

THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE

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Based on the Novel by Shirley Jackson

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Initial Shooting Script

NOTE: THE HARD COPY OF THIS SCRIPT CONTAINED SCENE NUMBERS.
THEY HAVE BEEN REMOVED FOR THIS SOFT COPY.

BEGIN MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE.

At the very edge of hearing, the tone of human VOICES.
Unintelligible, babbling, eerie. Then a loud FLAPPING SOUND. It
shifts from one side of the theater to the other, like something
moving among the wall hangings.

As the TITLE appears, the noise mounts, drowning out the VOICES,
agitated, becoming violent, banging... inhuman.

FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSING PROJECT, CHARLESTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

ON a housing project in the industrial outskirts of Boston. The
BANGING seems to flutter away, leading us along, searching... to a
tiny balcony, one of dozens, ten stories up. And there, the source

of the sound --

-- A SHEET, snapping in the wind. The umbrella-like clothes line on which it hangs bangs against a dirty glass door as if trying to get in.

THROUGH THE GLASS DOOR a woman paces inside, agitated. The VOICES rise over the banging, becoming intelligible --

INT. LIVING ROOM, NELL'S APARTMENT - DAY

-- becoming a fight. **JANE**, 30s, dark-haired, furious, wheels across a diminutive, neat, but poor living room.

JANE

It'll take a month to probate the will, Nell! A month! Even if Mother left you something, you won't get it in time to pay the rent. So instead of complaining, you should be thanking Lou for getting you these two weeks to get Mother's things packed.

At first we can't even see who she's yelling at. At first we don't even notice her. Then we do...

Holding herself, in a dim corner away from the light, small, plain, like a part of the faded room is **ELEANOR VANCE**, 20's -- Nell. She stares at the door. The clothes line raps at the begrimed glass.

JANE (cont'd)

Nell?

The wind dies, the banging stops. Nell seems to hear Jane and peers over at her, then across the room to Jane's bored husband, **LOU**. He's turning a Franklin Mint commemorative coin set in his hands, studying it.

LOU

You're still going to have to settle with your mother's landlord on the back rent.

Nell watches Jane's little boy, **RICHIE**. Unpacified by the cartoons on the TV, he plows a plastic tank across a shelf through neat rows of delicate PORCELAIN DOLLS.

NELL

I'm not going to stay. I'll get a job. I'll get my own apartment.

Richie knocks a porcelain DOLL off, and it breaks all over the carpet. His parents don't notice. But Nell feels it in the soul.

Richie stops. A long beat. He looks at her, insolent, then plows on with his tank.

JANE

Nell. A job? Two months and where is this job? You have no degree, you've never worked --

Nell explodes in outraged fury, startling us.

NELL

-- I've never worked? --

JANE

You have no experience in the world... the regular world. What would you put on a resume?

(beat, softening)

Now we all appreciate what you did for Mother. Isn't that right, Lou?

LOU

Eleven years. Long time.

JANE

That's why we've been talking. With me getting more time in Accessories, and Lou at the shop all day, we need somebody to take care of Richie, do a little cleaning and cooking. And in return you can have the extra room.

She goes to Lou, puts a hand on his shoulder, proud of her generosity. All Nell can do is stare.

And then: KNOCK KNOCK. Like a shot Nell is out of the chair and turning for a set of FRENCH DOORS across the room. It's all reflex. Nell catches herself.

KNOCK KNOCK. Richie, lying on the couch like he's sick, raps on the wall with a wooden CANE and squeals:

RICHIE

Eleanor, help me! I've got to pee!

Nell REACTS, but rather than being amused or annoyed, a wave of TRAUMA flickers over her face. The reaction is so strong we instantly know something is very wrong.

LOU

Richie, knock it off before I beat

the crap out of you!

Nell turns away, sick, breathing hard.

Jane picks up a JEWELRY BOX from a dresser.

JANE

You're sure this is all of
Mother's jewelry? The lawyer said
to make sure we took it to him...

(beat)

He said there might be some
antique pieces. Have you seen
anything? Some of it might be
valuable.

Nell knows what is going to happen to that jewelry. Jane no longer
can bear the weight of Nell's stare, checks her watch. She nods at
Lou. Lou rises, pocketing the coin set. Richie follows him out.

JANE (cont'd)

Think about our offer, Nell. You
don't know how hard it is out
there.

INT. NELL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Nell rams through the door into the small kitchen, spotless, empty.
And then bursts into tears. Shaking, she digs in her back pocket
and pulls out a FINE FILIGREE NECKLACE. Her mother's. It's from
an age gone by.

Clutching the necklace, she goes back out the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM, NELL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nell crosses the living room straight for the closed French doors,
the glass obscured by gauze curtains. She throws them open and
enters --

INT. SICK ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

-- what once was a dining room. Transformed into a sick room.
Drawn shades. Dim. The first traces of dust.

Nell lingers in the doorway a beat, daunted.

A perfectly made bed. The PILLOW, however retains the IMPRESSION
of a head. Lodged between the bed and a nightstand, a CANE. On
the opposite side of the bed is a plastic toilet. I.V. stand.
Shrouded white shapes.

On the wall above the bed, a framed needlepoint counsels: A PLACE
FOR EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE. A bit of wisdom. A way
to live a life.

A way Nell has lived for too long. Seeing it galvanizes her into movement. She goes to an old armoire, a medicine chest, opens it, removes a BOTTLE OF TYLENOL WITH CODEINE and marches out.

INT. LIVING ROOM, NELL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nell closes the doors on the chamber of horrors, exhales. She has been holding her breath.

INT. NELL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Nell sits at her tiny kitchen table, water glass and Tylenol in front of her. The necklace dangles from her fingers. She stares, mesmerized by it. Then she undoes the hasp. The clothes line outside BATTERS louder --

-- and, defiant, Nell puts the necklace on. She closes her eyes.

Silence. The battering has stopped. A BEAT. And then the PHONE RINGS. Nell opens her eyes. The phone RINGS. Keeps ringing. Nell, feeling the drug, finds her way to the phone and picks up.

NELL

Hello? Yes, this is Eleanor.
-- Where? Yes, it's right here.

Nell listens for a long moment. She picks up the classifieds, flips through. And there it is:

TROUBLE SLEEPING?

WANTED - RESEARCH SUBJECTS. \$900.00/.WEEK + RM.&BD. @ BEAUTIFUL OLD HOUSE IN BERKSHIRES. PSYCHOLOGY STUDY.

END MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE

INT. PSYCH OBSERVATION LAB - DAY

The lab feels more like the video center of a security office than a psychologist's laboratory. Two banks of black and white monitors give us images of men and women, different ages, different races, wired to electrodes. They are taking psychological tests, although we never see the Testers. The subjects are working through variations on object manipulation and pattern recognition tests. There are subtle differences between the two banks of monitors. On the left, the subjects are all twitching at exactly the same time, on the right, the subjects are also twitching, but in no discernible sequence. The subjects on the left are better able to concentrate on their tasks. The subjects on the right keep stopping, and going over what they have done.

Two men, **MALCOLM KEOGH**, in his 50's, is a graying professor, the head of the department; someone we trust.

He faces **PROFESSOR JAMES MARROW**. He is a man whose confidence rests uneasily on his ambition, and in the tension between the two is the power that makes him the teacher students love. Right now, though, he is defending himself before a Department Review. This is not a court martial with judges behind a desk, it's more free form.

The men are having a fight, and they are watched by OTHER PROFESSORS.

MALCOLM

It's still an electric shock!

MARROW

Come on Malcolm, it's only seven ohms, it's nothing, it's like a joy buzzer! And it's not about the pain, it's about the interference with concentration...

Malcolm looks at the monitor. This is Marrow's chance to explain it again.

MARROW (cont'd)

Look, look at what it does! The subjects on the left, because they anticipate the shocks, make the adjustment, and lose nothing on their scores. The subjects on the right, because the shocks are random, can't anticipate, and the distraction throws them off.

MALCOLM

Stop defending your science after the fact, Jim. The department protocol for research is very clear about this, and you violated the rules. I know, I know, I know that "Fear and Performance" is a big sexy idea, but as long as I'm chairman here you will need this department's endorsement to publish it, and right now I can't do that.

At this moment, **MARY LAMBRETTA**, late 20's, Marrow's pretty T.A., opens the door with an armload of files. Whatever else she's wearing, she wears glasses. Marrow, seeing her, motions for her to go away. He doesn't break eye contact with Malcolm. Mary hesitates...

MARROW

Malcolm, this is essential work I'm doing. Just think what my

research can do for education.
Elementary school classrooms near
train tracks or airports, where
loud noise is random; this helps
to prove the need for sound
insulation if the children are
ever going to learn to read.

MALCOLM

And that will be a good place to
end this study.

MARROW

No, Malcolm! Individual
performance is only part of it. I
know why baseball players choke
for no reason, I know why
violinists throw up with fear
before every concert, and need to,
to give a great performance, but
what I want to know is, how fear
works in a group...

MALCOLM

Not the way you've constructed
your group, it's just not ethical!

MARROW

But if the group knows it's being
studied as a group, you
contaminate the results. The
deception is minor.

Malcolm sees Mary Lambretta.

MALCOLM

Are you working with her?

MARROW

Mary, I'll meet you outside.

She understands, and she closes the door.

MALCOLM

Why are you working with her?
Mary Lambretta was thrown out of
the department for trying to get a
Ph.D. in psychic studies.

MARROW

And after she was thrown out, she
needed a job.

MALCOLM

You don't believe in the

paranormal.

MARROW

No, but she does, and that's all that matters.

MALCOLM

Does she know that's why you're using her?

MARROW

No.

MALCOLM

I, I just can't...

MARROW

She needed a job, Malcolm. And she's smart. And she helps me.

MALCOLM

I have a bad feeling about what you're doing.

MARROW

This is the last chapter. Please, please give me clearance. It's for science.

Marrow waits.

MALCOLM

I'm gonna hate myself for this.

But he nods. Permission granted.

MARROW

Thank you.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LAB - DAY

They open the door. They walk out. Mary is there. She closes her eyes, and does a gypsy voice.

MARY

I see a hostile man... he's (she describes him). The hostile man does not believe in Madame Velka.

This relieves the pressure. Malcolm is not listening anymore and storms off.

MARY

You know what he's really upset about?

MARROW

What?

MARY

You're going to publish, he's going to perish... And why did you hire me for this?

Marrow has a sly smile. They go into his office through another door in the lab.

INT. MARROW'S OFFICE - DAY

Long, narrow, badly lit, it's filled with filing cabinets, stacks of unread textbooks still in publisher's plastic, a desk with computer. As soon as they enter, Mary looks at the phone.

MARY

It's for you.

And then the phone rings. He doesn't pick it right up, he lets it ring.

MARROW

You hear the vibrations in the wire. There's a magnetic pulse in the wires, you feel it. I could test it.

MARY

Test it.

The phone still rings. Marrow answers.

MARROW

Yes, this is Doctor Marrow.

MARY

How'd I know it was for you?

MARROW

(quickly)

Because it's my phone.

(back to the phone)

Yes... Mrs. Dudley, just leave the boxes inside, thank you. See you soon. Thank you.

He hangs up.

Marrow is trying to read the first file as he goes to his desk. Mary shows him a huge CORKBOARD covered with photos, articles, and various items.

MARY

Here's how they're organized.
Groups of five, very different
personalities: scored all over the
Kiersey Temperament Sorter just
like you asked for. And they all
score high on the insomnia charts.

MARROW

Good.

A PHOTO OF NELL falls on the floor. Marrow scoops it up. He holds the photo of Nell up to Mary, and look at the written notes and studies the graphs that go with it.

MARROW (cont'd)

This is correct?

MARY

Her mother died two months ago.
She says she really wants to do
this. I didn't know if it'd be
taking advantage...

Marrow considers the lonely image for a long moment and then looks at the graph of her test scores.

MARROW

(meaning the graph,
not the face)

What a beautiful profile. How do
you feel about her? What does
your *intuition* say?

Mary balks at his teasing.

MARY

I put my favorites on the top.

Marrow continues to study the files.

MARROW (OC)

Okay... this one's good...
Extrovert Feeler... Okay... This
one I like, too...

We don't pay as much attention now to the cork board as to other images on the wall. We find clinical-looking shots from Stanley Milgram's experiments: subjects appearing to scream in response to electrical shock.

Rows of weeping prisoners in the Stanford prison experiment.

Photos of victims crushed under the stands of a soccer stadium, the aftermath of a riot. A picture of the Fuhrer before his mesmerized

masses. Mary opens a large envelope. She takes out a photograph that we can't see.

MARY

What's this?

(has to get his
attention)

What's this... this picture?

MARROW

That? That's Hill House.

MARY

This is where we're going?

MARROW

Yes. It's perfect, isn't it?

Mary studies the picture, and she can't answer him. In her glasses, we get the thinnest reflection of the photograph, a glimpse of dark brick and high chimneys.

INT. NELL'S CAR - DAY

Nell, in a rust-wormed old Buick, glances from the road to computer-drawn DIRECTIONS TO HILL HOUSE. She HUMS A TUNE, soft, lonely, like a lullaby but eerie, off-key.

EXT. ROUTE 39 - DAY

The car speeds down the country road, past old stone walls, out into rolling meadow, its winding route taking it across the western Berkshires, farther and farther into the glorious hills.

INT. NELL'S CAR - DAY

Countryside speeds by. She passes an antique store in a barn. A handpainted sign warns MELBY'S APPLE FARM 100 YARDS. Nell grabs for the window handle, letting in air.

She snorts, smelling, breathing like it was the first time in her life... sounding like a pig. And it makes her burst out in embarrassing, animal laughter.

EXT. HILLSDALE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

The white-steepled church, five stores and gas station of Hillsdale lie in a forgotten notch in the hills.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Nell is pumping gas at a country station. She is alone at the pump. As she finishes, she hears a BABY CRYING. She looks up. She is immediately drawn by the sound.

She moves to a car at another pump. The car is empty. The windows are rolled up. She peers into the car, through the window, and sees a toddler in a car seat. The child is crying. Nell looks around, no one is there. She makes faces at the baby, coos to it.

NELL

Hello Baby...

She does a peek-a-boo game, and the baby stops crying, the baby even starts to giggle.

A VOICE from behind.

MOTHER (O.S.)

What's going on, what happened?

Nell turns. The Mother is a busy country mom, arms filled with stuff from the gas station's market.

NELL

She's okay. She woke up and she saw she was alone.

The mother has the car open and the baby is smiling now.

MOTHER

Say thank you, Spencer.

(too much of an
explanation)

I was getting her something to drink. She's been crying all day...

NELL

That's all right.

MOTHER

Of course you know, how many children do you have?

NELL

None.

MOM

Then you're a teacher. Nursery school.

NELL

No.

MOM

You just... you seem like someone who takes care of children, lots of children.

NELL

Maybe... maybe someday. I'd like that.

The woman smiles in something like sympathy, and gets in her car. When she does, we see a friendly GAS STATION ATTENDANT appear behind Nell.

NELL (cont'd)

Umm, I'm a little lost.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Where you going?

Nell takes out her computer drawn directions and an old map.

NELL

They sent me directions and I've got a map, but it's kind of confusing. Here... it's a place called Hill House?

His helpful attitude changes dramatically.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Hill House.

He takes the map book and tears out the page and crumples it up.

NELL

What are you doing?

GAS STATION ATTENDANT

You don't want to go there.

He turns abruptly and walks away.

NELL

Did I say something wrong to you?

Nell slams the Buick door, and breathing hard, starts the engine. She gets control, and puts the car in gear. She's shaken. Badly.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

Nell's Buick bounces over a country road. The car works its way up into the steep, switchbacking hills.

INT. NELL'S CAR - DAY

Nell looks out at the forest, feels a chill. The road is more like a tunnel through the forest than a road.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Nell's car speeds through the trees, climbing the hills, higher and higher into the awesome solitude.

INT. NELL'S CAR - DAY

Nell takes a final switchback, and something off to the right catches her eye, then is gone in the trees. She watches again for it. There. A glimpse of a gray stone property wall set back twenty yards from the road.

There it is again. Moss-greened, twenty feet high, a wicked array of iron spikes and glass mortared atop it.

And then out of the tangled forest in front of her looms a pair of immense stone pillars. Between them, a steel GATE as high as the wall, chained and padlocked.

EXT. HILL HOUSE GATE - DAY

The gate stands immense. Silent. Forbidding. Beyond them a gravel drive curves away through the trees. Nell kills her car, gets out, instructions in hand. No one in sight. A long beat. She reaches in and blows the HORN.

The HORN shatters the air, rackets off the trees beyond the gate, echoing. Silence.

Nell blows the HORN a sustained staccato in annoyance. The echo replies in a terrible, deafening battering of sound. Nell covers her ears. Silence once again.

In a fit of agitation she goes to the padlock and rattles it. It's locked good. She turns --

-- and there is a man right behind her. It is **MR. DUDLEY**, his hair tied back like an ex-hippie. He stands between Nell and her open car door, weed spear in hand. He smiles at her -- rough, dirty, massive.

MR. DUDLEY

What do you want?

NELL

Oh! You scared me.

MR. DUDLEY

Me? No. What are you doing here?

NELL

Are you Mister Dudley, the caretaker?

MR. DUDLEY

Yeah, I'm Mister Dudley, the caretaker. What are you doing

here?

NELL

I'm with Dr. Marrow's group. I'm supposed to check in with Mrs. Dudley up at the house. Is she here?

She hands him the directions. He glances at them. She uses the distraction to get into her car.

MR. DUDLEY

Maybe she is...

INT. NELL'S CAR - DAY

Nell looks at the gate, some part of her aware it's a point of no-return. Mr. Dudley eases over to her window. Mr. Dudley gives her one last look and goes to the gate. He produces a keyring and undoes the padlock.

NELL

Why do you need a chain like that?

MR. DUDLEY

That's a good question. What is it about fences? Sometimes a locked chain makes people on both sides of the fence just a little more comfortable. Why would that be?

He unwinds the enormous chain, heavy turn after heavy turn. The gates swing in, revealing HILL HOUSE.

NELL

Is there something about the house?

MR. DUDLEY

Mrs. Dudley'll be waiting for you.

Grinning, Dudley steps aside and Nell rolls through. And at that he just grins wider. Nell pulls away. Disturbed, she watches him in the rearview mirror. She turns and in front of her sprawls Hill House. At center, the features of the oldest part of the House dwarf all others: towering, eye-like windows and the jaws of a Grand Entry with carved ebony doors.

EXT. HILL HOUSE DRIVEWAY - DAY

The car rumbles up the drive toward the carport.

INT. NELL'S CAR - DAY

Nell stops the car in front of the entrance, right inside the carport. In the silence all we can hear is her breathing.

EXT. HILL HOUSE - DAY

Her car sits in front of the house, tiny, alone. Its brake lights go off.

The finger-like pillars of the car port seem like a hand pinning the car in place under the House's gaze.

Nell gets out of the car.

Nell stares, daunted... yet there is something about the House. A romance in its lilac heavy Gothic decay. Nell feels it, is drawn to it.

EXT. GRAND ENTRY - DAY

Nell, suitcase in hand, climbs the steps to the front doors. On closer inspection, the snaking shapes of the carved doors depict a Garden of Eden. At center on the knocker, a tarnished silver Adam takes the forbidden fruit from his counterpart Eve.

Nell lifts Adam and knocks heavily. There is no answer. Nell looks around for some sign of life.

Off to one side is a LADDER and PAINT CANS. Somebody must've been touching up the window trim.

When she looks back the door is AJAR a fraction of an inch.

NELL

Hello? Hello? Mrs. Dudley? Mrs. Dudley, are you here? Anybody?

Tentative, she pushes it open into --

INT. GRAND ENTRY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

-- a vast entry towering away to a ceiling lost in shadow far above. Rays of light filter through floor-to-ceiling curtains. Doors lead off in a half dozen directions.

Every piece of woodwork or plaster in the house is carved, filigreed, painted or ornamented in wild, ornate fashion. It overwhelms the eye.

NELL

Wow...

She turns around, sets her suitcase on the marble floor. A short hallway straight ahead seems to let onto some vast space, dimly lit.

And then Nell hears a SOUND. Carrying through the empty halls from some distant place: a low, plaintive MOAN.

Nell freezes. The MOANING stops. Nell strains her ears. And then the MOAN again. It comes from the short hallway ahead. Nell starts for it. The Moan stops.

INT. HALL FROM ENTRY TO GREAT HALL - DAY

Nell moves down the hall. It's dim, stale, lined with pier tables, candelabra.

NELL

Hello? Hello? Mrs. Dudley?

Her voice echoes from the room beyond. She follows her own voice into --

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

-- A long, oval great hall. Passages and doors lead off in all directions to God-knows-where. A double-grand staircase at the far end ascends to a landing shrouded in darkness before turning up the next floor. Magnificent ANIMAL HEADS carved on the newel posts glare at her.

Nell makes her way past clusters of furniture, stops at the center. Silence. An ENORMOUS FIREPLACE dominates one wall. Large enough to stand in. An iron mesh SCREEN hangs in its mouth. Mantle and chimney rise in dark, baroque masonry, becoming lost in the shadows above.

The MOANING sound. Nell spins away from the fireplace. The sound rises from the door at the very back of the hall. Nell takes a step toward it.

NELL

Mrs. Dudley?

She moves up to the door, puts a hand out to it. The MOANING rises. Nell pushes through --

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY TOWARDS KITCHEN - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

-- into a much narrower, curving hallway. Doors all along it. The sound comes from the door right there across from the one Nell just came through. She flings it open --

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

-- and comes through into a vast kitchen. A woman in black with her back to Nell stands at a counter. The moaning comes from a disreputable old CAN OPENER.

Nell breaths, feels stupid. The woman senses her, turns from her

cans of potatoes. She is **MRS. DUDLEY**, sallow, unsmiling.

MRS. DUDLEY

It's make the soup or answer the door. Can't do both.

NELL

Mrs. Dudley.

MRS. DUDLEY

So far.

Mrs. Dudley wipes her hands, regards Nell, nods.

NELL

I'm Eleanor Vance, I'm with --

MRS. DUDLEY

-- Dr. Marrow's group. You're the first.

Mrs. Dudley just stares with her sunken face. It unsettles Nell.

MRS. DUDLEY (cont'd)

I'll show you your room.

INT. GRAND STAIRWAY/MEZZANINE - DAY

Mrs. Dudley glides up the stairs. Nell follows, hoisting her suitcase after her. It appears the mezzanine ahead leads to a hallway. But as we draw closer what we thought was a hallway is an ENORMOUS OIL PAINTING. In it stands a man, his features lost in the shadows above, only his body visible.

The nameplate reads HUGH CRAIN.

NELL

Hugh Crain.

Nell looks up: Mrs. Dudley waits coldly at the top of the stairs.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY, NORTH WING - DAY

Mrs. Dudley leads Nell down a curved hallway, over aged Persian carpets and turns to a door on her left. She throws it open, stands back. Nell enters.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - DAY

Nell lowers her suitcase.

MRS. DUDLEY

The Purple Room. You're going to be the first visitors that Hill House has had since Mister Crain

died.

The room is spacious, in a rococo gothic style with low-relief woodwork on the walls rising to a dark, coffered, ceiling of carved ivory. A king-size bed, furniture, all in blue purple. An open door gives a glimpse of a bathroom.

A large fireplace dominates one wall. Its mantle is carved with the faces of children, happy, at play, alive. Nell touches the wood, loving.

NELL

They're so beautiful. Aren't they?

MRS. DUDLEY

I've seen 'em. Lot to dust.

NELL

Well, I've never lived with beauty. You must love working here.

Mrs. Dudley peers at her. A beat. And then, cryptic:

MRS. DUDLEY

It's a job. I keep banker's hours. I set dinner on the dining room sideboard at six. You can serve yourselves. Breakfast is ready at nine. I don't wait on people. I don't stay after dinner. Not after it begins to get dark. I leave before dark comes. We live in town. Nine miles. So there won't be anyone around if you need help. We couldn't even hear you, in the night.

NELL

Why would we --

MRS. DUDLEY

-- no one could. No one lives any nearer than town. No one will come any nearer than that. In the night. In the dark.

And with that Mrs. Dudley grins, rictus-like. She turns and closes the door after her.

Nell stands there a long moment, the room silent, heavy, old. She goes to the windows, peers out. Nothing but forest for miles. The sun is setting.

Nell removes her windbreaker, opens her suitcase, takes out a blouse and skirt. Decent enough clothes, but cheap, the tags still on them.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY, NORTH WING - DAY

Nell emerges from her room in her new clothes. The hallway curves away into the distance, lined with massive, ornate doorframes like the one to her room.

Trying to get a better look, Nell searches the walls for a light switch, but can't find one. She follows the chair rail back to --

INT. MEZZANINE - SUNSET (CONTINUOUS)

-- the mezzanine at the top of the stairs. She searches in vain for a light switch there. Finally she spots a set of curtains and slings them open.

The light, late-day though it is, makes her wince. The window looks down on the driveway. Outside a BEIGE CAR crunches over the gravel. Somebody else has arrived.

Nell watches the car move past, trying to get a glimpse of the driver, but from up here, all she can see is roof.

NELL

Finally.

She backs away from the window, spins around --

-- and out of the darkness, powerful, mad, looms the visage of Hugh Crain. It is the painting. It is only from up here on the second floor with this curtain open that the FACE is visible in the late-day sunlight.

Despite the artist's discretion, the lines in the man's skin, his eyes, his posture, cry of unspeakable sickness.

Unconsciously, Nell takes a step back. In the far b.g., near the end of one of the halls, a DOOR stands open, the second or third set of doors in the Gothic Hallway left of the painting. Just as it starts to come into view, and we're starting to see it, it swings silently shut.

But Nell has caught the movement out of the corner of her eye.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY, NORTH WING - DAY

Nell stares down the long hallway. Which door was it?

NELL

Hello?

No response. She starts down the hall, slow at first, then faster.

She passes door after door, shadow after shadow, and as she nears the end of the hall... there is no door here. Not within 20 feet of, where we thought we just saw it.

A WHISPER. VOICES. Nell backs away. And then LAUGHTER. Behind her. It's coming from another stairwell. Very real... and very human.

INT. BACK STAIRWAY - DAY

Nell looks down from the top of the stairs. Below Mrs. Dudley and **THEO**, 20s, exotic, sophisticated, in Vera Wang leather, wrestle with a pile of designer luggage. Theo peers up. She's dark, sexy in an amused, worldly way: someone who has seen and done it all.

THEO

You may think I have a sickness about packing, but asking people to help me shlep the stuff I take with me everywhere is a cheap and exploitative way of making new friends. My name's Theo.

Theo foists a very heavy bag off on Mrs. Dudley who looks like she's been handed a snake. That makes Nell smile. She comes running down to help with the bags.

NELL

I'm Eleanor but everyone calls me Nell. Eleanor Vance. Nell. I'm really glad you're here. Really.

Theo is a little thrown by Nell's gushing.

NELL (cont'd)

What a beautiful jacket.

Theo looks her over... and understands. Nell is desperate to be liked.

THEO

And what you're wearing, that's great, too.

NELL

This? It's from a thrift shop.

THEO

What did it cost?

NELL

Fifteen dollars.

THEO

That'd be seventy in New York.
You stole it!

NELL

(embarrassed by the
simple truth)
It's all I could afford.

THEO

Wait. You're not wearing that
ironically? This is really you?

NELL

I don't know what you mean.

Mrs. Dudley, walking ahead, looks back at them. Then continues up.
Theo makes a face at Mrs. Dudley's back. Nell smiles, a little.

THEO

A week. You and I? We're going
to have fun.

INT. THEO'S ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Dudley opens the door, letting Theo and Nell into a large
bedroom, a mirror-image twin of Nell's room, except it's decorated
in rich red-orange velvets.

THEO

This is so twisted.

She dumps her stuff on the floor, grabs a banister on the four-
poster bed, swings cat-like onto its high mattress.

MRS. DUDLEY

I set dinner on the dining room
sideboard at six.

Mrs. Dudley lays Theo's suitcase on a luggage stand.

MRS. DUDLEY

Breakfast is at nine. I don't
stay after dinner. Not after it
begins to get dark.

Theo, back to Mrs. Dudley, rolls her eyes at Nell.

MRS. DUDLEY (cont'd)

I leave, before dark. So there
won't be anyone around if you need
help.

NELL

We couldn't even hear you.

Mrs. Dudley looks up at Nell who mimics her scary smile.

MRS. DUDLEY

No one could. No one lives any nearer than town.

NELL

No one will come any nearer than that.

Mrs. Dudley smiles at Nell, but it's softer than before.

MRS. DUDLEY

In the night. In the dark.

Theo leans on the bed, musing at the exchange. And then Mrs. Dudley backs out of the room, shuts the door.

NELL (cont'd)

My room is right next door. I think we share a bathroom.

Theo has an interesting eye on Nell, she's studying her.

THEO

Don't worry, I probably won't be in here much. Light sleeper.

NELL

That's why we're here.

THEO

What do you do?

NELL

I'm between jobs right now. My last job... it... the person I was working for... the job ended. Over. So... And you?

THEO

That depends.

Theo pops a dress bag on the bed, unzips it. Theo takes off her coat, and is only wearing a black bra underneath. Nell reacts, turns away. Back to the camera, Theo flicks off her bra, stretches.

THEO (cont'd)

I'm supposed to be an artist, but I've been really distracted from work by love. Do you know what I mean?

NELL

Not really.

THEO

Don't tell me Boston is different from New York.

NELL

(she knows this from magazines)

Ohh, sure, you have trouble with commitment.

THEO

My boyfriend thinks so, my girlfriend doesn't. If we could all live together... but... they hate each other. It's hard to be Miss Perversity when you're the only one at the party. D'you know what I mean?

NELL

No.

THEO

(delighted)

A blank canvas! I could paint your portrait, directly on you. Or maybe not. So, you? Husbands? Boyfriends? Girlfriends? Where do you live?

NELL

I don't have anyone.

(beat, lying)

But I do have a little apartment of my own. It has a little flower garden. You can just see the ocean. At night, when the wind comes in just right, you can hear the buoys in the harbor.

Nell peeks, sees Theo is decent, turns around.

THEO

That sounds really nice. You're lucky. But you know that.

Theo comes over, straightens Nell's seams; this is an intimate, forward gesture.

THEO (cont'd)

(with meaning)

Come on, we've seen enough of the bedroom for now.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - DUSK

The long hall is lost in shadow, its long rows of doors waiting in the deadening silence. A lamp on a pier table casts a small pool of light. The walls glow in rich tones, the low-relief carvings a worm's-wood of shadow.

Nell runs her hand over a wall panel as Theo peeks into a neighboring room.

NELL

So much carving. It's everywhere.
On everything.

Theo starts down the hall. Nell follows.

INT. RED PARLOR - DUSK

Nell and Theo enter a room just off the landing, a lavish parlor with the omnipresent panelled walls, lush red carpet, velvet curtains sweeping floor to ceiling, heavy pieces of furniture. Nell watches Theo explore. As Theo moves through the room, Nell's eye lands on another painting of Hugh Crain. Inside it's ornate golden framework, distinctive little cherubs are embedded. Cherubs of Death... She runs her fingers over it.

THEO

Maybe you shouldn't touch --

Theo twirls out of the room, Nell, anxious, behind her.

INT. MEZZANINE - DUSK

As they come out of Crain's study Theo stops at the top of the stairs, Nell behind her.

THEO

Jeez.

NELL

I know.

They stare out at Hugh Crain, the cracking and shadowing of the swirls of oil that compose his face. The figure is daunting, but dead. Just a painting. Four different hallways lead into the mezzanine, all dark and endless in the stray light.

NELL (cont'd)

Maybe we should wait for them
here.

Theo walks out, swings around.

THEO

Which one? Pick any.

Nell looks from one to another. She doesn't want to. But she forces a smile and points to one on the left. They both disappear into the dark gothic hallway.

INT. SMALL PARLOR (CONFUSING ROOMS) - DUSK

Theo breezes into a small parlor with heavy green velvet curtains, panelled walls, rich settees. Other doors lead off the room. Nell follows.

THEO

This is a serious question, but do you think the Dudleys ever make love in this room? They're alone in the house, no one watching. No one... no one watching. You can do what you want.

Theo goes running for another door and is out.

Nell, realizing she's being left behind, springs after her into another mysterious hallway --

INT. STATUARY HALL - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

-- into a wide hall lined with niches and classical statuary. Theo strides down it pointing left and right, bending over, straddling the pieces, provocative:

THEO

Here. Here. Here.
(under a leering
gargoyle)
Oh yes! Oh yes oh YES! Here!

Nell laughs -- appalled and loving every minute of it.

THEO (cont'd)

Can't you just see it?

NELL

Theo!

INT. HALL OF MIRRORS - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

Through a narrow passageway, and large double doors they suddenly stand at the threshold of a fantastic ballroom lined with mirrors and chandeliers. Rows of mirror-coated octagonal pillars, rise to a vaulted, mirrored ceiling far above. With the door opening, there's a CLICK, and a mechanism of some sort is activated. The FLOOR begins to MOVE like a slow turntable.

Theo comes right up, looks over Nell's shoulder. Nell steps out.

She traipses out across the room, her million reflections waltzing with her into infinity. Theo dances after her. They dance, not quite together. Nell stops and pronounces:

NELL
I love this house. I really love
this house.

THEO
(gently, recognizes
that Nell is
different)
You're okay.

Nell blushes... and they burst out laughing. They take off running, their reflections with them, stampeding for an archway on the far side of the room and out --

INT. 1ST FLOOR HALLS (VARIOUS) - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

-- into yet another hallway. They race down the hall, turn into another hall, then another, all dimly lit by the very last rays of day, all furnished in the House's dark, impossibly complicated, impossibly ornate fashion. As they go, the mood is growing darker, the women unaware that they are getting lost.

THEO
(having fun)
Rats! We're rats in a maze!
That's what this experiment is
going to be!

They open a door to --

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOCKED ROOM - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

They stand at the end of a long hallway to one of the House's forgotten outlying wings. It is dark. Too dark. Nell and Theo regard the darkness.

At the far end of the hall stand a pair of MAHOGANY DOORS, closed, almost black, oily-looking. Surrounding them, an enormously complex geometrical frieze.

The doors themselves are plain. In their simplicity there is something about them enormously disturbing. It is as if the doors are looking back at them, Nell goes cold. Theo holds herself.

NELL
We should go back.

Theo nods. They turn around, Theo opening what she thinks was the door they came through.

INT. NARROW STAIRCASE - DUSK

They hurry down a narrow staircase, Theo first, Nell right behind.

NELL
Theo, I'm scared --

They fly down a set of steps, Theo flings open a final door -- and SCREAMS!

INT. GRAND ENTRY - NIGHT

The Grand Entry, where they bump into LUKE SANDERSON, 20's, charming and cynical.

LUKE
Hi, Luke Sanderson, bad sleeper,
I'm your basic tosser-turner, and
you are...

NELL
Uh... Nell Vance...

LUKE
And what kind of sleeper?

NELL
Well, I... uh...

LUKE
Obsessive worrier. Join the club.
(to Theo)
And you? I'd guess...

THEO
You'll never guess.

She won't answer.

Marrow comes in the front door. He looks at the house like MacArthur studying a beachhead.

MARROW
There we are. You're Eleanor,
you're Luke, you're Theo.

ALL
Hi... hello... Dr. Marrow...

MARROW
And this is Todd, he just came up.

TODD comes in.

TODD

Hi. I'm Todd Aubochon.

LUKE
(1950's alien
spaceman)
Greetings fellow insomniac.

TODD
(playing)
Greetings fellow sheep counter.

MARROW
And this is my assistant, Mary
Lambretta.

LUKE
Greetings.

And Mary enters. Crossing the threshold, she catches her breath, and when she comes into the hall and sees everyone, she also sees the house in its detail. And she has a bad feeling.

Marrow is still putting everyone at ease.

MARROW
Eleanor, how was the drive?

NELL
You can call me Nell, Dr. Marrow.

MARROW
Nell. Good enough. And I'm Jim.

NELL
I'm really... honored to be part
of this study, Jim.

MARROW
Well... we're glad to have you.

His smile is devastating. Nell reddens, instantly taken by Marrow's warmth, observant sensitivity. Theo notices.

MARROW
Have either of you seen David
Watts?

THEO
No, but Nell's been here longer
than I have.

NELL
I only saw Theo drive up.

LUKE

Who's Watts?

MARROW

The man who completes the group.

For a long moment they stand there, silent, looking at each other -- polite smiles, but awkward, even Marrow. One by one they all look to him for a cue.

MARROW (cont'd)

Well, why don't we get some dinner while we're waiting for him?

(beat, backing through the doors to the Great Hall)

Welcome to Hill House, everyone.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Marrow leads the way across the hall. The others check out the furnishings as they pass.

TODD

These old Victorian houses are great, aren't they?

LUKE

(points to details; ADJUST FOR SET)

It's not Victorian, everyone thinks that the whole nineteenth century was Victorian. This is gothic, this is English Craftsman, this is Romanesque. This is... insane. Who lives here?

MARROW

Nobody. A local mill owner, Hugh Crain, built it in 1830. He had no heirs, but he put the house in trust, and the farmland around it, with the stipulation that it never be altered or sold. Crain's executors made good investments and for the last hundred and twenty years, Hill House has taken care of itself.

Mary is shaken by the house, but she's honoring Marrow's request. Everywhere she looks, she feels the presence of something.

TODD

So what's this study all about anyway? Mary described the kind of tests we'll be doing, but

didn't fill us in on the big picture. She said you needed bad sleepers, but this wasn't about curing the problem.

MARY

I can tell you what this is about.

MARROW

Eat first, questions later, Mary, please.

They exit the hall, Mary and Nell last, and as they do, Nell sees Mary's strange look. She stops.

NELL

Is something wrong?

MARY

No. Just... when I saw your picture I had a feeling about you, and now that I meet you, I know I was right.

NELL

What?

MARY

Eat first, questions later.

And suddenly awkward, Mary exits after the others.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A chandelier hangs unlit over a long dining table. LAUGHTER. At the end Nell and the others sprawl over the remains of a dinner which has been going on for hours. Luke is opening another bottle of jug wine.

LUKE

You know what I love about wine that comes in bottles like this?

TODD

What?

LUKE

Every year is a good year.

MARROW

Theo? It's your turn.

Theo twirls her wine glass, licks the dregs inside the rim, thinking.

THEO

The rest of you may hate your insomnia, but I find it the best time of the day for me. I'm alone. Nobody's talking to me but myself. My mind is racing with ideas, and I can think.

LUKE

Nah, you're going crazy with doubt, all of your mistakes are coming back up the pipes, and it's worse than a nightmare. --

Nell isn't used to people being so direct and at the same time, playful. She glances at Marrow's LEFT HAND: NO WEDDING RING.

THEO (cont'd)

Excuse me.

LUKE

Don't give me that look, it's everybody's problem, we just have different variations, I for example. I fall asleep easily. But I wake up around two or three in the morning, every morning. It's that time of night that Fitzgerald called the deep dark night of the soul. I stare into... the abyss. Every night.

(breaks his own
somber mood)

It's the price I pay for being such a jolly fellow.

(to Mary)

Y usted?

MARY

I think I'd fall asleep easily, but just as I start to feel comfortable, I see things in the dark.

Nell hears this, Nell is tuned into Mary.

MARY

I feel the presence of something watching me. It's not... scary... not by itself but... I don't want to go to sleep because I'm worried about the thing attacking me. So when I finally do fall asleep, I'm like a soldier who's fallen asleep at her post. I feel like I've

betrayed myself. Nell?

Nell wishes she could hide under her plate.

NELL

All of you have such interesting problems.

There's laughter.

NELL (cont'd)

No... Please, I know how that sounds but... You're all so articulate. You know how to talk. I feel like I'm here under false pretenses. It's silly, it's not like... well, all of you have trouble sleeping because you live in the world, and the world is complicated and scary, but nothing's ever happened to me. So I don't have a reason to sleep badly.

MARROW

You wrote that you had trouble sleeping.

NELL

Yes, because someone was always keeping me awake. Ever since I was little. That was my job. I took care of my mother and I had to be there for her all night long, and she woke up all the time. And after she died, well, it's been a few months, but I still, I still wake up, it's... a habit.

(beat)

I know we've only known each other a couple of hours, but I'm really glad to be with people who let me talk about this. I'm really happy to be here with you.

Silence. The others are embarrassed by her sincerity. She's right, Nell is not of their world.

MARROW

We're glad you're here.

He says this with enough sympathy for Theo to see his interest in the girl in the thrift shop dress.

MARROW (cont'd)

Why don't we move to another room?

INT. RED PARLOR - NIGHT

The HARP sings out, lively, expertly played by Mary. Theo, Luke, Todd and Nell are impressed with her skill.

MARY

It's an Erard. Late 1870s.

She plays, and as she does, she's aware of the room, and the house, and she sees something in a curtain or the fireplace, or a window, something at the edge of perception. She suddenly stops.

NELL

What's wrong?

MARY

The harp is out of tune.

She finds a key and begins TIGHTENING the strings -- as Marrow bangs open the door, briefcase in one hand, CELL PHONE in the other. He can't conceal his irritation. Marrow removes folders from his briefcase, passes them around while she plays. Nell again studies the Cherub of Death on the spine of the leather bound books.

MARROW

I'll have to count David Watts as a no-show. So let's start. Thank you, Mary.

That was a little abrupt, she feels it. Everybody finds a chair or spot on the sofa. Mary remains on the stool by the harp. Marrow sits in a large winged-back chair.

MARROW (cont'd)

All right? So, to answer your earlier question, Todd, why are we here? What do we all need in life, what are the basics? We need food, we need water, we need sleep. Sleep. All of you resist it? Why? What does that mean? Why do we resist sleep? My field of study is the individual's psychology of emotion and performance.

LUKE

So why did you need the Addam's Family mansion for a scientific test?

MARROW

I thought it best to be isolated, to be in a location with a definite sense of history, and I wanted to make sure that it wasn't so pleasant you'd all sleep too easily. You'll be taking a variety of tests, none of them harmful, and you've got the house, the grounds, and each other to keep you company.

THEO

When do we take the tests?

MARROW

Every day. Basically we'll be hanging out together like we have so far this evening.

Nell and Theo are looking through their folders: sheets of paper, bizarre geometric puzzles.

MARROW

Also, there is no phone service to the House and no TV. I have the cell phone for emergencies. We'll begin the tests after breakfast tomorrow.

The others shuffle through papers, Nell and Todd intent on them, Theo interested but not overly so, Luke, bored.

MARY

Dr. Marrow, what is this house?

When she says this, we should be seeing her from an odd perspective, the house's POV.

MARROW (cont'd)

There was once a king who built a palace. The King's name was Hugh Crain. A hundred and thirty years ago, when the Merrimack Valley was the center of American industry, Hugh Crain made two hundred million dollars. That's forty-three billion dollars in today's money. He could have anything he wanted. And what he wanted, was Rene, his banker's beautiful daughter. Rene, and a house filled with children.

NELL

All the carvings.

MARROW

But there's a sad catch to the story.

MARY

What happened?

MARROW

There were no children. Rene died, and then Hugh Crain built all of this, and then he died. His heart was broken.

Nell shifts, looks at the house with a strange feeling.

NELL

That's so sad.

This has been tense between them, a gunfight. POP! A LOG in the fireplace makes everyone jump. Theo relishes it, but Nell shudders.

MARY

I think there's more to the story. This house has its own music, Doctor Marrow, I can play it for you, I can hear it.

Mary plays, channeling unholy music from the house, from the walls, from the curtain, from the air. Her fingers fly down the harp to the THICKEST WIRE and --

-- TANG! Like a steel whip the wire SNAPS.

Mary SCREAMS in pain.

MARY

My eye... oh... my eye... my eye... oh... No...

The others leap up in shock. Blood lines the wall behind her. She clutches at her eye, more blood spilling out from between her fingers.

TODD

Oh Jesus.

Marrow and Theo rush over to her as she shrieks in pain.

Todd is frozen, pale, like he's about to be sick. Nell turns the OTHER WAY, but not because she's scared -- she's searching for a shot glass on a side table.

Marrow wraps Mary in his arms. Her shrieking becomes a terrified but quieter wail.

MARROW

Mary, let me see your eye.

Nell appears by his side with the glass. Marrow pries Mary's hand from her face.

Blood flows freely from the eyelid, but her eye is intact.

NELL

Here, cover it. Don't let her touch it.

EXT. HILL HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Marrow slams the door on the passenger side of Todd's car. Mary sits there, moaning, glass covering her eye, blood spilling out around the edges. Luke is on her side of the car.

LUKE

Keep your head back, that's it.

Todd opens his door. Marrow hands him a key.

MARROW

Here's my key to the gate. Call me the second you know anything.

Todd takes it, jumps in. The two men watch the car drive away.

LUKE

That could have been worse.

MARROW

Yeah.

As they turn back, Marrow taps Luke.

MARROW

Luke, can I talk to you?

LUKE

Sure.

MARROW

Because... well, I know I can trust you.

LUKE

Why?

MARROW

I've read your tests.

That was half a joke, and both men smile. Now they're bonded.

MARROW (cont'd)

There's something... I... I didn't tell you everything about the house, and about Hugh Crain... but I'm asking you not to repeat it.

LUKE

I can keep a secret.

They go in. The house is outlined by the sky and clouds and the moon.

INT. MEZZANINE - NIGHT

Luke catches up with Nell and Theo as he reaches the mezzanine. The painting of Hugh Crain, barely visible in the shadows, looms right behind.

LUKE

He said that Hugh Crain... Hugh Crain was a monster. He said that he was a brutal, horrible man. He told me that Crain drove his workers to early deaths. Crain had children chained to the looms in his mill. And listen to this: his beautiful Rene killed herself.

THEO

And why didn't Marrow tell us? Doesn't he trust women? That fuck.

NELL

(she's thinking
about the story,
not Marrow)

A monster? But he built this for the woman he loved, like the Taj Mahal.

THEO

The Taj Mahal wasn't a palace, it was a tomb. Why didn't he tell us?

LUKE

He's trying to protect the experiment. Personally, I don't think he's got a large enough sample for valid results, but as long as the money's good, and the food is good, I'm in.

He heads off. Theo turns to find Nell staring at the animal heads on the stairs. Theo touches her. She starts.

THEO

Nell, it was an accident.

INT. MARROW'S BEDROOM (PART OF CONFUSING ROOMS) - NIGHT

Marrow, sitting at a desk, speaks into a digital voice recorder. His voice is cold, analytical.

MARROW

Icebreaker exercise conducted over dinner. Observed initial bonding among subjects and experimenter. After dinner first bland history of House relayed. Nell appears most susceptible to suggestive history. Luke, who tested at the bottom of the Levy-Mogel Confidence Reliability Scale was given the second part of the story. We should see some results tomorrow. Accident with harp, while unfortunate... complements the experimental fiction.

He turns off the machine, and then he says, ruefully:

MARROW (cont'd)

Publish or perish.

He turns off the light. The shadows in the room are too much for him. He turns the light on, and then pulls the blanket over his head.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell finishes putting things away in drawers. Theo watches, leaning in the doorway. Nell looks around at the room: and this is her new family's new home. Theo smiles sweetly at her, comes over. An awkward moment, as the seriousness drains away.

THEO

Ever try putting your hair up in a French twist?

Theo reaches for Nell's hair. Nell pulls away. Theo pauses. Nell realizes she shouldn't have pulled back.

NELL

Sorry. I'm not used to being touched.

She moves closer to let Theo examine her hair. Theo takes Nell's

hair, holds it up in a French twist.

THEO

You've been out of the world for a long time, haven't you?

NELL

Yes. I've missed it.

THEO

No. The world has missed you.

Cautiously, Nell peers in a mirror at herself... and likes what she sees. Theo lets Nell's hair drop. Theo moves for the door.

NELL

Good night, Theo.

THEO

You, too. Happy tossing and turning.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

As Nell steps OUT OF FRAME and starts undressing, the CAMERA finds the carved mantle, the densely-packed scene of children at play, their faces frozen in dark wooden smiles, their eyes blind but staring OC where we sense Nell changing.

Now in a long tee-shirt, Nell crawls up onto the high bed. Its headboard is heavy, dark, engraved with fan-like shapes, maybe plants.

She draws the covers about her and peers up at the ornate headboard.

Something about it bothers Nell, but she can't put her finger on it. She twists over on her side and turns out the light on the nightstand. For a moment, all there is in the darkness is her breathing --

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

-- then almost silence. We pull back from the CHILDREN'S FACES on the doors of the Great Hall to reveal the vast room standing in darkness. Covens of strange shapes consort in the shadows, things that in the day would be lamps, the stuff of life. But now, at the very deepest limit of human hearing, it is as if SOMETHING EXHALES.

INT. GRAND STAIRWAY - NIGHT

It is black at the top of the stairs. The carved animal heads on the balusters are all turned UP THE STAIRWAY, eyes starting in fear. Waiting for something to walk down out of that blackness.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE LOCKED ROOM - NIGHT

Eyes. Eyes of all the mythological figures. STARING down the long, black hallway. Awaiting something. Afraid.

At the end of the hallway, where all eyes are staring, the double doors, the ones that scared Nell and Theo stand shut.

That something gathering at the edge of our hearing RISES. Rises as if the House itself is breathing.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

BUMP. The sound thuds the stillness of the House. Bump. Bump. Bump. Deep, hollow, distant like a dream. Nell sits up, still asleep, body moving by reflex.

NELL
Coming, Mother!

WHUMP. The noise jars her consciousness, lighting up her mind, VERY REAL. Nell remembers where she is.

Bump bang. It's coming from somewhere far off in the House. Nell listens in cold dread.

THEO (OC)
Nell!

Nell spins to the bathroom door, goes through --

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- the unlit bathroom, slamming the door to her room behind her, across and out the other door --

INT. THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- into Theo's room. THUMP BUMP BUMP. Nell finds Theo right in front of her, hair wet, kneeling in the bed, clutching her covers to herself.

THEO
What is it!?

The sound grows nearer. Out in the hall. Like something searching. Coming toward them.

Nell lunges at the door. Theo grabs to stop her, and Nell sees the door is DEADBOLTED. There's a RUSHING sound on the other side of the tall door. Right there. Nell freezes. BUMP! BUMP!

THEO (cont'd)
Nell!

Nell recoils to Theo's side, drags Theo out of bed to the corner of

the room.

Nell and Theo stare out AT US in terror. BUMP. BUMP. BUMP. BUMP.

Nell and Theo's eyes travel over the walls, following whatever it is which now seems to be moving out here in the theater.

The SOUND moves along the wall to the right, reaching its loudest as it crosses the back of the theater, then seems to come down the left side.

Theo shivers. Nell clutches her close. Nell writhes, unable to stand it any longer. She jumps up.

THEO (cont'd)

Nell!

Nell charges the door, screaming:

NELL

No!

SILENCE. The bumping goes dead. Nell blinks, looks back at Theo. But Theo is looking at her hands.

THEO (cont'd)

Cold. Oh, God. Feel it.

She looks up in horror at Nell. Their breath FOGS in the air. Nell holds her hand up in front of her, and as we watch HER HAIR PRICKLES UP, GOOSEBUMPS WITH THEM.

Her eyes turn up to the door, and: BAMBABAMBAM BABBA BAM! The DOOR JARS in its frame, leaping from the blows of whatever's on the other side.

Nell backpedals but slips on the rug, falls there on the floor right in front of the door. Theo SCREAMS.

Silence. The BANGING stops. With a RUSH, whatever is outside the door is no longer there.

Nell looks at Theo.

Then Theo looks at the bathroom.

Nell starts for it, grabs Theo's door, but it's designed to be locked from the BATHROOM SIDE. Nell looks up --

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- and takes a step into the pitch-dark bathroom. Theo appears in the doorway behind her. Across the bathroom the door to Nell's room is closed. Nell dashes for it --

-- but A SUDDEN SCUTTLING SOUND stops her dead. On the other side of the door. Rasping over wood. Like a thing without hands trying to turn --

-- THE DOORKNOB. A long beat. The metal creaks as something takes hold of it on the other side.

Nell, mouth open in cold horror, sees the deadbolt. It's open. She's in no-man's land: too far from the door to lock it, too close to run.

The doorknob TURNS, but just as the door starts to open NELL FLAILS FORWARD AND SHOOTS THE DEADBOLT HOME.

The door jams against it. Nell jumps back. Theo grabs her back into --

INT. THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- her bedroom and slams the door. A long, deadly silent moment.

NELL (cont'd)
It's in my room.

But their BREATH no longer fogs. Theo seems to notice the fact just as Nell starts for her room and... KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Behind them. At the door to the hall.

LUKE (OC)
Hey! I heard screaming...

THEO
Luke.

She grabs for the door and lets Luke in.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell's room stands silent, dark. The door to the bathroom is shut. The lock slides open. The door swings in. Luke stands there, the two women behind him.

Luke turns on the lights. The room is perfectly ordinary, no sign that anything has been in here. The door to the hall is shut. Nell reacts.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nell and Theo, wrapped in blankets, sit over mugs of tea at the kitchen table. Marrow, across from them, clicks off his digital recorder. Luke paces behind the women.

NELL
You really didn't hear anything?

Marrow takes his glasses off. Luke looks at him, then goes to the kitchen sink. He turns both faucets on full blast and leans up against the sink, arms folded. Theo and Nell turn to look at him. A beat. And then:

BUMP. Bump bump. It's the sound. Luke goes over to the door, pushes it open.

LUKE

Oh, look! There he goes, ol' Hugh Crain!

INT. GROUND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

VARIOUS SHOTS as the bumping seems to travel down the hallway. A rushing sound with it. They're the same sounds, from the scene before, but somehow have none of the impact, none of the presence as they did in Theo's bedroom.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke lets the door shut, turns off the faucet. The sounds of the plumbing die away.

LUKE

Do you need me anymore? Cause I'm going to bed. They can stay up talking another 45 minutes if they want, but I gotta try to get some sleep.

MARROW

Go ahead.

Luke leaves the kitchen. Theo and Nell watch him go.

THEO

If this was some sort of joke, I'm going to kill him.

NELL

You know it wasn't a joke, Theo.

Marrow watches the exchange closely.

MARROW

The cold sensation. Who felt it first?

NELL

Theo I think. You've asked us that three times, Doctor Marrow. What's going on?

MARROW

How do you feel about Luke's suggestion that it was just the old plumbing? Water hammer, something like that?

Theo and Nell look at each other in frustration. But Theo tries to get her mind around the question.

THEO

I did just take a bath. I don't know.

INT. THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is a lot less frightening now, especially with the lights on. Nell sits on Theo's bed. Theo looks at the walls, silent, normal.

THEO

I did just take a bath.

When Nell doesn't respond for a moment, Theo turns to her, sees her wrestling with herself.

NELL

Mother always banged on the wall when she needed me. The night she died... I heard her, but I pretended I didn't. I was just so sick of it all. And then the banging stopped. And in the morning... she was dead. This is the first I've ever said this to anyone. That was the job I had, Theo, it's the only job I've ever known, and I failed. I'm actually a bad person, Theo. The world doesn't need me.

Theo shakes her head, brushes at her eyes. The confession, on the top of the fright, has moved her deeply.

THEO

Oh, Nell. Eleven years. With all due respect to your mother who I'm sure was a saint, I'd have called Doctor Kevorkian, if not for her, for me.

It's such a horrible thought it makes Nell smile, and they share a tearful laugh.

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nell stands in the door to her room.

NELL
Good night, Theo.

Nell shuts the door. Theo is about to close her door, but hesitates. She puts on the light and goes to the tub. She turns it on, waits. Just the sound of the water. And no bumping.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell lies asleep under her sheet, the blankets off the end of the bed. HOVERING OVER HER, on the headboard, the carved faces of children, peering DOWN.

FLAP. FLAP flap. The fan-light at the top of the window right next to the bed is OPEN a crack. The sheer curtains flap listlessly in a gentle breeze. The flapping grows louder, and with a sudden gust the curtain BILLOWS OUT. In its flowing form, we sense the SHAPE OF A GIRL'S FACE, fleeting, so insubstantial we know we just saw her, but maybe our eyes are playing tricks on us.

The CURTAIN blows straight out, touching the bedposts at the foot of the bed, and there the wind catches the fabric hanging from them. The Wind seem to sneak under the bedcover and the shape follows...

Nell sleeps, oblivious, the WIND filling the room, stirring the tinkling crystal beads on the candelabra. The shape of the little girl's face now travels underneath the bedsheets toward the pillows, toward Nell.

Nell turns, restless, the AIR catches the edge of the pillowcase, and travels towards Nell's face. And for a split second there is a lifelike IMPRESSION OF A SMALL GIRL'S FACE. Nell almost awakens. The crystal beads stir, and in their tinkling, in the sigh of wind, we hear:

GIRL VOICE
Find us, find us Eleanor.

Nell's eyes open. And like that, the pillowcase deflates, the air rushes up the curtain to the window, and is gone.

Nell sits up, looks about her. Everything seems normal. Just her sheets, just the curtains, but on the headboard remain the carved faces. Benevolent. Nell settles back down on her pillow with a sense of peace.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Morning sun filters in through heavy drapes, falling on Marrow at the dining table. Nell squeezes behind him and the sideboard behind him to get at the coffee. Nell wears MAKE UP, badly applied, and her HAIR IS UP in a French twist.

NELL

Sorry.

MARROW

For an American you do a good imitation of the British at their most apologetic.

(Veddy British)

Pardon me. Excuse me, sorry, sorry...

Nell smiles. Theo walks in the door, sees Nell and Marrow, Nell squeezed in behind him.

NELL

Am I that bad?

Theo is aware of Marrow's curiosity and fascination with Nell. There's a jealousy brewing.

THEO

Well this is a cozy breakfast.

MARROW

Good morning, Theo. Luke.

Luke comes in behind Theo, tired-looking also. He goes to the sideboard, starts helping himself to breakfast.

LUKE

After I went to bed, the second time, after the... noise... I had the best night's sleep of my life. Anybody?

Marrow slept badly, we can see it in his eyes.

NELL

Yes. I feel really rested, too. Theo?

THEO

I guess. Oh, your hair! It looks good.

But she means exactly the opposite. Marrow looks over Nell's hair, but she can't stand it. Luke comes over to the table, drops into a chair next to Nell, digs into breakfast. Theo's face turns into an artificial smile.

THEO (cont'd)

Your makeup too.

Nell sits there flustered. Marrow senses the jealousy, isn't quite sure what to make of it, and intervenes.

MARROW

Eat your breakfast, Theo, then
we'll get started on the tests.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

CLOSE ON the complex PUZZLE of a field-cognition test. Nell scratches solutions, erases, and finally looks up in frustration. She sits alone, tiny, in the murk of the vast vaulted Great Hall. The enormous chimney occupies half the wall on one side of the room.

Clusters of furniture -- overwrought chairs with animal heads, splay-footed coffee tables, limbed lamps -- huddle in strange, silent covens throughout. Nell, in a plush chair, lays the work on a table beside her. The CLATTER of stone on stone makes Nell look up.

The fireplace looms just beyond her cluster of chairs, large enough for a man to stand in. A piece of mortar must have come loose. Nell stares at the chimney. And a VOICE lets out a loud groan.

Nell JUMPS. She pops out of the chair. It came from another circle of furniture in the shadows. A figure stands and comes over. It's Luke, stretching.

LUKE (cont'd)

I've been thinking about these
carvings. Kids. Lots of kids.
Fat little angel kids. Wild kids.
Kids with furry animals.

NELL

The children. The children Hugh
Crain built the house for. The
children he never had.

LUKE

Come on. These are the typically
sentimental gestures of a depraved
industrialist.

He puts his hand on a CHAIR, the back of which is heavily carved in the motif he just described.

Nell turns him an appalled look.

LUKE (cont'd)

Theo was working in the dining
room. She's probably done by now.
You finish?

NELL

Couldn't get the last ones. You?

LUKE

I did okay.

Nell looks at the test, tries to digest this.

LUKE (cont'd)

We could do this stuff anywhere.
I don't know what he's up to yet.
But like I said, that's the fun.
It has something to do with this
environment.

Luke just smiles, rises. We'll see.

He walks off, his footsteps echoing in the vast room. The door shuts after him.

Nell sags in her chair. Then something catches her eye. On a table opposite, a SET OF KEYS. Nell goes, picks them up. Car keys, house keys. Must be Luke's. She pockets them, thoughtful, but just as she does --

-- something MOVES in the fireplace. So fleeting Nell can barely see it, and we only catch a frame of it. But the iron MESH CURTAIN hanging in front of the hearth is STILL SWAYING.

Nell stands there FROZEN. The massive fireplace LOOMS before her, like a monstrous mouth, black as pitch beyond the black metal curtains.

The swaying metal scrapes over brick floor. Its eerie, repetitive screep cutting to the nerve.

Nell sits paralyzed, rooted to the chair. SCREEP. SCREEP. SCREEP.

A SINGLE STRAND of NELL'S HAIR stirs toward the fireplace, and --

-- SOMETHING INSIDE THE FIREPLACE MOVES BEHIND THE MESH!

Nell CRASHES back over her chair, knocking over a lamp and table, tripping, stumbling out of the furniture.

Holy shit. Whatever moved in there was real. Big, dark, like something's head. It goes out of focus and we can't see it as we follow --

-- NELL flying away, across the room in headlong terror.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Nell slams out of the room, skidding as the door slams behind her. She sways up off the floor to run --

-- right into Marrow and Theo's legs. Nell aborts a scream, realizing who it is. Theo stands there in surprise, holding papers in her hand.

NELL

There's someone in there! There's
someone in there in the fireplace!

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Nell and Theo stand behind Marrow and Luke across from the fireplace. Theo glances at Nell. Nell is shaken.

Marrow nods to Luke, and they start forward together, Marrow among the furniture to the left, Luke down the right side.

The iron screens hang silent in the fireplace, black, impenetrable. Marrow and Luke come up on either side, Luke ducking this way and that trying to get a glimpse through the mesh.

They stop before it, neither breathing, both listening. Marrow steps forward and pulls one screen aside far enough to look in.
DARKNESS.

Nell and Theo watch, apprehensive.

NELL

Jim...

Marrow sticks his head into the fireplace. For a long moment, nothing happens.

IN THE FIREPLACE: pitch darkness. Marrow feels up the chimney.

AND THEN SOMETHING SWINGS DOWN RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIS FACE! Marrow doesn't flinch.

He FLINGS back the screen, revealing the only things in the fireplace: two massive andirons, and the still-swinging FLUE. It's cast-iron, forged in the shape of a LION'S HEAD.

Luke throws back the other screen. Theo comes over. Nell follows. There's nothing else in the fireplace.

Luke and Theo stare at Nell. Marrow squats to study the hearth. The large iron ASH-DROP is coated in soot.

Not a mark on it. He opens it. Inside, a glimpse of ASHES and CHARRED WOOD. Marrow stands, looks at Nell.

NELL (cont'd)

Somebody was in here. I saw him.

Marrow looks at her, not sure what to believe. Nell turns to Luke and Theo for help. Not from that corner. Then Nell remembers, reaches into her pocket and produces the KEYS. She holds them up to Luke.

NELL (cont'd)

Are these yours? I found them
right over there.

LUKE

Who drives a Toyota?

Theo shakes her head. They aren't Marrow's. Marrow takes the keys
from Nell, turns them over.

THEO

Maybe they're Mary's.

MARROW

Mary came with me.

NELL

When I first got here I saw a gray
car pull up. I thought it was one
of us.

EXT. HILL HOUSE - DAY

They stand on the front steps. Nell's car is right there under the
car port.

NELL

This is my car.

Theo gestures to a sports car on the circular drive. Two other cars
are with it. They walk out into the driveway.

MARROW

And those are Luke's and mine.

LUKE

There's a carriage house around
back.

EXT. CARRIAGE HOUSE - DAY

Together they approach a stable/carriage house off to one side of
the main House. It looks old, unused. They enter through a small
door.

INT. CARRIAGE HOUSE - DAY

Light filters in through gaps in the wood. Luke opens one of the
main doors with a loud SQUEAK, the sun revealing a TARP-COVERED
SHAPE, a carriage. Unused in a hundred years. A row of tarp-
covered carriages fill the stalls into the distance.

LUKE

Well, this lot is full!

THEO

He must have left. Didn't like the looks of the place or something.

NELL

How could he have left without his keys?

THEO

Two sets. I don't know. Maybe they're not even his.

LUKE

Then he's got to be in the house...

As they leave, the CAMERA LINGERS on a covered shape in one of the stalls, SMALLER than the other carriages, it could be a car. A broken wagon wheel leaning against it.

INT. STATUARY HALL AND SHORT MONTAGE THROUGH HOUSE - DAY

Marrow, Theo and Luke move down the hall, opening doors left and right as Nell stands at the center of it all.

MARROW

Watts!

No answer. The statuary peers down on Nell. Dead faces on busts. Blind marble eyes.

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS AND HALLS - DAY

Luke calls out.

LUKE

Watts! Oh Watts! Here Wattsy...

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS AND HALLS - DAY

Marrow is looking for him, too.

MARROW

Watts! Can you hear us?

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS AND HALLS - DAY

Nell and Theo, walking into rooms.

THEO

Watts?

NELL

What's his first name?

THEO

David.

NELL

David? David Watts? Can you hear us? David! Daviiiiid!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Marrow comes through the kitchen. Mrs. Dudley, chopping carrots, stands by the counter. Only the slightest pause in the rhythm of her chopping says she's noticed him.

MARROW

Do you know who these keys belong to?

MRS. DUDLEY

No.

MARROW

I was expecting another guest yesterday. A man, David Watts. Did you see him?

MRS. DUDLEY

No.

MARROW

Is your husband around? I'd like to --

MRS. DUDLEY

-- Haven't seen him.

MARROW

Thank you.

Frustrated, he continues on.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Nell and Theo walk down the long hallway behind, opening doors, checking rooms.

NELL

David?

THEO

Maybe he never came in. If he'd come in, he would have left his bags at the door, right? Or maybe he got here early, and went for a walk, and fell. Maybe he's

outside.

Nell closes a door on the right, and then stops dead. Staring.

The shut, dark, door, the one that scared Nell and Theo earlier, awaits them at the end. Ominous.

Nell approaches. Closer and closer. The door nears.

Nell wraps her arms tightly about herself and try's to open the door. It's locked. Her BREATH FOGS THE AIR. She doesn't notice it. But then she suddenly GAGS. With a look of horror she recoils from the door, choking, covering her face.

Then Theo smells it. The women are both sick from the smell.

THEO (cont'd)

Oh my God, what is it? Oh, the
smell... ohhh.

Marrow comes into the hallway. He sees them from a distance.

ON the two women.

THEO

(looks to Nell for
an answer)

Is it over?

NELL

No, it's getting worse.

MARROW

Nell! What's wrong?

NELL

That smell... oh, God.

Theo blanches, looks at Nell. She smells it too, and in mirror image fashion backs away from the doors also. Marrow notices the exchange, and watches them, intense. And then, in a heartbeat, the moment is over.

EXT. VERANDA - DAY

The RED LIGHT on Marrow's DIGITAL VOICE RECORDER blinks. The device is in Marrow's jacket pocket, CONCEALED from Nell. They're sitting in Adirondack chairs on the long veranda behind the House. Marrow, beside her, observes.

MARROW

What did it smell like?

NELL

It was very specific.

MARROW

(so tell me...)

All right...

NELL

In the bathroom in my mother's room, the toilet was next to an old wooden table. It smelled like that wood.

MARROW

So... smell... is... Smell is the sense that triggers the most powerful memories. And a memory can trigger a smell.

NELL

I wasn't thinking about my mother's bathroom.

MARROW

What happened after you smelled it?

NELL

I looked at Theo. She had a look on her face.

MARROW

Like she smelled it too?

NELL

Yes.

MARROW

And then what happened?

NELL

I got more scared.

Marrow thinks about this.

MARROW

Hmm.

NELL

I'm sorry. I'm messing up the study.

MARROW

No you're not. Something moved you. You saw something.

Nell looks to him. He's sincere. He believes her.

NELL

I don't know. Maybe I...

"Didn't" she almost says. She struggles, embarrassed.

NELL (cont'd)

I haven't been with people in a long time.

Marrow settles in his chair, looks out at the forest.

MARROW

I really haven't either.

Nell peers at him, doubtful. Is she being made fun of?

MARROW (cont'd)

I mean, I'm surrounded by people, day in, day out. Students, colleagues.

(beat)

But most of the time, even when I'm with them... you know... It's all about power, there's not much room for actually getting to know someone or having someone getting to know you.

Nell's face flushes with compassion. With longing. Marrow looks at her. He's vulnerable. Needing. She doesn't dare hope. The moment lasts a few heartbeats.

He looks away. A flicker of distress crosses Nell's face. And then she realizes Marrow is looking at --

-- Luke.

LUKE (cont'd)

You have to see something.

INT. GRAND STAIRWAY - DAY

Luke, Nell and Marrow mount the stairs, climb up and up. They find Theo in the mezzanine staring at the wall at the painting. She turns and looks at Nell strangely.

Nell, confused, turns around. On the wall and the painting are dark stains. Black. Blue. Runny. Almost like something leaking from the roof has run down.

Nell steps back. The stains are the letters N and O. Pulling back farther: the rest of the word ELEANOR.

NELL

My name.

She follows the streaking substance up, blinking in rising fear as more running letters appear. The word: WELCOME. And higher up, the last: HOME.

NELL (cont'd)

No...

But the substance doesn't come from the ceiling.

It is as if the oils on the PAINTING OF HUGH CRAIN have been boiled by a heat gun and blasted off, running down from there. Hugh's face is gone. In place of the face, the underlying ivory of the canvas glares out... like a skull.

Nell SCREAMS and runs away, the others calling out after her in alarm. As they vanish around the corner, the camera tilts down and we discover smeared paint on the floor. Smeared, it seems, WITH LITTLE FOOTPRINTS in it.

INT. RED PARLOR - DAY

Nell, panic rising in her voice, confronts the others.

NELL

Welcome Home Eleanor. Welcome Home? I've never been here. Who did this?

LUKE

It's somebody's idea of a joke.

She looks at all three of them.

NELL

Who did this? Why are you doing this? I don't know any of you. You don't know me. Why are you doing this to me?

Luke shakes his head. Theo starts getting pissed. Marrow stands there, arms folded, observing.

LUKE

I didn't do it.

THEO

You could have.

LUKE

So could you! Is this some fucked up idea of art, putting someone else's name to a painting?

THEO

No.

NELL

Theo... Did you?

THEO

Maybe you did it yourself.

NELL

Why?

THEO

I don't know. You've been alone for a long time, maybe you want attention.

(pointing to
Marrow)

Maybe he did it...

MARROW

I didn't. You know that, Nell.

This is horrifying to Nell, being doubted and accused of something so ugly if it were true.

NELL

I don't know anything. Whoever did this, please, just... just say so... just... please... this is cruel. Don't be cruel to me. I can't stand it. You don't know me.

And she runs out.

Nell grabs for the door to leave.

She flings open the door. MONSTROUS arms seem to grab at her. But it's only a wild-looking coat rack in the hall.

EXT. 2ND FLOOR BALCONY - DAY

Nell stands at the railing of a stone balcony on the house's second floor. The air stirs her hair. She peers up at the House's roofline, its clusters of misplaced windows and other features like so many screaming heads.

Chilled, she pulls her sweater closer. Marrow comes out onto the balcony from twin French doors behind her.

NELL

Are you coming to confess?

MARROW

I wish I were. I wish I had done it, then I could confess and you'd be at peace. That great moral philosopher Frank Sinatra once said to someone he loved, I wish you had an enemy, so I could beat him up.

She smiles.

NELL

Let's say it wasn't you. Who did it?

MARROW

I don't know.

NELL

It was a stupid thing to do.

MARROW

It was.

NELL

(for the absurdity
of the idea)

Welcome Home.

MARROW

You'll never see it again. Mr. Dudley's taking care of it.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Nell. Can I show you something you'd like to see?

NELL

(still too shaky
for enthusiasm)

Sure.

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

Marrow lets Nell into a long, Victorian-era GREENHOUSE. It's overgrown, lush, the leaded-glass panes above stained with years of condensation and pollen. Vines and trees climb up the sides. Beds of flowers and plants line narrow footpaths of brick.

Nell leans down to look into a WATER GARDEN with a STATUE OF A MAN bursting from the surface, grasping for the air as if he had been drowning. A sudden rumble runs throughout the greenhouse. And A CAVALCADE of water comes out of the STATUE'S mouth surprising Nell. She lets out a little yelp, and then laughs with Marrow.

Nell loves the greenhouse. It takes her breath away.

NELL

Oh... it's so beautiful...

Nell makes her way among the plants. She looks up at a TOWERING, DOUBLE-HELIX STAIRCASE which rises from the floor to a platform which gives access to the roof. Below the staircase are planters filled with violets.

NELL (cont'd)

Violets. Somebody must've died here.

And then, out of the corners, comes Mister Dudley.

MR. DUDLEY

That's where she hanged herself.

NELL

Who?

MR. DUDLEY

Rene Crain. Up there. Rope. Ship's hawser. Hard to tie. Don't know how she got it.

MARROW

That's enough, Mister Dudley.

MR. DUDLEY

She stepped off the platform.
(he looks up, with
a suggestive leer)
They had long skirts in those days.

MARROW

Thank you, Mister Dudley,
please...

MR. DUDLEY

House is full of stories. If you know how to read these things, it's an open book. Just a different library than the kind you're used to.

NELL

Why?

MR. DUDLEY

Why'd she kill herself?

NELL

Yes.

MR. DUDLEY
(what other reason
is there?)
She was unhappy.

NELL
Why?

MR. DUDLEY
Can't say. Haven't been here that
long.
(he's off)
Well, it's Labor Day, gotta get to
work.

And off he goes.

MARROW
That's a horrible story.

Nell looks up, and smiles.

MARROW (cont'd)
You're smiling.

Marrow watches her as she moves about, takes a heavy, ripe bloom in hand, lifts it to her face. While she talks, she walks, and Marrow follows.

NELL
I was just thinking how happy I am
right now. All my life, I've been
waiting for an adventure. And I
thought, oh, I'll never have that,
adventures are for people who
travel long distances, that's for
soldiers, that's for the women
that the bullfighters fall in love
with. And here I am, and
something is happening to me.
Strange noises in the night.
Paintings are calling to me. And
all it cost to get there was five
gallons of gas. I'm getting my
adventure.

For the first time since we've seen Nell, there is something to her which is simply... erotic. Marrow follows her down one of the footpaths. She smiles back at Marrow as he trails her. She reaches a transept in the greenhouse, and as she turns down it, there's the slightest sway to her gait. Marrow follows her around the corner into the transept. At the far end the wall is completely overgrown.

Nell looks up through the ceiling at Hill House looming grim outside, distorted in the old glass.

MARROW

Someone is playing with you.

NELL

Why?

MARROW

I don't know.

NELL

It doesn't matter. Even if they're tormenting me, someone wants me. What I do with this is up to me. I can be a victim, or I can be a volunteer. And I want to be the volunteer.

Nell glances at him, and for that split second she is raw, passionate woman. She walks away, the sway in her gait aching, powerful. Marrow is surprised by what Nell just said and stares at her as she comes to the overgrown end. Nell reaches out to the hanging vines, pulls them aside...

...and A FACE stares out. Gastly. White. Nell takes an involuntary step back, a little gasp.

The face is marble. Blind eyes stare from stained cheeks. It is a STATUE OF CRAIN. Marrow comes over.

It's an enormous stone tableaux of Hugh surrounded by cherubim. The plants have attacked it as if trying to wipe its funerary presence from the greenhouse.

NELL (cont'd)

Hugh Crain. Can't seem to get away from him.

She laughs a little at herself. Marrow joins in. He helps her pull the plants back to reveal more of it.

She reaches out, touches the marble cheek. Then daring, grins, and begins to hum her TUNE.

Marrow steps back to watch her do a sensual slow-dance with Hugh Crain, pirouetting, her hips sliding past... hypnotizing Marrow.

MARROW

What is that tune?

NELL

I don't know. A lullaby I guess. My mother used to hum it to me. And her mother before that, and so on.

(to the statue)
Hugh Crain, would you care to
dance?

She hums another two notes, and BANG! The door behind her SLAMS OPEN in a gust of wind, jolting Nell. She stops and stares. Outside the window, through the glass, she sees Mr. Dudley, staring at her, he's been watching her dance. The spell is broken. Nell, embarrassed, can't bear to look at him.

A beat, and then Marrow goes over and shuts the door. When he turns back --

-- Nell is just vanishing around the corner, her rapid footsteps echoing in the vaulted room.

EXT. REAR LAWN - DAY

Nell hurries away from the House, across the rear lawn, ashamed at herself as much as she is spooked.

In the distance Mr. Dudley is walking toward the House with cans of paint cleaner and a ladder. Nell stops, watching him. He senses her, pauses, and smiles.

Nell reacts. Sees the ladder. Then Mr. Dudley disappears into the House.

Nell once again starts to hurry away, but looking back over her shoulder, almost impales herself on the rusted iron fence of --

EXT. FAMILY CEMETERY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

-- the tiny Crain family cemetery. Nell catches herself. A small swinging gate bars the way. She hesitates.

Nine moss-covered headstones show the wear of a long century. Eight small headstones, one large one. A half dozen unmarked stones in the grass: stillbirths.

Nell is drawn into the graveyard. The large stone is RENE CRAIN'S. The smaller ones are her children's.

Nell's heart is breaking as she moves among them: the various names. One reads ADAM CRAIN APRIL 5th 1874 -- ... The rest of the date is covered by growth. She clears it away. April 6th, 1874.

NELL
Only two days.

There is an EPITAPH, almost wiped out by lichens. Nell kneels to read it.

NELL (cont'd)
The blest are the dead / Who see

not the sight / Of their own
desolation...

Nell, disturbed but not knowing what to make of it, rises from the gravestone, turns to the next. ELISA CRAIN AUGUST 21ST, 1878 -- She clears it away: August 21, 1878. The blasphemous epitaph here:

NELL (cont'd)
A father's joy unjustly snatch'd
by a jealous God...

Nell is shaken, and dreading what she will find next, whirls to the one behind her: WENDY CRAIN JANUARY 1 , 1880 -- She clears it away -- January 1, 1880. And its graven commandment, so familiar, so comforting, now rings with terrible, malevolent promise:

NELL (cont'd)
Suffer the little children unto
me.

There are three more grave stones, and after clearing away the brush, they too show that the babies died after a few hours, or a day. There's the same symbol on the graves of the children, a cherub of death. We've seen this image before. Nell backs out of the cemetery, afraid.

INT. MEZZANINE - DAY

Nell hurries down the mezzanine to the doorway which leads to the Red Parlor.

INT. RED PARLOR - DAY

She stands there a beat staring in at the volumes upon volumes of books. Nell is unsure of what she's looking for. She looks at Crain's painting and recognizes the same Cherubs inside the ornate frame. The background in the painting IS THE RED PARLOR. Then recognizes in the painting an OPEN BOOKCASE BEHIND CRAIN. Intuitively, she turns toward the same bookcase across from her and is able to push it open. Inside a small stairwell...

INT. CRAIN'S SECRET STUDY - DAY

Down the circular stairs Nell enters a very small dusty room. Velvet curtains drawn shut, only a sliver of sunlight showing through. As her eyes adjust, she makes out the furnishings of a late-nineteenth century office, Crain's secret office.

The bookcases filled with business ledgers. The business ledgers are stamped with the cherub of death.

At the end is an enormous desk. Behind it a massive, carved chair covered with a sheet, only its lion-head arm rests protruding from underneath. Nell realizes it's:

NELL
Crain's study.

She moves for the desk. An ENORMOUS MIRROR, its silver inner surface flaking with age, tarnished, reflects the room, the desk, and FOR A SPLIT SECOND, A SHADOW IN THE CHAIR. Nell steps in front of it, blocking our view.

And when she steps past, there is only the dim, flaking image of the chair, the natural shadow of the room.

Nell goes around the desk, stands over it. The chair sits silent behind her, shrouded.

On the desk sits a set of ledgers marked with mill names -- Lowell, Haverhill, Manchester -- and years: 1884, '85 and so on. She flips one open.

THE LEDGER is a payroll account. Names upon names of workers rendered in sepia by Crain's severe cursive. Notations in the column beside it indicate man, woman, or child and the appropriate wage for each class of worker. Many of them, at least a third, are children.

NELL reacts. Disturbed by it. She shifts closer to that damn chair behind her. The sheet hangs over it in such a way that someone could be sitting there under it.

She turns the page. Columns indicate pay, and so on. But one column, at the very center of the book, hidden in the binding, is unlabeled. Down the column, some names have a line drawn through them, and at the end of the line, a CROSS.

Nell follows them back, eyes searching across the ledger.

She turns the page, pushes the book down revealing that concealed column, more crosses. And more. Her eyes flick back and forth. The crosses are paired with entries for CHILD. She looks their names...

NELL (cont'd)
Erin, Peter and Sean and Emily and
Elizabeth... who are you? And
you? What happened to you? You
died... How did you die?

Nell turns the pages. More and more crosses. Dozens. Scores.

Nell sinks down into Crain's chair and tears come to her eyes. We see the book.

INT. GRAND STAIRWAY - NIGHT

The painting is right there now. The letters have been erased.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

We see the ledger, and pull back, and the ledger is in Nell's lap. Nell sits on the bed in her sleeping tee-shirt and undies. Theo looks at the book with her.

THEO

That's so sad.

NELL

There's hundreds of them. This must be a record of the children who died at the mills, like Luke said.

THEO

Before he painted your name over Mister Crain.

Theo hands her the bottle. Nell takes it, tops off her glass, spilling. Her face is red. She grimaces as she tosses back a big swallow.

NELL

You really think it was Luke?

Theo takes another swig. She holds bottles of nail polish up next to Nell's bare feet, testing the colors.

THEO

Well, it wasn't me. Mister Dudley had to clean it and he knows that he's in charge of all the messes so why would he make more work for himself and...

(beat)

You said the Good Doctor was with you.

NELL

(pondering)

I don't know what to think anymore.

THEO

Just think about one thing right now: What color?

Nell finally puts the book down and takes a drink.

NELL

I've never had a pedicure before.

THEO

Well?

NELL

Red.

(into this now)

What else?

Theo smiles and takes Nell's foot gently in her hand. She begins to paint her toenails.

THEO (cont'd)

See, isn't this better than a hit on the head?

Nell looks down her long legs at Theo.

NELL

I'm sorry I was mad at you, Theo.

THEO

Me too. Although I learned one thing about you, that you don't know about yourself. You can be a pretty decent bitch.

Nell shoots down the rest of the glass of wine.

NELL

I'll take that as a compliment.

(beat, trying to
sound casual)

In the city, what kind of place do you live in?

THEO

I have a loft.

Nell is thrilled with this.

NELL

A loft. That's a lot of room for one person. Probably. Maybe there's room for...

Theo looks up, understands what she's asking.

THEO

You want to move to New York, you want to move in with me?

NELL

I don't know, you know...

Nell lies back, arms spread, lets the glass roll out of her hand. Theo paints Nell's toenails one by one, carefully guiding the brush strokes in along the skin. Nell, unused to this, gives into the

pleasure, and Theo sees how easy it is to move Nell.

THEO

My place isn't like yours, Nell, it doesn't have a view of sea. It doesn't have a view of anything. What's interesting about the way I live is what goes on inside the walls. Living with me... My boundaries aren't very well defined, Nell. Do you know what I mean?

NELL

I'm trying. Have you ever kept something to yourself because you were afraid it'd ruin things.

Theo looks up at her, unreadable.

THEO

All the time.

Nell lets out a sigh. Gently Theo's hand moves down the arch of Nell's foot. Caressing. Nell lets her.

Theo finishes Nell's last little toe, and then with the brush out of paint, runs it gently up the inside of Nell's calf. Nell sighs.

Theo lowers her face near Nell's toes, licks her lips: soft, near, red. She blows.

Nell raises herself up, peers down at Theo. Sees the want on her face. A long beat.

Nell breaks the gaze, looks away. Theo reads Nell's look, and releases her foot. She sits back in the chair. For a moment Nell doesn't know what to do.

NELL (cont'd)

I better go to bed.

THEO

Are you sure?

NELL

I think so.

THEO

Okay.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell closes the door and sits at the vanity brushing out her hair for bed. Her motions are languid in the light of the single small

lamp, off-balance with the wine.

Her HAIR brushes out in long, even strokes. The brush moves through it, lifting it and letting it fall.

IN THE MIRROR the brush draws through Nell's hair, but as it does, the hair divides in its wake LIKE FINGERS RUNNING THROUGH it.

Nell freezes. She's not sure what she just saw. She runs the brush through again, and again it is as if something pulls it back from her head.

Again -- fast -- she runs the brush through her hair, and this time the hair SPINS UP IN A KNOT.

Nell flinches, dropping the brush, knocking the shade of the lamp on the vanity a-wobbling.

She's out of the chair in a flash, grabbing her own hair, staring at the space behind her. Nothing there. A beat.

She steadies herself, feeling the alcohol. Gets control.

The Tiffany lamp rocks back and forth, crystal beads shimmering. The light plays across the fireplace and mantle on the wall. And something there catches her eye.

Nell feels her way across the room, not sure of what she's seeing. Over the sound of the wind outside, there's something at the very highest edge of hearing.

She stops five feet from the mantle. The swaying light catches the rich tones of wood. Then darkens. Illuminates it again. Darkens. The carvings of the playing CHILDREN in the wood SEEM TO MOVE.

Nell stares in drunken fascination. And as the first fear begins to rise in her throat, the wind dies down and in its place there is the FAINTEST TRACE OF CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER. Nell's reaction changes... to awe.

Tentative, her hand goes out, shaking... and touches the mantle.

It is hard and still. No movement whatsoever. Silence. But the FACES engraved in the wood all seem to be peering up at her, hands outstretched for her, hopeful.

EXT. HILL HOUSE GATES - NIGHT

The enormous LOCKED gates are silhouetted against the moonlit sky. The chain is dangling in the wind.

EXT. HILL HOUSE - NIGHT

Hold on Nell's WINDOW, the light shining dim through the gauze curtain. It goes out. The window stares from an arrangement of

other windows, stonework and doors... like an eye with a cataract in a face howling in horror.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell, her breathing heavy, lies tangled in her heavy blankets, asleep, but restless. Her feet hang off the end of the bed.

In the b.g., the door to the bathroom is shut, barely visible in the faint light from the window. HOLD on it.

Silently, it begins to OPEN. The gap WIDENS, yawning, pitch dark beyond. A long beat. And then a THUMP. A SLIDING SOUND. Something drags itself across the floor.

BUMP. SLIDE. Our line of sight is blocked by the bed. But the sound is getting louder, coming closer.

Bump. Slide. Nell grinds her teeth in her sleep, pulls the blankets about her tighter. Bump. The sound stops. And her BREATH BEGINS TO FOG.

Whatever has just come in the room is right there, hovering just OC. We can feel it.

Without warning Nell BOLTS upright, GASPING into consciousness. REVEAL: nothing. Just the dark room. And the bathroom door OPEN.

Nell stares at the-door, knows she shut it. Now it's open. She breaths fast, feeling the cold, knowing something's in here with her.

She stops breathing, strains her ears. Silence. A long moment. Then she notices her feet, hanging out from under the covers.

They are black. Feel slick. Nell turns on the light by her bed and looks down.

HER FEET ARE COVERED IN GORE. Where Theo had been painting. Nell SCREAMS.

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

SCREAMING, Nell spins the tub faucets on full blast, sticks her feet into the spray.

THEO (OC)

Nell? Nell!

Weeping, Nell scrubs the gore off her feet -- red, black like old clotted blood.

NELL

Who is doing this to me?

The door to Theo's bedroom is shut. The handle rattles, urgent, but it won't open. It's LOCKED.

THEO (OC)

Nell, what's wrong? What's wrong?

The blood or whatever it is on Nell's feet comes off, is sucked down the drain.

THEO (OC) (cont'd)

Nell, it's locked, let me in!

Nell, squatting in the tub, sobs as her feet come clean, and there are NO WOUNDS. Theo rattles the door.

THEO (OC)

Nell, the door is locked. Open it.

Nell rises, steps out of the tub, and looking like she could kill, moves for Theo's door.

She grabs the handle but realizes what Theo has been trying to tell her all along: it's LOCKED. Perplexed, Nell finds the key in the hole, and turns it.

The door rams open, Theo behind it, terrified and clearly just awoken.

THEO (cont'd)

Nell...

Nell stares at her, hair tangled, tear-stained, doubtful. Water splashes in the tub, faucets still running.

The LIGHTS flicker as one in the connecting rooms. Theo has time to look up at the bulb in the bathroom, and they all GO OUT. Darkness swallows them up. Stray moonlight reflecting in the mirror silhouettes them standing there.

THEO (cont'd)

Nell, the tub!

Nell stoops in the darkness and the faucets squeak shut. Theo bumps her way out of the room. Nell moves to the doorway following her into --

INT. THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT

-- Theo's room. Theo's form moves by her bed, and with a snick, her cigarette lighter lights up. Theo holds it above her head, its tiny orange flame glistening off polished wood in the shadows. Nell steps toward her.

Drip. Drip. From the bathroom. Theo's eyes widen?

THEO

Oh, God, your breath...

And sweeping over them a SHOCK OF COLD. Their breath.

Nell shakes her head: don't say anything. Nell turns around, the darkness almost impenetrable. SHAPES, alien, threatening, at the very edge of light -- anyone could be some... thing. Drip. Drip.

THEO (cont'd)

It's here.

Nell looks down at Theo's bed, then at Theo who moves closer to Nell. Nell gives the bed a wide berth. Together they back toward the wall with the fireplace.

They stare out at us, eyes trying to adjust, afraid. Behind them looms the fireplace and in front of it, a metal cage-like fire screen. A beat.

BAM! SOMETHING LUNGES out of the fireplace but is caught in the screen, hitting Nell and Theo in the back.

Theo's lighter goes flying in that very instant, and we never see what's hit the screen. Neither do they. Theo falls SCREAMING. Nell manages to whirl, embrace the cage and slam it with whatever's inside back into the fireplace. The screen JOLTS hard enough to lift Nell.

NELL

HELP!

Theo still SCREAMING, lying on her back before the fireplace, rams her feet against it. The screen HAMMERS at Nell and Theo. They can't run or it'll get out.

Theo's screaming is suddenly drowned out by a HORRIFYING, INHUMAN SOUND from inside the fireplace.

Theo's scream goes dead in breath-stealing horror. Nell recovers.

NELL (cont'd)

No! Go AWAY!

The screen punches out at them, denting. And then all the air in the room seems to be SUCKED into the fireplace in one THUMP. The door to the bathroom slams.

It's gone. They sit there in the darkness, panting.

INT. GREENHOUSE - NEXT DAY

Nell stares at the tableaux of Hugh Crain. In the morning light it seems inert, cold, just a statue. Luke and Theo enter. Nell

doesn't seem to notice them until they're beside her.

THEO

Marrow said the same thing as last night, he says --

(meaning, this is
on his now
doubtful word)

-- that he checked with Mrs. Dudley. And he says that she told him that all the fireplaces in the West Wing connect to the main chimney. He says that he thinks that the flue was open, and with the windstorm, he says that what probably happened was some kind of freak air current --

NELL

-- What do you think?

Theo considers, then looks at her, severe.

LUKE

(lowers his voice)

Don't tell the Professor; he'd probably throw me out. But test taking is one of the ways I've been supporting myself. I volunteer for every paid study that they offer. Of course straight psych stuff doesn't pay as much as the pharmaceuticals do, or a good wound study. Check it out.

He rolls up his sleeve revealing large, livid SCARS at intervals too regular to be anything natural.

LUKE (cont'd)

A thousand dollars each. Am I sick? Yes. Do you know why I only date freshmen? By the time they're sophomores, they've figured me out.

THEO

(get back on track!)

Mister very talky, would you please say what it is about this study that bothers you?

LUKE

The whole thing feels like experimental misdirection. Like

he says it's about one thing, a psychological profile of environmental effects on insomnia... and that'd be a legitimate study, but I think that we've been subjected to an academic bait and switch; he's really looking at something else.

NELL

No. No... Jim's not doing -- these things.

But there's a desperate, rising edge to Nell's voice. Theo's, in response, is quiet, sober... certain.

THEO

Then who is? Come on, Nell. Deep down, if you really thought it wasn't Jim, why wouldn't you be leaving right this second? Why wouldn't you be afraid? Really afraid.

NELL

Because I don't want to ruin things. Because home is where the heart is.

Theo is chilled by this answer which would only make sense to someone out of her mind.

Nell looks up and sees the double staircase at the end of the greenhouse... the one where Crain's wife killed herself.

And for a moment we see Crain's wife hanging there and then the image is gone...

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Lunch remains on the table as Nell enters, test papers in hand.

NELL

Jim? I'm done.

But Marrow isn't there. She's about to go back out to look for him, but sees something and stops.

Forgotten by a reading chair to one side of the room. Barely visible. Marrow's BRIEFCASE. Nell goes to the briefcase, knowing she shouldn't look, and unable to help herself. Marrow's digital recorder glints out at her.

Nell takes it out, and presses play. She looks up at the door. Any minute he could come back in here... and then Marrow's voice rings

out.

MARROW (V.O.)

...the hallway discussion about last night's fireplace incident concluded at three a.m. Nell continues her alienation of the other subjects and the experimenter. It remains unclear whether she truly believes she did not deface the painting. Interview with the subject in greenhouse yesterday to ascertain the extent of her self-delusion was inconclusive due to her efforts to sexualize encounter with experimenter.

Marrow's voice continues on in his assessment, but Nell isn't hearing anything anymore.

She dies inside. Her world upside down. She falls into a chair, and all we can hear of Marrow is the cold, analytical tone, his garbled jargon.

MARROW (OC)

One minute!

It's Marrow, for real, about to enter. Nell clicks off the recorder, drops it into the briefcase. Marrow is startled, not expecting Nell to be sitting right next to his papers and briefcase.

MARROW (cont'd)

Nell.

She can only stare at him, eyes dead. Marrow looks from her to the briefcase and back.

MARROW (cont'd)

Were you looking for me?

Nell can't answer. Marrow comes over, unsettled.

MARROW (cont'd)

How are the tests going?

Nell rises, staring, emotionless. Betrayal just beginning to find a hold. She hands him her papers. Marrow looks at Nell, knows she's been in his briefcase. He picks it up, and with a final, sorry glance, exits.

INT. GROUND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Nell emerges from the study, stands there a beat, lost. Then she turns, resolute, and starts moving. Faster.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Nell, blinded by tears, runs across the room toward the grand entry and the exit... and stops.

DOWN THE CONNECTING HALL, out in the grand entry, at the front doors, are Mr. and Mrs. Dudley. Leaving for the day. They stop. Look at her.

Nell, numb, gazes from the open door to Mrs. Dudley. Mr. Dudley holds the door open as if in invitation. Nell could walk out right now. This is her chance. But...

Mrs. Dudley smiles a knowing smile. An all too knowing smile. And seeing Nell's decision, gently shuts the door. The LOCK CLICKS. Final. Fate-sealing.

Nell turns back to the House, lost.

INT. RED PARLOR - DAY

Nell walks right up to the moveable bookcase and enters Crain's secret study.

INT. CRAIN'S SECRET STUDY - DAY

Nell sits in silence, trying to find a feeling, any feeling. A long beat. And without warning she leaps to her feet in SHOCKING rage.

NELL

How can he think I'm doing this!

She has a floor lamp in her hands, and hurls it like a throwing hammer at the nearest shelves. Vases, knickknacks and a LEATHER ALBUM crash to the floor.

She stalks around the room, and then slows, staring at what she's done, the rage draining out of her. But if she could do something like that...

NELL (cont'd)

No. No, I couldn't do those things: I'm not making it up.

She turns in place, desperate... and sees the old leather album precariously tilting on one of the sprung shelves. It's open. One of the leaves flips over on its own, gravity and the weight of its own pages TURNING IT.

Nell approaches, stepping over broken ceramic. SLIP. Another page turns.

Nell hovers over it, holding her breath so as not to make the book flip over and fall off the shelf in one instant.

SLIP. Another page turns. The book is a PHOTO ALBUM of the late nineteenth century, bound with ribbons, the aged Daguerreotypes in pressed vellum frames.

Nell peers closer. It's open to a faded, gray image taken long before it became the convention to smile for a photograph: a woman, RENE CRAIN, sitting in a chair.

And standing behind the chair, a fearsome presence in a black coat, his face hollow, malevolent. HUGH CRAIN.

Nell shivers, and SLIP, the page turns on its own.

An image of Hugh and Rene, a look of deathly loss on their faces. The page flips.

Crain hovers, dark, rage just under the surface, but on Rene's face is the faintest, most inappropriate SMILE. It sends a chill through Nell.

The album begins to slide down the shelf, and as it does, PAGES FLIP, Rene's SMILE grows wider, her hair dishevelled, her eyes lit with grinning insanity...

Nell grabs the book just as it falls from the shelf.

It is open in her hands to a picture of Crain, alone, in front of the enormous fireplace in the Great Hall. RENE IS GONE. The photo is monstrous. Nell, fearful, turns the page --

-- and REACTS to the last thing she expected. A picture of a lovely woman filled with grace and power. CAROLYN CRAIN. Posed. On a settee before the fireplace. Beautiful beyond words. Smiling. Ahead of her time.

NELL (cont'd)

His second wife. There was a second wife? Carolyn.

It warms Nell.

She turns the page. Now Crain is there beside Carolyn. But there is something different about him. Less frightening.

Nell flips the page again, and now there is an image of Crain and Carolyn. Her hair is up in a FRENCH TWIST. Nell smiles more.

Nell turns the page yet again.

But something is wrong. It is another image of Carolyn and the kinder, gentler Crain, but now it is Carolyn who is unsmiling.

Another page. Another. Carolyn's face darkening. And in this picture, Carolyn's stomach is slightly distended.

NELL (cont'd)

She was pregnant.

Nell TURNS PAGES FASTER AND FASTER, and as she does, Carolyn SWELLS PREGNANT before our eyes in ragged animation, mouth working as if to speak, voiceless as it is... ELEANOR.

Nell fumbles the book onto the floor. It stares up at her, open to the last page.

It is an image of Carolyn. Betrayal. Hell. Knowledge. Her hand seems to be POINTING at the gaping maw of the GRAND FIREPLACE.

Nell bolts from the room.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Nell bursts into the Great Hall and stops. At the far end of the room broods the vast fireplace, its chain curtains hanging like the veil to some hellish sanctuary.

Nell stares at it, daunted. What is it that Carolyn is trying to show her? The fireplace beckons, and Nell approaches against her will.

She finds a steel poker hanging by the fireplace, and takes it down. She uses it to slide one of the chain curtains open. She steps into its soot-black mouth.

Nell peers up the chimney. A faint sigh of air. She sticks the poker up the flue, scratches around. Nothing.

She turns her attention to the back of the fireplace, thwocks it. Sooty stone chips away, but it's solid.

The mechanism for the ash drop catches her eye. Nell grabs the heavy, iron lever. She pulls, but can barely budge it. It finally screeches back, and the iron door in the floor of the fireplace SWINGS DOWN.

Nell looks in. Two feet down it looks like a gray blanket of ash, a charred timber or two sticking out. Sick with fear, Nell prods the ash. Just charred wood.

She thrusts the poker down deep. It vanishes in the ash up to her hand. CLACK. She rakes through the ash. CLACK. And then she feels the poker take purchase. She draws it out, and full of dread turns it to the light...

Impaled on its hooks are TWO HUMAN SKULLS.

Nell fights back the scream in her throat. One of the skulls is a child's skull, the other an IMMENSE SKULL with brooding brow, forehead crushed.

Nell lets the poker drop. It bangs off the door, falls in the ash drop, its handle hitting a spring. Nell recoils as the trapdoors SNAP SHUT like a pair of jaws.

INT. GROUND HALLWAY FLOOR - DUSK

Nell stumbles down the hall, weeping in fear.

NELL
Theo! Jim! Help!

But instead she hears children voices, calling out for her.

INT. CONFUSING SERIES OF ROOMS (THE MAZE) - NIGHT

Nell winds through the pitch-dark halls, rooms gaping black left and right, searching for the voices which seems to come from just around the next bend, leading her around corner after corner.

The hallways peel past Nell as she runs, slamming through doors, ever darker. The House's hellish carvings glare as she passes, grinning, taunting. She rages on, oblivious until she rounds a final corner --

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOCKED ROOM - NIGHT

-- into the long, dark hall leading to the LOCKED ROOM. The STATUARY peer down on her. Dead faces. Blind marble eyes. As she turns, the heads and eyes turn imperceptibly with her.

For a frame or two the EYES are real, just a subliminal glimmer. For the instant we try to catch the movement, the illusion, it isn't there. It makes Nell stop. She regards the terrible doors. She considers the labyrinth around her. And begins to understand.

NELL
The house... it's a maze, that's how you designed it, didn't you, Mister Crain? So wherever one of your little guests went, the house brought them here. It's designed to make you come here. But why?

Another CRY comes from the far end.

Nell eases down the hallway, the fear welling back on her like a tide. She hesitates, but then the CHILD-CRY forces her on. She reaches the CARVED DOORS with the wooden guard statues.

NELL (cont'd)
Oh, no... Oh... no... no, no... not that... Oh no... Ohhhhhhhhh!

Gaping cold and stench hit her. She gags.

Now the CRY comes from under the door. Present. Real. Right there. Nell shudders.

The CRY grows louder, desperate. She shuts her ears to it. The CRY rises to fearsome rage, not sounding like a child anymore. Not sounding like anything human at all, it's painful. Nell looks at the locked room in horror and takes off running.

INT. PICTURE GALLERY - DUSK

Nell bursts into the picture gallery and stops. Standing there are Marrow, Theo and Luke, stricken silent by her entry. Looks of shock on their faces. Nell just stands there. A beat. And then it pours out of her, hysterical.

NELL (cont'd)

He hunted all those children in here. The dead children, Josiah and Elizabeth and all of them... from the books... he took them up here... he played games... the ones from his mills he burned them up in the fireplace but she found out what he did and she killed him --

She takes a breath, and turns gray. Before anyone else can react, her legs go out from under her, and she lands sitting. Theo and Marrow get to her side fast.

NELL (cont'd)

-- he didn't kill her she killed him and ran away with her baby --

Marrow grabs her face. It's gray, her eyes glazing over.

MARROW

Get a blanket!

THEO

It's okay... we're all here...

Luke races out. Theo, scared, looks at Marrow.

THEO (cont'd)

What's happening to her?

MARROW

She's in shock. Come on.

He starts to lift her. Theo takes her other side.

NELL

After Rene... after she killed

herself... he turned into a
monster. He did fill the house
with children... he did, but...
they weren't laughing...

Nell is ugly, sprawling, in shock, as Theo and Marrow shuffle her to
a padded bench on one side of the room.

THEO

Nell, what happened?

NELL

Carolyn showed me where she hid
him, hid him with all the ones he
killed --

MARROW

Nell... please, Nell... take a
deep breath...

NELL

And they're all locked together in
here... and he won't let go of
them!

Marrow grabs her face.

MARROW

Nell!

Luke rushes in with a blanket. Theo covers Nell and then holds her,
gently.

MARROW (cont'd)

Look at me, Nell. Look at me!

Nell manages to focus on him, her breath laboring.

NELL

Hugh Crain. He's in the house.
He's still here...

Theo pulls back, goes very still. The first hint of fear in her
eyes.

THEO

No.

Marrow sees the panic working on her, gives her a stern look:

MARROW

Theo! You too. Listen to me.

The command derails Theo's train of thought. Marrow stares at Nell
in pity, can't bear it, and has to look away. Finally he turns back

to her, full of regret.

MARROW

Nell, you have to hear me. Let me explain what's happening to you.

(beat)

You're participating in a study on hysteria.

Everyone but Marrow REACTS.

MARROW (cont'd)

I've given you a powerful suggestion that you're in a haunted house. I picked Hill House because it fits the expectations. It was my... it was my theater, my stage.

Theo glances at Luke: he's been right all along. This was never about perception.

LUKE

Modelling small-group dynamics in the formation of narrative hallucinations. You brought us here to scare us. Insomnia, that was just a decoy issue. You're disgusting.

NELL

Is this true? I've been hypnotized?

MARROW

I hadn't done a study of how group fear affects individual performance. Mass hysteria is like a story, Nell. A communal story. Someone starts it. Then we all add a little more to it. And then for some reason -- no one knows how -- we start believing it. This story shapes what we see and hear. We interpret everything through it, make it fit the story. I started our story when I gave you the history of Hill House. You've added to it. That's what this experiment has all been about. That's what it was about, the experiment's over. I'm pulling the plug. This is my fault.

NELL

It's not real? Crain? He's not real?

Marrow shoots him a look: shut up.

MARROW

Your fear of him was real. That's all the ghost anyone needs.

THEO

How could you do this to people?

Nell bucks in his arms, furious, desperate.

NELL

This is real, I'm not making it up! Theo, you saw it! You were there -- the banging and last night. You, you all saw the painting!

THEO

Nell, it makes sense. It all makes sense. You and I, we were scaring each other, working each other up.

NELL

-- but the painting!

Nobody says anything. The silence tortures Nell.

NELL (cont'd)

I know you think I did that. I didn't! Go to the great hall and look in the fireplace!

She starts to laugh. Marrow gently presses Nell down, tucking the blanket around her.

MARROW

Why would we want to do that, Nell?

NELL

Because that's where he burned them up, the child laborers from his mills! Because that's where their bones are! He killed *hundreds*. He took them here and he killed them. Their bones are in the fireplace!

Nell sobs. The others exchange looks at this. It sounds so hollow,

so delusional, it makes Marrow look so right.

MARROW

There are no bones in the fireplace. Luke and I looked in it yesterday. There's some old charred wood in the ash drop but --

Nell SPASMS trying to fight her way up, but Marrow and Luke hold her down. Nell begins to wail in helpless rage.

MARROW (cont'd)

Nell! If we look in that fireplace it'll just make you more upset. And when there are no bones there, you'll say they got up and walked away.

NELL

Oh, God, you're not going to look...

Theo pushes them back and grabs Nell's hand, gently brushes Nell's face.

THEO

Aw, shhh Nell, shhh.

Theo turns up to Marrow, intense, furious with him.

Nell's hysterics have stopped. She stares up at him, lost. Searching inside herself. Maybe she is crazy...

MARROW

There has to be Monster in the Labyrinth. We make them up. That's how we deal with the things in everyday life that are too terrible to deal with. Like losing someone. Like being alone.

Marrow reaches down to Nell, but she shrinks away. Theo blocks Marrow out, shielding Nell. Marrow pauses, disgusted with himself.

MARROW (cont'd)

I'm sorry, Nell. I'm really, really sorry I did this to you.

LUKE

Sometimes saying you're sorry is just not enough.

A disgusted Luke leaves the room.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell lies in her bed, shivering.

NELL
Don't leave me.

Theo spreads an extra blanket over Nell.

THEO
I'm going to stay with you until
you fall asleep. And then I'm
going to get some brandy.

NELL
I don't think I want any.

THEO
I do.

Theo spots a small candelabra with strings of crystal beads on the bedside table. She lights the two candles.

Theo goes and turns out the light. Nell lies there watching the flicker of the candles play in the crystal. Eddies of heat mingle up the frost-covered glass of the window behind the candelabra. Small streaks of frost begin to melt... We see eyes forming in the melting frost, a face begins to form...

Theo watches Nell. There can be a TIME DISSOLVE. Nell falls asleep. Theo tiptoes out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke eats chips. Marrow stands by the door, arms folded, matter-of-fact.

MARROW
I gave my key to the gate to Todd,
but the Dudleys'll be here in the
morning.

LUKE
Do we still get paid for the week?

MARROW
You get your money.

Awkward silence.

MARROW (cont'd)
Where did she come up with it?
How did she put it all together?

LUKE

Is that the question of compassion
or science?

MARROW

It's a question.

LUKE

She got the child labor stuff from
me.

Theo comes in, she heard what they were talking about.

THEO

I... I was playing games with
her... Big city games... I was
bad. And you, Doctor Morrow, you
broke her heart.

He knows this. It tears him apart.

MARROW

Is she asleep?

THEO

Yes. But I promised I wouldn't
let her alone the whole night.

Marrow nods, gets his briefcase, exits.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Marrow steps into the dark, vast room, his glasses glinting. The
faint outline of the fireplace on the far wall looms in the
darkness.

Marrow approaches it. The mesh screen is still open. Marrow stands
there a moment. Then looks in.

He squats and tries to open the ash-drop. It doesn't budge; it's
jammed by the poker Nell dropped in.

Marrow considers, then shakes his head, feels stupid for even coming
in to check.

Suddenly his CELL PHONE RINGS, startling him.

MARROW

Shit.

(answering the
phone)

Hello? Yes, this is Dr. Marrow.

(beat)

Oh, hello. Thank you for
returning the call.

(beat)

No. You mean he hasn't returned?
(long beat)
No, we haven't seen him.
(beat)
Can you tell me, what sort of car
does he drive?
(beat, reacting)
A Toyota...

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke stops Theo, carrying a tray of food and tea, outside the kitchen door.

THEO
We're fucked. We're in a haunted house and we can't get out until the morning.

LUKE
You don't really believe it's haunted... Do you believe in ghosts?

THEO
That depends on your definition of ghosts. I'm going to check on her, and then I'm going to stay awake.

LUKE
All night?

THEO
Yeah.

LUKE
You want company?

THEO
Maybe someday.

Some sexual awareness.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell lies in her bed asleep, the room dark except for the last, guttering end of one of the candles. It goes out.

A FAINT SOUND. LONG, LOW, like the inarticulate murmur of a dozen madmen. Nell stirs. Her eyes open. She hears the sound.

The wall on the opposite side of the room catches the pale gloom from the window. The twisting figures in the plaster, the low-relief, the shadows they make seem to COME TOGETHER AS AN EYE.

Black. Not human. The woodwork around it like some half-face.

The GIBBERING begins to RISE.

OUT OF THE CORNER OF HER EYE she can see a FORM beside her in the bed.

Nell's mouth moves. She manages to form words, but it's just a whisper.

NELL

Theo...

Nell reaches out under the covers.

Her HAND is suddenly grasped.

THE EYE on the wall stares. The babbling, liquid, deep voice mounts, and as the shadows move ever so slowly, the EYE seems to roam over the room.

NELL (cont'd)

Oh, God. It's looking for me.

And then the babbling stops. Nell grimaces in pain. She tries to look at Theo, but it's far too DARK right there beside her.

NELL (cont'd)

Theo, my hand. You're hurting me.

In the place of the babbling, another sound. High-pitched, drawn-out. A CHILD'S CRY. Nell reacts.

The cry wails louder, coming through the wall. It's a wail of agony. A wail not of this earth. Nell struggles, racked between the pain in her hand and the tortured child's cry.

NELL (cont'd)

A child. No. No! I'm right
HERE!

The EYE focusses on her. Dead on her. Nell stops. And with sudden violence, she's WRENCHED out of the bed by whatever's beside her. Nell hits the floor with a scream. She grabs at the table on this side of the bed, pulling a lamp down on her, yanking at its chain.

The room FLASHES into brilliance. Nell stands up, panting... There is nothing in the room. No Theo. She looks at her hand.

The eye on the wall is gone.

NELL (cont'd)

Oh, God. Who was holding my hand?

Nell snaps around. There on the window, SPREADING before her eyes

the frost on the glass is melting into a HORRIFYING FACE. The face of CRAIN.

Nell recoils in prickling fear. Living fear. Then her fear turns to RAGE. In the blink of an eye there's a heavy ashtray in her hand, and it's flying at the window.

NELL (cont'd)
I will not let you hurt a CHILD!

The window BASHES out into the night, the face vanishing with a HOWL of air.

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nell explodes from her room, a flying fury of hate. The child-cry seems to race ahead of her into --

INT. THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- Theo's room, which is empty. Now it seems like it's coming from the door to the hall, is right there. Nell races after it and --

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY, NORTH WING - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- barges out into the hallway. She breaks into a run. The cry sounds from farther off. Nell chases after it.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Theo carrying a pot of tea and some cups enters quietly just in case Nell is asleep. She stops in surprise. The window is smashed, lamp on the floor. Nell is gone.

THEO
Nell?

INT. NELL'S HALLWAY - NORTH WING - NIGHT

A panicked Theo runs out of Nell's room into the hallway.

THEO
Luke... Jim...!

INT. CROSS HALL - NIGHT

Halls sprawl away into darkness in all directions as Nell tries to feel out where she is, and realizes she's lost. Just like Theo and she were before. But now it's night. And she's alone. She's been tricked.

Panting, she stops, presses herself against the wall. Her breath catches.

Across from her is a MIRROR. Herself reflected in its tarnished

surface. But there is something wrong with it. Nell steps across to it.

Her reflected self begins to SMILE. But SHE'S NOT SMILING! Nell writhes in horror, but can't pull away from the mirror. In it, her GRIN WIDENS, INSANE. The bottom half of her face is someone else's.

BANG! Nell recoils. The sound breaks the spell, knocking Nell back from the mirror.

BANG. BANG. BANG. Nell turns and runs.

INT. HALL OF PILLARS - NIGHT

The banging chases Nell into the hall of pillars. Nell turns to face whatever it is that's coming after her. The BANGING CRESCENDOES... and then recedes, still audible, but like the thing following her has taken a wrong turn.

Another mirror on the wall. Nell glimpses herself in it. This time her EYES are someone else's, lit with insanity.

Nell backs away, through doors into --

INT. HALL OF MIRRORS - NIGHT

-- the hall of mirrors. Bang bang bang bang...

The octagonal, mirror-lined pillars cast and re-cast her reflection throughout the room. Nell is everywhere in plain sight, but hidden by the very infinity of her images. The BANGING grows louder.

NELL

Why do you want *me*?

The BANGING ceases. And then we see the real Nell standing there.

NELL (cont'd)

WHO AM I?

She turns around. Her REFLECTIONS all TURN with her. EXCEPT ONE. For a long moment, we see it but Nell doesn't.

And then she does.

The REFLECTED NELL stands there, hands hanging, silent.

Nell exhales in shuddering fear. The Reflected Nell MOUTHS compelling the real Nell to whisper with it:

NELL (cont'd)

Welcome home, Eleanor...

With that the Reflected Nell grins and her STOMACH SWELLS before our eyes, pregnant just like Carolyn Crain.

NELL (cont'd)

No.

Nell runs.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Nell races down the long hall, bare feet flying, covering her face from MIRRORS left and right. She stumbles into --

INT. GREENHOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- the greenhouse where she slips on the marble. She kicks the door shut behind her and lunges for the spiral staircase, her horror driving her up and up, setting the rickety thing swinging. We HEAR what Nell hears, the voices of children.

VOICES OF CHILDREN

Help us... help us...

NELL

I'm here... I'm here... I'm coming
to you, I'm coming to you...

Nell climbs higher and higher into the dark reaches above.

AS SHE CLIMBS: through the greenhouse windows we see the night sky, the clouds driven by the wind, the moon, old vines wrapped around the skin of the greenhouse... and the shapes and shadows of the vines seem to shift as if it was alive...

Nell reaches the landing. The stair case rolls back and forth beneath her. A beat. And then BAM! The door slams open below.

MARROW (OC)

Nell! Nell, are you in here?

Nell can only manage sobbing relief.

LUKE (OC)

Look, the stairs!

Nell drags herself to the hand rail. Marrow, Luke and Theo rush into view below.

They all react to the sight of Nell at the precarious top -- with her insanely happy smile. They think she's there to kill herself. Just like Rene Crain.

They all freak out in a chorus of 'Nell! No, Nell!'

MARROW

Nell! Don't move.

Nell couldn't anyway. She just grins madly, tears running down her face. Marrow grabs for the stairs, but they shift under Nell's movement from up above.

LUKE

It's not going to hold your weight.

MARROW

Just stay there, Nell!

Marrow mounts the stairs. The metal support rods sing out under his weight. And the whole thing pitches, rolling around as he goes up. Five feet. Ten feet. Fifteen feet up. The sway gets wilder as he goes.

At twenty feet, with twenty more to go to reach Nell, he stops. The stairs buck, sway out dizzily. And then to his dismay, he realizes he's on the WRONG SIDE of the double helix staircase.

MARROW (cont'd)

Damn it.

He straddles the rail to climb over to the other half.

LUKE

Don't!

The sudden shift is too much for the old stairs. The support rods CREASE and then the whole enormous column of steel from where Marrow is standing to the ground BURSTS from its supports.

Luke shoves Theo aside, and the bottom half of the stairs spirals out in a massive, deafening COLLAPSE. Marrow's cellular phone falls out of his pocket and shatters in hundred pieces across the floor.

The top half of the stairs remains, still hanging from the ceiling. Nell grips the railing at the top.

Marrow hangs there by one hand over the razor tangle of steel below. He flails out for the other stairway, swings himself over to it. It takes a moment for him to realize he almost just died. A moment of paralysis. This is no longer an experiment. No longer fun and games.

MARROW

Nell? Are you up there?

There she is. Marrow forces himself to start climbing the shaky stairs. Luke and Theo watch from below, tense.

Then he's there. Nell stands a mere arm's length from him on the other side of the railing.

MARROW (cont'd)

Come on, Nell. You have to climb
over and step back on the stairs.

Nell barely seems to hear him. Instead she looks at the DEFORMING
SUPPORT RODS around her. We HEAR the voices of the CHILDREN,
calling to her.

MARROW (cont'd)

Nell! Now!

Theo, on the ground, calls up to Nell.

THEO

Nell, go with him! Just go with
him.

Nell refocuses on him and then gingerly climbs over the railing.
She hangs there. She looks down at the tangled steel below...

NELL

The children want me. They're
calling me. They need me.

MARROW

Nell. You will come here now.

Nell looks UP at him, hazy.

And THEN BEHIND MARROW: the shifting clouds, the moon, the vines...
and suddenly all these random elements behind him form a dark
hideous face and in front of it a hand, and the hand is rushing
forward to PUSH MARROW OFF THE STEPS.

After we scream, NELL SCREAMS.

NELL

NO!

And as Marrow falls forward, pushed by the force behind him, Nell
grabs him... he is caught on the rail... As she has reached out to
him, now she has fallen into thin air, and she falls towards Marrow,
and they hold each other. She has a hand... then a foot... she
slips... she holds on again... and reaches the staircase. She grabs
on.

A moment's peace... and then a new disaster: with a metallic POP POP
POP the support rods spring from their anchors and the rest of the
stairwell next to them drops to the ground in a catastrophic
shattering of sound.

Marrow looks behind him, to whatever it was that Nell saw over his
shoulder. He looks back at her. Her eyes are closed, she won't
open them.

MARROW

We're going down the stairs, Nell,
I'm taking you down the stairs.

He leads her go down the stairs.

INT. THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Marrow and Theo stand in the doorway to the shared bathroom watching Luke finish taping a trash bag over Nell's broken window. Nell lies in her bed, asleep or unconscious, it's impossible to say. Luke finishes, comes over. Marrow is hushed, grim, exhausted.

THEO

She needs help.

MARROW

I'll take her with me to the University tomorrow. I can't believe I read the test wrong. I didn't see anything that looked like she was suicidal.

LUKE

You used the wrong test.

THEO

(indignant)

Will the two of you shut up! God damn it! Maybe the tests were right, Marrow. She's sensitive, she's vulnerable, but I don't think she's suicidal and I didn't have to test her. Maybe she wasn't trying to kill herself. Maybe she was really scared. Maybe she really heard voices.

Marrow looks away, doesn't want to say this. Theo reads the feelings on his face.

LUKE

You're not telling us something.

MARROW

Watts. Those were his keys Nell found. His roommate called and said Watts left when he was supposed to. I think he's here.

THEO

He's wandering around the house, and Nell heard him. She thought it was ghosts. Let's go look for him again.

MARROW

No. If he's lost somewhere in the house... he'll have to stay lost until tomorrow, until the night is over. What we have to do now is be together, with Nell.

And they go. Three scared people.

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Luke sits on the closed toilet and watches Nell in the adjoining room. Light from the bathroom falls across her fetal, curled form in the bed.

The door to Theo's room is open too. Luke glances over. Theo lies on her bed. Marrow is slouched in a chair.

Luke settles back against the wall.

The HOUSE EXHALES, and the breath of the house is like the poppy field in the Wizard of OZ; it brings on sleep.

INT. THEO'S ROOM - MUCH LATER THAT NIGHT

Marrow is struggling to stay awake and his eyes finally close. Theo breathes hard in the grips of some awful dream.

This is what the House wanted.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell lies asleep, the ornate headboard looming behind her, black with its strange plant-like splay of leaves.

Nell draws a deep, sleeping breath... and her EYES OPEN. She lies there, her breath still in her lungs, not moving, but sensing something. A long beat. When she lets her breath out, we can see it in the cold.

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Luke's head rests solidly on the wall. His eyes are closed, unaware his breath is fogging too.

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nell lies there afraid to move, afraid to make the faintest sound. From the darkness above WOOD CREAKS. At first it seems like someone is walking on the floor above. But it is coming from within the room.

The CARVINGS on the ceiling, the impossibly elaborate woodwork, ARE MOVING. Incredibly slowly, with incredible subtlety: turning inside out, some of the forms lengthening, some shortening. Carvings

changing here, changing there -- the ceiling coming alive -- with some grand design we sense but cannot yet see.

The wood grows out of the ceiling eating its way down into the tall bed POSTERS. It crawls down the posters, straining the sinewy baroque curves, swelling them...

The CREAKING begins from the darkness of the wall opposite Nell. Nell inclines her head to see. Out of the wall two enormous BULGES grow, side by side.

From behind Nell, now. The headboard GROANS, its shapes moving, the fan-like plant designs thickening and SPLAYING wide.

Nell can't move, her mind refusing to understand what's going on. The bulges in the wall DROOP to the floor. And then we BEGIN TO SEE: they are like a pair of KNEES.

Understanding starts to show in Nell's eyes. She looks up at the ceiling. And now all the movement, the design behind the awful transformation of the ceiling is clear.

It is a HEAD. A visage of madness, of absolute horror, eyelids sealing shut its blind face.

Silence. Nell's breath comes ragged. Unable to speak, but trying to call out.

The EYES OPEN. A SCREAM tears out of Nell's throat.

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Luke is shocked awake in time to see Nell's room CONVULSE on her just before the DOOR SLAMS in his face.

LUKE

Oh my God...

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

The entire ROOM RAMS itself at Nell, jolting her hard into the headboard. THUMBS FOLD OUT of the woodwork, pinning her by the shoulders against it. As the room lowers itself toward her, she SCREAMS out of her mind.

INT. NELL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Marrow lunges into the bathroom, thrown from sleep as Luke stares in impotent shock. Theo is there behind Marrow an instant later.

MARROW

What is it?

Luke can't make any words come out. Marrow shoves him aside, grabs the doorknob and thrashes at it.

MARROW (cont'd)

Help me!

He braces Luke up, and then they lunge together, shouldering the door. It splinters out of its frame --

INT. NELL'S ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

-- and stumble into Nell's room. Marrow's mouth opens. Luke stands speechless. They're stricken by the sight: Nell SCREAMING, held by the headboard as the deformed ceiling dips over her, the room THRUSTING at her rhythmically. Nell and Theo make EYE CONTACT.

THEO

Oh, Jesus.

Marrow recovers, reaches out for Nell, and the FACE in the ceiling turns on him. The GAZE stops Marrow in his tracks. He looks up into it and knows it's real. Somehow, it is Crain.

Luke appears from out of nowhere on the other side of the bed and SMASHES off one of the wooden hands with a large brass candelabra. Nell screams in surprise, but Theo drags her out of the bed.

The head turns to them. They flee. Marrow backs away in awe and fear.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Luke and Theo drag Nell down the stairs into the Great Hall. Marrow brings up the rear. They retreat for the entry as Luke puts his jacket over Nell's shoulders. Marrow stops, looks back up the stairs.

MARROW

Wait a second! Wait!

All there is are the sounds of Nell, Luke and Theo making for the hall to the entry. The House is silent.

LUKE

No.

Luke goes out. But Nell pauses, stopping Theo with her.

The House is quiet. Marrow's hand still outstretched. Nell looks around the room. There are heads everywhere, faces: animal heads, humans, gods, all staring from the woodwork, the carpets everything. All turning to her.

Theo looks around, but can't see what Nell is seeing. Nell's breath comes faster, disoriented, yet aware...

NELL

They're all in here. All the ones
he killed. They're just children!
We have to help them!

THEO
(to Marrow)
Come on! Why are we waiting?

Even now, Marrow can't believe what he just saw, but Theo's voice brings him back. He whirls, grabs onto Nell, helps Theo drag her out.

EXT. HILL HOUSE DRIVEWAY/GATE - NIGHT

Four cars sit behind the massive, locked gate, as far from Hill House as possible. Marrow paces past the fence, staring out, the road beyond leading out of this place, so close...

Luke digs with a pen knife at the marble footing below the gate. No easy way under it. He stands and gazes at the razor-sharp spikes twenty feet up. There's no way to climb this.

THEO
Oh my God we need to call someone?

Marrow just looks at her and walks back to Nell's car.

INT. NELL'S CAR - NIGHT

Nell sits in the passenger seat of her car, wrapped in her jacket. She stares out at the gate, at Luke and Theo consulting. Marrow appears in the window.

MARROW
You okay?

Nell nods, but there's something about her not right.

NELL
Why did you bring me here?

Marrow shakes his head, doesn't fully understand.

NELL (cont'd)
Why did you call me and tell me to
look in the paper for the ad?

MARROW
Nell, what are you talking about?
I never called you.

Nell stares, dismayed, but Marrow is dead serious.

NELL
But you told me to look in the

paper! You told me I'd be perfect!

MARROW

Nell, the first time I ever spoke with you in person was the night we met here.

NELL

Then who called me?

Hill House looms behind her, windows forming eyes, the carport a gaping mouth.

Nell's dismay becomes a cold, terrifying understanding, and she turns and stares back up at the House.

Luke comes up with Theo on the other side of the car.

THEO

Nell --

LUKE

-- how much is this car worth?

EXT. HILL HOUSE DRIVEWAY/GATE - NIGHT

Theo pulls Nell away from the drive. Marrow stands back from Nell's car where Luke belts in behind the wheel.

Luke eases the car forward to the gate. He advances until the car's bumper makes contact. And then without further ado, REVS the engine.

The Buick grinds into the heavy steel bars. The chain tightens around the two halves of the gate, but shows not the slightest strain.

INT. NELL'S CAR - NIGHT

Luke grimaces, shifts into low, pours on the gas.

EXT. MAIN GATE - NIGHT

The car fishes back and forth against the gate, hurling a shower of gravel on the other cars off to the side of the road. Marrow, Nell and Theo move back.

One of the Buick's headlights breaks. The grill mashes in. For a long moment the car struggles against the Gate. No good. Luke eases up.

Theo looks at Marrow. Luke puts the car in reverse.

LUKE

Get the hell out of the way!

They back way up. Luke vanishes up the drive in the car. And then the Buick comes around the corner, accelerating, slicing down the gravel road.

INT. NELL'S CAR - NIGHT

Luke sits way back in the seat, grits his teeth, floors it, aiming at the gate...

EXT. MAIN GATE - NIGHT

The car SMASHES into it... and is STOPPED, collapsing, twisting in a deafening hail of steel and glass.

The massive gate has BENT itself AROUND the car, holding it in its steel-grip.

EXT. GATE - NIGHT

Nell understands, the house will not let her go. She turns away from the gate, faces the House, mesmerized by the beauty in this monstrosity. The House is calling her back, and Nell is drawn towards it. She starts walking...

INT. NELL'S CAR - NIGHT

Luke gasps for the seat belt, the wind knocked out of him, steering column pushed to his chest. Marrow and Theo run up outside. Luke sees him, sees he's not getting any closer than ten feet, and he's looking back at the gas tank.

Luke gets the seatbelt off, tries to open the door but it's warped shut. He struggles to get out from behind the wheel. Sparks jump from the battery. Gas shoots out of the fuel pump onto the shattered window. He knows he's in trouble.

THEO

Hurry. The gas! Luke... The gas!

Finally Luke gets free of the wheel. It's agonizing to watch... The passenger door is jammed shut too.

He squirms into the back seat. The rear doors are in the same condition as the front. But the rear window is blown out. He crawls out onto the trunk.

EXT. MAIN GATE - NIGHT

Marrow hurries around the back of the car, staying clear of the lake of gas spreading about it. Luke rolls off. Marrow helps him up, and gets him away a safe distance.

LUKE

I'm okay. Okay. Just my chest.
Just my wind knocked out.

Marrow looks up at the gate. It is even more impassible than before with the gasoline-saturated wreck in it. No way to try another break-out either.

LUKE (cont'd)
Sorry about your car, Nell.

He turns around. The others do too.

No Nell. Luke and Theo look up. Mute dread. No Nell anywhere.

MARROW
Oh, no.

INT. GRAND ENTRY - NIGHT

The massive black door swings silently into the dark, vaulted entry. Marrow pauses there, looks about, and then enters. He holds a tire iron.

Luke does too. He and Theo follow Marrow in.

THEO
I'm sure she went back to her
room.

INT. GRAND STAIRWAY - NIGHT

They stay to the outside of the stairs, padding silently up, trying to get a glimpse of the floor above. It's shrouded in darkness.

They turn at the landing, eyes riveted to the top of the stairs. They start up.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY, NORTH WING - NIGHT

Marrow, Luke and Theo pause at the top of the stairs and peer down both long, empty directions of the hallway.

Then Marrow turns toward Nell and Theo's room. The brass candelabra... in front of the open door.

The rooms draw nearer, closer. Not even the sound of their breathing.

The door is ajar. Marrow pushes it open with the tire iron. The room lies in silent disarray. Normal disarray. The bed normal. The ceiling normal. No Nell.

Marrow and Theo REACT and enter the room. Luke lingers out in the hall a moment. And just as he steps in after them we HOLD on the long, empty hall --

-- and a FIGURE glides across. Far down at the other end. She disappears. It was Nell.

INT. STATUARY HALL - NIGHT

Nell walks through the row of dark statues. Carved faces watch her pass.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE LOCKED ROOM - NIGHT

Nell stands before the threshold of the horrific doors, once locked, now inexplicably OPEN. The mythological frieze on the door split in half, a world cut in two, a seal broken. Like something has come out of its tomb.

Nell steps into the blackness.

INT. THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Marrow comes out of the bathroom, joining Theo by the window next to her bed. Luke stands in the doorway.

THEO
Was sure she'd be in here.

LUKE
(worried)
Where in the hell can she be.

Marrow remembers.

MARROW
Oh no...

INT. GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Marrow, Luke and Theo enter the greenhouse, the heavy growth forbidding in the darkness. They spread out on the parallel walkways.

THEO
Nell?

They reach the transept, turn down it toward the statue of Crain at the end looming white in the dusk.

Dead silence. Then Marrow SCREAMS.

Under a thin layer of ice underneath the giant hand that protrudes from the pond we find Watt's body, as if the hand wants to keep him there forever. Marrow did find his Watts, a horrifying sight.

MARROW
Oh my God it's Watts.

As at the same time out of the mouth from the sculpture erupts a river of blood, scaring the hell out of them. Their clothes splattered with blood, Marrow quickly leads them out of there.

INT. LOCKED ROOM - NURSERY - NIGHT

Nell stands there in the darkness, sensing the expanse of the room, turning... and kicking something on the floor.

It is a wooden toy train. Then she sees a rocking horse by her feet. It is a NURSERY. Turn-of-the-century.

And as Nell's eyes adjust, as she tries to see what else is in here in the dark, she begins to make out WHITE SHROUDED SHAPES.

Against the wall. A bed covered in a sheet. A table beside it. A HAND BELL. A CANE.

Just like Nell's sick room at home. Nell realizes it, covers her mouth.

The furniture is in EXACTLY the same position, though the sheets covering the pieces are stained, FAR OLDER.

And on the wall, something in a frame is covered with a piece of sheet.

Nell approaches it in trepidation and removes the cloth. For a long beat, all we see is her face as it goes slack. Understanding.

The framed thing is a stitchery. It says: A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE.

Just like the one at home.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Marrow, Theo and Luke barge into the Great Hall.

THEO

Nell!

LUKE

We can't stay here looking for her. She doesn't want to be found...

Marrow and Theo look at him. It's what they've been thinking, but haven't had the courage to say. Theo stops suddenly. Turns around. The men notice, and pause.

Then they hear it. Faint. Floating down from upstairs somewhere. Nell's TUNE. It doesn't sound right, but it's hard to tell as it's coming from so far away.

They look at each other, start for the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOCKED ROOM - NIGHT

Theo, Marrow and Luke stand at the end of the dark hallway. They stare at the gaping doors to the nursery at the far end. The tune is coming from within. Abruptly, it stops.

And instead of Nell's tune, there's a repetitive CREAK. CREAK. CREAK.

In rising dread, Theo starts forward.

It takes Marrow and Luke a moment to come after her. The CREAKING gets louder, unnerving.

They get to the doors, Theo first. She pushes them wide.

INT. LOCKED ROOM - NURSERY - NIGHT

They stop there, staring into the shadows.

THEO

Nell?

And there, hunched over something turning a CREAKING CRANK of some sort, is Nell.

MARROW

Nell.

Nell straightens from whatever it is she was doing and turns to them. Theo steps toward her, afraid for her.

THEO

What'd you come back for, babe?

NELL

Just had to be sure.

LUKE

Come on, Jesus! Let's go!

Marrow shuts him up with a vicious gesture, stays back himself as Theo approaches Nell.

THEO

Let's go, hon. Don't you want to go back to your little apartment where you can hear the buoy out in the harbor when the wind is just right?

Nell smiles at Theo. She's holding something.

NELL

Oh, Theo. You know I don't have an apartment.

THEO

Then let's go get you one.

Nell's smile softens even more. Her voice is reassuring.

NELL

Don't worry about me, Theo. I'm wanted. Right here. I'm home.

A CHILL of fear cuts through Theo as Nell looks deep into her eyes.

NELL (cont'd)

After all...

(beat)

I'm family.

The thing in Nell's hand is a NEEDLE, the thing she's been cranking an ANCIENT PHONOGRAPH. She lowers the needle to the spinning record. And HER TUNE, the one she hums all the time, begins to play.

The others are frozen where they stand. Marrow's mind reels at the implications of what he's hearing.

MARROW

No.

NELL

My mother used to hum this to me. Like her mother hummed it to her. And my great grandmother Carolyn hummed it to her.

Nell turns back. The others stand there speechless.

NELL (cont'd)

I have to stay. You better go. I could explain it, but you'd never understand.

And that, finally, galvanizes the others into action. Marrow sweeps past Theo, grabs Nell hard, and swings her for the door.

MARROW

Come on.

NELL

No --

THEO

Please, Nell, just see us out.

Luke closes in on Nell with Marrow, and there's nothing she can do but let herself be pulled along.

INT. GRAND STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Down the stairs they come, Luke out in front now, bounding down a half flight ahead. Marrow and Theo support Nell between them.

Nell looks up at the hooded painting of Crain, but is spun around and taken down the next flight.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Nell, Marrow and Theo reach the bottom of the stairs and pause. Luke is halfway across the room, looking back to make sure they're with him --

-- and Nell digs her heels in, jerking Marrow and Theo to a stop. She stares. The others follow her gaze.

She's looking down the connecting hall, out to the entry at the front doors. They're open.

NELL

In the night...

The DOOR BAMS SHUT with a concussion that rocks the entire room, sweeping Luke's jacket under it. The HANDLES TURN, LOCK DOWN.

Stunned. All stunned.

A RUSH OF AIR. The House EXHALES. Silence. And then CREEEEAK. They cast their eyes back up the stairs.

BUMP BUMP. Far-off sounds, hair-raising, of infinite variety, carry down the halls.

NELL (cont'd)

...In the dark.

Luke rushes from the room.

INT. GRAND ENTRY - NIGHT

Luke YELLS and throws himself at the front doors. Marrow runs over to help him and shoves the tire iron between the doors and PRIES. Marrow throws the useless thing down and stands back.

Luke joins him, and they shoulder block it together. But this door is MASSIVE. There's no way.

LUKE

No you bastard! Break!

He roundhouse kicks it, hurts himself.

Theo, afraid, watches the Great Hall behind them. Nell puts her hand on her shoulder.

NELL

It's not safe for you anymore.
The children need me, and Crain is
doing everything he can to keep me
from them.

Theo stares, appalled. Marrow looks around, puts his hand up to shush everyone. The HOUSE MOANS, the BUMPING growing, searching.

MARROW

Come on.

He rushes down the hall, Luke right beside him, Nell and Theo in their wake.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Luke's first barging into the kitchen. Big windows all along the wall. Huge windows. Marrow follows him in, Luke's fear turning into a vicious smile as he sees the towering windows.

Nell and Theo are right behind in time to see Luke and Marrow scooping up a table and chair respectively.

LUKE

Watch out!

The men rush the same window, side-by-side, and let the heavy pieces of furniture fly from ten feet.

The WINDOW SHATTERS, dozens of panes blown out into the darkness beyond. But the metal LATTICE remains, the chair's legs stuck in it.

Marrow and Luke pause, taken back a beat. They hustle over to it. Theo and Nell stand a few feet back.

Luke grabs the chair, levers it, tries to pry open the metal. Marrow reaches through, knocking loose glass, trying to find some sort of handle on the other side.

THEO

Hurry!

Theo watches the door behind them. Luke pries at the inch of metal between him and freedom. It won't break.

MARROW

They don't open!

Marrow slips on the broken glass and catches hold of the lattice LACERATING his ring and little finger. With a cry of pain, he lands on the floor.

MARROW (cont'd)

Oh Jesus my hand.

Nell and Theo fall to the floor to help him. Marrow moans, and Nell grips his injured hand in hers. Fast, like she was born a trauma doctor, Nell clamps off the blood with her fingers.

NELL

Give me your shoelace.

Marrow tugs at his shoe, in shock, and looks at Nell. She's calm. Terrifyingly calm. And in that moment, he realizes she's not out of her mind. She just understands things beyond what he could possible begin to understand.

MARROW

What'll happen to us, Nell?

NELL

Nothing, if you leave right now.
There's a war going on all around us. Don't get in the way, please.

Nell cinches the shoelace tight around his wrist.

Luke throws down the chair, giving up on the window.

LUKE

Shit! All right, you
sonofabitch...

As he looks up at another one of Crain's painting hanging on the wall. Nell Theo with Marrow straggle toward the great hall.

INT. VESTIBULE TOWARDS GREAT HALL - NIGHT

LUKE

Maybe this'll get your attention!

Luke flicks a LIGHTER out of his pocket.

MARROW

Luke!

Before anyone can stop him, he LIGHTS a towering TAPESTRY on fire.

He races from one to the next, lighting them. Theo and Nell help Marrow up, back away as Luke shoots by.

All the tapestries are ON FIRE, blazing up like torches.

At last, his rage spent, heaving, he moves to join the others at the center of the room. They stare at him, appalled, afraid. Knowing he has done something wrong.

Luke stops. Maybe fifteen feet away. He sees their expressions.

LUKE

What?

Nell looks over at the burning tapestries. Heat sears the stone, blackens the carved figures in the woodwork.

The ruddy light casts deep shadows throughout the room.

LUKE (cont'd)

We'll get out after this wing
burns down. Let's go.

But there's no need. The tapestries are consuming themselves too fast to ignite the walls or ceiling. They all realize it. As the last flaming scraps of cloth fall to the floor and go out, there is utter silence.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Luke looks at them helplessly. An awful, impending beat. Without warning, the huge PERSIAN CARPET he's standing on JERKS out from under him. Luke falls on his stomach.

Stunned, Luke looks straight into Nell's eyes. Then the carpet slides fast for the FIREPLACE. It whips up to the hearth and sends Luke flying through the chain curtains.

The others are speechless. They can do nothing but watch as Luke lays there on the ashdrop. A long moment.

NELL

(to the house, to
Crain)

No! No! Let them go!

She knows what is going to happen, is powerless to prevent it. Luke stands up, has time to give her a look.

And then the LION'S HEAD FLUE drops open behind him. Luke looks back into its iron eyes --

-- and with SHOCKING SPEED the FLUE snaps shut again, taking Luke's head off his body.

The decapitated corpse falls back in the fireplace like a puppet with its strings cut.

Nell, Marrow and Theo stand there. Not sure of what just happened,

their minds unable to accept it.

A sound comes up in Theo's throat. A sob. A horrified whimper. Marrow and Nell stand there speechless. It's as if saying the obvious will make it real:

MARROW

Luke.

BANG. The blood-splattered LION'S HEAD drops open. Luke's head falls out.

Theo SCREAMS and SCREAMS again. Nell backs away with Marrow, almost has the presence of mind to drag them away, but --

-- CLANG! The ASH DROP OPENS. The sudden sound stops them in their tracks.

As they watch, it's as if the House INHALES. And BOOM!

Out of the ash drop EXPLODES a hail of BONES, SKULLS, FLYING ASH.

Nell, Theo and Marrow back up toward the Grand Staircase as TONS OF INCINERATED HUMAN REMAINS vomit from the fireplace, blasting across the floor, knocking over furniture with shocking violence. Skulls bounce over wood. Hundreds of them.

Theo and Marrow cover their faces as shattered bits of bone, loose teeth pelt them. Nell is immune.

They run up the Grand Staircase toward the top and finally it can't reach them anymore.

INT. MEZZANINE - NIGHT

They look out at the full scope of Crain's horror.

THEO

Oh God, we can't get out!

MARROW

Nell, what do we do?

NELL

He played hide and seek with the children. That's how he built the house.

Marrow stares at her, trembling. He glances around at the winding labyrinth of house. Impossible.

MARROW

We can't hide in here! We won't make it til morning.

Nell looks at him, pitying. Infinitely sad, but guarding them.

NELL

I know.

Behind them the huge painting of Hugh Crain in a golden frame with sharp metal spikes, looks down at them. The room inhales and exhales, the bumping sound resumes. A rumble runs through the house and they all look down in fear toward the great hall where a cloud of ashes still hangs in the air.

Unseen by them, this rumble start to shake the painting behind them. The sound from the great hall makes Marrow and Theo back up more, but Nell doesn't move... she senses something is about to happen and she will fight it...

She suddenly turns and sees the painting... in a flash she reaches out for Marrow and Theo, pull them out of the way as the giant painting with the huge skull, falls face down toward them. It misses them by a hair, but their clothes are shredded by the spikes.

Marrow and Theo are-shocked as they back up right toward the GRIFFIN on top of the staircase.

For a split second the BRASS Griffin right behind them, comes alive, opens it's fangs and claws and is ready to attack... but Nell sees the danger, grabs a human bone and batters the griffin.

NELL (cont'd)

No, no, you leave them alone!

And the griffin turns back into brass. Marrow and Theo unaware of what happened behind them. They have to get out of there.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nell leads Marrow and Theo down the dark hallway, the twisted woodwork along the walls frozen, but seeming poised to reach out, trip someone, grab a sleeve.

It is a nightmare House. Doing what it was made for.

The BUMPING they've left behind seems to vanish up and into the ceiling. It gives chase, on the floor above. Nell keeps looking back, and every time she does the BUMPING seems to get more firm, MORE LIKE A FOOTSTEP. Calm, Nell urges them on.

NELL

Hurry.

The FOOTSTEPS upstairs come faster; whatever's up there moving better, more naturally.

Theo and Marrow turn LEFT through an archway. Nell looks back at the ceiling. The thing's moving fast.

She dodges toward the archway where Theo and Marrow went, and STOPS. It's a wall. Solid wall. There's no archway here! Nell backs away. Alone.

The House has separated them.

Nell tries to open any of the hall doors, but they are all locked. There's no other way then going back.

INT. MEZZANINE - DAY

Nell is back in the mezzanine, steps carefully over Crain's painting. The long white lace curtains in front of a side window start to flutter in the wind... but the window is closed!

Nell walks up to the top of the stairs, her back to the window, calls out:

NELL

Jim! Theo!

No answer, and as she steps forward, listening for a reply, the CURTAIN BILLOWS OUT behind her, and in its movement, becomes for a split second, the image of CRAIN, GRABBING for her.

Nell, oblivious, steps just OUT OF REACH, and as the breeze fails, the contours and patterns of the billowing curtain dissolve into chaos. Nell glances back at it, just sees curtain, and looks up at the open window.

She turns from it, determined, and starts out to find her friends and walks down the steps.

INT. GRAND STAIRCASE/GREAT HALL - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE BRASS GRIFFINS that guard the staircase.

Behind Nell's back they all turn toward her, follow her with their eyes as Nell enters the great hall. And they cower in fear for what is about to happen. Again Nell call's out for Theo and Marrow.

And Nell doesn't see the scores of TINY ARMS OF CHILDREN that fold out from the carvings in the high backed chairs in the hall as Nell carefully avoids stepping on the skulls and bones of the children that cover the floor.

Horribly alive are these TINY HANDS as reach out for her hair after she passes. We're screaming as they almost have her... and Nell steps away.

And then... CREAK... CREAK... CREAK...

The terrified animal heads on the balustrade, their eyes flash in fear. The lions above the big fireplace snarl restlessly.

Cherubim, afraid, clasp hands. Gods and men pay unwilling witness to what is now coming down the stairs.

The upper flight of stairs strains under the weight of the thing coming down, over our heads, coming down, down... and now at the landing. The sound stops.

Nell's BREATH escapes, visible in the cold as she watches, rooted to the floor in the Grand Entry.

Darkness against darkness. Something BLOCKS the glint of the gilded frame up on the landing. Something huge. A beat.

And then a SHADOW sweeps across the scene, impenetrable, darkening the stairs, wiping them from sight, like something gliding down them.

Before our eyes, out of the most subtle variation of shadow, flickers into existence:

THE SHAPE, tall, eight or nine feet, featureless, black, but in the proportions of an enormous man with his head bowed, shoulders stooped. And just like that, all it is...

...is a well of darkness and night once again. We don't even know for sure what we just saw. But it is still there in that bar of shadow.

Nell goes rigid, not breathing, not seeing anything but the awful presence. She is spellbound.

BANG. A door in the connecting passage opens, and Theo and Marrow come out, between Nell in the entry and the thing in the Great Hall beyond.

In a flash the SHAPE is moving at Theo and Marrow. They don't see it, have their backs turned.

THEO
Nell! There you --

But Nell is looking past them. They see her face and turn around.

NELL
Nooo, not them!

What is coming at them makes the blood stop.

The Shape rushes from the Great Hall, vanishing as it crosses the pools of moonlight, reforming darker as it hits shadow again, its wake like a shockwave, invisible itself, but VISIBLE IN ITS EFFECTS:

Theo SCREAMS. Marrow stumbles back. And then Nell's voice rings out:

NELL (cont'd)
Is this where she bashed your
brains in?

The onrushing presence STOPS. Seems to turn its attention to Nell,
standing there before the towering front doors.

NELL (cont'd)
When you came in the door? I bet
that was the last thing you
expected. Right? From Carolyn?

(beat)
You thought, oh, Carolyn, I've
taken it all out of her, you
thought, Oh, Carolyn, she's no
threat. Carolyn. Great Grandma
Carolyn. Did you know that?

Nell shows no fear. There's a ferocious edge to her voice.

NELL (cont'd)
She found out what you did, and
she knew there was only one way to
stop you. And she stopped you, so
you couldn't torture anymore of
the living.

(beat)
But you wouldn't even let go of
the dead, would you? Well, now
I'm here. They called me. Did
you know that? They've been
crying out for help for a long
time. And I heard them.

She points out at the human remains strewn all over the Great Hall.

NELL (cont'd)
And I won't let you hurt them
anymore.

The SHAPE hovers there, silent. Air and shadow distort around it.
The carved animal heads on the Newell posts and walls loll back and
forth, alive then not-alive. Pieces of furniture stamp in fury, try
to animate themselves, but can't find limbs that work.

NELL (cont'd)
Come on, Hugh Crain, you know what
to do. We've both been here
before.

The SHAPE HOWLS FORWARD, knocking everyone out of their seats. It
flies across the floor at Nell.

Marrow and Theo are slammed against the walls out of its way.

Nell OPENS WIDE HER ARMS in an EMBRACE.

It's ON HER, but just as it seems to hit, it SPLITS like she went right through it. The SHAPE and all the debris in its wake IMPACTS deep in the enormous doors.

The carved WOODWORK seems to suck it all in, cracking, groaning. And then all the SCREAMS are cut off.

Nell stands there with her arms spread. A long moment.

She opens her eyes.

And then the woodwork LASHES OUT, grabs her from behind, slams her back against the doors. THE BLOW HAS KILLED HER.

We feel her bones break as she crumples, is drawn into the woodwork.

And for a few seconds Nell's body just hangs there... and then it gently falls down.

Theo lets out a horrified cry as she runs toward Nell.

THEO

NELL!

Marrow gets up off the floor in terror and awe, his life his beliefs changed forever. He walks over to Nell and feels her pulse, knowing it is a useless gesture as Theo softly moans over Nell.

And as the camera pans up across the entry door, we see a new carving in the sculpted doors. It is a woman and as we move in we can see that she wears the same necklace as Nell...

INT. HILL HOUSE FRONT DOORS, ENTRY - EARLY MORNING

The HOUSE INHALES. And BOOM!

The front doors blast wide. Every door in the entry slams open.

EXT. HILL HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Against the early light of a rising sun, the silhouette of Hill House. Every window and every door in the House is open, each and every one CRYING OUT with a different, unintelligible voice, like a soul, the soul of a child, escaping from each one.

EXT. GATE - DAWN

Theo and Marrow stand on the far side of Nell's wrecked car. On the other side of the gate Mr. Dudley is undoing the chain. Mrs. Dudley stares at the ragged duo.

MRS. DUDLEY

(her final verdict)
City people.

Mr. Dudley can barely get one side of the gate open with the car crushed in it. Theo and Marrow emerge, dazed, into the real world again.

MR. DUDLEY
You find out what you wanted to know, mister?

Marrow stares at him, he's an exhausted man. He walks away, Theo beside him.

THEO
I'm not going back to New York City. I'm going to find an apartment with a little flower garden, where you can just see the ocean and at night, when the wind comes in just right, you can hear the sound of the harbor. What about you?

MARROW
I'm a scientist. I just conducted an experiment. Now I have to write it up.

THEO
But the experiment was a failure.

Now, we could have him say this line...

MARROW
Was it?

But he should just look at her, and say the same thing with his eyes.

We pull back.

EXT. BERKSHIRE HILLS - DAY (AERIAL)

The summer hills lie green, passing fast underneath. Clearings loom out of the forest ahead. And there, its sprawling stone in the sunshine, rises Hill House.

FADE OUT.

ALTERNATE ENDING

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know, mister?

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As they walk away, the SOUND OF APPLAUSE comes up.

WE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRINTING PLANT - DAY

Where the applause turns out to be the sound of a press finishing a run of a book. This could be shot in an old press in England, or a foundry, with a few pieces of equipment to suggest a press. There are stacks of books. This is the printing press in Hell. The NOISE is deafening.

The title of the book: FEAR AND PERFORMANCE.

Marrow stands before a mountain of copies of the book. A PRINTER very proudly hands him a copy.

PRINTER
(has to shout)
First copy!

Marrow opens the book. The Printer looks at the page over his shoulder.

PRINTER (cont'd)
(reads)
This book is dedicated to Eleanor
Vance, Luke Sanderson, Rene Crain
and Carolyn Crain.
(to Marrow)
They'll be happy to see this.
Their names in a book, it kind of
makes them immortal, doesn't it?

Marrow looks at him.

MARROW

In a way.

Marrow studies the page. We go into the whiteness of the page to:

EXT. HILL HOUSE - DAY

Where we find Theo. The House is beautiful today, it's sunny, there are flowers outside, the mood has changed. Theo is now softened, she's found something better than what she had. She goes into the house.

INT. HILL HOUSE - DAY

Theo is in the House. She looks around, walks up the stairs.

THEO

Nell?... Nell?

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FADE OUT.