.00.  
He slides over paperwork.

SALESMAN

You need to fill out this form and  
pass a firearms safety test.

He hands her a pen--  
Their fingers touch--  
*A HAZY IMAGE TAKES OVER THE SCREEN...*  
*A spotlight on The Salesman unzipping Joan's hoodie...*  
Joan snaps her hand back--  
The image evaporates--

SALESMAN

(oblivious)

I need to see some government ID.  
You're twenty-one right? I can't sell  
you a handgun if you're under--

She backs away.  
Too much for her.  
Rushing out.

JOAN (V.O.)

But our family changed me. After the  
first time a stranger touched me...

**EXT. GUN STORE - CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

Joan hurries outside--  
Bumps into a PEDESTRIAN--  
*A HAZY IMAGE FLASHES OVER THE SCREEN...*  
*The Pedestrian standing on a chair with a noose...*

PEDESTRIAN (V.O.)

Maybe I'll do it tomorrow or maybe--

The Pedestrian shuffles away--  
The image fading with each step--  
Joan stares at her hands as more pedestrians pass by.  
*She hears the thoughts of everyone around her.*

JOAN (V.O.)

They appeared. The Three True Gifts.

**I/E. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT**

Joan hurries down the sketchy row of rooms.  
*INNER VOICES bubble up from behind every door...*  
*She slams into her apartment... but the voices follow her...*



JOAN (V.O.)  
 True Sight, True Hearing, True Touch:  
 the gifts of the powers of the mind.

**I/E. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN / BACK ALLEY - DAY**

Joan tosses leftovers in the trash.  
 Waiters walk past.  
 She jerks out of their way.  
 Still hearing their *INNER VOICES*...

JOAN (V.O.)  
 And I couldn't make them stop.

*The voices crescendo...*  
*She takes the trash outside to a dumpster...*  
*The inner voices are LOUDER OUT HERE...*  
*She keels over...*  
*Looks ready to burst...*  
*When she sees something...*

JOAN (V.O.)  
 I needed help.

*A LIQUOR BOTTLE by the dumpster..*  
*Inner voices rising to a fever pitch...*  
*She grabs the bottle...*  
*Takes a sip...*

The voices go away.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT**

The camera sits with its lens cap off, no money in sight.  
 Joan sips a new liquor bottle in sweet silence.  
 She tries punching the wall.  
 Trips.  
 Falls.  
 And stays down.  
 A drunk mess.

JOAN (V.O.)  
 But I was alone.

**INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY**

Joan washes dishes, half-drunk--  
 Tries to sneak a swig from a bottle--  
 And drops dishes that SHATTER on the floor--

JOAN (V.O.)

I had run away from home but...

The Cook yells at Joan, pointing her to the door.

**EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT**

Joan staggers back to her place to find--  
The Landlord and REPO MEN taking all her stuff--  
They shout and run after her--  
She careens away--

JOAN (V.O.)

I couldn't run away from myself.

**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT/DAY**

Joan roams the city.  
Downing bottles.  
Shirking away from people.  
Wandering through different neighborhoods.  
Passing through different seasons.

JOAN (V.O.)

I tried though. I tried to lose  
myself. For months, I tried to shed  
this sick person I had become.

**EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT**

TIME CARD: 1 Year Ago

Joan paces.  
Waiting. Hands shaking.  
A DEALER walks over with a bag.  
He opens it to show her a HANDGUN.

JOAN (V.O.)

And I always thought of you. I  
always planned to come back for you.

She takes cash from her camera's lens cap when--  
He DECKS her--  
Takes her money and her camera--  
Running off into the night--  
Leaving her with nothing.

**EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY**

Joan howls.  
Drifting.  
Drinking.

JOAN (V.O.)  
I lost everything.

All the pedestrians ignore her.  
Just another crazy, homeless woman.

**EXT. PAWN SHOP - DAY**

In the window, the Dealer sells Joan's camera.  
Joan watches from across the street.

JOAN (V.O.)  
And I have to get it back. I have to  
get you back. Please... forgive me.

**INT. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT**

Darkness.  
SMASH--  
A back door opens--  
Joan bursts in--  
Scouring the counter as--

BILLY (O.S.)  
Hey!

A silhouette stands at the door--  
Joan scrambles to find another exit--  
The silhouette hits the lights to reveal--

**BILLY**, 20s, a gentle giant in new agey clothes.  
A man who's gone through hell and come back with clear eyes.  
He watches her.  
Sees something in her.  
And relaxes.  
He tidies up the store and puts down a NOVEL.  
HOLD on that novel: American Warlock by Augustus Whitman.

BILLY  
Sorry, I didn't see I had a customer.

He turns his back on her.  
Going through a ring of keys.  
She watches him, confused.  
He opens a case and takes out his most expensive items.  
Placing JOAN'S CAMERA in front of her.

BILLY

Take whichever one you'd like. Free  
thirty-day trial.

She reaches for her camera--  
Pulls her hand back--

BILLY

It's okay. I'll be alright.

She watches him, unsure--  
Then GRABS the camera--  
Goes for the door--

BILLY (O.S.)

Wait a minute, you forgot something.

Joan turns back to see--  
Billy taking out a professional CAMERA BAG.  
Packing it with batteries, memory cards, and a cleaning kit.  
He offers it to her.

BILLY

If you're willing to risk your life  
for a camera, then you better take  
good care of it. Here.

JOAN

...Why? Why are you doing this?

He looks at her.  
It's like a warm hug without making a move.

BILLY

Someone did the same thing for me.  
When I was homeless.

JOAN

You were homeless?

BILLY

My name's Billy. What's yours?

JOAN

Joan.

BILLY

Joan... Are you hungry, Joan?

**INT. DINER - NIGHT**

Billy sips coffee, sitting across from--  
Joan wolfing down a Philly Cheesesteak sandwich.

BILLY  
Hit the spot?

She nods, chewing happily, as--

DANA (O.S.)  
Excuse me, miss, but is this man  
bothering you?

DANA, 60s, nudges Billy as she refreshes their coffees.  
Sporting a wry smirk, an apron, and a cane.  
Billy squeezes her arm. Old pals.

BILLY  
Good to see you too, Dana-- Dana, I'd  
like you to meet Joan.

DANA  
Joan! Good to meet you, darling. You  
two heading to a meeting?

Joan doesn't know what to say.

BILLY  
We'll see-- But in the meantime,  
could you get us two slices of your  
world-famous pumpkin pie?

JOAN  
Oh, thank you, but I'm so full--

DANA  
Then I'll box it up for you, dear,  
don't you worry. Back in a flash.  
(pointing at Billy)  
And don't you bore her to tears with  
one of your stories!

Dana kisses Billy on the forehead and walks off.  
Leaning on her cane in a slow, uneven gait.  
Joan and Billy smile at each other.

JOAN  
Well, thank you so much, Billy, but I  
should go, I--

BILLY  
Go where?

Joan doesn't have an answer for that.

BILLY  
Do you have a place to stay? A friend  
you can call or maybe your family--

JOAN

NO. I mean... No.

Joan tenses up.  
Her hands shaking.  
Looking around, paranoid.

BILLY

Hey. Hey. I didn't mean to pry,  
only... it's warm here. It's dry. And  
you have fresh pie on the way. You  
can stay as long as you like, okay?

Joan takes a deep breath.  
Looks Billy in the eye.  
No judgment in him.  
She nods.

BILLY

Okay. What do you want to talk about?

She shrugs.

BILLY

Want to hear how I first met Dana?

DANA (O.S.)

(from the kitchen)

Billy, what did I just tell you?

Billy puts a hand over his mouth.  
Like a boy caught cursing.  
Joan smirks.

JOAN

It's fine, go ahead.

BILLY

I'll make it quick-- I first met Dana  
three years ago when I held her up at  
gunpoint.

That snaps Joan to attention.

BILLY

I was drunk, homeless, and broke. I  
was yelling at Dana to open the  
register when she took one look at  
me... and walked away. A moment later  
she came back with all the money in  
the safe, a steak dinner in a doggy  
bag, and the coat off her back.

(MORE)

BILLY (cont'd)

The only reason I'm not in jail right now is because she sat me down in this booth three years ago and she gave me a choice: I could go back out there and drink until I die... or I could stay here, sleep on a cot in her back room, and go to my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

Dana returns, serving up two plates of pie.  
Resting her hand on Joan's shoulder.

DANA

You have a choice too, dear. I already have that cot set up for you.

BILLY

Joan, are you ready to stop drinking?

**EXT. DINER - NIGHT**

A window framing Joan's booth.  
Billy and Dana wait on her answer.  
She stares down at her pumpkin pie.  
Then buries her face into Dana, crying, hugging her.  
Finding refuge at last.

**INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY**

Coffee percolates.  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS pamphlets on a table.  
Members sitting in a block of Sunday School chairs.  
Joan sitting in the back, a changed woman, wearing GLOVES.  
Gloves she will wear for the rest of the film.

TIME CARD: The Day Before

*Inner voices start to rise up around Joan--  
She opens a prescription bottle--  
Pops a BLUE PILL--  
The voices fade away.*

Up front, Billy leads the meeting.

BILLY

Even though my father molested me...  
even though he deserves a lifetime of  
hatred, I deserve more than to live  
with that hatred all my life. I had  
to learn to let go and I couldn't've  
done that without A.A.

Nods and murmurs of agreement.

BILLY

On to closing business. We have a  
birthday: Joan is one year sober.

Whoops and applause.

Joan walks up front.

Billy offers her a ONE YEAR CHIP.

She takes it with her gloved hands.

He goes to hug her, remembers, and steps back.

BILLY

I'm proud of you. You got this.

Billy leaves the floor to Joan.

She unfolds a letter, hands shaking.

JOAN

H-Hi, I'm Joan, an alcoholic.

EVERYONE

Hi Joan!

JOAN

Today, I am one year sober--

Ripples of applause.

A DONATION BASKET passes around.

JOAN

--and with the help of my sponsor,  
Billy, I'm now on the Fifth Step, so  
I'd like to admit to myself, to you,  
and to... someone else... the exact  
nature of my wrongs.

(reading the letter)

Dear Cora Lee, I'm coming back for--

VOICE (O.S.)

**Kala-Ayvi.**

Joan looks up--

*Everyone is frozen in time as--*

**A LONE KINSMAN** walks toward her--

LONE KINSMAN

**Come home.**

She turns to run--

*The Kinsman stands behind her--*

LONE KINSMAN

**Come home and we will not hurt you.**



She spins around--  
 NOW HE HAS HER CORNERED--

**LONE KINSMAN**  
**Come home or your sister will suffer.**  
**Sveetha-Ayvi!**

*He scrapes his thumb across his wrist tattoo--*  
*She SCREAMS-- time returning to normal and--*

BILLY  
 Joan!

She opens her eyes.  
 The Kinsman is gone.  
 Everyone stares at Joan, dismayed.  
 She stares at the donation basket--  
 GASPS-- and runs out--

BILLY  
 Joan! Wait! Where are you--

Billy looks in the donation basket to find--  
 A RED ENVELOPE with a wax seal resembling The Keeper Mask.

**EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY**

Joan marches.  
 On a warpath to self-destruction.  
 Billy races up behind her.  
 Gets in her way.

BILLY  
 Joan, stop-- Stop! You're better than  
 this. You're stronger than--

JOAN  
 They're stronger! They found me! I  
 don't know how but they--

BILLY  
 Who found you? Who sent this?

He brandishes the RED ENVELOPE.  
 She won't look at it.  
 Tries to get past him.

JOAN  
 Just give up on me, Billy, I'm no  
 good, leave me--

BILLY  
 NO! I'm never giving up on you.

Joan looks into his eyes.  
 Sees the fierce loyalty there.  
 Maybe even something more.  
 Her drive to drink fades.  
 She takes the envelope.  
 Opens it.  
 Reads it.  
 Cries.

BILLY

What is it?

JOAN

My sister's getting married.

She shows him a wedding invitation.

BILLY

That's a good thing. Right?

JOAN

She's asking me to come home-- but I  
 can't! They know I'm coming now--

BILLY

I'll come with you. Together, we--

JOAN

No. You don't understand. My family--  
 they'll kill me, they'll kill you--

BILLY

My dad tried to kill me. I put him in  
 the hospital. I put him in prison and  
 I never saw him again-- but I wish I  
 had. I wish I had the chance to  
 confront him before he died.

(beat)

Joan, whatever happened between you  
 and your family, you owe it to  
 yourself to face them one last time.

She looks at the invitation, her resolve mounting and--

**INT. BILLY'S CAR - CITY STREET - NIGHT**

Billy waits in an idling CAR-- SLAM!--  
 Joan gets in with a backpack, wearing all black.

JOAN

You're going to see some strange  
 things tonight.

**INT. DINER - STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT**

A back room with one light bulb dangling.  
 Joan doing push-ups off her cot.  
 More intense than before.  
 Faster now.  
 Stronger.

JOAN (V.O.)

Twisted things. Unnatural things.  
 Things you should never see.

**INT. BILLY'S CAR - INTERSTATE - NIGHT**

Yellow sodium lights whoosh overhead.  
 Billy cruises down a dark road, sneaking glances at--  
 Joan studying a MAP WITH PICTURES OF THE WHITMAN HOUSE.

JOAN

But you can't ask questions. Not now.  
 Now all you need to do is drive.

BILLY

But when we get there, I'm going to  
 the wedding with y--

JOAN

We're not going to the wedding.

**INT. DINER - STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT**

A life-size drawing of a CLOAKED MAN on the wall.  
 Joan ATTACKS IT with taped up fists.  
 A blur of knock-out punches.  
 A one-woman army.  
 Her sweaty face glaring at the drawing.

JOAN (V.O.)

We're going to rescue my sister.

**INT. BILLY'S CAR - WHITMAN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Billy pulls over.  
 Looking at the Whitman House in the distance.  
 All their lights are out.  
 He turns to Joan--

BILLY

Are you really going t--

His eyes widen in shock at--

**KINSMEN** stepping out of the woods.  
 Approaching the car.  
 Surrounding them.  
 Billy freezes.  
 Joan SLAMS the invitation against her window.

A long beat.

The Kinsmen walk backwards.  
 And slip back into the woods.  
 Billy turns back to Joan--  
She's drawing Runic Tattoos on his wrists in sharpie.

BILLY

What are you--

JOAN

For your own safety: stay in the car.

Joan puts on a kinsman's RED CLOAK and a WHITE MASK.  
 She gets out.

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Festive red sashes hang from the roof.  
 The house looms over Joan.  
 She straightens her disguise.  
 Clenches her fists.  
 Exhales.  
 And walks into--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT**

The door pushes open.  
 Joan's eyes peer out from behind her mask.  
 Scanning a long, dark hall.  
 Emptiness.  
 Silence.  
 She moves quietly to--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

A double bunk bed.  
 Too dark to see much else.  
 Joan creeps in, her eyes adjusting.

JOAN

Cora?... Cora!

No response.  
 Joan goes to the bunk bed.

No one there.  
 But her fingers trace the covers.  
 Lost in a memory.  
 Reaching under the mattress.  
 Pulling out a CHILDREN'S STORYBOOK.  
 Her eyes smile.  
 She flips to where TRAVEL GUIDES were stuffed between pages.  
 Tourist brochures with hand-written notes.  
 She touches the notes, moved.

**INT. BILLY'S CAR - WHITMAN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Billy fidgets in the driver's seat.  
 Scanning the woods, nervous.  
 He thumbs through a novel.  
 The cover: American Warlock by Augustus Whitman.  
 The back: a picture of AUGUSTUS.  
 Billy looks up from the novel.  
 Staring at the house.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Joan reminisces over her sister's notes when--  
 Floorboards CREAK down the hall.  
 She eases back against a wall.  
 Returns the storybook.  
 Peeks out into--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT**

Joan steps into the murky dark.  
 Squinting to see through her mask.  
 She takes it off.  
 And freezes in shock.  
*This is the room from the first scene.*  
 Her heart beats in her ears.  
 Her eyes dart to the windows.  
 No one in sight.  
 But she's breathing fast.  
 She can't take this--  
 She spins around and--  
Slams into CORA.

CORA

...Joan?

The sisters stare.  
 Joan looks over Cora's prim attire.  
 Cora looks over Joan's disguise.  
 They're years older.  
 And worlds apart.

Tears come to Joan's eyes.  
She reaches for Cora--

JOAN  
Cora, it's so good to--

CORA  
What are you doing here?

JOAN  
I'm here to save you. I have a car  
out front, we can finally--

CORA  
(cold)  
You didn't find me. I'm not here.  
Go away.

Joan is blindsided.  
Cora goes to walk away--

JOAN  
Wait! Where are you going? I came all  
this way for--

Cora advances on her-- fierce--

CORA  
You came all this way for nothing.  
This is who I am now. This is my  
home. Or did you forget that when you  
ran off and--

A GROAN upstairs.  
Cora's face slackens.  
Her eyes fix on the ceiling.

CORA  
You are not welcome here. Go.

JOAN  
B-but Cora-- You invited me--

Joan shows her the invitation--  
Cora SNATCHES it from her--

CORA  
Where did you get this?

MASON (O.S.)  
We sent it to her, honey. Remember?

**MASON BLY**, 20s, steps in with a candle and a handshake.  
A sunny, upstanding boy next door.

MASON

Hi, Mason, pleased to meet you! Cora told me so much about--

CORA

Did you invite her? I told you--

MASON

She's your sister. You can't--

AUGUSTUS (O.S.)

Joan? Joooooaniie...

That came from upstairs.  
Something wrong about his voice.  
Cora looks sick to her stomach.  
She turns on Joan--

CORA

You stay for dinner and that's it.

A threat.  
Cora storms off.

MASON

If you will excuse us for a--

Mason hurries after Cora.  
Violent whispers from another room.  
Joan slumps into the wall.  
Fighting a panic attack.

JOAN

No, no, no, no, no, no-- what have I done, what have I--

FOOTSTEPS come closer--  
That does it-- Joan flees into--

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Joan turns the corner--  
Her mother OCTAVIA blocks the way out.  
Holding a candelabra in this dark passage.  
Eyes of granite locked on Joan.

OCTAVIA

Dinner is served.

Octavia turns around.  
Stands still.

OCTAVIA

Oh, and please do invite that man  
waiting in the car to come join us.

A chill runs down Joan's spine.

OCTAVIA

He is one of our kind, is he not?

Joan nods.  
Octavia walks away.  
Leaving us in darkness.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Joan enters with Billy.  
Throwing him a look of *Follow My Fucking Lead*.  
As they walk into a luxuriant, Southern Gothic scene.  
Joan's family sits at a dark, feast-laden table.  
Candles flickering between five grim faces.  
All eyes on Joan and Billy.  
MASON gets up.

MASON

We are so delighted you could join  
us. Please allow me to show you to  
your seats, Joan and dear Cousin...

JOAN

Billy. Cousin Billy.

MASON

Right! That's right. Here you are.

Mason seats them at one end of the table.  
Name cards before them in calligraphy.  
Porcelain plates of sumptuous food.  
Sitting across from CORA AND MASON.

MASON

How was your trip down here?

JOAN

Fine. Just fine.

CORA

Although you won't be staying long.

Before Joan can speak--

**OCTAVIA**

Cuts in, sitting regal at the other end of the table--



OCTAVIA

Oh, no? And why is that, Joan?

CORA

Urgent matters with your photography business-- isn't that right, Joan?

Joan squirms under their demanding gaze.

JOAN

Th-that's right-- but I was just thinking I could stay and photograph the wedding-- as my gift to you.

BILLY

Joan, that is a beautiful--

OCTAVIA

This is a private affair. We have no need for any pictures.

BILLY

But Joan is a talented photographer--

JOAN

Billy, stop--

BILLY

Don't you want a keepsake? Memories fade but pictures last forever.

CORA

Some memories never fade.

Cora stares at Joan.  
Octavia stares at Billy.  
Nervous, he goes to eat--

OCTAVIA

Not yet, Cousin Billy. We're waiting for Augustus to join us.

Octavia gives a swan-like nod to--  
An empty armchair at the head of the table.

OCTAVIA

Although, I must admit this smells extraordinary. Thank you, Sebastian.

**SEBASTIAN WILKES**

Sits at Octavia's side in chef's garb, pouring her wine.  
A wiry man in his 20s with a loyal smile.

SEBASTIAN

Anything for the Whitman family.

OCTAVIA

So, Cousin Billy, how long have you been dating my daughter?

BILLY

Me? No-- we're not-- I'm her spons--

JOAN

We're just friends, Mother.

OCTAVIA

And how did you two... friends meet?

BILLY

Well, we first met when I caught her breaking into my store--

OCTAVIA

Your store? You don't work on your family's land?

JOAN

A feed store. His family runs a co-operative with others like us. Billy found me after I... left and since then he's helped me find my way.

OCTAVIA

I see.

She gazes at Joan.  
Dropping her hands under the table with a quiet whisper.  
*And Joan hears Octavia's INNER VOICE.*

OCTAVIA (V.O.)

*What are you hiding from me, Joan? I can tell when you're lying, what--*

*Joan whispers back-- sliding her thumb over her tattoo and--  
She blocks out Octavia's inner voice.  
Octavia shifts her gaze to Billy.  
Listening for his thoughts.  
Hearing only silence.  
Joan presses her thumb deeper into her wrist tattoo when--*

BILLY

So, Cora, Mason, how did you meet?

Joan seizes Billy's hand.  
He throws her a confused look.  
As a small, fresh trickle of blood drips from Joan's ear.

CORA

Why, Sebastian introduced us. We were having a hard time with the harvest about three years ago.

SEBASTIAN

That's right. 'Round then, I... lost my parents and the Whitmans took me in-- even though I was terrible with the livestock! Just terrible!

OCTAVIA

But you are marvelous in the kitchen.

SEBASTIAN

Only under your tutelage, Octavia. But you still needed a hard-working stable boy-- so I recommended Mason.

MASON

Cora interviewed me and, well, she scared the daylights out of me!

CORA

I did not! We Whitmans demand a high threshold of rigor and I merely--

MASON

You see that? She put the fear of the First Fathers in me, by Gods! But I guess I answered her questions right or else I wouldn't be here.

LAVINIA (O.S.)

Let's not forget the other reason you're here, Mason.

**LAVINIA BLY**

Mason's mother, 40s, sitting at his other side. A frail, intense woman toying with her food.

LAVINIA

You came looking for work because your father passed, bless his soul.

MASON

Mother, please not now. Where was I?

SEBASTIAN

Cora was gonna marry the stable boy.

CORA

Sebastian, hush! I did not see him that way, not at first, until... I was breaking in a new mare. I thought I had her under control when she ran at full gallop for the trees. I swear I was going to die when Mason appeared at my side on another horse. He calmed the mare down, he saved our lives, and I knew right then that I--

Cora gazes into Mason's eyes--  
Taking his hand in hers--  
Showing true joy when--

AUGUSTUS (O.S.)

I'm here!

**AUGUSTUS**

Lurches into the dining room.  
Straining from a recent stroke or trauma.  
Aided by the **HIGH ELDER** in his black robes and crimson mask.  
Everyone stands abruptly.  
The High Elder waves them all to sit.  
Everyone returns to their seats.  
Augustus settles into an armchair at the head of the table.

AUGUSTUS

My girls! All my girls are here!

He reaches to Cora and Joan at his sides.  
Clasping both their hands.  
Fresh tears in his eyes.  
Sweet like that.

The High Elder bows his head in prayer.  
They all follow suit.

HIGH ELDER

Be present at our table, O Father of the First Fathers. By thy blood, grant us that we may feast in fellowship with thee. Amen.

EVERYONE

Amen.

Everyone starts eating.  
Billy casts a look at Joan-- she ignores it.

AUGUSTUS

Joan! It's so good to see you! Have you come to stay with us at last?

CORA

No, Father. Just for dinner.

AUGUSTUS

Oh, no. Why can't she stay?

OCTAVIA

You know perfectly well, Augustus.

AUGUSTUS

Why?

HIGH ELDER

Must I remind you, Augustus Whitman,  
what was done unto you the last time  
*she* was here?

The High Elder wraps his fingers around Augustus' shoulder.  
Like claws sinking into prey.  
Augustus shakes his head.

BILLY

Wait, you're Augustus Whitman?

AUGUSTUS

That I am.

BILLY

You wrote American Warlock?

(deathly silence)

Your novel is amazing! How brave of  
you to share your life story and how  
brilliant using magic as a metaphor--

AUGUSTUS

That book was banned.

BILLY

Sure, but you can find it online.

AUGUSTUS

On what?

Billy looks around the table at blank faces.  
No one here has heard of the Internet.

Joan shoots to her feet--

JOAN

We need to go. Thank you all so--

MASON

Wait, please don't go!

SEBASTIAN

You haven't even touched your supper!

AUGUSTUS

Yes! Stay!

CORA

No, Father, she cannot stay. The Council of Elders already decided--

OCTAVIA

But before you go, *Cousin Billy*, do tell us more about your relations.

JOAN

I'm sorry, we really ought to--

OCTAVIA

Let the man speak, Joan. What branch of the family are you, *Cousin Billy*?

BILLY

I, uh, I'm from, uh--

JOAN

Father, please let us stay--

CORA

Father, don't listen to her--

OCTAVIA

Augustus Whitman, if you dare--

AUGUSTUS

ENOUGH-- BROTNA!

He POUNDS HIS FISTS on the table with a *THUNDEROUS CRACK*--  
The High Elder carries him off--

HIGH ELDER

Time for you to repose, Augustus.

AUGUSTUS

No! NO! I want her to stay! I want--

JOAN

Billy, go! You have to--

BILLY

What's going on? Joan, what's--

Octavia takes Joan away--  
Everyone scatters--  
And Billy is left alone.

He stares at the empty dinner table.  
 Noticing a *SYMMETRICAL CRACK* in every wine glass.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Octavia brings Joan into a corner--

OCTAVIA  
 Who is he?

JOAN  
 H-He's our cousin. I told you--

OCTAVIA  
 Did you bring an Outsider into my house?

JOAN  
 No, Mother, I would never--

OCTAVIA  
 Does he know who we are?

JOAN  
 Mother, don't you trust--

OCTAVIA  
 Does he know who we are? Seythra!

*And in the moment she speaks...  
 Her thumb drags across her wrist tattoo...  
 Her hair stands on her head...  
 And every drawer in the kitchen slides open one inch.*

JOAN  
 He doesn't know!-- I didn't tell him a thing, I-- I swear, please don't--

OCTAVIA  
 I want you gone tonight.

JOAN  
 But Mother--

*An inaudible whisper--  
 A blur of Octavia's hands--  
 All the drawers SLAM SHUT--*

OCTAVIA  
 Is that clear?

Joan manages a nod.  
 Octavia storms off-- then stops.

OCTAVIA

Your father sent the invitation.

(beat)

I was against it, but he hasn't been well since he wrote that Gods awful book and the High Elder... crippled him for it. Your father thought if you came home, maybe he'd get better. Maybe Cora could forgive you. Maybe we could be a family again.

On Octavia, hiding the sudden weariness on her face. Blood slowly trickling out of her ear.

OCTAVIA

But you failed us again.

Octavia walks out--

Joan goes after her--

*Octavia slides a thumb down her wrist-- whispering and--*  
*The door SLAMS in Joan's face.*

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Octavia leans against the other side of the door. Then drops to the floor, a sweaty mess.

CORA (O.S.)

Mother, what did you do?

Cora appears and helps Octavia to her feet.

CORA

You pushed yourself too far.

OCTAVIA

No. It was you.

Octavia shoves her away. Staggering off by herself.

OCTAVIA

You pushed this family too far.

Cora watches her go, biting her tongue.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Joan tiptoes down the dark hall, searching.

JOAN

Billy... Billy?...



Her footsteps slow.  
Faint SOBBING nearby.  
She follows it to--

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BACK PORCH - NIGHT**

Joan comes to a screen door to find...  
A man sitting on the porch with a glass of whiskey, crying.

JOAN  
Billy? Is that--

The man turns--  
It's MASON.  
Jumping up.  
Wiping away tears.  
Hiding it all with a smile.

MASON  
Joan! Hey! Sorry, I was just getting  
a breath of fresh air and I, uh...  
(voice cracking)  
Who am I kidding?

He sits back down and knocks back whiskey.  
Joan watches him, deciding.  
Steps outside.  
Sits with him.

JOAN  
You sure you want to marry into this  
crazy family?

That makes him laugh.  
He offers the glass.  
She stares at the whiskey.  
Stares at it too long.  
Then shakes her head.  
A beat.  
He goes to talk, stops himself--

JOAN  
Go ahead. Say it.

MASON  
Did Cora tell you how long I spent  
planning that dinner?  
(off her reaction)  
A month. Thirty days of going over  
the linens, the seating arrangement,  
the menu-- and this is embarrassing--

He takes out index cards from his jacket.

MASON

I made Dinner Conversation flash cards.

JOAN

(smiling)

No...

MASON

I researched everyone's hobbies and wrote them down, see? Here's you-- travel and photography--

JOAN

Oh my Gods.

MASON

I know. But tonight was the night our families first met. I wanted it to be perfect... but I ruined everything.

JOAN

Mason, honestly, you didn't--

MASON

Yes, I did. I ruined Cora's dreams of a fairy tale wedding. Now she'll probably call it off.

He takes a long draw of whiskey.  
When Joan snorts.

JOAN

Sorry-- Cora told you about her first boyfriend, right?

MASON

(excited for gossip)

No!

JOAN

Oh! Well, it didn't really count so I shouldn't--

MASON

No, now you have to tell me!

JOAN

Okay, okay! So-- Our parents raised us very strict. No Outsider movies or TV, only True Family literature--

MASON

Me too. Not until I turned eighteen--

JOAN

Right, but when Cora was six, she crept into our Aunt Aurelia's room, found a bunch of old Disney movies--

MASON

No!

JOAN

And thought they were true stories.

MASON

Nooo!

JOAN

So naturally, being the wise older sister I was, I told on her--

MASON

Naturally.

JOAN

*And she ran away.* I looked all over our land... and I couldn't find her.

Joan holds a hand over her mouth.  
Mason leans in, his smile fading.

MASON

Was-- Was she okay, what happ--

Joan giggles behind her hand--

JOAN

Father found her in a pumpkin patch, smacking a big, fat pumpkin with a stick. He shouted at her, "Cora, what are you doing?" and she said--

(through laughter)

"I'm turning this pumpkin into a carriage so I can go see my Prince Charming."

Joan tips over, belly laughing.  
Mason can't help but laugh with her.

MASON

She didn't!

JOAN

She did! And every harvest, I'd leave a baby pumpkin on her pillow and tell her to go have a nice date with her boyfriend Prince Charming.

MASON

My gods, you're the worst sister!

Mason keeps laughing.  
But his words struck a nerve with Joan.  
She gets up and heads inside.

MASON

Hey Joan... thank you.

JOAN

You still sure you want to marry into  
this family?

He looks at Joan.

MASON

I'd do anything for Cora.

They nod good night.  
Joan walks back inside.

HOLD on Mason.  
Waiting.  
Then his face falls slack.  
He buries his head in his hands.  
And howls a MUTED SCREAM into his palms.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Joan rushes in--

JOAN

Billy! There you are! We need to...

Billy is curled up in bed, asleep.  
Joan sits beside him.  
Gently wakes him.

JOAN

Billy... Billy, get up.

BILLY

...hm? Joan! Sorry, I looked for you,  
I waited here and... where were you?

JOAN

We need to go. Get dressed, come on.

BILLY

Now? What time is it?

JOAN

It's late and we can't stay.

BILLY

Why, what happened?

JOAN

I'll tell you later. Now get up--

She pulls his covers back--  
 He grabs her gloved hand--  
 She stops.  
 Leaning over his shirtless body.  
 Her long hair framing his face in curtains.  
 A charged moment.

BILLY

I'm not going anywhere... not until  
 you tell me what the hell is going on  
 with your family.

That kills the moment.  
 She storms off.  
 Pacing.  
 Fidgeting.  
 Taking a deep breath.  
 Walking back over to talk.

JOAN

Billy, I...

He's fast asleep.  
 She marches over to her bed.  
 Sits down, furious.

*Whispers of INNER VOICES bubble up--*  
*She rummages through her pockets--*  
*Whispers build into a murmur--*  
*She pulls out her pill bottle--*  
*Murmurs build into a cacophony--*  
 She pops a BLUE PILL and--

The voices fade away.  
 She sighs.  
 Peace at last.  
 Places the pill bottle on the night table.  
 Leans back to rest her eyes for just a moment--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

Joan's eyes flutter open on--  
 The empty night table.  
 HER PILL BOTTLE IS GONE.



**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Joan rushes forward--  
 Hits a CREAKING FLOORBOARD--  
 A GROAN from a nearby room--  
 She freezes.  
 Hears snoring.  
 Keeps moving.  
 Navigating a minefield of old floorboards.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BRIDAL SUITE - DAY**

Joan opens the door to--  
 Flickering red candles everywhere.  
 A bathtub full of milk and rose petals.  
 CORA sits at a vanity.  
 Brushing her hair.  
 She notices Joan in the mirror.  
 And continues brushing.  
 Joan shuts the door.

JOAN

Come with me.

(no response)

They're asleep-- I still have a car  
 out front-- We can go wherever you  
 want but we have to go now.

(no response)

Cora?

CORA

Are you finished?

JOAN

What?

CORA

You're finished. You tried. Now you  
 can leave.

JOAN

I'm not leaving without you!

CORA

You left without me three years ago.

She puts down her brush.  
 Places it within an orderly arrangement of beauty supplies.  
 Picks out a shimmering red ribbon.  
 Starts braiding her hair with it.  
 Joan steps toward her--

CORA

Now you walk in here and expect me to run off with you? Today of all days?

JOAN

I tried coming back-- I tried many times but every time they--

CORA

They named me The Keeper.

Like a gut punch to Joan.

JOAN

Cora... I had no idea.

CORA

The day you left, The High Elder gave me your mask and ordered me to finish the ceremony.

JOAN

...Did you kill that Outsider?

CORA

I kept our family safe. Year after year. I had to be the responsible one while you traipsed around the globe--

JOAN

No, I didn't! I--

CORA

You were cast out, declared an Outsider, and now you stand before The Keeper of the True Family.

Cora stands.  
Picks up THE KEEPER'S MASK.  
Treads slowly toward Joan.

JOAN

What are you doing?

CORA

The silence must be kept. Kala-Nipt!

Cora slides a thumb across her wrist--  
And Joan freezes on the spot--  
Struggling to move-- but stuck in place--  
Her hand inching A WRINKLED LETTER toward Cora--



JOAN

Wait I... wrote this for you... Tried  
to sending it to you ever since--

Cora casts the letter aside--

CORA

A letter? You think you can fix  
everything with a letter?

JOAN

I'm sorry... Please... Don't empty my  
mind I... I can't bear to forget you.

Cora raises her hands over Joan like twin weapons.  
Looks into Joan's quivering eyes.  
Cora's face softens.

CORA

Do you want to make things right?

JOAN

Yes! I'll do anything, I--

CORA

Then repent. Stand before our kin,  
beg their forgiveness, and declare  
that I belong to the True Family now.  
Will you do that for me?

JOAN

Cora, I... Can't we go back to the  
way we used to be?

Cora flinches.  
Somewhere between tears and rage.  
She lowers her hands.

CORA

No-- Sveetha-nipt-hrinda-KAERR!

*Cora's hands blur--  
All the candles wink out at the same time as--  
WHOOSH!-- the door swings open-- HURLING JOAN OUT TO--*

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Joan tumbles out across the floor and-- SLAM!--  
The door is suddenly thrown shut.

JOAN

Cora, no--

Joan is moving again--  
Twisting the knob--  
But it's locked--

JOAN

No! Don't! Please, Cora! Please!

Joan knocks on the door when-- from outside--

BILLY (O.S.)

Joan?

Joan turns around as...  
She hears people rousing out of bed from nearby rooms...

BILLY (O.S.)

Joan, where are you?

She creeps back--  
As fast as she can--  
Stepping around old floorboards until--

BILLY (O.S.)

Joan!

She looks up.  
A RED ROBE flits past a window--  
*And the INNER VOICES return--*  
Joan books it--  
Fast and loud--  
Careening down the hall--  
Heading for the front door--  
*INNER VOICES rising--*  
THEN SHE TURNS INTO--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

Joan scours the room--  
Searching the night table--  
Tearing the bed apart--  
*INNER VOICES overwhelming her--*  
Fuck it--  
She races out of there--  
Grabbing her camera on her way to--

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - DAY**

Joan sprints outside--  
*INNER VOICES dogging her--*  
Billy's car just a few feet away but--

JOAN  
Billy?... BILLY!

Billy is nowhere to be seen--  
*INNER VOICES crescendoing--*  
 She jumps in the car--  
 Checks her pockets--  
 Finds the keys in the ignition--  
 How in the hell--  
*INNER VOICES almost deafen her--*  
 She turns the key--  
VROOM!--  
 Ready to drive off when--  
 A *ROUGH INNER VOICE* cuts through everything--

**ROUGH INNER VOICE (O.S.)**  
**Kill them. Kill them all.**

Joan stops.  
 Looks at the house.

**ROUGH INNER VOICE (O.S.)**  
**And save the bride for last.**

Joan exits the car.  
 Faces the house.  
 Clutching her camera.  
 And goes back inside.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

No soul in sight.  
 Joan creeps in.  
 Shallow breaths.  
 CAMERA shaking in her hands.  
*Listening to the inner voices.*  
*ROUGH TONES rising as she approaches--*

**INTERCUT - DOOR TO KITCHEN / HALLWAY**

A vertical line of sight through a doorjamb.  
 Two figures whispering in the kitchen.  
 SEBASTIAN is the one facing us.  
 Joan watches, fidgeting with her camera.

**ROUGH VOICE (O.S.)**  
 Is everything ready?

**SEBASTIAN**  
 All here. See?

**ROUGH VOICE (O.S.)**  
 Not enough. Double it.

SEBASTIAN

But that would... No! No, that's not  
what we planned--

ROUGH VOICE (O.S.)

Fuck the plan. They deserve to die.  
They all deserve to--

SEBASTIAN

No! I won't do it. I'm out.

ROUGH VOICE (O.S.)

You can't walk out on--

Sebastian turns--  
HANDS grab him--  
He hits someone--  
HANDS shove him back--  
He slips--  
His neck hits a granite counter and--  
CRACK!  
Sebastian hits the floor, DEAD.

Joan GASPS.

Silence so quiet we hear a pin drop.  
Then movement in the kitchen.  
Joan panics-- steps back--  
AN ANGRY EYE APPEARS AT THE DOOR JAMB--

**JOAN**

Runs for her life--  
Banging on doors--  
Yanking on locked doorknobs--

JOAN

Help! Someone help--

The KITCHEN DOOR slams open--  
Joan dashes away--  
Reaches the end of the hall--  
Slams her fists on the last door--

JOAN

HELP! Please! Let me in! You have t--

**OCTAVIA - IN THE BRIDAL SUITE**

Opens the door a crack--

OCTAVIA

I thought I made it clear--

JOAN

You have to stop the wedding! Someone  
is trying to kill every--

OCTAVIA

How DARE you! Coming all this way  
just to ruin--

JOAN

I'm not lying! You have to believe--

CORA (O.S.)

Mother, could fasten the back please?

Octavia looks back--  
Cora stands with her back to us.  
A stunning silhouette in her wedding dress.

OCTAVIA

But Joan--

CORA

Ignore her. She'll be gone soon.

JOAN

Cora, wait! Listen to--

Octavia SLAMS the door on her--

VOICE (O.S.)

Are you ready, Joan?

She spins around to see--

**AUGUSTUS**

Standing before her in formal clothes with his arm out.  
The hall is empty behind him.  
Joan shudders relief.

JOAN

Father, thank gods.

AUGUSTUS

I know. Big day today.

He takes her arm.  
Guides her away.

JOAN

I... I need to show you something.

AUGUSTUS

But it's time to go outside.

JOAN  
No, Father, I--

He leads her into--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY**

Augustus ushers Joan to the site of the first scene.

JOAN  
Where are you taking me?

AUGUSTUS  
Outside. To walk you down the aisle.

JOAN  
Father, I'm not the one getting  
married. Cora is.

She looks at him.  
He didn't know that.

AUGUSTUS  
I knew that. And you know I'd walk  
you down the aisle, Joan.

JOAN  
Yes, Father.

AUGUSTUS  
Why aren't you getting married?  
You're so beautiful.

He traces a knuckle down her cheek when--

**BILLY**

Walks in on them.

BILLY  
Hey! What are you doing to her?

JOAN  
Billy! Where did you go?

BILLY  
I went to the car like you-- Get your  
hands off of her!

AUGUSTUS  
She's my daughter! Don't you--

BILLY  
You get away from her or I'll--

JOAN  
Billy! Enough!

She pushes them apart--  
Taking Billy out to--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Joan turns the corner with Billy--

JOAN  
What's the matter with you?

BILLY  
This morning when you-- you showed  
me-- I saw him touching you and--

A NOISE DOWN THE HALL.  
The kitchen door is wide open.  
Joan raises a finger to her lips.  
Leads Billy down the hall.  
Holding her breath.  
Creeping into--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Joan inches in to find--  
The kitchen appears spotless.  
Sebastian's body is gone.  
She scours the place.  
Hold on A LAPEL PIN on the counter that they do not find.

JOAN  
No... no, no, he was here. I saw him!

BILLY  
Saw who?

JOAN  
Sebastian! The Chef! He was...

She cocks her head.  
Listening to something faint.

BILLY  
He was what, Joan?

She raises a hand.  
She hears WEDDING MUSIC now.

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY**

A sunlit arch of roses.  
 Mason stands in a dashing tux.  
 Cora in a breathtaking gown.  
 True love in their tear-rimmed eyes.  
 THE HIGH ELDER presides over them in his mask and robes.  
 As a gramophone plays an old record.  
 A fairy tale wedding indeed.

HIGH ELDER  
 ...will now say their vows.

Cora and Mason fasten their hands in the medieval fashion.

CORA  
 You cannot possess me for I belong to  
 myself.

MASON  
 But while we both wish it, I give you  
 all that is mine.

CORA  
 You cannot command me for I am a free  
 person.

MASON  
 But I shall serve you in all the ways  
 you require.

Joan and Billy rush out to witness--

CORA AND MASON  
 You are blood of my blood, hand in my  
 hand, thoughts in my mind. I give you  
 my body that we two may be one. I  
 give you my spirit 'til our life is  
 done. This I vow and thee I wed.

HIGH ELDER  
 You may seal the pact with a kiss.

Everyone applauds--  
 Cora and Mason lean in for a kiss--

JOAN  
 Wait!

Everyone stops.  
 Staring at Joan.  
 Silence.  
 They all move to the arch.  
 They all pose for a picture.



Joan freezes.  
One of them is the killer.  
 She goes to speak--  
 All eyes on her--  
 She hesitates--  
 Panics--  
 And just takes the picture.  
 CLICK.  
 On her numb face as--

HIGH ELDER (O.S.)  
 I now pronounce you husband and wife.

OFF SCREEN applause.  
 All sound fades.  
 All we hear is Joan's shaky breathing.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATER**

Joan sits at a table.  
 Wearing the same numb expression.  
 As everyone else drinks and mingles at other tables.

BILLY (O.S.)  
 Well?

Joan looks up.  
 Billy has been sitting with her.

BILLY  
 Are we safe here? Can we stay?

Joan looks across the tables at Cora.  
 Laughing in her wedding dress.  
 Holding hands with Mason.  
 So happy.

BILLY  
 If you don't want to face your family  
 alone, I can do it with you. We can--

JOAN  
 We can't stay. You can't stay.

Joan grabs him by his sleeve--  
 Taking him off to--

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY**

Joan trudges to the car with Billy in tow.  
 Carrying her camera with her everywhere.  
 She opens the driver's side door.

JOAN  
Get in. Go home. When this is over,  
I'll find my way back--

BILLY  
Joan, I can't--

JOAN  
You have to! Trust me--

BILLY  
No, look--

Billy lifts the hood of the car.  
The engine is a mess.  
Lines have been cut.

BILLY  
I tried to start the car this morning  
but it wouldn't go. Joan, I-- I think  
someone tampered with it.

Joan looks down.  
A STEAK KNIFE sticks out of the front tire.  
Her mind races a mile a minute.

BILLY  
There is something very wrong here.  
Let me help you. I can talk to your  
family, I can find out who is--

JOAN  
Give me your phone.

BILLY  
What, why--

JOAN  
I don't have a phone! Just give me--

She rummages through his pockets--  
Takes his phone-- dials--

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)  
Nine-one-one, what's the nature of  
your emergency?

She looks at Billy-- *Can she trust him?*

BILLY  
Joan, I can help--

She marches into the house.  
Can't deal with him right now.

Billy watches her go.  
 Exhales a sigh.  
 Doesn't know what to do when--

AUGUSTUS (O.S.)

Hey you!

Augustus stands by the back of the house.  
 Wiping his dirty hands with a towel.

AUGUSTUS

Gimme a hand with this.

Augustus walks around a corner.  
 Billy makes a decision.  
 And goes after him.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

AUGUSTUS and BILLY work back to back.  
 Billy serves food fresh out of the oven and onto plates.  
 Augustus washes something at the sink.  
 Scrubbing grime off his hands.  
 As Billy finds A LAPEL PIN.

BILLY

Happy to help, Mister Whitman-- say,  
 have you seen Sebastian?

Billy watches Augustus from behind.  
 Augustus stares at the wall.  
 Water running.

BILLY

I haven't seen Sebastian all day and  
 I thought he'd be here. Do you know  
 where he is?... Mister Whitman?

Augustus doesn't move.  
 Water still running.  
 Billy is about to tap his shoulder--

AUGUSTUS

Women's work!

BILLY

What?

Augustus goes back to scrubbing pots.  
 Then scrubbing his hands.  
 Scrubbing them raw.

AUGUSTUS

That's what she wants. Told me to stay in the kitchen. Cook. Clean. Do nothing but women's work. All because I wrote that book.

BILLY

You mean American Warlock? I'd love to hear about...

Billy sees the fear in Augustus' eyes.  
Like a boy about to get a spanking.

AUGUSTUS

I'm not supposed to talk about that.

Billy looks around.  
Steps in closer.

BILLY

It's okay, Mister Whitman. This stays between us. No one else will know.

Their eyes meet.

Augustus inhales sharply.  
Lets out a ragged breath.  
And whispers.

AUGUSTUS

It's not a novel... It's my diary.

As Billy digests this, we PRE-LAP--

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)

What's the address of your emergency?

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

Joan paces on the phone-- whispering--

JOAN

I-- we don't have an address-- Can't you track my phone or--

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)

No, ma'am, we cannot. What's your exact location?

Joan ransacks the room for a road map-- no luck--

JOAN

It's-- I'm down the road from the  
Tyrone farm-- near-- right off  
Interstate Ten and-- Eugene Road.

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)

Okay... does that road dead end at...  
a white house in Heirloom Forest?

JOAN

Yes! That's us! Get here as soon as--

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)

We will. What number can I call y--

JOAN

When will you get here?

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)

Ma'am, I need your number--

JOAN

*There's a killer in the house!* When  
will you get here?

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)

...fifty minutes. You're over fifty  
miles from the nearest city--

JOAN

Fifty minutes? That's too late! Tha--

OCTAVIA (O.S.)

I was wondering what had become of  
you.

Joan spins--

Hiding the phone behind her back as--

**OCTAVIA**

Lets herself in.

Making Joan back into a wall.

Muffling the phone behind her.

OCTAVIA

With whom were you speaking just now?

JOAN

With... myself.

As Octavia levels an acute gaze...

*Her hands going to her wrists with a whisper...*

*Her inner voice rising in a sea of questions...*

OCTAVIA (V.O.)  
*You don't have to lie to me, child--  
 What are you hiding?-- Who were you--*

JOAN  
 Mother, stop!

*Joan's voice rattles the room--  
 Sending a subtle gust of wind through Octavia's hair--  
 Octavia grins.  
 Sits on a bed and takes out her purse.  
 Pulling out a compact and a handkerchief.*

OCTAVIA  
 Why are you here?

JOAN  
 I, uh-- Car trouble. The car won't--

OCTAVIA  
 No. You're not hearing me. Why-- when  
 you could be surfing at the beach,  
 drinking at bars, or going to rock  
 'n' roll show-- why are you here?

JOAN  
 ...How do you know about rock music?

OCTAVIA  
 Same as you. I was young and foolish.

*Octavia dabs at the flop sweat now beading on her face.  
 Cleans the fresh blood trickling from her ears.  
 Applies make-up to hide her sudden fatigue.*

OCTAVIA  
 Before I met your father, I thought  
 it would be fun to go into the city.

*She snaps her compact shut.*

OCTAVIA  
 When I came back, I found the Council  
 of Elders had slaughtered my parents  
 and siblings for my insubordination.

*Joan gasps.  
 Octavia rises to her feet.  
 Wobbling as she advances on Joan.*

OCTAVIA  
 When you left us, I fought with all  
 the power within me just to keep this  
 family alive, day after day, and...

She grabs Joan by the shoulders.  
 Octavia's immaculate face stained by tears.

OCTAVIA  
 It was all worth it knowing you were  
 happy. That you were out there living  
 your life. So why are you here?

Joan doesn't know what to say.  
 Then it comes effortlessly.

JOAN  
 ...I'm here for my sister.

Joan grabs her CAMERA off a table.

JOAN  
 I'm here to photograph my sister's  
 wedding, starting with you.

Joan marches off.  
 Octavia follows her, curious.  
 CRANE DOWN to show Billy's phone left under a pillow.  
The 911 call still going.

911 OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)  
 Ma'am? You still there? Please stay  
 with us, police are on their way...

The SCORE rises--  
 CLICK, CLICK, SNAP--  
 The rhythm of a camera wheel turning--  
 The drumbeat of a camera shutter firing--  
 The music of camera gears building and taking us to--

**MONTAGE - JOAN SHOOTING WEDDING PHOTOS**

**SUBJECT 1) OCTAVIA - IN THE DINING ROOM**

Joan sweeps in with her camera and Octavia--

OCTAVIA  
 Here? So far away from--

JOAN  
 There.

Joan points at the head of the table.  
 Glowing with warm, curtained light.  
 Octavia sits in her armchair.  
 A queen on her throne.

OCTAVIA  
 Like this?

**SUBJECT 2) MASON - AT THE BRIDAL TABLE**

Joan orbits Mason with her camera.  
 Finding the right angle out of the sun.  
 Framing Mason's face in both light and shadow.

MASON

Do you want Cora in the--

JOAN

No. Leave her out of this.

**SUBJECT 3) LAVINIA - AT A BACK TABLE**

Lavinia stares at the house.  
 Arms crossed over a full plate.  
 Ignoring Joan as she frames a shot.

LAVINIA

Sure, snap away.

**SUBJECT 4) AUGUSTUS - IN THE KITCHEN**

Joan throws open a side door.  
 Casting hard light on Augustus, alone at the sink.

AUGUSTUS

That's awfully bright, are you sure--

Joan presses a palm into his chest.  
 Taking control.

JOAN

Stand still.

**SUBJECT 1) OCTAVIA - IN THE DINING ROOM**

Joan circles Octavia--  
 Adjusting her camera settings--

OCTAVIA

My dear, what is taking so--

Octavia squirms--  
 Joan SHOVES her back into her seat--

JOAN

Don't move.

Octavia nods.  
 Power shifts.



**SUBJECT 2) MASON - AT THE BRIDAL TABLE**

Mason sweats in the sun's glare.  
 Goes to wipe his brow--  
 Joan SWATS his hand down--  
 GRABS his chin and looks him in the eye.

JOAN  
 Like a statue. Got it?

Mason makes the tiniest nod.

JOAN  
 Now I'm going to ask you a question.

**SUBJECT 3) LAVINIA - AT A BACK TABLE**

Lavinia rolls her eyes--

LAVINIA  
 Just take the damn picture alrea--

Joan grabs Lavinia's chair--  
 YANKS Lavinia in closer--  
 Getting her attention--

JOAN  
 And I need you to answer my question  
 as honestly as possible.

**SUBJECT 4) AUGUSTUS - IN THE KITCHEN**

Augustus stands rigidly still.  
 Clenching his fists like a boy holding his breath.

JOAN  
 Ready?

He blinks an "okay."  
 Joan frames up--  
 Gets into position--  
 Finger on the shutter and--

JOAN  
 Are you planning to kill Cora?

**INTERCUT - ALL FOUR SUBJECTS' REACTIONS**

A wave of emotions hits all four--  
 Too fast to catch them but--  
 SNAP-- SNAP-- SNAP-- SNAP--  
Joan captures all their reactions.

**SUBJECT 1) OCTAVIA - IN THE DINING ROOM**

Octavia stands bolt upright--

OCTAVIA

How could you ask such an impudent--

She marches at Joan--  
Gets right in her face--  
Joan braces for violence--

OCTAVIA

The only one here heartless enough to  
get Cora killed is you.

And Octavia storms out--

**SUBJECT 2) MASON - AT THE BRIDAL TABLE**

Mason stares right back at Joan.  
His face a blank slate.

JOAN

I would never hurt Cora.

**SUBJECT 3) LAVINIA - AT A BACK TABLE**

Lavinia shrugs, cuts up her food--

LAVINIA

No. Why would I? I only met the girl  
today. What kind of question is that?

**SUBJECT 4) AUGUSTUS - IN THE KITCHEN**

SMASH!-- Augustus sweeps plates to the floor--  
Putting his back to Joan--

AUGUSTUS

No. NO. What makes you think I would  
ever do that?... Answer me!

JOAN

I... I was just--

He turns to face her.  
His cheeks wet with tears.

AUGUSTUS

Everything I've done, I did it for  
you girls. I wrote that blasted book  
hoping you'd read it and come home. I  
did other things... terrible things.

JOAN  
What did you do, Father?

AUGUSTUS  
You're my compass, Joanie. You're my  
North Star. I was lost without you.

He pulls Joan into a hug.  
Caressing her hair.

AUGUSTUS  
And now you're home.

On Joan's concerned face we END INTERCUT.

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY**

Everyone having a wonderful time.  
Laughing. Drinking. Dancing.  
Except for JOAN.  
Sitting alone.  
Fixated on--

**HER CAMERA**

Sliding through PHOTOS.  
A wedding portrait of each subject.  
Octavia. Mason. Lavinia. Augustus.  
All of them look GUILTY.

**JOAN**

Drops her camera on the table.  
Running fingers through her hair.  
Frustrated.  
Until.  
She picks up her camera again.  
Eyes widening at--

**HER CAMERA - A VIDEO FILE**

She hits play.  
A low angle on her feet walking.  
Footage taken by accident--  
When the angle tilts up--  
Peering into the kitchen--  
Revealing Sebastian's murder.  
The final frame: his fingers reaching for A LAPEL PIN.

**JOAN**

Watches in horror.  
Hand over her mouth when--

*INNER VOICES* bubble up--  
*She spins in her seat--*  
*Seeing a carousel of cruel eyes watching her--*  
*Vicious whispers coming from all around her--*  
*Getting louder-- angrier-- SCREAMING--*  
*She holds her throbbing head--*  
*Spots a WINE BOTTLE at her table--*  
*A moment's hesitation--*  
*She GRABS IT--*  
*Pours a glass--*  
*Knocks it back--*  
*Down in one--*  
*Wincing as--*

The voices fade.  
 She exhales.  
 Then the shame hits her.  
 She grabs the bottle again.  
 Shaky hands pour another glass.  
 Goes to knock it back--  
 As her eyes meet--

#### **OCTAVIA**

At the next table.  
 Wearing a similar dress.  
 Wearing a similar expression of shame.  
 Holding a similarly full glass of wine.  
The mirror image of Joan as an older woman.

#### OCTAVIA

You can't escape who you are, Joan.  
 There's no use in fighting your fate.

Octavia sips her wine.  
 Sways to her feet, drunk.  
 And joins the party.

#### **JOAN**

Breathes hard. Fast. Hyper-ventilating.  
 Glass of wine shaking in her hand.  
 She raises it to her lips--  
 A HAND grabs her shoulder--

#### BILLY (O.S.)

Joan, stop!

#### **BILLY**

Sits beside her.  
 Lets go of her shoulder.  
 Leaves the choice up to her.

BILLY

Don't throw away three years of  
sobriety. Don't throw away your life.

JOAN

Billy... I... oh Gods...

BILLY

Stop. Don't fall down that spiral.  
You're okay. You're with me. But I  
need you to come clean:

He reaches into his coat.  
Pulls out JOAN'S PILL BOTTLE.

BILLY

How long have you been taking these?

JOAN

My pills-- Where did you--

BILLY

How long have you been using? How  
long have you been lying to me?

Her eyes widen.  
She touches his jacket.  
Pulls something off of it.  
THE LAPEL PIN FROM THE VIDEO.

JOAN

Where did you get this?

BILLY

I found it in the kitchen. But don't  
you change the subject on--

Joan shoots to her feet.  
Backing away from him.  
Billy follows her.

JOAN

It was you.

BILLY

What?

JOAN

You killed Sebastian. You're trying  
to kill my family.

BILLY

What are you talking about?

JOAN

That's why you came here-- Why you  
kept disappearing--

BILLY

Joan, you're not making sense. I  
think you need to sit back--

JOAN

Where were you this morning?

BILLY

I-- I went to the car, like you--

JOAN

Liar! You weren't at the car when I  
got there!

BILLY

I was looking for you, but--

JOAN

Prove it.

BILLY

I can't, I--

JOAN

Syna-GETH!

Joan LUNGES at him--  
Whipping off a glove--  
*Touching her wrists then his face and--*

**INT. PAWN SHOP - [BILLY'S MIND] - NIGHT**

*Joan touches Billy's face in his shop...  
Only this place looks surreal now...  
Everything cranked up brighter...  
Joan lets go...  
Gazing around...  
As Billy freaks out...*

BILLY

What th-- How-- Wait, this can't be  
my shop. Where are we?

JOAN

Your mind. Now show me where you were  
this morning.

BILLY

Show you? I don't know how to--

*She pushes past him...  
Because playing over the wall behind him is a...*

**PROJECTION - BILLY OUTSIDE THE WHITMAN HOUSE**

*Billy in the car...  
Turning it over...  
The engine whirring and dying...  
Getting out and popping the hood...  
Hearing something...  
Looking into the forest...  
A KINSMAN stares back at him...  
Billy sprints...  
Into the house...  
Into the library with Joan and Augustus...  
And that scene repeats on the wall...*

JOAN

You didn't kill anyone. You were  
telling the truth.

BILLY

Of course, I was. I would never do  
anything to hurt you.

*Then all the images on the wall change to...*

**PROJECTIONS - BILLY LOOKING AT JOAN**

*Alternate takes of every scene with Billy...  
Every moment Joan looked away from him...  
But now we hold on Billy watching her...  
A tender longing in his eyes...*

JOAN

Because you love me.

BILLY

No, I-- I never said-- you weren't  
supposed to see any of this.

*Billy tries to block the projections...  
But the images play over his body...  
Joan can't help but smile...*

JOAN

Why didn't you tell me?

BILLY

I'm your sponsor. I can't date you.  
Not yet.

JOAN

Not until I finish all twelve steps?

BILLY

Not until you to open up to me.  
Joan... who are you?

JOAN

What do you mean?

BILLY

I mean what is all this? Since when  
could you do this? And what happened  
between you and your sister?

JOAN

I-- I'm not allowed to talk about--

BILLY

I have been patient. I have told you  
everything about my past but you  
haven't told me a thing about your...

CREAK...

*They both look at...  
A door opening to...*

**AN ADJOINING ROOM - BILLY'S CHILDHOOD MEMORY**

*The back of Billy's shop transformed into a '90s bedroom...  
A boy watches TV there... LITTLE BILLY (12)...  
BILLY'S FATHER (40s) shambles in drunk...  
Keeping his back to us...*

BILLY'S FATHER

Billy! Why're you still up? Bed! Now!

LITTLE BILLY

But--

*A SLAP across the boy's face...*

BILLY'S FATHER

Do as you're told.

*He grabs Little Billy...  
Wrenching him off screen as...  
WE PUSH IN ON the empty door frame...*

BILLY'S FATHER (O.S.)

You can't sleep in that. Off. Off!

LITTLE BILLY (O.S.)

Dad, please don't-- ACK--

BILLY'S FATHER (O.S.)

Don't speak.



*Choking noises...*  
*Billy's clothes are thrown across the room...*  
*His underwear lands in front of us...*

BILLY'S FATHER (O.S.)  
 Shh, don't speak. Don't you ever--  
 EVER. Do you hear me? Do you--

**BILLY**

*Slams the door on his childhood memory...*  
*Shaking... crying...*

JOAN  
 Billy, I didn't mean for that to  
 happen. I didn't know--

BILLY  
 I told you, didn't I? I told you that  
 he... abused me.

JOAN  
 I didn't know he... I am so sorry.

BILLY  
 Now you know. Now you know everything  
 about me. So why can't you be honest  
 with me?

JOAN  
 I-- I can't--

BILLY  
 Try.

*She shudders...*  
*Steps forward...*  
*Looks into his comforting eyes...*  
*Touches his face and... A BRIEF FLASH...*  
*Billy steps back... blinking rapid-fire at...*

**PROJECTIONS - THE FIRST SCENE**

*Joan's flight from her family flickers over every wall...*  
*Different moments playing on different walls...*

BILLY  
 Oh my god, Joan...

JOAN  
 I don't know what to do. I never  
 should've left. I never should've  
 come back or brought you here or done  
 any of this!

BILLY

No, Joan--

*He takes her hands...  
His face in beatific wonder...*

BILLY

This ability... this is a gift.

JOAN

What? No! This ruined my life. This is why I ran away, why I drank, why--

BILLY

This can help so many people.

JOAN

This will get me killed! It will get both of us-- all of us--

*Billy turns and marches into...*

**THE ADJOINING ROOM - BILLY'S CHILDHOOD MEMORY**

BILLY

Hey! HEY! You get away from him!

BILLY'S FATHER (O.S.)

What the--

*Billy lunges off screen...  
WE HOLD ON the empty door frame...  
Sounds of a scuffle... CRACK!... his father groaning...*

BILLY (O.S.)

I never want to see you again, you got that? SAY IT.

BILLY'S FATHER (O.S.)

You're never going to see me again.

*The sound of a decisive blow...  
Then out comes...*

**BILLY**

*Holding LITTLE BILLY in his arms...  
Rescuing his inner child...  
Tear-rimmed eyes on Joan...*

BILLY

This is how you help people. This is how you help your sister. And we're going to do it together.

*Billy reaches out...*  
*Little Billy does too...*  
 Joan takes both their hands as it all *FLASHES TO WHITE.*

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BACK YARD - [REALITY] - DAY**

Joan lets go of Billy's face.  
 No time has passed here.  
 Until their eyes open.  
 A look from Billy.  
 A nod from Joan.  
 She turns to--

**CORA - AT THE BRIDAL TABLE**

Fifty feet away, spoon-feeding Mason.  
 Booping him on the nose with food.  
 Making each other laugh.  
 As THE HIGH ELDER watches over them.  
 Keeping an eye on--

**JOAN**

Coming their way.  
 Walking fast.  
 Passing other tables--  
 Rousing judgmental stares when--

*INNER VOICES rise up...*  
*Vicious thoughts ready to overwhelm her...*  
*But this time she locks her sights on Cora...*  
*Everything else falls out of focus as she whispers...*  
*Swiping her thumb across her wrist tattoo and...*

The inner voices fade away.  
 We hear only her heartbeat.  
 And one looping thought.

JOAN (V.O.)

I'm coming back for you. I'm coming  
 back for you. I'm coming back for  
 you. I'm coming back for you...

Joan marches.  
 Suddenly weary.  
 Breaking out in a sweat.  
 Blood dripping from her ears.  
 Not giving a fuck and pressing on.  
 Just a few feet away from Cora.  
 Reaching out to touch her as--

**THE HIGH ELDER**

PULLS Joan away--  
 Lifts up a glass--  
 CLINKING it and--

All sound returns.  
 All attention on The High Elder and Joan.  
 Her moment ruined.

**HIGH ELDER**

The time has come to celebrate this  
 union with a toast-- but first-- Joan  
 must be on her way.

(cutting Joan off)

Yes, urgent business takes her away  
 so say your farewells while you can.

Joan looks around.  
 Stony faces stare back.  
 Cora won't look at her.  
 No one says goodbye.  
 Joan walks off.

**HIGH ELDER**

Now, raise your glasses to--

CLINKING.  
 All heads to turn to--

**JOAN**

Tapping her own glass with a knife.  
 All cleaned up and smiling.  
 Facing a tough audience.  
 Holding up the PIN.

**JOAN**

Public service announcement: Who left  
 this pin in the kitchen? Anyone?

She scans the party--  
 Catches movement at a back table--  
 But her vision is blurring in and out--

**HIGH ELDER**

Child, it's time for you to--

**JOAN**

I'd like to make a toast: To my  
 sister on her wedding day.

She raises a glass.  
 No one else does.

JOAN (cont'd)

Cora, I remember the day you were born. I remember holding you in my arms and never wanting to let you go. I told you stories, I gave you my toys-- Mother said you were too young for all that-- but I said, "That's okay, I'll teach her everything."

A few chuckles.  
Cora starts to smile.

JOAN

From that day on, I always had you by my side. I took you to school with me. I took you to harvest with me. We shared the same room for fifty years and I wouldn't have wished for it any other way. You were my best friend, my constant companion, and I never wanted to let you go but...

Joan fights back tears.  
Everyone is listening.  
Cora is leaning in.

JOAN

But here is this handsome man by your side who loves you-- he loves you so much he married you even after he met all of us--

Now they all laugh.  
Cora brushes away tears with a giggle.

JOAN

So I have nothing more to teach you. I guess I have to let you go now. Here's to Cora and Mason--

Joan raises her glass higher.  
Now everyone follows suit.  
Moved and grinning.  
Ready to toast--

JOAN

But one last thing I'd like to say to my newlywed sister and to all of you: I repent. I beg your forgiveness for all my wrongs. And I declare...

Joan looks at Cora.  
Takes a deep breath.  
Then this whole scene turns on a dime--

JOAN

*Someone here is trying to kill Cora!*  
Kill all of us! I have proof! I can--

**THE HIGH ELDER**

Grabs at Joan--

HIGH ELDER

That is enough! No more--

Joan SHOVES him back--

JOAN

Get off me! All of you, listen--

**AUGUSTUS - A FEW TABLES OVER**

Rushes at Joan--

AUGUSTUS

Joan, stop it! Don't you disrespect--

JOAN

Father, I can prove it! I can show--

He SLAPS her.  
Shocking her--  
And he drags Joan off her feet--

JOAN

Wait, no-- Let me go! You have to  
believe-- Billy! Help!

**BILLY - AT A BACK TABLE**

Stands-- goes to run as--

**OCTAVIA**

GRABS Billy's shoulder with an iron grip--  
Sits him right back down--

OCTAVIA

Do not interfere.

BILLY

He can't do this to her, you can't--

OCTAVIA

She is our child and we do what we  
want with our children.

That strikes a fucking nerve with Billy as--

**JOAN - DRAGGED BY AUGUSTUS**

Sees Billy struggling with Octavia-- turns to face--

JOAN

Cora! Talk to Billy! He can prove it!  
HE CAN PROVE THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL--

Augustus hauls her inside.  
Pained silence.

**CORA - AT THE BRIDAL TABLE**

Really looking at everyone now.  
*What if Joan is right?*  
She locks eyes with--

**BILLY - AT THE BACK TABLE**

Looking right back at her.  
Nodding. *Joan is right.*  
As Cora reacts--

OCTAVIA

Have you any inkling what she was  
raving about, Cousin Billy?

BILLY

Sorry?

OCTAVIA

Can you really prove that someone  
here is trying to kill us?

Billy hesitates as--  
They both turn to look at JOAN'S CAMERA in front of them.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Augustus drags Joan kicking and screaming--

JOAN

Let go of me! Please! Don't make me  
go! Don't send me away--

He **THROWS** her into a door--

AUGUSTUS

I'm not making you go.

JOAN

You're not?

AUGUSTUS  
I'm making you stay.

He opens the door-- PUSHING Joan into--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Augustus SLAMS the door on Joan as--

JOAN  
No, no, no, NO--

CLICK!-- Joan yanks on the knob--  
She's locked in--

JOAN  
No! Let me out! Open the door!

**INTERCUT - AUGUSTUS & JOAN**

AUGUSTUS  
I'm not opening the door until you  
come to your senses.

JOAN  
Please! You have to protect Cora! You  
have to get her out of--

AUGUSTUS  
No one is leaving this house, you  
hear me? I made sure of that when I  
dismantled your car.

Horror dawns on Joan--  
Turning back to see--  
OILY TOOLS in the sink.

JOAN  
You did what?

AUGUSTUS  
I won't lose you again. You'll stay  
with us and we'll be a family again.

Augustus tenderly puts his hand on the door--  
Joan BANGS HER FISTS on the other side--

JOAN  
NO! They're going to kill her! You  
have to let me out! You... Father?

On that silence we--



**END INTERCUT - ON JOAN**

Whipping around--  
 Seeing two more doors--  
 Rushing the first door--  
 Yanking on the knob--  
 It's locked--  
 Now the second door--  
 SWINGING IT OPEN AND--

Finding stairs that go down, down, down to a DARK BASEMENT.  
*Fuck no.*

Going back to the first door.  
 Noticing two SCREWS there.  
 Rummaging through drawers.

JOAN  
 Screwdriver, screwdriver, screwdriv--

FOOTSTEPS from down the hall.

JOAN  
 Father? Is that you?

The footsteps stop.  
 A shadow hangs over the door sill.

JOAN  
 Billy?... Mother?... Could you please  
 let me ou--

WHAM!-- someone rams into the door--  
 Joan screams--  
WHAM!-- the door rattles again--  
 Joan searches all the cabinets--  
WHAM!-- the door begins to crack--  
 Joan finds a screwdriver--  
WHAM!-- the door's frame *splinters*--  
 Joan rushes to the other door--  
WHAM!-- a door hinge *pops off*--  
 Joan starts unscrewing the other door's knob--  
WHAM!-- the other hinge *pops off*--  
 Joan almost finishes--  
 SHE DROPS THE SCREWDRIVER--

THE DOOR SLAMS OPEN--

Joan shrieks--  
 No options left--  
 She runs into--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY**

Joan descends the steps.  
 Down, down, down.  
 Into darkness.  
 Pitch black.  
 Eyes adjusting.  
 Surfaces appearing.  
 Her feet fumbling.  
 Hands tracing the walls.  
 Finding a switch.  
 Flipping it.

A BLINDING LIGHT BULB.  
 Swinging over a concrete storm shelter.  
 Joan squinting among stacks of dusty boxes.  
 She searches for another way out.  
 Finding only more boxes.  
 FOOTSTEPS.  
 Heavy and slow.  
 Coming down the stairs.  
 Joan panics.  
 Crouches.  
*Where the hell can she hide?*  
 FOOTSTEPS come closer.  
 Then she finds it.  
 Behind her.  
 A CRAWLSPACE.  
 Joan scoots in--  
 Pulling a box with her--  
 Covering up the crawlspace from sight--  
 When she looks over at--

**SEBASTIAN**

His DEAD BODY lies in the crawlspace beside her.

**JOAN - IN THE CRAWLSPACE**

Gasps--  
 The FOOTSTEPS STOP.  
 She slaps a hand over her mouth.  
 Controls her breathing.  
 Calms down.  
 Peers around her box.  
 Looking out at... an empty basement.  
 Silence.  
 THEN HER BOX IS KICKED AWAY AND--

**LAVINIA BLY**

Mason's mother steps into the light.  
 Kneeling over Sebastian's body.  
 Sneering in disgust.

JOAN

You... You're the--

Lavinia whips out a KNIFE and holds it to Joan's throat.  
A spider toying with its prey.

LAVINIA

I'm going to enjoy gutting you.

Lavinia drags the blade's tip across Joan's neck--  
Drawing a bead of blood--  
A MUFFLED MOAN--

LAVINIA

Don't be shy, dear. You got something  
to say, you come and tell her.

Out of the shadows steps--

**EMMETT BLY**

The beaten journalist from the first scene.  
His face disfigured as if from a stroke.  
His hair a shock of white.  
His jaw locked shut.  
His crooked feet shambling.  
His shaky hands reaching out.  
Going through Joan's pockets.  
And pulling out THE LAPEL PIN.

LAVINIA

Oh, dear, you found it! Here, let me  
get that for you.

Lavinia sticks the pin on Emmett's lapel.  
Kisses his cheek.

LAVINIA

There! Now you look like your old  
self back when you won the Pulitzer.

JOAN

You-- You're that journalist! But I  
thought they--

LAVINIA

Killed him? No. But you should have.  
The agony you put him through, trying  
to empty his mind-- but he didn't  
forget. We will never forget.

Emmett corners Joan--  
Eyes blazing with fury--  
Hands touching her face and FLASHING US TO--

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - [EMMETT'S MIND] - DAY**

*Moments after the first scene...  
Joan running and running...  
Only everything looks surreal now...  
Shimmering... desaturated... almost black and white...*

CORA (O.S.)

Joan! Don't leave me, Joa-- No! NO!--  
JOAN COME BACK PLEASE THEY'RE--

*This time her voice is cut off by a VIOLENT GASP--  
Joan STOPS--  
Turns around--  
And runs back into--*

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - [EMMETT'S MIND] - DAY**

*Joan twists down dark, empty corridors--  
Her feet slapping in disjointed echoes--  
VIOLENT GASPS getting closer--*

JOAN

Cora! Cora, what happened! What--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - LIBRARY - [EMMETT'S MIND] - DAY**

*Joan turns the corner to find--  
Her parents on the floor, DEAD.  
EMMETT HOLDING A KNIFE TO CORA'S THROAT.*

JOAN

Wait! Please don't--

EMMETT

Do you know how long your sister  
tortured me?

JOAN

She never meant to hurt you! She was  
only trying to erase your--

EMMETT

Twenty seconds. No more than half a  
minute. But in here...  
(gesturing around)  
It lasted fifty years. Fifty years  
imprisoned in my own mind.

JOAN

Our parents forced her to! Please,  
just put down th--

EMMETT

Now I have you here and I'm going to  
put you through the same hell.

Emmett slits Cora's throat.

Joan *CRIES OUT*--

Cora falls-- bleeding--

Joan scoops Cora into her arms--

Watching Cora's last gurgling breaths--

Hugging Cora tight as--

Joan finds herself hugging *THE KEEPER'S MASK*--

Cora and Emmett have vanished.

The room is empty.

An infant *WAILS*.

Joan goes to--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - [EMMETT'S MIND] - DAY**

Joan stops in to see--

*LITTLE JOAN* (8) same hair and clothes, holding--

*BABY CORA* in her arms, rocking her gently, as--

*OCTAVIA*, radiant and tired, lies in bed.

LITTLE JOAN

(all in one breath)

Hi I'm your sister Joan and I'm going  
to teach you to play hide and seek  
and read you bedtime stories like  
Snow White and Rose Red which is my  
favorite story so let's read it  
together: "Once upon a time--

As Little Joan sits down with a *CHILDREN'S STORYBOOK*...  
Showing the pages to Baby Cora...

OCTAVIA

Joanie, she's too young for all that.  
Here, give her back to--

LITTLE JOAN

That's okay, I'll teach her  
everything. Now, "Snow White and Rose  
Red went for a walk in the woods..."

As our Joan smiles at this memory...

*EMMETT APPEARS* behind Little Joan...

JOAN

No!-- Don't--

EMMETT

Fifty years.

*He swings down a KNIFE--  
Joan SCREAMS--*

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BRIDAL SUITE - [REALITY] - DAY**

Cora's empty room.  
Hold here for a beat.

CORA (O.S.)  
...back in just a minute!

Cora walks in.  
Shuts the door.  
Looks around.  
Searching on top of dressers.  
Shuffling through papers until--  
There-- on the floor-- she finds it--

**A LETTER**

Unfolding it to reveal shaky handwriting.  
This is Joan's Letter.

**CORA**

Reads it, hand on her hip.  
When a change comes over her.  
Fresh tears spring to her eyes.  
She has to sit down.  
She reads it faster.  
Believing in Joan.

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - [EMMETT'S MIND] - DAY**

WHAM!-- Joan slams into a wall--  
Exhausted-- years older-- streaks of white hair--  
She plods on.  
Dead on her feet.  
Marching into--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - LIBRARY - [EMMETT'S MIND] - DAY**

Joan slumps into the door frame--  
Resting to catch her breath--  
Seeing a familiar sight--  
EMMETT HOLDING A KNIFE TO CORA'S THROAT.

EMMETT  
You can't save her. I'm going to kill  
her again and again and--

JOAN

No.

EMMETT

Then get down on your hands and knees  
and beg me. Go on, beg.

*Joan doesn't move.  
Fucking fed up.*

EMMETT

Suit yourself--

*He goes to slit her throat--  
Joan SMASHES her fist into the wall--  
CRAAACK!-- the whole house quakes and rumbles--*

JOAN

I said NO!

*The house vanishes.  
Nothing left but a black void.  
A spotlight hits Joan and Emmett.  
The tables have turned.*

JOAN

What's your plan?

*He turns to run--  
And bumps into JOAN suddenly behind him--*

JOAN

How are you going to do it?

EMMETT

I-- I don't know! I--

JOAN

You knew I had nothing to do with  
this yet you tortured me. But I know  
you're trying to kill my family--

*A CIRCLE OF KINSMAN step out of the dark--  
Surrounding Emmett--*

JOAN

So tell me your plan or I'll make you  
relive your worst nightmares.

*KINSMEN reach out for Emmett--  
Swarming him--*

JOAN

Tell me!

EMMETT

Poison! We're using poison!

*The Kinsmen vanish into the dark.  
Joan GRABS Emmett.*

JOAN

How?

EMMETT

Two separate chemicals. Tasteless,  
harmless-- but put them together--  
(a sick grin spreads)  
They should be enjoying it right now.

JOAN

Enjoying what? What did you poison?

EMMETT

The wine and-- Do you think they're  
cutting the cake about now?

*As Emmett laughs--  
All this FLASHES TO WHITE--*

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BASEMENT - [REALITY] - DAY**

Joan slides out of the corner--  
Lavinia lunges at her--  
WHAM!-- Joan socks her good--  
Soars up the stairs--  
Slamming out--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Joan skids over the floor and out to--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Joan sprints down the hall--  
A terrifying sight-- sweaty-- dirty-- bloody--

JOAN

Cora! CORA!

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY**

Joan rushes out to find--  
A slow song playing and no one dancing.  
Cora's table is EMPTY.



JOAN

Cora! Has anyone seen--

MASON (O.S.)

She'll be back soon.

Joan spins--

MASON pulls her to him--

Taking her gloved hand in his--

Hooking his arm around her back--

And now they're dancing face to face.

JOAN

Let go of--

MASON

Shh, don't make a scene.

JOAN

I'll scream, I'll--

MASON

You'll get dragged away only this time you won't come back. So relax.

JOAN

Why are you doing this?

MASON

Dancing? I thought maybe we could get to know each other.

JOAN

No, not-- Why are you planning to--

MASON

Wrong question. And you know why.

JOAN

Then why did you kill Sebastian?

MASON

I didn't-- Wait, Sebastian is dead?

Mason stops dancing.

Face dropping in shock.

JOAN

I have it on camera. His body is lying in the basement.

MASON

No-- No, that wasn't the plan, that wasn't supposed to--

JOAN  
What was the plan?

Mason hesitates--  
Joan turns to run--  
He pulls her back into dancing--

MASON  
Ah, ah. Try another question.

JOAN  
Where's Cora? What have you done to--

MASON  
Getting colder.

JOAN  
If you hurt her, I swear--

MASON  
Okay, here's a hint: the question starts with "How."

JOAN  
I already know how: poison.

MASON  
Who told-- You heard that from my mom, didn't you?

Joan stonewalls him.  
Mason smirks, impressed.

MASON  
You're close! But the real question is: "How did I get to marry Cora?"

JOAN  
(dawning on her)  
...My parents don't know who you really are. But they must have tested you, made you prove you're one of us.

MASON  
Oh, they did. But Cora helped me.

JOAN  
No... No, she wouldn't have--

MASON  
Cora lied about my past. Cora blocked out my thoughts. Cora made everyone think I had gifts but it was all her.

JOAN

You're lying! She would never--

MASON

She did all that and more-- because  
Cora is in love with me.

JOAN

You sick sonuvabitch, I'll kill you--

Joan tries to hit Mason--  
He wraps his arms around her--  
Pulling her in for a closer dance--

MASON

No. You won't. Here's what you'll do:  
In three minutes, you'll leave--  
leave your camera, leave Cora, leave  
all of us-- and never come back.

JOAN

No! You can't make m--

MASON

If you leave, Cora will live. If you  
stay, everyone here will die.

Joan looks up at Billy.

JOAN

How do I know you won't kill Cora as  
soon as I leave?

MASON

You know. You can hear my thoughts.  
So am I telling the truth?

Joan closes her eyes...  
*His inner voices whisper...*  
*Warm, resonant tones emanate...*

JOAN

Yes... You'd do anything for her.

MASON

And so would you.

He stops the dance.  
Half-bows to her.

MASON

Three minutes.

Mason walks off.  
Joan stands still, breathless.

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER**

Joan hurries over--

                                JOAN  
                    Billy! Billy, I need to talk to...

LAUGHTER drowns out her words--  
As she comes upon--

**AT A BACK TABLE - BILLY, AUGUSTUS, AND OCTAVIA**

Chuckling together like old friends.  
Talking over plates of CAKE.

                                AUGUSTUS  
                    ...and, I swear, she said, "But I  
                    need to turn this pumpkin into a  
                    carriage to find Prince Charming."

Augustus and Octavia giggle, wiping away tears--  
Billy goes for a bite of CAKE--  
Joan grabs his wrist--

                                JOAN  
                    Don't eat that. It's poisoned, it--

                                AUGUSTUS  
                    Joan, I tried to make you see reason,  
                    but you have taken full leave of your  
                    senses. Sit down.

                                JOAN  
                    Thank you, Father, but if you pardon  
                    us, I really must speak with Billy--

                                OCTAVIA  
                    Anything you have to say to *Cousin*  
                    Billy you can say to us. Have a seat.

                                JOAN  
                    I would much rather--

                                AUGUSTUS  
                    Sit down, child.

Augustus stares her down.  
Billy squirms between Octavia and Augustus.  
Clearly their captive.  
Joan looks past them at--

**BACK PORCH ENTRANCE - LAVINIA**

Stumbling out of the house.  
Talking to Mason.  
Pointing at--

**JOAN - AT THE BACK TABLE**

Taking a deep breath.  
And sitting between Billy and Octavia.

OCTAVIA

Now what is it you want to say?

BILLY

Actually, it's something we both want to say.

JOAN

Billy, what are you doing?

BILLY

Augustus, Octavia... you touched Joan as a child and you need to apologize.

Like a bomb going off--  
Everyone talking at once--  
Augustus jumping up-- outraged--

AUGUSTUS

How dare you! You have no right to--

BILLY

You took advantage of her! You abused your own daughter--

Augustus almost flips the table--  
Octavia holds him back--

OCTAVIA

Augustus, calm down-- just calm--

JOAN

Billy, stop! We need to leave, we--

BILLY

Tell them! Tell them how much they hurt you!

AUGUSTUS

You keep your mouth shut! We do not talk about--

BILLY

You talked all about it in your book,  
how guilty you felt when you--

Augustus tries to throw his chair--  
Octavia stops him-- turns on Billy--

OCTAVIA

You never speak about that book!  
Don't you speak a word of--

BILLY

I'll tell everyone about that book  
and who you really are you-- *witches!*

That word echoes.  
They stop fighting.  
Augustus pulls up Billy's sleeve.  
Revealing Billy's wrist tattoo is SMUDGED AND FADED.

AUGUSTUS

You're an Outsider.

JOAN

Billy, run! Get out of--

AUGUSTUS

OUTSIDER!

JOAN

RUN!

Billy bolts--  
Gunning for the trees as--

### **THE KINSMEN**

Rows of them emerging from the woods.  
Encircling the house.  
Surrounding Billy.

JOAN

*No!*

She screams as--  
A RED BAG IS PULLED OVER HER HEAD--

### **INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BRIDAL SUITE - DAY**

Cora sits on her bed.  
JOAN'S LETTER in her hands.  
Staring into the middle distance.  
A portrait of remorse.

JOAN'S SCREAM REPEATS--

CORA  
Joan! JOAN! Where are--

As she heads out--

**MASON**

Bursts in.  
Gripping JOAN'S CAMERA.  
Cora motions to get past.  
Mason matches her movement.  
Blocking her exit.

MASON  
We need to talk.

She hides the letter behind her back when--

**LAVINIA AND EMMETT**

Walk in and join Mason.  
The trio advances on Cora.  
Pulling the door closed behind them.  
WE HOLD on Cora as the door shuts over her face.

CUT TO BLACK.

**FADE IN:**

**THROUGH CLOTH - JOAN'S POV**

Joan coming to...  
Everything fuzzy and red...  
Crimson gauze over the world...  
Dark silhouettes towering over her...  
Low whispers deciding her fate...

VOICE (O.S.)  
Hey, shh, she's awake--

The cloth is pulled away-- establishing us in--

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT**

Right back where we started.  
Moonlight cascades in from the window.  
Joan lies on the floor in a white dress.  
**KINSMEN** surround her in red robes but *no masks*.  
Revealing their faces to show PERFECTLY ORDINARY PEOPLE.  
Augustus, Octavia, Lavinia, and Mason among them.

All of them watch Joan.  
 All of them eat cake.  
 Except Lavinia and Mason pointedly do not eat cake.

JOAN  
 What is this? Why are you all here?

**CORA**

Pushes through the ranks.  
 Looms over Joan in red robes.  
 Her hands trembling.

JOAN  
 Cora! You're alive! Oh thank gods--

CORA  
 Do you want to be sisters again?

JOAN  
 Yes, of course I--

CORA  
 Then repent.

Cora takes Joan by the hand.  
 Lifts her up.

CORA  
 Stand before our kin, beg their  
 forgiveness, and declare that I  
 belong to the True Family now.

Joan swallows hard.  
 Says it for Cora.

JOAN  
 I repent. I beg your forgiveness. And  
 I declare you now belong... here.

HIGH ELDER (O.S.)  
 Then it is decided.

All the cake is put away.  
 All the masks are put on.  
 Because here comes--

**THE HIGH ELDER**

Resplendent black robes.  
 Macabre crimson mask.  
 Presiding over Joan and Cora.  
 The Kinsmen circle around all three.  
 Passing around a DAGGER.



HIGH ELDER

The ceremony was cut short. But now  
it may begin anew.

CORA

We can pick up where we left off.

JOAN

You... want me back?

The High Elder hands Joan a mask-- THE KEEPER.

HIGH ELDER

Become The Keeper once more.

JOAN

Wait-- You want me to--

WHUMP!-- A body hitting the floor--

**BILLY**

Now lying at Joan's feet, BEATEN AND BLOODY.  
Like Emmett all over again.

BILLY

Joan! What's going on? Why are they--

JOAN

Billy! Billy, it's okay, it's going  
to be o-- What did you do to him?

AUGUSTUS

He is an Outsider. He saw too much.

**THE KINSMEN**

**The silence must be kept.**

JOAN

Then empty his mind and and let him  
go! You don't have to--

BILLY

Empty my-- No, don't--

OCTAVIA

He killed Sebastian. He's murdered  
our kind.

**THE KINSMEN**

**The silence must be kept.**

JOAN

No! It wasn't him! He didn't--

MASON

You swore to protect this family.

JOAN

YOU! You killed them! You and your--

LAVINIA

And protect this family you will.

The High Elder hands Joan a DAGGER.  
They all HUM around Joan and Billy--  
Left hands touching their left neighbor's wrist--  
Right hands touching their right neighbor's throat--

JOAN

No! NO! Don't do this! Don't--

BILLY

What are they doing? Joan, what is--

**THE KINSMEN**

**Blood of my blood. Hand in my hand.  
Thoughts in my mind-- Seythra!**

Joan tries to rush out--  
Augustus and Octavia GRAB Joan--  
And Joan moves against her will--

JOAN

No! Please! Don't make me do this! I  
don't want to--

*Joan fights it-- but her hands lift up--  
Pointing the DAGGER at Billy--*

BILLY

What are you doing?

JOAN

Run, Billy! Get out of--

*Billy turns to flee--  
But Kinsmen grab him too--*

BILLY

Let go of me! Get off-- Joan, put  
that down! Stop!

JOAN

I'm trying, I-- I can't!

**STEP.**  
*Joan lurches forward.  
Only four feet away from Billy.*

BILLY

I'm sorry! I'm so sorry! If you let me go I promise I will never--

*STEP.*

*Joan resisting with all her might.  
Three feet from Billy.*

BILLY

Please! You don't have to do this!

JOAN

I'm sorry! I never should have brought you, I--

*STEP.*

*The dagger shaking in her hand.  
Two feet from Billy.*

BILLY

I don't want to die! Please. Please!

JOAN

Billy, I-- I--

*STEP.*

*Raising the dagger up.  
Inches from Billy's heart.*

BILLY

I love you! I love you Joan and I don't want to die. Please, please, please, please--

JOAN

I love you too! I-- No, no, no--

*One last step--*

*The dagger pressing into Billy's chest--*

JOAN

NOOO-- HRINDA!

*Joan barely scrapes a thumb across her other wrist tattoo--  
Everyone is FLUNG BACK--*

*The High Elder rushes at Joan--*

*But she holds the DAGGER up to his throat--*

HIGH ELDER

You petulant cur! You will pay for--

JOAN

No. I do not repent. I seek no forgiveness. And my sister belongs to no one but herself! Syna-GETH!

Joan slides a thumb across her tattoo--  
 Dropping the dagger-- TOUCHING HIM--  
*Now everyone in the circle gasps--*  
*Like an electrical current coursing out of Joan as--*  
 A SPLIT-SECOND MONTAGE PLAYS OUT OVER THEIR WHITE MASKS--  
*Every moment of murderous conspiracy flitting by--*  
 Joan releases the High Elder and--

They all step back.  
 A Mexican standoff.  
 One last beat of calm.  
THEN ALL FUCKING HELL BREAKS LOOSE--

**THE HIGH ELDER**

Lunges like a wolf at--

**LAVINIA**

Fighting back with all her might--  
 But Kinsmen grab her-- go for her throat--

MASON (O.S.)

No!

**MASON**

Charges across the room for Lavinia--  
 Only to get pulled back by--

**CORA**

Yanking on Mason's collar--

CORA

Mason, stop! We--

**MASON**

Turns on Cora-- WHAM!--  
 Pinning her against the wall and--

**JOAN**

Rips Mason away--  
 SOCKS HIM ACROSS THE JAW--  
 About to sock him again and--



He stops.  
 Stumbles back.  
 Drops to his knees.  
 VOMITS BLOOD on the floor.  
 And keels over onto a plate of CAKE.

**THE KINSMEN**

Realize all too late--  
 And STAMPEDE out the door--

**BILLY**

Huddles in a corner--  
 Trapped-- Overwhelmed--  
 When a dying Kinsmen lurches after him--

BILLY  
 Help! Joan, HELP!

**JOAN AND CORA - ACROSS THE ROOM**

Can't hear Billy--  
 Fighting tooth and nail--  
 Letting out years of pent-up anger--

AUGUSTUS (O.S.)  
 That's enough!

**AUGUSTUS**

Barrels through the Kinsmen--  
 Reaching Joan and Cora--

AUGUSTUS  
 Stop it, you two! Stop--

He pulls them apart--  
 GASPS--  
 Eyes widening--

AUGUSTUS  
 Stop fighting.

He falls over with THE DAGGER IN HIS BACK--

JOAN AND CORA  
 Father!

**LAVINIA**

Now standing behind Augustus--  
 YANKING out the knife--  
 Advancing on--

**JOAN AND CORA**

Pressed up against a wall--  
Panicking when--

OCTAVIA (O.S.)

Hrinda-Vik!

**LAVINIA**

*Flies into a wall and-- WHOOSH!--*  
*SLIDES UP the wall as if possessed--*

**OCTAVIA**

Stands with a thumb digging into her wrist--  
Tears lining her furious face--

LAVINIA

Please don't--

OCTAVIA

Brotna!

Octavia twists her hand around--

**LAVINIA - UP THE WALL**

Her head suddenly twisting--  
Her neck SNAPPING--  
Her body dropping to the floor, DEAD--

BILLY (O.S.)

JOAN, HELP!

**BILLY - IN A CORNER**

Fights off a trio of Kinsmen--  
Slobbering blood all over him--  
Reaching for his throat--

**JOAN**

Sprints across the room for Billy--  
Pushing Kinsman out of her way--  
Dropping like flies all around her as--  
A MOURNFUL CRY RINGS OUT--

**MASON**

Bum-rushes Octavia--  
An icy whisper--  
He FREEZES--

**OCTAVIA**

Kneels beside Augustus' body--  
 Squeezing her wrist-- *CHOKING MASON*--  
 Another whisper and-- *WHOOSH!*-- she stumbles back--

**MASON**

Falls over-- breathing again--

**CORA**

Now stands between Octavia and Mason--  
 Fingers poised on a wrist tattoo--

CORA  
 Mother, let him be--

OCTAVIA  
 If you dare push me again, I swear to  
 the First Fathers I will--

A BLOODCURDLING SCREAM--

**JOAN AND BILLY**

Shove over the last Kinsman--  
 Backing away in terror from--

**EMMETT**

Limping into the room--  
 Plunging down a *KITCHEN KNIFE*--  
*WHOOSH!*-- he spins around against his will--  
 Now turning to face--

**OCTAVIA**

Lifting her wrist to her neck--  
 Digging a fingernail into her wrist tattoo--

MASON (O.S.)  
 No! Don't! Please--

OCTAVIA  
*Skera.*

**EMMETT**

Lifts the knife to his neck and--  
*HE SLITS HIS OWN THROAT*--

MASON (O.S.)  
 NO!



**OCTAVIA**

Turns on Mason--

**CORA**

Pulls her mother into a fierce hug.

**OCTAVIA**

Let go of me! Child, don't make me--

**CORA**

Wait.

**OCTAVIA**

Struggles then--  
Her whole body relaxes.  
SHE COUGHS UP BLOOD.  
Looks at Cora.  
A sad smile.

**OCTAVIA**

I only wanted to protect y--

She chokes--  
Tips forward--  
Her hand streaks blood down Cora's cheek as--  
Octavia slides down and collapses on the floor, DEAD.

Silence.

Stillness.

Blood everywhere.

Cora sinks to her knees as--  
WHUMP!-- her legs are yanked out from under her by--

**THE HIGH ELDER**

Still alive--  
On death's door but--  
Crawling on top of Cora--  
Grabbing her throat-- STRANGLING HER--

**HIGH ELDER**

The silence... must... be... KEPT!

**CORA**

Can't speak--  
Clawing at his hands--  
Eyes bulging-- gasping-- dying--

**JOAN**

Kicks the High Elder off Cora--  
Stabs him in the fucking heart with the dagger--

**THE HIGH ELDER**

Slumps over--  
Still reaching for Cora and--  
The death rattle echoes out of him.

**JOAN AND CORA**

Help each other up.  
Watching each other.  
A KNOCK at the front door.

VOICE (O.S.)  
OPEN UP! THIS IS THE POLICE!

The survivors stand.  
Peek down the hall at--

**THE FOYER - OUT THE WINDOWS**

Two silhouetted POLICE OFFICERS approach.  
Their guns drawn.

**INSIDE - JOAN, CORA, BILLY, AND MASON**

Panic washes over them--  
Looking at this bloodbath--

OFFICER (O.S.)  
WE'RE COMING INSIDE IN THREE-- TWO--

CORA  
Syna-geth--

*Cora touches her wrist-- then touches Joan's arm and--*

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - BEDROOM - [CORA'S MIND] - DAY**

*Cora lets go of Joan now in their childhood room...  
Everything is warmer here... brighter... softer...  
Golden light beaming out of the curtains...*

CORA  
Don't let them take Mason.

JOAN  
But he tried to kill you! He killed  
Mother and Father and--

CORA

I did.

JOAN

What? No, you didn't--

CORA

I killed our parents.

JOAN

It wasn't your fault. You didn't know--

CORA

I did know. I planned this. I killed our parents.

*A FLICKERING behind her and we see a...*

**PROJECTION ON THE WALL - CONSPIRACY IN THE KITCHEN**

*Lavinia, Emmett, Mason, and CORA huddle over the counter...  
SEBASTIAN showing them all two red vials of POISON...  
Pouring one into the wine...  
Pouring one over the cake...*

CORA

You don't know what it was like after you left. What Mother and Father made me do. I had to escape but I didn't know how... until I met Mason.

**JOAN**

*Steadies herself against a dresser...*

CORA

I knew who his parents were, but Mason-- he never wanted to hurt a soul. His parents kept pushing him, making him do terrible things-- like our parents did. Both our families wanted to kill each other, so...

JOAN

So you had them kill each other. You orchestrated all of this to... to get rid of our parents?

CORA

To break free. And after that, we were going to come find you.

(tears coming)

I never gave up on you.

*Joan sways down to the floor...  
And all the images on the wall change to...*

**PROJECTIONS - LITTLE JOAN AND BABY CORA**

*Reading a children's storybook...*

LITTLE JOAN (PROJECTION)  
"Snow White and Rose Red." Once upon  
a time, Snow White and Rose Red went  
for a walk in the woods...

*Baby Cora coos... Little Joan turns the page as...*

**CORA**

*Sits on the floor beside Joan...*

CORA  
Joan... Can't we go back to the way  
we used to be?

JOAN  
No.

*Joan turns her back on Cora...  
Then faces her holding an ANTIQUE GLOBE...*

JOAN  
But we can go forward.

CORA  
Joan... I...

JOAN  
Do you want to go on that trip?

CORA  
But where would we go?

JOAN  
Wherever the globe sends us... Go on.  
Give it a whirl.

*Cora spins the globe-- FLASHING TO WHITE--*

**INT. WHITMAN HOUSE - LIBRARY - [REALITY] - DAY**

*Cora lets go of Joan as--*

OFFICER (O.S.)  
TWO-- ONE!

WHAM!-- we hear the FRONT DOOR KICKED IN--

JOAN  
WAIT! We're coming out!

Joan looks to everyone.  
Solemn purpose in her eyes.  
They all nod, following her out to--

**I/E. WHITMAN HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT**

The front door is wide open.  
Red and blue flash over everything.  
Silhouetted officers stand with THEIR GUNS AIMED AT--

**JOAN, CORA, MASON, AND BILLY**

Walking out the front door.  
High-beams blinding them like deer.  
Shining on their BLOODY CLOTHES.

OFFICER (O.S.)  
Put your hands over your heads and--

Joan and Cora wave their hands-- WHOOSH--  
*Both officers fly back as if thrown--*  
*Knock into their car--*  
*And pass out--*

**EXT. WHITMAN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Joan and Cora move on.  
Stepping over the unconscious officers in the grass.  
Billy and Mason stare, then jog to catch up to--

**JOAN AND CORA**

Walking side by side.  
Marching into the dark.  
Holding each others' hands.  
Snow White and Rose Red going for a walk in the woods.  
Together.

FADE TO BLACK.

**THE END**