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COLD OPEN

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- DAY

A small, one-man operation. There's a house, a few outbuildings, corrals and a barn.

TITLE: VENTURA COUNTY, 45 MILES FROM LOS ANGELES

Angle on JIM CROWLEY, a hard-working dairy farmer, 50's, dressed in coveralls. He's opening a gate. DAIRY COWS come plodding through and head straight towards the milking barn. They know the routine.

JIM

Morning, Girls. Let's move along now, sun's been up for an hour.

Jim moves off and doesn't see the last cow. Her name is DELILA and she looks like all the rest, except she's walking backwards.

INT. MILKING BARN -- SAME DAY

Jim making his rounds, moving past the cows in their stalls, a quaint wooden sign over each: SWEET SUE, OL' BESS, MAGGIE MAY, etc. The cows are facing away from us, udders attached by clear plastic hoses to a complicated milking apparatus. We can hear the automated pumps shushing rhythmically, see the milk coursing through the hoses.

Jim reaches Delila. She's completely still, her milk stuttering through the hose.

JIM

You okay, Delila?

Suddenly, Delila turns her head, looks at him, a malevolent glint in her eyes. She GROWLS.

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- MOMENTS LATER

Jim's wife, ELLEN, hanging clothes on a clothesline. She hears Jim yelling, then sees him stumbling out of the barn, scared cows running past him.

ELLEN

Oh my heavens!

EXT. MILKING BARN -- THAT NIGHT

Jim and Ellen have the door open a bit and they're peeking in. We hear Delila's rabid BELLOWING intermixed with CRASHING and CLANGING. Apparently, she's wrecking the place.

JIM
Well it's not anthrax or hoof and
mouth. I've never seen anything
like this in 35 years of dairy
farming.

Ellen wants to say something, is too afraid.

JIM
What?

ELLEN
This is not natural, Jim.

JIM
Not natural? What's that supposed
to mean?

ELLEN
Look at her eyes.

Angle on Delila, panting, glaring at them, eyes like molten
orbs, a burgeoning, unnatural fury inside her.

ELLEN
I've only seen that look one other
time. Remember my cousin, Thalia?

JIM
Aww Ellen --

ELLEN
Thalia was possessed, Jim. A demon
took hold of that poor woman's body
and drove her right out of her
mind!

JIM
Cow's don't get possessed, Ellen.
They're cows.

They hear a BELLOW that's more like a scream. Delila is
galloping right at them, her face distorted into a snarl,
ears back, teeth bared like a dog. In a panic, they slam the
door shut as Delila rams into it, splintering the wood. Jim
looks at Ellen, realizes she may be right.

JIM
My God...

END COLD OPEN

ACT 1

INT. CAMRY -- DAY

JOSH KEELING at the wheel, drinking a chocolate milk with a straw. He's mid-30's, casually dressed, attractive, a regular guy. Music begins, the Talking Heads sing the arrestingly weird, "Once In A Lifetime" over...

A MONTAGE

Josh drives through a typical LA suburb, intercut with scenes of ordinary people doing ordinary things; walking their dogs, playing tennis, having coffee at Starbucks, talking on their cells. The scenes are so ordinary they're almost surreal.

JOSH (V.O.)

Somebody once said, the only normal people are the ones you don't know very well, and how many people do you know that well? I mean really. Your family, your friends, the people you see everyday? Oh sure, they look normal, but believe me when I tell you, normal can disguise the weirdest stuff you can imagine.

The montage ends.

EXT. PCI -- SAME DAY

A small, nondescript commercial building, "Paranormal Consultants Inc" stenciled discreetly on the door.

COLLIN (V.O.)

I believe all paranormal mysteries have a scientific explanation...

INT. PCI -- CONTINUOUS

A combination office/lab. COLLIN CLARK in the lab area. 20's, white, geeky, chip on his shoulder. He's repairing a homemade device called THE M-PAC. It looks like a cross between an assault pistol and an ionic blow dryer.

COLLIN

...and technology will be the key to unlocking them.

Angle on ATHENA ORTIZ; Latina, 20's, street edge, hot but not on purpose. She's at the reception desk reading a book.

ATHENA

Some things will always be mysteries, Collin.

(MORE)

ATHENA (cont'd)

The most you can do is harness
their energy and use them for good.

COLLIN

(scoffs) Is that like the Witch's
Hippocratic Oath?

ATHENA

I'm a bruja.

COLLIN

My mistake. A bruja.

ATHENA

Runs in the family. My
grandmother's a bruja too. In the
barrio she's famous.

COLLIN

Oh really?

ATHENA

Yes, really. I've seen her do
amazing things and she doesn't need
any technology made from stuff you
can get at Radio Shack.

Stung, Collin starts to retort but Josh enters with a BAG OF
DONUTS.

JOSH

Good morning.

ATHENA

Morning, Josh.

JOSH

(off the bag) Apple fritter?

ATHENA

Maybe some other time, like when
I'm skinny and have a dental plan.
(then) Messages. A Mr. Markett
called. He thinks his wife was a
victim of spontaneous combustion
and he'd like you to investigate
and The New Age Society wants you
to submit a paper on The Taos Hum
Phenomenon.

JOSH

Screen Mr. Markett, see if he
really had a wife and I don't have
time to submit a paper.

ATHENA

We also have that consultation with Jim Crowley, the dairy farmer? We should leave soon.

Josh crosses to Collin.

JOSH

Apple fritter?

COLLIN

The new girl is not working out.

JOSH

I think she's doing great.

COLLIN

She claims to be a witch, a bruja no less.

JOSH

I know, Collin, and could we keep an open mind?

New angle. The phone RINGS, Athena answers.

ATHENA

PCI. (then) Josh, it's Barbara.

JOSH

I'll take it in my office.

INT. JOSH'S OFFICE/PCI -- SAME

A cramped jumble of files, tapes, books, maps and photos, Josh picking up the phone.

JOSH

Hello?

BARBARA (V.O.)

Colonial, God, that's so eighties..is that olive? No, it's more like a moss...

JOSH

Honey? What are we talking about?

INTERCUT

INT. KITCHEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

BARBARA, Josh's wife; 30'S, attractive, suburban prim. She's looking out of the window, watching the house next door. A delivery truck is in the driveway, workmen toting a new living room set (the subject of her comments) into the house.

TED STROUD and his wife, LASANDRA, supervising. They're attractive, black, 30's.

BARBARA

Ted and LaSandra, our new neighbors? I invited them over for lunch tomorrow. They seem nice enough.

Barbara waves at the Strouds, they wave back. As the dialogue continues Barb takes dishes out of the dishwasher and wipes off spots only she can see.

JOSH

Is that why you called?

BARBARA

I just got off the phone with the Vice Principal. Danni skipped school.

JOSH

She did?

BARBARA

It's the new boyfriend. Cal. He's taking advantage of her.

Athena appears in Josh's doorway, gestures, let's go.

JOSH

I've got to go. We'll talk about it later.

They hang up but we stay with Barbara in the kitchen. ADAM enters. 7 years old, a smart kid trying to figure out how the world works.

ADAM

I finished cleaning my room, Mom.

BARBARA

Really? Why don't we have a look?

INT. ADAM'S ROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

The room is very clean but Barbara is inspecting with the scrutiny of a Marine sergeant, Adam watching, tense.

BARBARA

Good job, Adam. (then) Don't you just feel better when everything is the way it's supposed to be?

ADAM

Sure. I guess.

Barbara notices the bookshelf.

BARBARA
Adam, didn't we say you would
alphabetize your books?

ADAM
I don't think so.

A MINUTE LATER

Barbara and Adam examining a 20 PAGE, HANDWRITTEN CONTRACT
titled "MY CONTRACT WITH MOM BY ADAM KEELING".

BARBARA
Here, Section B, item 7a. (reads)
"I will put my books away in
alphabetical order."

ADAM
But they look neat and everything.

BARBARA
You agreed to the contract, Adam.
See? There's your signature.

ADAM
But you said I had to sign it or I
wouldn't get my allowance.

BARBARA
Give and take, sweetheart. We
negotiated.

On Adam, confused.

INT. CAMRY -- SAME DAY

Rural road. Josh driving, Athena riding shotgun. Through the
rear window, we can see Collin following them in a PANEL VAN.

JOSH (V.O.)
I'm not sure if Athena's a bruja or
not but I liked what she said in
her interview.

INT. (FLASHBACK) JOSH'S OFFICE/PCI -- DAY

Athena interviewing with Josh.

ATHENA
My whole life I knew I was special
but I didn't know how or why.

EXT. (FLASHBACK) STREET -- NIGHT

The barrio. Athena hanging with her rowdy HOME GIRLS, drinking and laughing.

ATHENA (V.O.)
And I was cool with that. Lots of
people are ordinary, right?

INT. (FLASHBACK) LIVING ROOM/GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE -- DAY

Athena's GRANDMOTHER, gripping Athena by the shoulders, imploring her, impassioned, her eyes ablaze.

ATHENA (V.O.)
But one day my grandmother called
me over to her house and told me
that I was a bruja like her and
that if I didn't nurture my gift I
would lose it.

INT. (FLASHBACK) JOSH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Josh and Athena, the interview continuing.

ATHENA
She said other people could waste
their time but I didn't have the
right. (beat) I had a calling.

RESUME SCENE

Josh and Athena still driving.

ATHENA
I'm surprised this dairy farmer
didn't just put the cow down.

JOSH
He could have, but what if the rest
of his herd had the same problem?

ATHENA
So he calls a paranormal consultant
before he calls a vet?

JOSH
A vet might report the cow's
symptoms to the Department of
Agriculture. They could quarantine
his farm.

ATHENA
Rock and a hard place.

JOSH

Like a lot of our clients. They have a problem they can't go public with so they go online, look for help. Eventually they find us.

ATHENA

Speaking of somebody who needs help, what's up with Collin?

INT. PCI VAN -- CONTINUOUS

Collin driving, brooding.

JOSH (V.O.)

Collin was a grad student in physics, top of his class.

INT. (FLASHBACK) DORM ROOM -- NIGHT

A manic Collin working at his laptop, surrounded by stacks of textbooks, complicated charts and diagrams.

JOSH (V.O.)

He wrote his thesis on a variation of the big bang theory that included a race of cybernetic aliens.

INT. (FLASHBACK) OFFICE/UNIVERSITY -- DAY

Collin yelling at his PROFESSOR, then ripping a page out of his THESIS and eating it.

JOSH (V.O.)

When his professor demanded revisions, Collin refused, saying he'd eat his thesis before he changed a word of it.

RESUME SCENE

JOSH

He was booted out of school, humiliating for a guy like him. (beat) He's got something to prove.

Up ahead, they can see the dairy farm. Jim and Ellen waving.

JOSH

I think we're here.

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- MINUTES LATER

Josh, Athena and Collin meeting Jim and Ellen.

JIM
Mr. Keeling? I'm Jim Crowley and
this is my wife, Ellen.

JOSH
Please call me Josh. These are my
associates, Athena Ortiz and Collin
Clark.

Everybody shakes hands. We hear Delila BELLOW.

JIM
That's Delila.

JOSH
We need to take a look at her.

Ellen notices Collin adjusting the M-PAC.

ELLEN
You're not going to kill her, are
you?

COLLIN
Oh no, ma'am. This is an M-PAC
device. Multi-Purpose Attack and
Control. It's charged with a non-
lethal pulse of super-compressed
argon gas.

JOSH
Actually, I thought we'd let Athena
take the lead.

Collin is put-out. Athena reacts, who me?

INT. MILKING BARN -- SAME DAY

The barn is a mess and full of shadows. Josh and Athena
enter. They can hear Delila's HEAVY BREATHING coming from
somewhere in the darkness. Warily, they creep forward.

ATHENA
Josh, I have a confession to make.

JOSH
Now?

ATHENA
I'm a little worried about the
bruja thing. I mean I've watched
my Grandmother a lot but I've never
actually done stuff on my own.

We hear a threatening HUFF. Delila steps into view. Her
condition has worsened, she looks truly berserk.

JOSH

I think you better get started.

ATHENA

I'll try an incantation from El Salmo de Los Muertos. It's supposed to have a calming effect on animals.

Athena holds her hands out, palms up, intones in Spanish:

ATHENA

Este en la paz apacible tranquilo, ningún daño vendrá a usted, esté en la paz con mí y curaré su dolor. Deje la energía de mi terraplén del corazón usted con amor y deje el--

Suddenly, Delila lets out a roaring BELLOW.

ATHENA

I don't think this is working.

Delila paws the ground and charges.

ATHENA

Josh?

Josh seems unconcerned, Delila building speed.

ATHENA

Josh?!

JOSH

Anytime, Collin.

Collin appears with the M-PAC and fires. An INVISIBLE PULSE warps the air, hits Delila and stops her cold. She staggers.

Angle on Josh, Athena and Collin as we hear Delila SLUMP to the ground. Collin looks at Athena, smug.

COLLIN

Radio Shack. There is no substitute.

A LITTLE LATER

Josh examining the unconscious Delila, Athena taking pictures with a digital camera, Jim and Ellen watching.

JOSH

She's got no obvious contusions or lacerations, no blood anywhere.

Josh uses a mini-lite to check Delila's eyes.

JIM

If you don't mind my asking, how does a fella get into a field like this?

JOSH

Started early. I was that kid.
(off Delila) Her pupils are dilated but she's not aphasic.

JIM

That kid?

INT. (FLASHBACK) YOUNG JOSH'S ROOM/APARTMENT -- EVENING

A chemistry set, models of spaceships hanging on wires, terrariums full of lizards and spiders, a poster of Stephen King looming over everything. YOUNG JOSH, 10 years old, reading a comic book with great concentration, stacks of them nearby, a PET SNAKE slithering up his arm.

JOSH (V.O.)

You know, the loner, the oddball, the one everybody called "weirdo"?

RESUME SCENE

Josh checks Delila's nose and ears.

JOSH

I was a curious kid too, almost to the point of stupidity. (off Delila) Ears are clean, no discharge or ectoplasmic residue.

EXT. (FLASHBACK) COAL MINE -- DUSK

Young Josh crawling out of an old coal mine, blackened with soot, sputtering, BATS flying past him.

JOSH (V.O.)

If somebody said Big Foot was living in the old abandoned mine? I'd crawl in there and take a look.

RESUME SCENE

Josh puts a THERMOMETER in Delila's mouth.

JOSH

When I was ten years old I even camped out in the cemetery on Halloween night. I wanted to see a ghost.

JIM

How did your folks feel about that?

INT. YOUNG JOSH'S ROOM/APARTMENT -- SAME EVENING

Josh still reading his comic book.

JOSH (V.O.)
My Mom raised me by herself and she
worked nights.

Josh's mom, RACHEL enters. Attractive and warm, early thirties, nurses uniform. She's putting on her coat.

RACHEL
Are you sure you don't want to go
trick or treating?

YOUNG JOSH
I'm sure.

RESUME SCENE

JOSH
She never knew and I never told
her.

Josh checks Delila's thermometer.

JOSH
Low grade fever, her tongue is
discolored too. I'll need a blood
sample.

JIM
And did you? See a ghost?

COLLIN (O.S)
Josh, over here!

JOSH (V.O.)
I saw a lot of things that night

MOMENTS LATER

Everyone gathered around Collin, kneeling in the wreckage of Delila's stall, a MOUND OF MANURE in front of him. He shines a UV light on the manure illuminating HUNDREDS OF TINY WORMS.

COLLIN
Worms.

JIM
Cows get worms all the time and
they don't act like Delila.

COLLIN
I found these in Delila's stall and
nowhere else.

JOSH
I want them collected, Collin.
Every single one.

Delila stirs, groans.

JOSH
She's going to wake up pretty soon.
Can we put her someplace secure?

JIM
I've got a breeding corral. We
could roll her on to a tarp, drag
her in there with the tractor.

EXT. MILKING BARN -- SAME DAY

The group comes out.

JIM
Do you think she's possessed?

JOSH
She's showing some of the signs;
anomalous aggression, preternatural
strength -- but the worms, I'm not
sure how they fit in. (then) You've
got to stop selling milk.

JIM
Okay, but I can't do it forever.
I've got a small operation here.

JOSH
We'll work as fast as we can and
I'll call you as soon as we know
something.

Jim and Ellen move off.

COLLIN
I'll do a blood panel and full work-
up on the worms.

ATHENA
How come Delila is the only one
that got them?

JOSH
Gut feeling? She was deliberately
infected. (to Collin) Make up a
separate worm sample for me. I'll
get started at home, see if I can
identify them.

ATHENA

You sure you want to take those things into your house?

COLLIN

(patronizing) Worms are cold-blooded. On ice they'll be inert.

INT. CAMRY -- THAT EVENING

Josh driving, A LITTLE RED COOLER on the seat beside him.

JOSH (V.O.)

Spending Halloween night at the cemetery was one of those things, it seemed like a good idea at the time.

INT. (FLASHBACK) LIVING ROOM/APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Young Josh seeing Rachel to the door.

RACHEL

You can still change your mind. Mrs. Webberly will take you trick or treating with her kids.

YOUNG JOSH

No thanks. I'll be okay.

RESUME SCENE

JOSH (V.O.)

I'll always wonder how my life would have been different if I'd gone trick or treating with Mrs. Webberly.

Josh arrives at his house, turns in the driveway.

INT. LIVING ROOM/STROUDS HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Angle on a SHOULDER HOLSTER WITH A GUN IT, hanging over a chair, an LAPD DETECTIVE'S GOLD SHIELD CLIPPED TO THE HOLSTER.

TED (O.S.)

I had a conversation with Bob Fletcher, insurance guy, lives three houses down?

New angle: LaSandra moving her new sofa. Ted at the window, watching Josh get out of the car.

TED

He told me Josh calls himself a paranormal consultant. Whatever that is.

LASANDRA

Really? His wife told me he was a scientist. (beat) Are you going to help me move this sofa?

TED

(helping her) I worked a long time so I could afford this house, so I could get away from noise and pollution and the traffic and most of all? The nutcases.

LASANDRA

Ted --

TED

So here I am, in my dream house, mortgaged to the hilt and who is my next door neighbor? A nutcase!

LASANDRA

You don't know that, Ted. You don't know that at all. Now we're going over there for lunch tomorrow and you're going to behave yourself, you understand?

INT. KITCHEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Josh crosses, puts the red cooler in the fridge.

JOSH (V.O.)

You'd think it would be a problem, coming home after a day at work, making the transition from the strange and supernatural to the mundane routines of normal life.

Adam appears.

ADAM

Mom and I have a disagreement over certain implied terms and exclusionary clauses. You may be asked to mediate.

JOSH (V.O.)

Actually, I have trouble telling the difference.

INT. DINING ROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Josh, Barbara and Adam having dinner.

BARBARA

We have a clean slate with Ted and LaSandra and I'd like to keep it that way. As far as they're concerned we're a perfectly normal family.

JOSH

You mean we're not?

BARBARA

Nobody else in the neighborhood seems to think so.

JOSH

If you'd just let me talk about my work it wouldn't be such a big mystery.

BARBARA

There's only so much people can accept, Josh. It's one thing to say you believe in UFO's, it's another thing to say you've been on one.

DANNI enters. 16 years old, slovenly, not quite cute, a poster child for low self-esteem.

JOSH

Hey, kiddo.

DANNI

Hey.

Danni sits down, starts eating. Barbara shoots a look at Josh, then:

JOSH

You skipped school, Danni?

DANNI

Everybody skips school, Dad. It's like, what you do?

ADAM

Didn't your contract stipulate penalties?

DANNI

Don't tell me you signed that stupid thing.

BARBARA
(to Josh) Cal made her skip school.

DANNI
Cal didn't make me do anything.

ADAM
(to Danni) Mom said I had to sign
it or I wouldn't get my allowance.

BARBARA
We negotiated, sweetheart. It was
give and take.

JOSH
So why'd you skip, Danni?

DANNI
Cal's band was rehearsing and he
needed me to like, do stuff.

BARBARA
He treats you like a maid servant.

DANNI
He does not!

BARBARA
(to Josh) She cleans his house,
which by the way, is down by the
landfill.

DANNI
Okay, Mom, we get it. You hate my
boyfriend, just like you hate
everything else about me.

BARBARA
(hurt) Danni!

They hear a car ROAR up to the house, the horn HONK.

DANNI
That's Cal. I have to go.

JOSH
I think I need to talk to him.

Danni groans.

EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME

Josh and Danni come out of the house, cross to the driveway.

DANNI
 (whispers) He's the first cool
 boyfriend I've ever had. Don't
 embarrass me!

JOSH (V.O.)
 Don't embarrass her, like I'm the
 freak here.

They approach a tricked-out ACURA, a guy named CAL in the
 driver's seat. 18, unshaven, unwashed, tats, thinks a lot of
 himself. Danni gets in. Josh moves up to the driver's window.

JOSH
 Hey, Cal, how are you?

Cal shrugs, too cool.

JOSH
 Listen, we're a little concerned
 about Danni skipping school.

Cal REVS the engine, drowning out Josh's voice.

JOSH
 It's really important that she keep
 up her attendance --

Cal keeps REVVING the engine, Josh trying to talk over it
 until finally:

DANNI
 We gotta go, Dad!

Cal gives Josh a fuck-you sneer and peels out of the
 driveway. Josh watches after the car, confounded.

JOSH (V.O.)
 People ask me all the time. Have
 the aliens landed? Are they living
 among us disguised as human beings?
 (beat) Yes, they are.

INT. BEDROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- THAT NIGHT

Josh in bed. Barbara at the dressing table, moisturizing.

BARBARA
 What are we going to do? We can't
 let her keep seeing him.

JOSH
 Telling her not to will only make
 it worse.

BARBARA

You mean we can't do anything? We have no control at all?

JOSH

Speaking of control, don't you think your contract with Adam is a little much?

BARBARA

No, he needs clear-cut boundaries.

JOSH

And what happens when you're not around to threaten him with lawsuits?

Barbara gets into bed.

BARBARA

That was exactly your attitude with Danni. Just let her do whatever she wants. Never mind that she doesn't care about her appearance or her grades or...herself.

She puts her head on Josh's chest, sighs a parents' sigh.

BARBARA

How did that happen?

JOSH

I don't know.

Josh kisses her, then turns out the light.

JOSH V.O.

It's human nature to try and control your life and the people you love. The mistake is thinking you had any in the first place.

We hold here in the darkness. Faintly at first, we hear an odd CRUNCHING SOUND. The camera moves off Josh and Barbara, following the sound out of the bedroom and through the house, the crunching getting louder and louder. Now we're in the kitchen heading towards the fridge, pushing through the door to the little red cooler, then into the cooler itself to a CLEAR PLASTIC PETRI DISH, nestled in ice, some WORMS inside.

SNAP ZOOM -- THE WORMS

They're eating through the plastic.

END ACT 1

ACT 2

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- DAY

Delila in small metal corral. She's bellowing angrily, ramming the gate with her head. Jim and Ellen watching.

ELLEN
She's getting worse, Jim.

JIM
What the hell are those PCI people doing?!

INT. STUDY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Josh on the phone with Collin. On his computer screen is a PHOTO OF A WORM that looks just like Delila's worms.

JOSH
Delila's worms are just your run-of-the-mill coccidia. No reason they should be causing anything worse than a stomachache.

INTERCUT

INT. PCI -- CONTINUOUS

Collin on the speakerphone with Josh.

COLLIN
We've got a bigger problem. Jim Crowley called. Delila is deteriorating fast.

JOSH
How did her blood panel come back?

COLLIN
Negative. It's not an infection, drugs or toxicity.

JOSH
Which leads us back to the worms.

COLLIN
(grudging) Athena has a theory.

Athena appears alongside Collin. She has a large, antique BOOK; the leather cover crumbling, pages yellow with age.

ATHENA
I had a chat with my Grandmother, Josh.

(MORE)

ATHENA (cont'd)

She said the worms reminded her of something she heard about, something to do with an Indian tribe called the Michaguas. I found them in one of her books.

As Athena continues we FLASH TO PRIMITIVE DRAWINGS in the book appropriate to her narration.

ATHENA

The Michaguas lived in Peru about the time Columbus sailed for America. They used insects in their religious ceremonies; hornets, scorpions, army ants -- and worms.

JOSH

Interesting.

ATHENA

The high priests extracted the worms from the stomachs of their most ferocious bulls and then performed a blood rite, basically, black magic, which transformed the worms into pequeños demonios, or little demons.

COLLIN

Oh please --

ATHENA

The worms were fed to the dairy cattle and then their milk was given to the tribe's warriors just before a big battle. It made them super-aggressive.

JOSH

And Delila is acting like a super-aggressive bull. (then) What happened to the dairy cattle?

ATHENA

The worms made them so crazy the priests eventually had to kill them.

JOSH

Doesn't bode well for Delila.

COLLIN

Okay, let's suppose Delila's worms are somehow related to your ferocious-bull-black-magic-demon-worms. How does that help us? Jim said he might have to put Delila down.

JOSH

That's a point. (beat) So let's skip the diagnostics for now and find a way to kill the worms. Try commercial de-wormers first.

COLLIN

I'm on it.

They hang up. We stay with Josh, thinking...

EXT. (FLASHBACK) LIVING ROOM/APARTMENT -- SAME EVENING

Young Josh looking out of the window. Below, he can see Rachel emerge from the building, clusters of KIDS in Halloween costumes moving past her. She stops, looks up at him and waves. He waves back.

JOSH (V.O.)

I'll always remember my Mom's face that night. In a way, it was the last time I'd see it.

EXT.(FLASHBACK) APARTMENT BUILDING -- A MINUTE LATER

Young Josh comes out of the building wearing his backpack. He looks to see that Rachel is really gone, then runs off in the other direction.

INT. KITCHEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Back to the present. Barbara arranging potato chips on a platter in a precise pattern, Adam bringing a bowl of creamy SOUR CREAM DIP out of the fridge. We catch a glimpse of the red cooler.

BARBARA

I'll tell you what, if you help me serve snacks to Ted and LaSandra? We'll forego 14B and 14C and use the ad-interim clause to credit you with compliance.

ADAM

I accept.

Barbara takes the bowl of dip from Adam and sets it in the center of the platter.

BARBARA

There, that's perfect.

We hear Cal's Acura ROAR up to the house and then the HORN honk. Barbara stiffens, can't stand that sound.

INT. HALLWAY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Danni comes out of her room, responding to the HORN. As she starts down the hall, Josh comes out of the study. They stop, look at each other, Josh perplexed, Danni defensive.

JOSH
You could do so much better, Danni.

DANNI
Actually, Dad, I can't.

JOSH
Your Mom is right about him. He's a jerk.

DANNI
Mom doesn't care. She just doesn't want me to embarrass her.

JOSH
That's not true at all.

The phone in Josh's study RINGS.

JOSH
I have to get that.

DANNI
So get it.

She walks past him and exits.

EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE-- SAME DAY

Cal sitting in the Acura, HONKING the horn. A HAND REACHES INTO FRAME and takes the key out of the ignition.

New angle: Barbara, standing at the driver's side window, keys in hand. Cal sneers.

CAL
What's up, Barb?

BARBARA
Call me Mrs. Keeling and if you're going to pick up my daughter the least you could do is knock on the door.

CAL
I'm not really into knocking.

BARBARA
And from now on you will not bring Danni home after her curfew and you will not make her skip school.

CAL

Yeah, well, here's the thing, Barb.
(beat) Danni's s my bitch now and
there's nothing you can do about
it.

Barbara's jaw drops. Cal takes his keys back as Danni gets
in the car.

DANNI

Let's go already.

Cal cackles and peels out of the driveway.

INT. KITCHEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Barbara enters, furious, beside herself.

BARBARA

Danni's my bitch?! Danni's my
bitch?!!

She tries to calm down but can't. Impulsively, she grabs a
chip off the perfect platter, takes a big scoop of sour cream
dip and shoves it in her mouth.

INT. PCI -- SAME DAY

Collin working with chemicals, muttering to himself.

ATHENA (O.S.)

Collin?

Angle on Athena looking into the industrial fridge. She holds
up two empty PETRI DISHES, tiny holes chewed through them.

ATHENA

What happened to the worms?

INT. STUDY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Josh on the phone.

JOSH

What do you mean the worms escaped?

INTERCUT

INT. PCI -- CONTINUOUS

Collin and Athena on the speakerphone with Josh.

COLLIN

I mean they chewed through the
polystyrene petri dishes.

FLASHBACK -- A SERIES OF SHOTS

We're inside the industrial fridge, the worms squiggling out of holes they've made in the petri dishes. They crawl on to the fridge rack...

COLLIN (V.O.)
 Their reaction to the cold was to seek a warmer temperature but once they escaped the dishes they still had to get out of the fridge.

The worms traveling along the bars of the rack. They're so tiny the distances from their perspective are enormous.

JOSH (V.O.)
 Long way to go if you're a worm.

COLLIN (V.O.)
 Exactly. And that's why they decided to generate their own heat.

JOSH (V.O.)
 How?

COLLIN (V.O.)
 Sex, of course. But they needed the proper environment, the chemical equivalent of soft lighting and a Luther VanDross CD.

..the worms stop, raise their heads, look around...

COLLIN (V.O.)
 In their case it was free glucose, acid triglycerides, casein proteins, lactose and --

JOSH (V.O.)
 Collin --

RESUME COLLIN AND ATHENA

looking into the open industrial fridge. A CARTON OF COTTAGE CHEESE, A BOX OF YOGURT AND A QUART OF MILK are all bubbling over with froth and worms.

COLLIN
 Anything made with milk. Cottage cheese, yogurt, ice cream.

ATHENA
 Josh, didn't you take some worms home with you? And weren't they in petri dishes?

RESUME JOSH

JOSH
Yeah, but the dishes were in a cooler. (realizes) Also made of polystyrene.

Just then, Josh catches a momentary glimpse of Barbara crossing the hall. She's walking backwards.

JOSH
I'll call you back.

INT. KITCHEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Josh rushes in, starts to open the fridge but sees the platter of chips on the counter, chips missing, scoop marks in the sour cream dip. He takes a closer look. The dip is moving.

JOSH
Oh no!

The doorbell RINGS.

EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE -- A MOMENT LATER.

Ted and LaSandra are there, Ted with a bottle of wine.

LASANDRA
Remember, behave yourself.

TED
It's not me you need to worry about.

The door opens, Josh frazzled but covering.

JOSH
Ted! LaSandra! Nice to see you! What's going on?

LASANDRA
Barbara invited us for lunch?

JOSH
(beat) Right, yes, lunch! (then) Why don't you guys go on in the living room and make yourselves comfortable. I'll see what's keeping Barb.

INT. BEDROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Josh enters, sees Barbara, sitting at the dressing table in her slip. She's unnervingly still.

JOSH
Honey? (no response) Honey, are
you okay?

Josh moves closer, sees Barbara's reflection in the mirror, a blank, bovine expression on her face. She's looking at her MAKEUP ITEMS like she's never seen them before.

BARBARA
Have to..get ready...

JOSH
Why don't you just stay put for
now? I'll be back in a second.

INT. LIVING ROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Adam is serving the platter of chips and dip to Ted and LaSandra.

ADAM
Help yourself. It's Mom's famous
onion sour cream dip.

TED
Why thank you, young man. Don't
mind if I do.

Ted takes a chip, starts to scoop up some dip when the whole platter is snatched away!

New angle: Josh with the platter.

JOSH
This is not for you! I mean, this
is not for anybody...people I mean.
These are, um, doggie treats.

ADAM
We have a dog?

JOSH
I'll get the real snacks.

ADAM
When did we get a dog?

Josh turns, stops short. Barbara standing in the doorway, dress on backwards, hair half-combed, make-up smeared.

JOSH
Barb! Honey! Gosh!

^TED
Is she okay?

JOSH
Yeah, yeah, she's fine.

On Josh, covering his alarm...

INT. (FLASHBACK) WOODS -- SAME EVENING

Young Josh, apprehensive, following a narrow trail.

JOSH (V.O.)
I took a shortcut to the cemetery
but it was still a long walk.

Young Josh comes out of the trees and on to the crest of a hill. There's a sweeping view of the CEMETERY; row upon row of headstones, crypts and mausoleums. The sun is going down.

JOSH (V.O.)
I wasn't scared. Well, not a lot.
I mean let's suppose I saw a ghost?
What was it going to do, eat me?

INT. DINING ROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Back to the present. Josh, Barbra, LaSandra and Ted having lunch, everyone trying not to notice Barbara. She's sniffing her pasta salad.

JOSH
So how did you two meet?

TED
On the job. I'm a detective,
LaSandra's a psychologist. I
consulted her on a case and it was
love at first sight.

LASANDRA
(teasing) For him, anyway.

TED
She tries to play it off but she
was all over me.

Barbara picks up her fork, sniffs that too.

JOSH
(covering) Are you guys planning a
family?

LASANDRA
That's one of the reasons we moved
here. Seemed like the ideal place.

TED
Quiet, peaceful, the people are
just ordinary folks.

Barbara reaches over to LaSandra's plate, takes the PARSLEY GARNISH, puts it in her mouth, chews languidly.

JOSH
(covering) Barb's a vegetarian.
Loves anything green.

TED
I'm a meat man myself. Yeah, gimme
a big ol' bloody hunk of beefsteak
anytime.

Offended, Barbara looks at him and bellows:

BARBARA
MOOOOOOOOOO!!

EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Ted comes storming out, LaSandra following.

LASANDRA
Where are you going?!

TED
I'm going to get my badge and my
gun and then I'm going back in
there and haul those two nutcases
to jail!

She grabs him, turns him around.

LASANDRA
Stop it, Ted! You can't arrest
them for being nut -- you can't
arrest them!

TED
Well I am not living next door to
people that serve doggie treats,
and make animal noises!

LASANDRA
Yes, I know, it was strange.

TED
Did you see Barbara? She had her
dress on backwards! That's not
strange, that's crazy!

LASANDRA
I think they're having some kind of
family crisis. If we just give
them some time to work through it
I'm sure they'll be fine.

TED
Well they better be fine. They
better be damn fine!

EXT. CAL'S PLACE -- SAME DAY

A ramshackle two-story house. Cal and his BAND MEMBERS sitting on the porch, throwing back beers.

BAND MEMBER 1
If we're gonna party tonight we
need booze money.

BAND MEMBER 2
I'm tapped out.

CAL
Me too.

BAND MEMBER 3
What about your scrag?

Angle on Danni, in the yard, washing Cal's car.

CAL
I'll find out. She's gotta be good
for something.

INT. KITCHEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Adam frightened. Through the pass-through he can see into the dining room and living room. Barbara is meandering around, bellowing and knocking things over, gradually losing her mind.

EXT. BACKYARD/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

A frantic Josh, talking on his CELL with one hand and inexplicably MOWING THE LAWN with the other.

JOSH
This is Josh. Barbara ate some
worms!

INTERCUT

INT. PCI -- CONTINUOUS

Collin and Athena on the speaker phone with Josh.

COLLIN
Barbara did what?!

ATHENA
Oh my God!

JOSH
We need a de-wormer, Collin.

COLLIN
The commercial ones don't work!
I've tried them all. The worms
don't even react!

JOSH
Then formulate one yourself. I'm
on my way.

COLLIN
Right!

They disconnect, we stay with Collin and Athena. Collin starts bustling around, gathering chemicals and muttering to himself. Athena thinks a bit, then grabs her jacket and exits the office.

RESUME JOSH

taking the GRASS CATCHING BAG off the lawn mower. He rushes towards the house with it as Adam comes out.

ADAM
Dad! What's wrong with Mom?

JOSH
She's not feeling well, Adam.

Josh hurries past Adam and into the house.

INT. DEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Barbara lumbering around, huffing and grunting and banging into things. She stops, smells something, sniffs loudly.

We follow her following her nose through various rooms and then into the hallway to an open door. She looks inside. Stairs lead down to the basement. Piled on the cement floor is an inviting MOUND OF FRESHLY MOWN GRASS. Barbara huffs approvingly. She descends the stairs, and the door slams shut behind her!

INT. HALLWAY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Josh has just shut the door, Adam looking on. Immediately, we hear Barbara trying to get out but Josh jams a HOCKEY STICK between the door and the opposite wall, wedging it closed.

ADAM
You're locking Mom in the basement?

JOSH
 Just for a little while, until she
 feels better!

INT. BASEMENT/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Barbara still trying to get out. She hears VOICES, bounds down the stairs, crosses to a narrow transom (too narrow for escape) that's just above ground level. Through it she can see Josh and Adam come out of the house.

EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Josh moving quickly to his car, Adam trailing.

ADAM
 What's going on, Dad?

JOSH
 It's a long story, Adam. I'll
 explain it to you later.

ADAM
 Where are you going?!

JOSH
 To the office.

He stops, kneels, takes Adam by the shoulders.

JOSH
 Now listen to me closely. Don't go
 in the kitchen, don't eat anything,
 and whatever you do, don't let Mom
 out of the basement, do you
 understand?

ADAM
 But Dad --

JOSH
 You're in charge while I'm gone,
 Adam. I'm counting on you.

Josh gets in his car and drives away. On Adam, alone and afraid.

EXT. (FLASHBACK) HILL OVERLOOKING CEMETERY-- NIGHT

It's dark now. Young Josh drinking a chocolate milk through a straw. Finished, he puts the empty carton into his backpack and surveys the cemetery. It's quiet and still. Disappointed, he sighs, stands up, puts on his backpack...

...and then a DARK SHAPE glides silently out of the trees nearby.

Young Josh freezes, watches the shape move through the air as effortlessly as a bird carried on the wind, swooping in circles around the cemetery and then descending, landing silently on the ground. It's a WITCH, young, gaunt, flowing robe, piercing eyes.

CU YOUNG JOSH

stunned.

END ACT 2

ACT 3

INT. PCI -- SAME DAY

Collin is conducting an experiment. THE BOX OF WORMY COTTAGE CHEESE we saw before is enclosed in a large AQUARIUM.

At either end of the aquarium are TWO ELECTRONIC DEVICES that look like modified radar guns. A BEAM is shining from one device to the other, passing through the cottage cheese. Both devices are humming, indicator lights flashing.

Josh bursts in, crosses quickly to Collin.

JOSH
Where are we?!

COLLIN
I'm trying to kill the worms
electromagnetically without hurting
any cellular structures around it.

JOSH
So the cottage cheese is Barbara?

COLLIN
Yes. The question is, will the
worms die and leave Bar -- the
cottage cheese intact.

Collin turns dials and pushes buttons, the humming gets louder, the lights more intense, the worms squiggling.

COLLIN
They're reacting...

The cottage cheese EXPLODES, covering the inside of the aquarium, muck shooting up to the ceiling.

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- SAME DAY

Delila still ramming the gate on the breeding stall, weakening it, Jim and Ellen watching, worried.

ELLEN
What happens if she gets out of
there, Jim?

They look at each other.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FARMHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Jim enters, crosses to a gun rack and finds a DEER RIFLE.

INT. PCI -- SAME DAY

Josh and Collin staring at the aquarium mess.

COLLIN
I'm sorry, Josh.

JOSH
It's okay. This is all my fault.

Athena enters, excited.

ATHENA
I have something!

Athena shows them a small APOTHECARY BOTTLE. She opens it, spills what looks like a FINE, UNIFORM GRAVEL into her hand.

ATHENA
Laccophilium Hydrolatum.
A parasitic beetle. They're
dehydrated.

COLLIN
Dehydrated beetles?

ATHENA
The Laccophilium live in the desert
and during the dry times they
burrow underground and basically
hibernate. They can stay that way
for years, and then when the rains
come, they rehydrate and come back
to life.

JOSH
Where did you get them?

ATHENA
An herbalist in Chinatown. My
grandmother's boyfriend.

COLLIN
I don't understand.

ATHENA
The Laccophilium will eat the worms.

JOSH
They do this in commercial
agriculture. Introduce one
parasite to get rid of another.

COLLIN
But if the Laccophilium are inside a
living body, won't they propagate?
Won't we just be replacing the
worms with Laccophilium?

ATHENA
They have a short life cycle, a few
hours, and these are just males.

COLLIN
How can you tell?

ATHENA

Because they're wearing little jock straps -- that's what the herbalist told me!

COLLIN

But you said worms are demonized. Won't they be resistant to ordinary Laccophilia?

ATHENA

They're demonized too. Me, the herbalist and my grandmother did a little ritual on them.

INT. (FLASHBACK) HERBALIST SHOP -- DAY

Athena, ATHENA'S GRANDMOTHER and an ELDELY CHINESE HERBALIST performing a ritual over the apothecary bottle, making strange movements, chanting in Chinese and Spanish, incense burning.

RESUME SCENE

ATHENA

The herbalist is a heavy dude.

COLLIN

Is this something like what you did in the barn with Delila?

ATHENA

Could we just try it please?!

INT. BASEMENT/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Barbara, growling as she tries to shoulder down the door but it won't budge. Defeated, she descends the steps to the basement floor and snarls in frustration. Then she hears something, FOOTSTEPS coming from above. She tracks the sound with her eyes.

INT. DEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Adam crossing, plunking down in front of the TV. He watches for a bit, and then he hears Barbara, an unsettling bovine thrum in her voice.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Adammmmm....oh Adammmmmmmmm...

On Adam, uh-oh...

INT. PCI -- SAME DAY

Athena, Josh and Collin gathered around a tall BEAKER OF WATER. Athena adds the dried Laccophilia to the water.

ATHENA
Rehydrate the Laccophilia...

The Laccophilia drift down in the water, gradually coming alive as they descend. They look like tiny tadpoles.

JOSH
They're coming to life!

Athena puts some worms in the beaker.

ATHENA
Versus Delila's worms...

A SERIES OF SHOTS

The presence of the worms excites the Laccophilia. They swirl around the worms and start savagely consuming them.

COLLIN
They're like piranhas. They're eating the worms alive!

JOSH
But will the same thing happen inside a living body? This is my wife we're talking about.

COLLIN
Yes, they could very well attack the tissue around them and eat Barbara's stomach lining or chew through her intestines or -- (off Josh's look) Sorry.

JOSH
We'll have to test it on Delila.

ATHENA
You guys pack up. I'll get the van.

JOSH
Athena? (she hesitates) Nice work.

Athena smiles and rushes out. The guys start gathering the equipment they'll need. Collin stops, looks at Josh.

COLLIN
Is this why you hired a witch?
This kind of situation?

JOSH
I hired her for a lot of reasons.

EXT. (FLASHBACK) HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING CEMETERY -- SAME NIGHT

Young Josh, still watching the Witch. She's standing on a crypt, staring off into the night sky, waiting. And now another WITCH comes gliding into view, landing near the first. Then ANOTHER comes walking through the headstones, and then ANOTHER sails into view...and then ANOTHER...and then ANOTHER...a coven.

INT. DEN/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Back to the present. Adam has a pillow over his head. He's trying to shut out the sound of his mother's voice.

BARBARA (O.S.)
Adammmm?...Aaaadammm....mommy is
calling youuuuu....

INT. PCI VAN -- SAME DAY

Josh, Collin and Athena, Josh driving fast. His cell RINGS. He answers:

JOSH
Hello?

JIM (V.O.)
It's Jim. Delila's going to get out
of the stall. I've got to shoot
her!

JOSH
No, don't shoot her!

INTERCUT

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- CONTINUOUS

Jim talking on his CELL, watching Delila ramming the stall gate, the hinges giving way.

JIM
I've got neighbors with kids! If
somebody gets hurt --

JOSH
If you shoot her we can't test the
Laccophilia!

JIM
Test the what?

Delila gets her horns interlocked in the gate, gives it a mighty shake. The hinges snap, the gate about to come off.

JIM
She's getting out!

Jim drops his cell, grabs the deer rifle...

ON JOSH

yelling into his cell.

JOSH
Don't shoot her! Don't shoot her!

From the cell he hears: BANG! BANG!

JOSH
Oh no --

RESUME DAIRY FARM

Ellen is driving the TRACTOR towards the stall, the motor BACKFIRING (the bangs) As Delila pushes the gate down, the tractor pushes it back in place and holds it there, Delila held in for now. Elated, Jim waves his hat.

JIM
Yeee-ha! That's my girl!

Ellen beams. Jim picks up his cell.

JIM
We're okay. We didn't shoot her.

JOSH (V.O.)
Thank, God!

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM/CAL'S PLACE -- SAME DAY

Apres sex. Danni on the raggedy futon, blanket pulled up around her. Cal in his underwear, going through the pockets of her jeans.

DANNI
I don't have more money, Cal. I spent it on gas for your car!

CAL
We gotta buy booze for the party.

Frustrated, Cal throws her jeans at her. Then:

CAL
What about your parents?

DANNI
What about them?

EXT. DAIRY FARM --SAME DAY

XCU -- HYPODERMIC DART

liquid filled, swimming with Laccophilina.

New angle. Collin loading the dart into the M-PAC; Josh, Athena, Jim and Ellen looking on.

JOSH

Go ahead.

Collin aims at Delila and fires. The dart whizzes through the air and sticks in her haunch. She bellows.

JIM

Now what?

JOSH

We wait.

EXT. (FLASHBACK) CEMETERY -- SAME NIGHT

Young Josh watching the coven of Witches. There are about a dozen of them, in their 20's and 30's, not hideous-looking but a witchly gleam in their eyes. They're doing a strange dance, circling around a crypt. One of them makes some especially wild gyrations, her face revealed in a shaft of moonlight. It's Rachel, Josh's Mom.

YOUNG JOSH

Mom!

Shocked and terrified, Young Josh stumbles back, loosening some rocks which roll down the hill.

THE WITCHES

react to the sound, stop their dancing, alerted. One of them sees an indiscernible figure (Young Josh) retreating into the treeline. She points, lets out an ungodly SCREECH.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

The Witches chase Young Josh through the dark woods, howling and caterwauling. As the sequence concludes, Young Josh arrives at the edge of a SWAMP. He looks back, can see the Witches coming. He thinks a moment, then picks up a ROCK and throws it, skipping it across the water.

MOMENTS LATER

The Witches arrive at the edge of the swamp. They can see the RIPPLES in the water left by the skipping rock. They move off in that direction but Rachel remains, looking around, sensing something. Panning down, we can see Josh underwater, face up, pinching his nose and breathing via the straw he was using to drink the chocolate milk. He's looking right at Rachel. On his terrified eyes...

EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE -- THAT NIGHT

Back to the present.

BARBARA (V.O.)
 I know you're out there Adam and
 I'm going to keep calling you and
 calling you and calling you...

INT. BASEMENT/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Barbara at the door, talking relentlessly. She's struggling to stay in control of herself, rage growing, her voice an octave lower.

BARBARA
 ...and if I have to do this all
 night and all the next day and all
 the next night I'll keep going and
 I'll never stop calling you until
 you open this --

ADAM (O.S.)
 Mom?

INTERCUT

INT. HALLWAY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

A worn down Adam at the basement door.

ADAM
 I'm here.

BARBARA
 Adam, let me out.

ADAM
 Dad said not to.

BARBARA
 Mommy doesn't want to be locked in
 the basement, Adam.

ADAM
 But Dad said --

BARBARA
 Open this door right now!

Adam dithers, then starts to remove the hockey stick bracing the door shut.

BARBARA
 That's a good boy, Adam!

Adam stops, something occurring to him.

ADAM
 Mom?

BARBARA
(very tight) Yes...sweetheart?

ADAM
This is sort of like my allowance.

BARBARA
Your allowance?

ADAM
Yeah, I wanted my allowance just like you want to get out of the basement.

BARBARA
Adammm --

ADAM
Maybe we should negotiate. You know, give and take?

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- SAME NIGHT

Josh, Athena, Collin, Jim and Ellen, watching Delila gradually become quieter...and calmer...and then her eyes return to normal.

JIM
Will you look at that!

Jim approaches Delila, reaches out, scratches her head. She huffs contentedly. Jim is too moved to speak. Ellen hugs Josh, Athena and Collin in turn.

ELLEN
Thank you! Thank you all so much!

JOSH
We have to go.

INT. BASEMENT/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Barbara, on the verge of losing it, listening to Adam.

ADAM (O.S.)
And in the second paragraph where it says "Adam will pick up his toys on a daily basis"? I want to amend that to say, "Mom will pick up Adam's toys on a daily basis...

INTERCUT

INT. HALLWAY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Adam reading his contract.

ADAM
 ...and in the section on bicycle
 care? I'd like "regular
 maintenance to be performed by
 Adam" to read "regular maintenance
 to be performed by Mom".

BARBARA
 (explodes) LET ME OUTTTTTT!!

INT. DINING ROOM/STROUDS HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Ted and LaSandra eating dinner. They hear Barbara yelling.

TED
 What are they doing over there?!

LASANDRA
 Try not to listen to it, Ted. Just
 eat your steak.

INT. BASEMENT/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Barbara still at the door, roaring at Adam.

BARBARA
 IF YOU DON'T LET ME OUT OF HERE
 ADAM YOU WILL BE SORREEEE!!

ADAM OS
 I'm sorry, Mom. I'm not going to
 negotiate in an atmosphere of
 intimidation.

Barbara starts to respond but hears a car ROAR up to the house. She descends the stairs, crosses to the transom. She can see the Acura in the driveway, Danni and Cal inside, Cal yelling at her, Danni about to cry. Barbara snarls.

INT. FOYER/JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Danni enters, is met by Adam.

DANNI
 Where's Mom and Dad?

ADAM
 Dad went out, Mom's in the
 basement.

DANNI
 What's she doing in the basement?

Following them through the house.

ADAM

She's acting really nuts! She's been yelling and screaming and breaking stuff and --

Danni stops, looks at him.

DANNI

You'll understand this when you're like, older? It's a girl-thing, it's called PMS. (beat) Stop following me, okay? Go watch TV or something.

INT. BEDROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Danni enters furtively, sees BARBARA'S HANDBAG.

EXT. FREEWAY -- SAME NIGHT

The PCI van zooms past camera.

INT. BASEMENT/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Barbara at the transom, watching Danni cross from the house back to the Acura. She gets in, gives Cal some money. Cal is disappointed with the amount. He yells at her, throws the bills in her face, then peels out of the driveway.

Barbara bellows, goes into a mindless rage, knocking things over, dumping out boxes and bins until something clatters to the cement floor. A CROWBAR.

INT. DEN/STROUDS HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Ted and LaSandra watching TV. They hear a POUNDING sound. They try to ignore it but the sound continues.

TED

There's only so much of this I'm gonna take.

INT. BASEMENT/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Barbara working on the door with the crowbar; savagely pounding and prying at the wood.

INT. HALLWAY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUING

Adam watching the door get shredded, knows he's in trouble.

ADAM

You know what, Mom? We could leave the contract the same!

EXT. STREET -- SAME NIGHT

The PCI van in suburbia now, speeding past camera.

INT. DEN/STROUDS HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Ted and LaSandra still trying to watch TV, the POUNDING sounds from next door continuing.

TED
That's it. Enough is enough!

LASANDRA
Don't get involved over there, Ted.
Just call the police.

TED
I am the police!

EXT. STROUDS HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Ted comes out, crosses towards Josh's house, LaSandra calling to him.

LASANDRA
Be careful, Ted!

The PCI van pulls into the driveway. Josh jumps out, rushes to his front door, blocking Ted's path.

JOSH
Ted! What's going on?

TED
It's your house, Josh, how the hell would I know?!

Josh hears the POUNDING.

JOSH
Oh that? Yeah, we're having a little work done on the house.

The door opens, Adam there, crying.

ADAM
Mommy's got a crowbar!

TED
(at Josh) Mommy's got a crowbar?!

JOSH
She's a real do-it-yourselfer.

TED
Get outta my way!

Ted barges past him into the house.

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS -- CONTINUOUS

Ted moving through the house, Josh and Adam trailing.

JOSH

Don't you need a warrant to come in here, Ted?

TED

Not if I have probable cause that a crime is being committed and Lord knows I have that!

They arrive at the basement door. It's completely demolished. A trail of destruction leads away from them, down the hall to the open back door. Barbara's gone.

Ted glares at Josh.

JOSH

(wanly) She probably went out for some air.

END ACT 3

ACT 4

INT. CITY BUS -- SAME NIGHT

The BUS DRIVER brings the bus to a halt, opens the door. PASSENGERS get aboard, dropping money in the receptacle as they pass. Someone goes by without paying.

BUS DRIVER

Miss? You have to pay the --

The Bus Driver looks in the rearview mirror, sees TWO MOLTEN ORBS. Barbara's eyes.

BUS DRIVER

Never mind.

INT. PCI VAN -- SAME NIGHT

Josh driving around the neighborhood, looking for Barbara.
Adam in the shotgun seat, Athena and Collin in the back.

JOSH
She didn't say anything about where
she was going?

ADAM
No.

Favoring Athena and Collin. She glances at him, can see he's
still chagrined about the way things have unfolded. She
gestures at the M-PAC.

ATHENA
You know, I was thinking, maybe you
could teach me how to use that
sometime.

COLLIN
Sure. Okay. (then) That was really
interesting, what you did with the
Laccophilia and the worms?

ATHENA
Thanks.

COLLIN
The notion of a ritualistic
transmutation is very intriguing
although I still think there might
be a biochemical explanation. I
hope you're open to discussing it.

ATHENA
Anytime, Collin.

On Athena, smiling to herself.

INT. CAL'S PLACE -- SAME NIGHT

A loud drunken party in progress. A self-conscious Danni
moving through the CROWD, everyone older than her. She finds
one of the Band Members.

DANNI
Have you seen Cal around?

BAND MEMBER 1
(mocking) Have you seen Cal around?

On Danni, resuming her search...

EXT. (FLASHBACK) STREET -- SAME NIGHT

Young Josh, sopping wet and terrified running down the street. He arrives at his apartment building.

JOSH (V.O.)
I ran all the way home...

INT. (FLASHBACK) BEDROOM/APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Young Josh staggers in, rips off his wet clothes and gets into bed. He huddles there, trembling.

JOSH (V.O.)
Had my Mother seen me? What would she say? What would she do? (beat)
Did I still have a mother?

INT. PCI VAN -- SAME NIGHT

Back to the present. Josh and the group still driving around looking for Barbara.

ADAM
...Mom was really mad and screaming and everything, and then when Danni came back she got super-mad.

JOSH
Danni came back?

ADAM
With that guy, and then they left again. That was when Mom really went ballistic.

JOSH
(realizes) She wouldn't...

ATHENA
What, Josh?

JOSH
Barbara hates Danni's boyfriend, a guy named Cal. (trying to remember)
She told me where he lived --

COLLIN
You think she went after him?

JOSH
(remembers) The landfill! She said he lived near the landfill!

EXT. LANDFILL -- SAME NIGHT

A long shot of Cal's place perched on the edge of the landfill, a vast crater.

PULLING BACK TO BARBARA'S SILHOUETTE

INT. STAIRS/CAL'S PLACE -- SAME NIGHT

Danni comes up the stairs, reaches the second floor hallway.

DANNI
Cal? Are you up here?

She moves down the hall to a door, opens it...

INT. BEDROOM/CAL'S PLACE -- CONTINUOUS

Danni enters.

DANNI
Cal?

She stops abruptly. Cal and a GIRL are on the futon making out, a BOTTLE OF VODKA on the floor next to them. Danni is mortified. Cal looks at her, sneers.

DANNI
You are such a jerk.

CAL
Close the door and get out.

DANNI
Fine, just give me my booze back!

Danni crosses, grabs the vodka. Cal grabs her wrist.

CAL
Drop it.

DANNI
No!

GIRL
I'm outta here.

The Girl gets up and exits.

CAL
Let go of the bottle, Danni.

DANNI
It's mine, I paid for it!

Danni tries to yank free but he's too strong, standing up while he twists her wrist, bringing her to her knees. She cries out in pain.

CAL
Let go or I'll break your arm!

A shadow falls over them. Barbara in the doorway. Cal sneers.

CAL
What's up, Barb?

Barbara steps forward. She's completely berserk, enraged, demonized.

DANNI
Mom?

She walks towards Cal, her voice like the growl of a beast.

BARBARA
Call..me...Mrs..Keeling!!

Barbara gives him a two-hand shove in the chest. He's knocked backwards, hits the wall hard. She catches him on the rebound and slings him into the dresser, smashing it.

DANNI
Mom?

Cal tries to get up but Barbara puts a foot on the side of his head, mashing him into the floor.

BARBARA
You little punk! You and your car
and your tattoos and your band!
YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO WIPE THE
DIRT OFF MY DAUGHTER'S SHOES!!

CAL
Get off me! Get off me you
freakin' old hag!

BARBARA
Oh I see. A potty mouth.

INT. BATHROOM/CAL'S PLACE -- MOMENTS LATER

Barbara is holding Cal's head in the toilet while he flails futilely, Danni watching, aghast, but digging it.

BARBARA
You think I hate you, Danni?! I
gave birth to you!
(MORE)

BARBARA (cont'd)

I worry about you and wish for you
and want for you and ache for you
and breathe for you every single
minute of every single day! I AM
YOUR MOTHERRRR!!!

Danni is awed by her mother's tirade but notices:

DANNI

Mom? I don't think he's moving.

Barbara yanks the sputtering Cal out of the toilet. She pulls him close, looks him right in the eye.

BARBARA

So tell me something, Cal. (beat)
Who's the bitch now?!

INT. BEDROOM/CAL'S PLACE -- MOMENTS LATER

Barbara bum-rushing Cal out of the bathroom, across the room, through the french doors, Danni trailing.

DANIELL

Mom, don't!

EXT. BALCONY/CAL'S PLACE -- CONTINUOUS

Barbara brings Cal to the railing, starts to heave him over. A 200 foot drop to the bottom of the landfill.

BARBARA

So long, asshole!

JOSH (O.S.)

Barbara!

Barbara hesitates, sees Josh, Adam, Collin (with the M-PAC) and Athena down below but off to one side(ground level). They've just come around the side of the house.

JOSH

(to Collin) Go on up there, get ready to dart her.

Collin moves off.

JOSH

Don't do it, Barb! He's had enough.

Barbara snarls, not willing to let Cal go.

JOSH

You've made your point, honey.
Hasn't she Cal?

CAL
 (blubbering) Oh yes! Yes she has!
 I swear, Mrs. Keeling ma'am!

Barbara bellows defiantly, starts to turn Cal over the railing.

CAL
 NOOOOOO!!

But Barbara stops.

New angle: Danni has put a hand on her shoulder.

DANNI
 (tearful) It's okay, Mom.

They look at each other.

DANNI
 I love you too.

Danni hugs her. Barbara's rage softens, turns into tears. She hugs Danni...and lets go of Cal. He plummets, screaming like a girl, hitting the landfill and disappearing into the sea of garbage. PHLOOOF!! Everyone except Barbara wincing at the sound.

INT. (FLASHBACK) KITCHEN/APARTMENT -- NEXT MORNING

Young Josh enters. Rachel is at the counter, making a bag lunch, humming, everything normal. She notices him. He tries to control his fear.

RACHEL
 Good morning, Josh. Sleep okay?

YOUNG JOSH
 Yeah. I slept fine.

RACHEL
 What did you do last night?

YOUNG JOSH
 Oh, the usual stuff, you know.

RACHEL
 Want some breakfast?

JOSH
 No thanks. I'm supposed to get to school early. Hockey practice.

RACHEL
 Okay. Well, here's your lunch.

She gives him his bag lunch. They look at each other a long beat, Josh trying to see something in her eyes.

JOSH (V.O.)
I didn't realize it then, but that
Halloween night was my very first
case.

Rachel smiles warmly, kisses him on the forehead.

RACHEL
See you later.

Following Young Josh out of the kitchen, down the hall to the front door.

JOSH (V.O.)
It was also the start of my career,
when a kid's curiosity became a
calling. I had to find out, what's
really going on here?

Young Josh starts to exit but glances back. Rachel is standing at the sink, staring out of the window at the sky. He looks at her, wondering.

JOSH (V.O.)
So what was my Mom doing in the
cemetery that night? I still don't
know, but the case isn't closed..
...not by a long shot.

EXT. JOSH'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Back to the present. Josh comes out, heads towards his newspaper on the lawn. He sees Ted, doing the same.

JOSH
Hey, Ted. Listen, about what
happened...

TED
I'm not havin' it, Josh. Are you
hearing me? I'm not havin' it.

Ted points a finger at Josh, then turns and walks into his house. On Josh, breathing a weary sigh.

INT. STUDY/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Josh on the phone with an official from the US Department of Agriculture. Intermittently, we hear a loud GRINDING SOUND.

USDA OFFICIAL 1 (V.O.)
I can assure you, Mr. Keeling, we
here at the Department of
Agriculture monitor the country's
milk supply very carefully --

JOSH
I wasn't suggesting --

USDA OFFICIAL 1 (V.O.)
-- and we've received no reports of
contaminated milk or cattle
displaying the symptoms you
describe.

JOSH
No reports at all?

USDA OFFICIAL (V.O.)
Not one. (beat) But you say this
particular cow was affected by
worms?

JOSH
Yes.

USDA OFFICIAL (V.O.)
What kind of worms?

JOSH
Well, they were a garden-variety
coccidia but they were demonized.

USDA OFFICIAL 1 (V.O.)
Demon worms?

JOSH
Yes.

The GRINDING SOUND is distracting.

JOSH
Could you hold on for just a
second?

INT. ADAM'S ROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The source of the GRINDING SOUND. Adam and Barbara are
feeding the pages of his contract into a SHREDDER.

RESUME JOSH

closing the his study door, picking up the phone again.

JOSH
Sorry about that.

USDA OFFICIAL 1 (V.O.)
That's okay. Listen, I've got
somebody else on the line with me
whose more familiar with this kind
of thing.

JOSH
Oh great.

USDA OFFICIAL 2 (V.O.)
Mr. Keeling? Yeah, My name's Jerry
Cooper. I'm the supervisor here at
the USDA's Demon Worm and Goblin
Grasshopper Department?

Josh realizes they're messing with him.

JOSH
Listen, I know how this sounds --

USDA OFFICIAL 2 (V.O.)
No, no, we think you're really on
to something here. In fact, we're
sending a crack team of agents to
your house right now.

USDA OFFICIAL 1 (V.O.)
You'll recognize them by their big
shoes. They put the worms on the
sidewalk and stomp on 'em!

The Officials burst into hysterics. Josh hangs up.

INT. LIVING ROOM/JOSH'S HOUSE -- SAME DAY

Josh and Barbara snuggling on the couch.

JOSH
How are you feeling?

BARBARA
I'm fine. (off his look) Really.
Oh I have the occasional urge to
graze but other than that --

JOSH
I was afraid I was going to lose
you.

He kisses her.

JOSH
I'm so sorry.

BARBARA
I know you are...but I have to
admit, it wasn't all bad.

INT. ACURA -- SAME DAY

Cal, hysterical and blubbing, driving on a desert highway really fast. He whips past a sign that says: LEAVING THE GOLDEN STATE. COME AGAIN SOON!

RESUME JOSH AND BARBARA

the conversation continuing.

JOSH
I think it's going to take awhile
to patch things up with Ted and
LaSandra.

BARBARA
I'll talk to LaSandra. (bright
idea) I'll tell her I had the flu.

JOSH
(not hopeful) Yeah, that might
work.

Danni enters.

JOSH
Hey, kiddo.

Reveal Danni's companion. A very butch girl named RITA.

DANNI
This is my friend Rita. We'll be
in my room.

Danni and Rita move off. On Josh and Barbara, speechless.

EXT. PCI -- DAY

JOSH (V.O.)
The Department of Agriculture guys
weren't very receptive...

INT. PCI -- CONTINUOUS

Josh, Athena and Collin, a discussion in progress.

JOSH
...but that's not what bothered me.
(beat) They said they haven't
received any reports about
contaminated milk or possessed
cows.

ATHENA
But isn't that good?

JOSH

Think about it. Somebody gave demonized worms to one cow.

COLLIN

Right. Why not a hundred cows or a thousand?

JOSH

And why here, why not in Wisconsin, the Dairy State? Why pick a place that's less than an hour's drive from this office?

ATHENA

Are you saying --

JOSH

Just hear me out, okay? Somebody feeds Delila a handful of hay contaminated with the worms. Then Delila shows symptoms that defy explanation so Jim goes online and looks for help. Chatrooms, message boards, that kind of thing. What kind of response would he get?

COLLIN

Oh, the usual palaver from the uninformed but anybody who knows anything would refer him to you.

JOSH

Especially here in my own backyard.

ATHENA

You mean you were supposed to get the case?

JOSH

And take the worm samples. It's standard operating procedure.

COLLIN

So what happened to Barbara --

JOSH

Was meant for me. Us. It was only by chance we didn't eat or drink anything that was contaminated.

ATHENA

But who would want to set us up?

JOSH

I don't know, but they had to be able to demonize the worms..this wasn't just anybody.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Jim, asleep in his rocker, the TV on.

JOSH (V.O.)

Somebody once said, the only normal people are the ones you don't know very well...

New angle. Ellen, standing in the doorway, looking at him. Her farm wife demeanor is gone, replaced with a whole other persona; confident, mysterious, a little menacing.

JOSH (V.O.)

...and how many people do you know that well? I mean really?

Music begins. The Talking Heads sing "Once In A Lifetime" continuing over...

EXT. DAIRY FARM -- SAME NIGHT

Ellen comes out of the house, moves off into the night.

TRACKING ELLEN

walking through the countryside, completely at ease in the dark. As the sequence concludes she goes through a DILAPIDATED WOODEN GATE, stops.

Reverse angle: We're in a small, neglected GRAVEYARD, overgrown with weeds. Rachel is there, middle-aged now, still attractive, wearing regular clothes. The two women look at each other, smile.

ELLEN

We tried.

RACHEL

And we'll try again.

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- SAME NIGHT

Rachel and Ellen are doing the same witches dance Young Josh saw on Halloween Night. Pulling back as other middle-aged WOMEN come walking, gliding and flying over the hills and through the fields and out of the night sky, converging on the graveyard....

THE END

