

AFTER.LIFE

Screenplay by
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INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - DAY

BLINDING WHITENESS

We hear a MAN GASPING softly. Rhythmically.

A LUMINOUS PALE SHAPE slowly forms out of the searing whiteness. Gradually we realize we're moving across the ALABASTER BODY of a WOMAN. Her skin translucent.

ON THE WOMAN'S FACE

Ethereal. Her eyes closed. Her face lifeless. Then...

...her eyes open. She looks straight at us with unseeing pale blue eyes. This is ANNA (late 20s).

We pull back. PAUL (30s) makes love to Anna. Their movements perfunctory. Passionless. He turns to look at her. Realizes she's not there. He suddenly stops. Rolls off her. Sits on the edge of the bed.

PAUL
What's wrong?

ANNA
Nothing.

Anna leans down and picks up her RED SLIP from the floor.

PAUL
(sighs wearily)
You used to enjoy it. Now it's...

He shakes his head. Frustrated. Lights a cigarette.

PAUL
...it's like fucking a corpse.

Paul immediately realizes he's gone too far. Turns to Anna.

PAUL
Shit. I'm sorry. That was--

Anna gets out of bed. Walks towards the bathroom. Paul puts his head in his hands.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Through the fogged shower partition we see the blurred ghostly figure of Anna. Paul walks in.

PAUL
Anna. I'm sorry. That was a stupid thing to say. But you know sometimes... sometimes it's like you're not here anymore. Like you're somewhere else.

Anna doesn't reply.

PAUL
Is this about us?

ON ANNA

her head bowed as she lets the water wash over her.

ANNA
It's not about us.

PAUL (O.C.)
Then what is it?

ANNA
I don't know.

PAUL (O.C.)
I just want us to be happy.

Anna doesn't move. We sense the emptiness inside her.

PAUL (O.C.)
Are you happy?

She closes her eyes. Forces herself to reply.

ANNA
I'm happy.

A DROP OF BLOOD

falls into the water. Then another drop.

ON ANNA

her nose is bleeding. She touches her lips. Looks impassively at the blood on her fingertips. The SOUND OF WATER carries into the next scene...

FADE TO WHITE.

A STREAM OF CRYSTAL BLUE WATER

A MAN'S HANDS penetrate the water. Thin and elegant. Perfectly manicured. Turning slowly as he washes them meticulously. He picks up a crisply folded white towel. Dries his hands carefully. Snaps on white latex gloves.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

A beautiful morning. We move through a tranquil cemetery. Pastoral and idyllic. Dappled light falls through old trees onto statues of grieving angels.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

A path leads to an old well-kept house. Amongst a blaze of violet tulips we see a sign: *Eliot Deane. Funeral Home.*

INT. FUNERAL HOME. CASKET DISPLAY ROOM - MORNING

Sun streams into an elegant wood-panelled room. The Funeral Director, ELIOT DEANE (40s) guides MRS. AYRES (70s) past caskets tastefully arranged on faux-marble pedestals. He's a serene man. Quiet and professional.

ELIOT
The Antique Carlisle. Solid cherry.
(strokes the wood lovingly)
Hand rubbed satin finish. Tufted
sovereign interior. Eternal-Rest
adjustable mattress with matching pillow.

He gestures to a metal casket.

ELIOT
Or perhaps the Aegean? Solid bronze
exterior. Hand brushed finish with
Grecian bronze highlights.

MRS. AYRES
The Antique Carlisle. Definitely the
Antique Carlisle.

ELIOT
(writes in his notebook)
Excellent choice.

Mrs. Ayres caresses the soft velvet trimming.

MRS. AYRES
An antique coffin for an antique lady.
We suit each other.

ELIOT
(smiles)
You'll look beautiful.
(beat)
Now about the service. Would you like a
private visitation?

Mrs. Ayres is miles away.

ELIOT
Mrs. Ayres?

MRS. AYRES
I'm sorry. Yes. A private visitation.
(hesitates)
Mr. Deane? What happens when we die?

Eliot chooses his words carefully.

ELIOT

It's different every time. Each person
dies in their own way.

INT/EXT. ANNA'S CAR - MORNING

Anna drives past the strip malls of a small suburban town in a GREEN TOYOTA. On the dashboard a KITSCHY BOBBLEHEAD DOLL nods its head from side to side. Anna pulls up to a red light. Glances across at the other cars. We see the vacant faces of COMMUTERS staring blankly into space.

The light changes. Anna hasn't noticed. The car behind her HONKS in frustration. She quickly pulls out...

... just as a SUV turns in front of her. She slams on her brakes. Hard. Missing the SUV by inches. The DRIVER screams at her. His face contorted in ugly rage.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. PARKING LOT - MORNING

Anna locks her car. Heads towards the main building.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. CORRIDOR - MORNING

Classes have started. JACK (11), a serious looking boy, walks through a silent corridor. Up ahead two OLDER BOYS, a TALL KID and a KID with ACNE, push a GEEKY BOY against a locker. Jack tries to pass by unnoticed.

TALL KID

Hey. Jack-off!

Jack walks faster. The two Older Boys set off after him. He darts into a corridor. Ducks into an empty classroom.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. BIOLOGY CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jack waits anxiously by the door. It looks like he's lost the bullies. Then a sudden rustling noise makes him jump. He turns. TINY CHICKS huddle in a plastic incubator on a table. Jack moves over to them.

TALL KID (O.C.)

Didn't you hear me Jack-off?

Jack swivels round. The Tall Kid walks towards him as the Acne Kid guards the door. Jack doesn't reply.

ACNE KID

He must be deaf.

TALL KID
You deaf Jack-off?

Jack ignores them. Irritating the Tall Kid even more.

TALL KID
Can't fucking speak either.

He pushes Jack against the table, toppling the incubator. Panicked, the CHICKS scatter across the surface. Just then the door opens. Anna walks in.

ANNA
What's going on?

She glances at the Older Boys then at Jack.

ANNA
Jack?

JACK
Nothing Miss Bryant.

ANNA
Nothing? The incubator didn't just fall by itself.

The Older Boys stare at Jack. Waiting for his reaction.

JACK
I tripped. It was an accident.

Anna looks at Jack carefully. She knows he's lying.

ANNA
(to the Older Boys)
Show's over. Get to your classes.
(to Jack)
Jack. Help me clear up.

Jack doesn't hear her. He's mesmerized by a SOLITARY CHICK standing motionless in the corner of the incubator.

JACK
I think it's dead.

Anna reaches in. Tenderly picks up the chick.

ANNA
No. The poor thing's just scared.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. TEACHERS' COMMON ROOM - DAY

School's over. Anna listlessly corrects a stack of exercise books. She can't focus. Pulls out a BOTTLE OF PILLS. Shakes a pill into her hand. Swallows it dry.

INT. LAW OFFICE. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Paul works with half a dozen COLLEAGUES around a large conference table covered with documents and thick files. He reaches across to a pizza box. It's empty.

PAUL

OK. Who took the last pepperoni?

A PREPPY GUY slides across another pizza box.

PAUL

Great. Broccoli.
(lifts out a slice)
Who the fuck ordered broccoli?

NEAL, a thin pallid guy, looks up.

NEAL

Oh that's just disgusting.

PREPPY GUY

What's wrong with vegetarian pizza? It's healthy.

NEAL

Pizza isn't supposed to be healthy.

Paul glances at his watch. Suddenly realizes the time. He quickly picks up his cell phone. Heads for the door.

NEAL

You ordering in another pizza?

PAUL

Yeah. With wheatgrass and alfalfa sprouts.

Everyone laughs.

PREPPY GUY

(mutters)

Yeah. Yeah. Smart asses.

INT. LAW OFFICE. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Paul walks into the corridor dialling his cell phone.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. TEACHERS' COMMON ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna's cell phone rings as she closes her locker. She fishes it out from her bag as she heads to the door. Checks the ID. Hesitates. Then takes the call.

INT. LAW OFFICE. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Paul cups his cell. Worried he'll be overheard.

PAUL
Hi baby. I'm really sorry about this morning. I fucked up. I know.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Anna steps into an empty corridor.

PAUL (O.S.)
(filtered)
We still on for tonight?
(beat)
Anna?

ANNA
I don't know Paul.

INT. LAW OFFICE. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Paul's anxious. We sense he's hiding something.

PAUL
Please Anna. It took me weeks to get the table.

ANNA (O.S.)
(filtered)
Maybe we can change it to Thursday--

PAUL
No. It has to be tonight.

ANNA (O.S.)
(filtered)
Paul? What's the matter?

Paul tries hard to cover his nervousness. Forces a smile.

PAUL
Nothing. Don't worry. I just need... I just want us to have dinner tonight.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Despite Paul's reassurances Anna is clearly worried now.

ANNA
(hesitates)
OK.

PAUL (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Great.

INT. LAW OFFICE. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Paul hesitates. Lowers his voice.

PAUL
 And Anna. Everything's going to be fine.

ANNA (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Promise?

PAUL
 I promise.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Anna slips her phone back into her bag as she walks through the deserted corridor. Her high heels echo loudly in the eerie quietness.

Suddenly one of the fluorescent ceiling lights behind her blows out with a loud WHUMPH. Anna starts. Turns. WHUMPH. The next light dies. Anna quickens her step.

The lights go off one by one. The darkness quickly creeping up behind her. There's only one light still on as she reaches the exit. She looks up. The light flickers. But then strangely stays on. Bathing her in a cold pool of light.

Anna's unsettled. She turns and frantically pushes the door. It doesn't open. She pushes hard with both hands. Nothing. It's locked. She turns back slowly. The darkness around her impenetrable. Almost viscous. She reaches out...

... her hand DISAPPEARS into the thick blackness. Anna snatches her hand back. Stares at it.

Then we hear the sound of SLOW FOOTSTEPS. Moving deliberately towards her.

ANNA
 (nervously)
 Hello?

Her voice echoes down the silent corridor. She glimpses something move in the blackness.

ANNA
 Is someone there?

A BLACK SHAPE materializes inside the darkness. Silent. Brooding. Anna can't move. Terrified. Suddenly the corridor's flooded with a BLINDING WHITE LIGHT.

Anna's dazzled. Shades her eyes with her hand. As she tentatively pulls her hand away...

...it's only Jack. His hand on the light switch.

ANNA

Jack!

JACK

Did I scare you Miss Bryant?

Jack moves over to the door.

ANNA

It's locked.

He gently pushes against the door. The door slowly opens.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Anna, still shaken, walks with Jack towards the parking lot.

ANNA

Shouldn't you be home?

JACK

My mom's picking me up.

(beat)

It's my birthday. We're going to MacDonald's. Then on Saturday my mom's taking me to Busch Gardens. We're going to ride the Alpengeist.

(earnestly)

Continually voted one of the top ten roller coaster rides in America, the Alpengeist is a breathtaking avalanche of adventure.

ANNA

(tries to keep a straight-face)

I didn't know the park was open yet.

JACK

My mom's friends with the manager. They're opening it specially for me.

She knows he's lying again. Smiles sadly.

ANNA

Sounds like fun.

JACK

Yes. It will be fun.

They reach Anna's car. Stand in silence for a moment.

ANNA
Jack. Those boys. Do they bother you
a lot?

Jack hesitates. Then slowly nods his head.

ANNA
You know you can always talk to me about
it if you want to.

He nods. Anna's clearly worried about him.

ANNA
You sure you don't need a ride?

Jack shakes his head. Anna glances at her watch.

ANNA
Well. I better run.

JACK
Where are you going?

ANNA
(hesitates)
I have to go to a funeral. My old piano
teacher.

JACK
(with sudden interest)
Can I come?

ANNA
No Jack. Funerals are very private
affairs.

JACK
I've never been to a funeral.

ANNA
It wouldn't be appropriate Jack. Anyway
wouldn't your mom worry about you?

JACK
(shrugs)
Not really.

ANNA
I'm sure she would. I'll see you
tomorrow in class. Have a wonderful
birthday.

Jack nods disappointed. Anna watches him walk away then
gets in her car.

INT. ANNA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Anna slips her key into the ignition. Loud music suddenly blares from the car radio. She switches it off. Squeezes the bridge of her nose. She pulls out a bottle of pills from her bag. It's empty. She rummages in the glove compartment. Finds another bottle. Empty. She sighs.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Jack sits on the bench. Watches Anna drive away. Then unzips his backpack. Something moves inside. A strange jerky movement. Jack closes the backpack. Glances up and down the empty street. Then walks away on his own.

EXT. STRIP MALL. PHARMACY - DAY

Anna steps out of the Pharmacy. As she washes down a pill with a bottle of water she notices a small Hair Salon. Looks critically at herself in the Pharmacy window.

Anna moves over to the Salon. Reaches for the door handle... then hesitates. She's about to walk away when the Salon door suddenly opens. Anna smiles shyly as a freshly COIFFURED WOMAN politely holds the door for her.

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

Anna leans back against a washbasin. Her neck tightly cradled against the white porcelain. The light's harsh and not particularly flattering. She closes her eyes. Behind her the HANDS of a HAIRDRESSER in latex gloves begin to rinse dye from Anna's hair.

ON SINK

Startling white. A stream of water flows into the sink. Then after a moment the spiralling clear water gradually turns a deep crimson red.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE. HALLWAY - DAY

Anna closes the front door behind her. She smiles as she catches her reflection in the hallway mirror. Her hair a dark vibrant red. Just then, from another room, we hear an OLD WOMAN'S hacking cough.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

Anna? Is that you?

ANNA

Yes Mother.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna's mother, BEATRICE (50s), sits in bed, knitting with swift, violent precision. The bedside table's stacked with medication. She's clearly been bed-ridden for some time. An electric wheelchair in the corner of the room.

Anna appears at the door. Beatrice scrutinizes her for a second. Then returns to her knitting.

BEATRICE
Terrible color.

Anna moves to the beside table. Picks up a dirty plate.

ANNA
Can I get you something to eat?

BEATRICE
I'm not hungry.

ANNA
You have to eat.

BEATRICE
I don't have to do anything.

ANNA
The doctor said--

BEATRICE
The doctor's an idiot. He doesn't know what he's talking about.

Anna sighs. Trying hard not to let her Mother provoke her. Beatrice glances up. Anna avoids her look.

BEATRICE
Why did you do it? Today of all days.

ANNA
What have I done wrong this time?

Anna goes to the window. Draws back the curtains.

BEATRICE
You've forgotten haven't you?

ANNA
No I haven't forgotten. The service isn't till six.

BEATRICE
Then you've got plenty of time to wash it out.

ANNA

It's permanent. You can't wash it out.

BEATRICE

Then dye it back. You can't show up at the funeral looking like that. Like some prostitute.

ANNA

I don't look--

BEATRICE

Don't argue with me. Why are you constantly arguing with me?

Anna bites her tongue. Heads to the door.

BEATRICE

Where are you going?

ANNA

To do the washing up.

BEATRICE

The sheets need changing. They haven't been changed in months.

ANNA

I changed them Monday.

Anna goes to the cupboard. Takes out clean sheets.

BEATRICE

You weren't here Monday. You never sleep at home anymore. What if something happened to me in the middle of the night?

ANNA

Nothing is going to happen to you. Anyway Diane--

BEATRICE

(snorts)

Fat lot of good she is. I wouldn't have to pay for a Nurse if my only daughter wasn't living in sin with that lawyer of hers. Doing God knows what. They always leave you in the end. You'll see. Just like your father--

ANNA

That's enough Mother!

Anna dumps the sheets on the bed. As she turns to leave Beatrice's hand darts out and grabs Anna's wrist.

BEATRICE

That's it. Go and cry to Paul.

Anna pulls herself free. Moves to the door.

BEATRICE

Go and bitch to Paul about your mean old mother.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

A warm intimate room. Peaceful. Rows of chairs filled with ELDERLY MOURNERS. Eliot stands respectfully beside a casket. FATHER GRAHAM (50s) reads at a lectern.

FATHER GRAHAM

We have entrusted our brother James Hutton to God's mercy in sure and...

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Anna, in a black dress, walks quickly along the gravel driveway. She stops. Stares out over the cemetery.

FATHER GRAHAM (O.S.)

...certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna slips into the back of the room. Eliot leads MRS. HUTTON (60s) to the body of her husband, JAMES HUTTON (70S), lying in the casket. Mrs. Hutton touches a bouquet of white roses by the casket.

MRS. HUTTON

White roses. They were his favorite. How did you know?

ELIOT

They just seemed appropriate somehow.

MRS. HUTTON

He looks so peaceful. As if he's only sleeping.

Anna approaches Mrs. Hutton. She doesn't notice Eliot watching her carefully.

ANNA

Mrs. Hutton. I'm so sorry.

MRS. HUTTON

Thank you Anna. You were always his favorite student.

Anna smiles awkwardly. Uncomfortable.

MRS. HUTTON
How's your mother?

ANNA
Fine. She sends her condolences.

MRS. HUTTON
You look tired dear.

ANNA
No. I'm fine. Everything's fine.

But we can see in her eyes that everything's not fine. Mrs. Hutton nods, then turns to greet another MOURNER. Anna steps nervously up to the coffin.

ANNA'S POV

James Hutton lies peacefully amongst the velvet trimming. Suddenly his LIPS PART... as he GASPS SOFTLY.

VIEWING ROOM

Anna steps back terrified. Stares at Hutton. His face serene again. It must have been her imagination. She glances up quickly. Embarrassed.

Eliot's still observing her. He nods to her cordially.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S ROOM - DAY

A spartan room at the top of the house. Eliot carefully pins a POLAROID of Hutton lying in a coffin to the wall. Next to Hutton's photograph, we briefly glimpse the edge of ANOTHER POLAROID.

Eliot stares intently at Hutton's image for a moment, then takes off his jacket and moves to the window.

ELIOT'S POV

Anna's by her car rummaging in a bag for her keys. Getting increasingly frustrated.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Anna suddenly loses it. Angrily dumps the contents of her bag onto the driveway. She kneels down. Grabs the keys. Throws the rest of her things back into the bag.

She stands. Leans against the car. She looks weary. She glances up at the sky desperately trying to hold back her tears. Black storm clouds gather on the horizon.

Anna brusquely wipes away her eyes with the back of her hand. Pulls herself together. Angry with herself.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S ROOM - DAY

Eliot watches intently as Anna drives away.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Paul sits at a window table. It's raining hard outside. He glances at his watch then nervously checks his pockets. Pulls out a RING BOX. He looks at it for a moment then slips it back into his pocket.

As he refills his glass, Anna appears outside holding her raincoat above her head. She stares at Paul for a moment through the window marbled with rain.

Paul suddenly notices Anna at the window. He starts. Spills some of his red wine on his shirt.

CLOSE on the red stain. It unfurls like a flower. Spreading out over the white material.

ANNA (O.C.)
Sorry about that.

Paul dabs the stain with a napkin.

PAUL
You scared the life out of me.

Anna laughs as she sits down. Paul looks up at her.

PAUL
Your hair.

ANNA
You don't like it.

PAUL
I didn't say that. It's just very...
red. I mean it's not really you is it?

A WAITER appears at the table before Anna can reply.

WAITER
Are you ready to order?

PAUL
Yes. We'll have the duck.

ANNA
Paul.

PAUL
What? You always have the duck here.

ANNA
(picks up the menu)
I don't always have the duck.

Paul shrugs. Pours Anna some wine as she looks through the menu. The Waiter taps his pen on his pad impatiently. Anna sighs. Puts the menu aside.

ANNA
I'll have the duck.

Paul smiles as the Waiter leaves. Anna tries to ignore him. But after a second she can't help smiling back.

PAUL
The duck is very good.

Anna's smile broadens. The tension between them broken for the moment. Paul reaches across. Touches her hand.

PAUL
Let's not argue tonight. OK?

ANNA
OK.

Anna takes a sip of wine.

ANNA
This is good.

She picks up the bottle. Checks the label.

ANNA
And looks very expensive...
(smiles questioningly)
What's the special occasion?

Paul's momentarily thrown. He tries to cover it by rearranging his napkin. Anna notices.

PAUL
(suddenly very serious)
Actually there is something I need to talk to you about.

Now Anna's nervous.

PAUL
I've been offered a transfer to head office in Chicago.

Anna looks down. Stares at her hands on the table.

PAUL

It'll mean more work of course. More responsibility. A lot of changes. But it's an incredible opportunity. I'd be crazy to turn it down. And...

(nervous)

...well I've been thinking. Maybe it's time for us to...

Paul pauses as he reaches inside his jacket.

ANNA

(without looking up)

You're going to leave me.

Paul's stunned. Speechless. Before he can say anything--

ANNA

You could've just told me this morning. You didn't need to buy me off with an expensive meal.

Paul reaches for her hand. Anna gets up to leave.

PAUL

Anna wait.

ANNA

Why did you lie to me? You promised everything was going to be OK.

PAUL

(increasingly frustrated)

Don't be ridiculous. Anna. You've got it all wrong.

ANNA

I'm not being ridiculous. Why do you always talk to me like I'm a small child?

PAUL

(as if talking to a small child)

Anna.

ANNA

See? There you go again. Do you know how irritating that is?

PAUL

(loses it)

Jesus. Can't we just have one fucking meal without arguing--

ANNA

Fuck you!

The other DINERS turn and stare at them. Paul glances at them embarrassed. Anna doesn't notice. Upset.

PAUL
Keep your voice down, everyone's watching.

ANNA
FUCK YOU!

PAUL
You're crazy. You know that? Just like
your mother.

ANNA
I'm nothing like my mother!

Anna grabs her coat. Pushes her way through the restaurant.

PAUL
(stands)
I'm not running after you this time Anna.

ANNA
Good.

Paul's suddenly aware that everyone's looking at him. He quickly sits down. Drains his glass of wine. Furious.

INT/EXT. ANNA'S CAR - NIGHT

Anna closes the car door. It's still raining hard outside.

Her hair, perfect minutes ago, is now bedraggled. Her make-up's running. She places her hands on the steering wheel. Trying desperately to pull herself together.

Suddenly. THUMP. Anna jumps. Turns. Paul's at the car window. He thumps the glass again. Anna hits the locks.

EXT. RESTAURANT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Paul grabs the door handle.

PAUL
Anna. Open the door. Please. I want
you to come with me. I want to...

INT/EXT. ANNA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Anna can't hear him above the sound of the RAIN HAMMERING onto the car. She shakes her head. Puts the car in drive.

EXT. RESTAURANT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Paul stumbles aside as Anna's car pulls away. She stops at the parking lot exit a short distance away.

INT/EXT. ANNA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Anna looks up into the rearview mirror.

ON REARVIEW MIRROR

Paul stands forlornly in the rain. Their eyes meet.

ANNA'S CAR

She hesitates. For a moment we think she might go back to him...

EXT. RESTAURANT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

... but then Anna pulls out and drives away. Leaving Paul alone in the parking lot. The rain pounding the asphalt.

INT/EXT. ANNA'S CAR. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Anna peers through the blurred windshield as the wipers battle with the TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR. A LARGE TRUCK plows past menacingly on the rain-slicked highway.

Anna's still upset. She wipes away her tears. On the dashboard the kitschy doll bobs its head from side to side. Anna picks up her cell phone. Glances down as she dials a number. She looks up...

a WHITE VAN with black tinted windows cuts in front of her.

ANNA

Shit!

Anna swerves into the next lane. We hear the blaring horn from the car behind her.

ANNA

(into rear-view mirror)

OK. OK. I saw you.

(muttering)

Jerk.

The cell phone connects. We hear Paul's answering machine.

ANNA

Paul? You home yet? Can you pick up? I just don't want it to end like this.

Anna drops the phone into her bag on the passenger seat. Wipes away the mist on the inside of the glass.

A TRACTOR TRAILER shudders past loaded with metal pipes.

ON METAL PIPES

The badly loaded pipes BANG OMINOUSLY against each other.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Darkness. A bright light comes on.

CLOSE ON a MAN'S HANDS. Turning slowly under a stream of crystal blue water. We pull back. Eliot dries his hands. Opens a cabinet. Takes out a pair of latex gloves.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - EARLY MORNING

A large room. Tall vaulted ceilings. White tiles. Soft morning light seeps in from a small round window set high on one wall. The room is silent. Still. Like a chapel.

In the semi-darkness we see a BODY on a porcelain slab covered with a white sheet.

We hear a key turn in a lock. Then another lock. The room's suddenly flooded with a harsh white light.

Eliot steps inside the room. He takes off his jacket. Carefully places it on a coat-hanger. Puts on a pale blue smock then snaps on the latex gloves. His every move meticulous. Measured. Like a ritual.

Eliot walks over to the slab, his surgery clogs softly clacking against the tiled floor. He looks at the slab for a moment then slowly pulls the sheet away revealing...

ANNA'S BODY. Pale and lifeless. An ugly gash above her eyebrow. Cracked violet lips. A rip in her black dress soaked with a dark stain. She's only wearing one shoe.

Eliot gently takes off the watch from her stiff wrist. Places it inside a brown paper bag. Eases off the shoe. Picks up a scalpel from a tray of instruments on a steel trolley. Delicately slices open her dress. Peels it off.

He's about to cut the straps of her RED SLIP when...

Anna OPENS HER EYES.

She looks straight at us with unseeing pale blue eyes.

Strangely Eliot's not surprised. He calmly steps back. Watches her carefully.

Anna's eyes slowly focus on Eliot. She's groggy. Confused.

ANNA

Where am I?

She talks with difficulty. Her breathe labored.

ELIOT

You're in a funeral home.

(beat)

You're dead.

Anna's vacant eyes widen in shock. She struggles to sit up but she can't even raise her head. Her body stiff. Rigid. Eliot speaks to her calmly. Soothingly.

ELIOT

You had a car accident. It was raining.
You hit a truck loaded with metal pipes.

She looks fearfully at the bloodied dress in Eliot's hand.

ANNA

I'm not dead.

ELIOT

You were pronounced dead eight hours ago.
Your blood no longer circulates through
your body. Your brain cells are slowly
dying. Your body's already decomposing.

ANNA

I'm not dead.

Eliot looks at her sadly for a moment. He places the bloodied dress on the trolley. Then picks up a document. Holds it up for her.

ON DOCUMENT

It's Anna's death certificate.

ELIOT (O.C.)

This is your death certificate. Cause of
death. Massive internal trauma. Time of
death. 8.23PM.

PREP ROOM

ELIOT

You were dead on arrival. The attending
physician signed here...

(points to document)

...at 9.45 last night. I picked up your
body from the hospital morgue at 12.10
this morning.

Anna stares with horror at her death certificate, then at Eliot. He looks away. It pains him to see her so distressed.

ELIOT

I'm sorry.

Eliot picks up a sponge from the trolley. Wets it.

ANNA

Who are you?

Eliot delicately washes Anna's face. She doesn't flinch as he dabs the wound above her eye brow.

ANNA

Don't touch me! Why are you touching me?

ELIOT

I'm preparing your body. You have to look beautiful for your funeral.

ANNA

I'm not dead.

Eliot sighs wearily. As if he'd had this conversation many times before.

ELIOT

You all say the same thing.

(beat)

I'm sorry. Maybe you should rest now.

Eliot peels off his latex gloves and heads for the door. As he hangs his pale blue smock on the peg he turns and looks at Anna for a moment.

ON ANNA

The lights go off. O.S. the door clicks shut as it locks automatically behind Eliot.

ANNA

(softly)

I can't be dead. It's just a nightmare.
I'll wake up soon. Wake up.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Paul wakes up. Badly hung-over. Still in his clothes. Sunlight streams into the room. Blinding him. He reaches across. The bed's empty. He's surprised for a moment then remembers the argument the night before.

He gets up. Sits on the edge of the bed. Lights a cigarette. He notices his jacket on the floor. Leans down. As he pulls out the BlackBerry from his jacket, the RING BOX falls onto the floor. Paul doesn't notice.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - LATER

Paul steps into the kitchen. Nervously checking his BlackBerry. Nothing. Just then he sees the red light blinking on his answer machine. He presses play.

ANNA

Paul? You home yet? Can you pick up? I just don't want it to end like this.

Paul's relieved. He picks up the phone. Dials. We hear the ringing on the other end.

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - SAME TIME

Two technicians, an OLD GUY and his YOUNG PALE ASSISTANT, push a NAKED BODY wrapped in plastic through the morgue.

They jump as they hear the MUFFLED sound of a cell phone.

The ringing comes from a bag speckled with blood lying on a table (we recognize it as Anna's bag). The Assistant walks over. Takes out the cell phone.

ASSISTANT

It's the schoolteacher's. From the car crash. Should I answer it?

The ringing stops abruptly. It's suddenly very silent.

ASSISTANT

Someone's in for a surprise.

OLD GUY

How many times do I have to tell you? You can't leave their stuff laying around. It should've been returned to the family.

ASSISTANT

I've been busy, OK.

(muttering)

Like she's really going to need her rollover minutes now.

As the Assistant reaches for the bag, he notices a solitary shoe on the table. He picks it up.

ASSISTANT

What shall I do with this?

OLD GUY

Where's the other one?

The Assistant looks round. He can't see the other shoe anywhere. He turns to the Old Guy and shrugs.

OLD GUY

Just burn it. You can't send them back
one shoe. It's not respectful.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

We hear a BEEP.

PAUL

(on phone)

You got it all wrong baby. I want you to
come to Chicago with me. Look. I'll
swing by your place on my way to the
office. You know I love you.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul pulls up to a suburban house. Walks quickly to the
door, a supermarket bouquet of flowers wrapped in
cellophane in his hand. He rings the bell. No-one
answers. He rings again. Knocks hard on the door.

PAUL

Anna!

Still no answer. Paul looks around. Notices the
driveway's empty. He heads back to his car.

INT/EXT. PAUL'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Paul's on his cell phone as he drives. He gets Anna's
voice mail again.

PAUL

(into phone)

It's me again. I must have just missed you
at home. Call me when you get this. OK?

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. CORRIDOR - DAY

Paul strides down an empty corridor. The flowers in his
hand. Searching for Anna's classroom.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. BIOLOGY CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A TEACHER stands in front of the class holding a shell.

TEACHER

... the shell grows slowly...

The door opens. Paul steps into the classroom. His
smile fades as he realizes it's not Anna.

PAUL

Oh hi. I'm looking for Anna Bryant.

The Teacher quickly moves over. Hustles Paul to the door.

TEACHER

(indignant)

I'm sorry but you just can't--

PAUL

I'm Anna's... fiancée. Paul Conran. I thought this was her class.

The Teacher glances suspiciously at the flowers in his hand.

PAUL

We had a little misunderstanding last night.

TEACHER

(hesitates)

She didn't come in today.

Jack's in the front row. Following the conversation.

PAUL

Did she call in sick?

TEACHER

She hasn't called in at all. It's not like her. She always calls in.

Paul's worried now. Something's wrong.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAY

Anna lies rigidly on the slab. Her head turned to one side. Staring blankly at the wall. Her eyes glazed.

Suddenly classical music fills the room. Anna frowns. Disoriented. She moves her head with difficulty. Nervously looks around.

For a moment she doesn't know where she is. Then she sees Eliot by a CD player. She watches with trepidation as he approaches her.

ANNA

Please don't hurt me.

ELIOT

(smiles)

How can I hurt you? You're already dead.

ANNA

But I'm not dead.

ELIOT

Then why are you here?

Anna doesn't know what to say. She turns her head away. A tear falls down her cheek.

ANNA

Please. Just let me go. I won't go to the police. I won't tell anyone.

Eliot moves her head back. Gently wipes away her tear.

ELIOT

You're still in denial. You have to trust me. I'm only here to help you.

Eliot slides a wooden head-rest under her neck and studies her wounds, touching them delicately. Thinking about how to conceal them. He turns to a tray of instruments. Picks up a needle. Leans over Anna.

The needle pierces her brow. Sliding cleanly through her skin. She doesn't feel any pain as Eliot carefully sews the wound. He's meticulous. Clearly very good at his job.

Eliot glances at his watch. Picks up a SYRINGE and an AMPOULE OF AMBER LIQUID. Draws up the amber liquid. Anna's alarmed. She tries to pull back.

ELIOT

Don't be scared.

ANNA

What are you doing?

ELIOT

This will relax your muscles. Stop the rigor mortis setting in so I can work on your body.

He INJECTS Anna in the neck. Just then we hear a car pull up on the gravel driveway outside.

ELIOT

(to himself)
Your mother's early.

Anna's eyelids feel very heavy. Slowly her eyes close. Eliot pulls the white sheet over her body.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A Nurse, DIANE (30s) follows Beatrice in her wheelchair as Eliot leads them through the hallway.

ELIOT

I'm so very sorry Mrs. Bryant. It's always so tragic when you lose a child.

BEATRICE

I lost her years ago.

He glances at her curiously. Then gestures to his office.

ELIOT

If you'd care to come to my office we can discuss the arrangements.

BEATRICE

I want to see her.

ELIOT

But she hasn't been--

BEATRICE

I don't care. I want to see her.

It takes him a second to respond.

ELIOT

Of course.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAY

Beatrice leans against the slab staring at Anna's covered body. Eliot stands respectfully to one side. In the b.g. Diane shivers. The room's cold. Beatrice touches Anna's hand through the white sheet. Then uncovers Anna's face.

The needle's still embedded in her eyebrow.

ELIOT

Ah. Forgive me.

Eliot quickly steps forward. Pulls out the needle. Cuts the thread with a pair of large scissors.

ELIOT

As I said. I've only just started preparing her.

BEATRICE

What's the point of preserving the body if the soul's already left?

ELIOT

(quietly to himself)
No. The soul never leaves.

Beatrice stares at Anna.

BEATRICE

It's us who are left behind. It's us who suffer.

(to Anna)

Who's going to look after me now? Did you think about that?

She nods to Diane. Diane helps her into the wheelchair.

ELIOT

I'll confirm the date with Father Graham this afternoon. Friday as you requested.

BEATRICE

Just do what you think's best. It's just details.

Beatrice whirs towards the door. She suddenly stops. Turns to Eliot.

BEATRICE

Oh there is one thing.

ELIOT

Yes?

BEATRICE

Her hair. She was a brunette. I'd like it back to that color.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Eliot watches Beatrice's car drive away.

INT/EXT. PAUL'S CAR - DAY

Paul waits in his car outside the Mother's house. The wilting flowers on the passenger seat beside him.

PAUL'S POV

Beatrice's car pulls up. Diane gets out. Pulls the wheelchair out of the car.

PAUL'S CAR

Paul grabs the flowers.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Paul strides over as Diane helps Beatrice into her wheelchair.

PAUL

Mrs. Bryant.

Beatrice doesn't acknowledge him. Paul turns to Diane.

PAUL

Hi Diane. I need to talk to Anna.

Diane can't look him in the eye.

PAUL

What's wrong?

DIANE

I think you better come in.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Beatrice sits in her wheelchair with her back to the door. Paul stops a short distance away.

PAUL

What happened? Where's Anna?

BEATRICE

(without turning)

Anna was in a car accident last night.
My daughter's dead. That's what
happened.

Paul stares at Beatrice's back in disbelief.

PAUL

A car crash? When?

Beatrice turns her wheelchair round to face Paul.

BEATRICE

(irritably)

I don't know.

DIANE

They said it happened just before 8.30.

PAUL

But... we were at the restaurant...

Beatrice glares at him. She clearly blames him for Anna's death.

BEATRICE

You shouldn't have let her drive in that
weather.

Paul looks down guiltily at the flowers in his hand.

PAUL

No. She can't be dead. There must be some mistake.

BEATRICE

There's no mistake. We just got back from the funeral home.

Beatrice pushes a joystick on her wheelchair. As she whirs past Paul she notices the flowers.

BEATRICE

(dryly)
Flowers? How appropriate.

Paul's not listening anymore. Stunned.

PAUL

Why didn't you call me?

BEATRICE

You took her away from me. I don't want you anywhere near her.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. KITCHEN - DAY

Eliot turns on the taps. Fills a copper kettle.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Silence. O.S. a shuddering pipe bangs ominously. Anna opens her eyes abruptly as if waking from a deep sleep. She stares at us. Numb.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON an exploding BLUE FLAME from a gas ring.

We pull back. Eliot places a kettle on the ring. Then measures out exactly two spoons of tea from an ornate tin into a teapot. Meticulous in everything he does.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON Anna's hand. Her fingers FLEX slightly. She pushes herself up awkwardly. Suddenly realizes something. She touches her wrist. Desperately searching for her pulse. Then frantically checks her neck. Panicking. She can't find her heartbeat.

She stares at her hand. Then abruptly SLAMS it against the slab. Hard. She feels no pain. She does it again. Harder. Still nothing.

ANNA

I must be in shock. That's all. It's just shock.

She struggles to her feet. Stumbles groggily to the door. Tries the door handle. It's locked. She bangs on the door feebly. Then she hears something. She cocks her head. Follows the sound of Eliot's footsteps upstairs.

ANNA

(hoarse)

Let me out!

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S OFFICE - DAY

Eliot's by his desk. Checking his appointment book. Whistling softly to himself. We can't hear Anna's cries.

He pours a cup of tea. Adds a drop of milk. As he stirs his tea, he hears the sound of feet CRUNCHING on the gravel outside. He glances out the window.

ELIOT'S POV

Paul stands in the middle of the driveway staring blankly at the Funeral Home.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot steps out of the Funeral Home. Heads towards Paul.

ELIOT

Can I help you?

Paul turns to him. Pulled away from his thoughts.

PAUL

Mr. Deane?

ELIOT

Yes.

PAUL

My name's Conran. Paul Conran.

Eliot smiles. Holds out his hand.

ELIOT

Of course. The lawyer.

(off Paul's surprised look)

It's a small town. In my line of work you get to know everyone eventually.

As they shake, Eliot looks at Paul's hand strangely. As if he senses something.

PAUL
I'm Anna Bryant's fiancée.

ELIOT
That's strange. She wasn't wearing an engagement ring.

PAUL
Well not quite fiancée...

ELIOT
I'm very sorry for your loss Mr. Conran.

PAUL
I'd like to see her.

ELIOT
I'm afraid the viewing isn't until--

PAUL
I'd need to see her now. If that's possible.

ELIOT
I'm sorry. It's not possible. You're not family and--

PAUL
Please. It'd only take a minute.

ELIOT
I understand. But--

PAUL
NO. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna suddenly hears Paul's loud voice outside.

ANNA
(weakly)
Paul! I'm here! Paul!

She frantically beats her fists against the door.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - SAME TIME

Paul quickly controls his anger. His eyes smart with tears.

PAUL
I tried to stop her. She didn't hear me.

Paul's voice breaks with emotion. He can't go on. Eliot gently takes him by the elbow. Leads him back to his car.

ELIOT
Mr. Conran. There really is nothing I
can do. I'm so sorry.

Paul looks defeated. He simply nods his head. Eliot
watches him get into his car and drive away.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - LATER

Anna sits by the door in the darkness. Suddenly the
room's flooded with light. Eliot walks in. Looks at
Anna for a moment. She just stares back at him coldly.
He heads over to the sink.

ANNA
Who was that?

ELIOT
No one.

ANNA
No one?

A long beat.

ELIOT
It was Paul.

ANNA
(calmly)
I know. I heard you talking to him.
Why didn't you let him see me?

Eliot smiles. Amused she caught him out. He continues
washing his hands.

ELIOT
Did you love him?

Anna looks up sharply. Eliot's clearly hit a nerve.

ANNA
That's none of your business.

Eliot shrugs. Dries his hands on a white towel.

ANNA
You weren't going to tell me Paul was
here, were you?

ELIOT
No.

ANNA
Why not?

ELIOT

Because it would only hurt you. You have to let go of the living. Just like they have to let go of you.

ANNA

I don't believe you. Why are you doing this to me?

He shakes his head as he drops the towel into a small bin.

ELIOT

You're all the same. You all blame me for your death. As if it were my fault.

ANNA

No. You drugged me. So my mother wouldn't--

ELIOT

The others. They just see you as a dead body on a slab. Only I can see you as you really are.

ANNA

You're crazy!

Eliot's taken aback. Hurt.

ELIOT

I'm a busy man. I don't have time for this.

He heads to the door. Pulls out his keys and unlocks it. Just then he remembers something. Turns to her.

ELIOT

Oh I nearly forgot. How tall are you?

ANNA

What!?

He looks her up and down. Gauging her height.

ELIOT

Five seven.

ANNA

Why..?

ELIOT

I need to know how tall you are. For your coffin.

Anna's stunned. Eliot looks at her for a moment. Then switches off the main lights.

ANNA

Wait!

He ignores her. The door CLICKS shut behind him.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot steps into the hallway. Stops by a vase of flowers. He plucks a dead petal. Crushes it. Curiously sniffs his fingers. Then heads to the casket room.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON Anna's face. She looks empty. Dispirited. Just then something catches her attention...

The light from the window glints off a pair of LARGE SCISSORS on the steel trolley. Anna stumbles to the trolley. Feeling her way through the semi-darkness. Grabs the scissors.

Just then she notices a BODY, covered with a white sheet, lying on a gurney in the corner. She turns away. Scared. But then, almost against her will, she approaches the gurney. As if drawn to the body. She slowly pulls the sheet away...

The dead body of an OLD WOMAN. Staring blindly at Anna with cloudy opaque eyes. Long greasy gray hair. Shaken, Anna pushes herself against the wall.

ANNA

Oh God. Please. I don't want to die.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY

Jack carefully cuts something out of a local newspaper. The loud sounds of a TV blare from another room.

ON NEWSPAPER

Schoolteacher Dies in Tragic Car Crash.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The curtains are drawn. JACK'S MOTHER sits in an armchair with her back to us watching TV. Jack walks in.

JACK

You were supposed to pick me up from school yesterday.

His mother doesn't reply. Jack moves in front of the TV.

JACK

I waited.

His mother doesn't respond.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Jack furiously cycles through empty streets. Past identical suburban houses with identical prim lawns. He stops suddenly. Considering something. Then turns and cycles away purposely.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Eliot walks out of the funeral home. We pull back. Jack stands by his bicycle in the bushes watching him. Eliot looks up. As if sensing someone was spying on him. Jack steps back quickly behind a tree.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A POLICE OFFICER talks on the phone as Paul walks in.

POLICE OFFICER

(into phone)

Hang on a sec.

(to Paul)

Mr. Conran. Heard about your girlfriend.
I'm sorry.

Paul nods. Clearly doesn't want to talk about it.

PAUL

Is Tom in?

POLICE OFFICER

The captain just stepped out. He won't be long. You can wait in his office if you want.

PAUL

Thanks. I'll just go and grab a coffee.

As Paul walks away, the Officer returns to the phone.

POLICE OFFICER

(into phone)

A buddy of the captain's. Poor guy...

INT. POLICE STATION. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Paul slides a dollar bill into a coffee machine. Presses his selection. Nothing.

PAUL

Come on.

He pushes the button repeatedly. Then angrily slams the side of the machine. Nothing.

PAUL

You piece of shit.

As Paul turns away, he notices a door with a sign on it: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY. Paul glances around. Then quickly walks over to the door.

INT. POLICE STATION. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

A dozen wrecked cars. Twisted metal. Paul's footsteps echo through the empty garage. It's dark. Out the corner of his eye Paul glimpses a SHAPE move quickly around a pillar. He stops. Unsettled.

Just then we hear a WOMAN'S FOOTSTEPS. Her high-heels clicking on the concrete floor. There's something strange about the sound. UNNATURAL. Paul listens nervously. The footsteps grow fainter. Then fade away. The garage is silent again. Too quiet.

Paul moves apprehensively over to Anna's GREEN TOYOTA. The car's a mess. One side's completely caved in. He touches the car. Pulls open the door. Squeezes into the driver's seat.

ANNA'S CAR

Glass everywhere. Paul glances at the KITSCHY BOBBLEHEAD DOLL on the dashboard flecked with blood. He places his hands on the steering wheel. Suddenly he hears a strange noise. He looks up...

The KITSCHY DOLL. Its head NODDING SLOWLY. Its smiling face now unnaturally sinister. Turning towards us until it abruptly stops. Staring straight at us.

Paul looks at the doll transfixed. Just then a PALE WOMAN'S HAND slowly reaches through the window... and touches Paul's shoulder. He jumps. Turns.

ANNA stands by the car. Staring blankly at him. The color drains from Paul's face.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Paul?

The Police Captain, Tom Peterson, stands by the car where Anna was a second ago. He pulls his hand away from Paul's shoulder. Looks at him with concern.

Paul gathers his composure. He must have just imagined Anna was there. He shoves the door open. He's about to step out when he turns back and grabs the Kitschy Doll.

GARAGE

Paul gets out awkwardly. He can't look Tom in the eye.

TOM
You OK?

PAUL
(unconvincing)
I'm fine.

TOM
I just found out. I'm so sorry Paul. If you need anything--

PAUL
I need to see Anna.

TOM
(puzzled)
What do you mean?

PAUL
The funeral director won't let me see her Tom. He says I'm not family. Can you talk to him? Put some pressure on him.

TOM
I can't do that.

PAUL
Tom. You're my friend.

TOM
Paul. I can't do it.

Paul nods slowly. Tom notices the Kitschy Doll.

TOM
You sure you're OK?

PAUL
I fucked up.

TOM
Paul. It was an accident. You should get some rest. Let me drive you home.

PAUL
I always fuck everything up.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - DAY

Eliot stops by a thermostat. Studies it for a moment. Turns it lower. He glances at his watch. Takes out his keys from his jacket and moves over to the Prep Room door.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna sits on the slab. Her hands behind her back. She carefully watches Eliot as he pulls on his pale blue smock then walks over to a cabinet.

BEHIND ANNA'S BACK

her hands clutch the large scissors.

PREP ROOM

Eliot opens a cabinet full of boxes of hair dye with photographs of smiling women. As he prepares the dye he looks across at Anna. She's staring at something behind him. Eliot turns. Sees the uncovered body of the Old Woman on the gurney. He quickly walks over. Carefully pulls the white sheet over the Old Woman.

ANNA

Who is she?

ELIOT

Mrs. Whitehall.

He mixes the dye in a bowl as he moves over to Anna.

ELIOT

You shouldn't be afraid of her. The dead can't harm the dead.

ANNA

(forcefully)

But I'm not dead!

Anna's hand suddenly FLIES UP... she slashes at Eliot's face with the SCISSORS.

The sharp edge misses his cheek by inches. Eliot drops the bowl. Stumbles back against the steel trolley. Instruments crash to the floor.

Anna staggers to the door. Her legs weak. Her long lank hair falling over her eyes. She frantically wrenches at the door handle but it's locked. Eliot gets up. Slowly moves towards Anna. She turns. Raises the scissors.

ANNA

Stay where you are.

ELIOT
 (holds out his hand)
 Give me the scissors. I only want to
 help you.

ANNA
 Don't come any closer. I swear to God
 I'll kill you.

Eliot walks right up to her. His face now inches from hers.

ELIOT
 (calmly)
 Go ahead.

Anna doesn't move. Eliot looks her steadily in the eye.
 He reaches for her hand. Slowly. Deliberately. He brings
 the scissors to his cheek. Then lets go of Anna's hand.

CLOSE ON ELIOT'S FACE

The sharp tip pushes into his skin.

ELIOT
 Go on.

PREP ROOM

For a moment we think she might do it. But then she wavers.

ELIOT
 What are you waiting for?

Anna's confidence falters. She slowly lowers her hand.
 The scissors fall onto the floor. Anna looks down
 defeated. Her breath labored. Suddenly she realizes...

ANNA
 I'm breathing!
 (raises her head)
 Look. I'm still alive!

ELIOT
 You think you're still alive because
 you're still attached to life. It's
 normal. You're just imagining you still
 have symptoms of life.

She's not listening. Eliot takes a roll of paper towels.
 Kneels down, picks up the bowl of dye and mops up the mess.

ANNA
 Maybe I was in some kind of coma. The
 doctors made a mistake. They're always
 making mistakes.

ELIOT
 You died. Everyone dies.

ANNA

How can I be dead if we're talking?

He stands up. Sighs wearily.

ELIOT

We're talking not because you're alive.
But because I have a gift.

(beat)

I can talk to those between life and death.

ANNA

Why?

ELIOT

To help them make the transition.

Anna's stunned. For the first time we sense a seed of doubt in her mind.

ANNA

Is this what happens when you die?

ELIOT

It depends on how you lived your life.

ANNA

What do you mean?

ELIOT

Not everyone needs my help. Some let go as soon as their body dies. Others don't let go until long after they're in the grave.

ANNA

Am I a ghost? Is that why I'm here?

ELIOT

You're here so I can bury you.

Anna's silent. Trying to make sense of what she's just heard. Eliot takes her arm. Leads her to the slab.

ELIOT

Come. We've wasted enough time already.

She lies down submissively. Suddenly very tired. Eliot leans over her to apply what's left of the dye.

ANNA

(whispers)

No. Please. I don't want--

ELIOT

You're a corpse. Your opinion doesn't count anymore.

ANNA

But I can breathe. I must be alive.

She weakly pushes him away. Anger flashes across Eliot's face, but just as quickly he controls it.

ELIOT

You people. You all think that if you breathe, shit, piss you're alive.

Anna doesn't know what to say.

ELIOT

You clutch onto life as if your life was worth clutching onto. Was your life worth clutching onto Anna?

Anna turns her head away. Clearly he's struck a chord.

ELIOT

Was it? Maybe you died a long time ago.

Eliot rips off his latex gloves. Tosses them into a bin.

ELIOT

I have to tell you I'm surprised you're still arguing with me. You don't have much time left.

(gestures to the Old Women)

Look. She's accepted her death. Her life has been examined. She has no more regrets. And now she's at peace. She used her time well. You still have so much to learn.

ANNA

I have nothing to learn!

ELIOT

Are you sure?

Eliot stands in the doorway. He switches off the light. His body silhouetted by the light from the hallway.

ELIOT

Your funeral's in three days. Soon you'll be enclosed in a coffin. Then buried in the ground. No-one will hear you then. No-one will talk to you there.

The door clicks shut behind him. Anna doesn't move. Clearly unsettled by Eliot's words. After a moment she looks at the Old Woman. She moves over. Hesitantly pulls away the white sheet. Stares at the Old Woman curiously. Then tentatively touches her cheek.

ANNA

Are you cold?

She takes the Old Woman's hand. Strokes her paper-thin skin.

ANNA

I'm so cold.

Anna notices the Old Woman's plastic ankle tag.

ON PLASTIC ANKLE TAG

Name: Carol Whitehall. Sex: F. DOB: 11.02.30.

PREP ROOM

ANNA

You had a long life.

Anna turns back. Studies the Old Woman's serene face.

ANNA

You look so peaceful.

(beat)

Aren't you scared?

Anna's eyes fill with tears.

ANNA

I'm scared. I'm so scared.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack lies in bed staring at the ceiling. On his bedside table an alarm clock reads 2.38AM. He looks across at an Anglepoise lamp in the corner of the room bent over an open shoebox. He gets up. Walks towards the muted light.

The SMALL CHICK huddles in the shoebox. It looks dead even though it's eyes are open. Jack's about to reach into the box. Then changes his mind. He looks at the lamp. Switches it off. After a moment he switches it back on again.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul stands motionless in the middle of the room. Staring blankly into space. The room feels empty and depressing.

He suddenly looks around. Not quite sure why he came into the room in the first place. He moves over to a CD player. Mechanically switches it on. Music fills the room. He turns the volume higher. Then all the way up. The music's unbearably loud but Paul just stands there. Numb.

ON PAUL

The music's strangely distorted now. Almost silent. As if we were inside Paul's head.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - NIGHT

Anna lies on the slab. Curled in a fetal position. O.S. we hear the UNNATURALLY LOUD metallic drip of a faulty faucet. Slow. Rhythmical. Anna opens her eyes. Stares at us. Terrified. Then she turns her head.

The Old Woman sits on the other slab. Slowly brushing her tangled gray hair with a silver backed brush.

Anna looks around anxiously. The room is strangely larger. The perspective not quite right. Certain objects look absurdly small or abnormally large. She notices a TINY DOOR. Half hidden by a steel trolley. The door's slightly ajar. Anna's surprised.

The Old Woman shakes her head. Staring blindly at Anna with opaque eyes. Anna ignores her. Moves quickly to the tiny door. As she approaches, the door seems to grow to normal size.

Then we realize it's Anna who has shrunk. The steel trolley now towers high above her. The massive instruments on the trolley look like menacing insects cast in surgical steel. She opens the door. Revealing a solid wall of DARKNESS.

FROM INSIDE THE DARKNESS

the small shape of Anna in the doorway. The huge dark space engulfs her. The only light comes from the Prep Room behind her.

PREP ROOM

Anna reaches forward. Her hand disappears into the thick blackness. She snatches her hand back. Scared. Then...

...a CHILD'S HAND darts out of the darkness. Grabs Anna's wrist. Pulling her in with surprising strength. Anna struggles to free herself. But the hand drags her deeper into the darkness. The door slams shut behind her.

INT. DARKNESS

Anna stands in the black empty space.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)
I'm disappointed with you.

An innocent looking YOUNG GIRL (6) materializes out of the blackness. She looks like a young Anna.

ANNA
Who are you?

The Young Girl walks slowly towards Anna.

GIRL
 You promised me so many things.
 (amused)
 You don't recognize me?

Anna shakes her head.

GIRL
 I am you. I've been waiting for you.
 You shouldn't have disappointed me.

The Girl now looks strangely malevolent. Anna steps back terrified. Turns. But there's no door anymore.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

The Old Woman stands alone in the middle of the room.
 Braiding her long hair.

OLD WOMAN
 You're not ready.

CUT TO A SEARING WHITENESS.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

A small congregation of MOURNERS sit in the white chairs.
 "AVE MARIA" plays quietly in the b.g. A MAN leans over
 the casket paying his respects.

ON CASKET

The Old Woman. Her long hair braided. She looks serene.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

"AVE MARIA" filters into the room. Anna opens her eyes.
 She's confused. She gets up awkwardly. Looks around the
 room. The other slab's empty. The Old Woman's gone.

Anna stumbles over to the trolley. Pushes it aside.
 Desperately searching for the tiny door. She touches the
 wall. There's nothing there. Frustrated she turns to a
 counter crowded with instruments. She sweeps her arm
 across the counter top in rage. Sending everything
 crashing to the floor.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

The funeral's over. Eliot takes out a wilted bouquet of
 flowers from a vase.

In the b.g. Jack stands half-hidden in the doorway.
Glancing around in fascination. A flower in his hand.

ELIOT
(to Jack without looking up)
Can I help you?

Jack steps back timidly. Eliot looks up. Smiles.

ELIOT
Then perhaps you can help me.
(holds up the withered flowers)
Could you throw these away for me?

Jack nods hesitantly. Moves over and takes the flowers.

ELIOT
Thank-you.

Eliot turns and arranges fresh flowers in the vase.

ON JACK

as he looks at the wilted flowers. He crushes a petal
then sniffs his fingers.

ELIOT (O.C.)
There's no life left in them.

VIEWING ROOM

Jack looks up. Eliot's watching him carefully.

ELIOT
They belong in the garbage.

Jack turns to leave.

ELIOT
I've seen you round here before.

Jack's suddenly nervous.

ELIOT
Did you know Mrs. Whitehall?

JACK
I thought it was Miss Bryant's funeral.

ELIOT
Ah. Miss Bryant. No. Her funeral's not
until Friday.

JACK
Where is she now?

Eliot considers the question for a moment.

ELIOT
She's downstairs.

JACK
Why?

ELIOT
Why? Because she's not ready.
(beat)
Is the flower for her?

JACK
(nods)
She was my teacher.

ELIOT
And you are?

JACK
Jack.

Jack holds out his hand. A serious look on his face.
Eliot's amused. He shakes Jack's hand.

ELIOT
Well Jack. What did you think?

JACK
About what?

ELIOT
Mrs. Whitehall's funeral. Did you find
it interesting?

JACK
(shrugs)
It was OK I guess.

ELIOT
Oh. I see.

JACK
Are all funerals the same?

ELIOT
No Jack. They're never the same. Each
one is special. The dead always speak to
us in different ways.

JACK
(curious now)
What do you mean?

Eliot finished arranging the flowers. He glances at his
watch. Smiles at Jack.

ELIOT
It was a pleasure talking to you Jack.

Jack's intrigued. He watches Eliot walk out of the room.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

As Eliot heads to the Prep Room, we hear a MUFFLED CRASH from inside. Eliot quickly pulls out his keys. Moves to the door. Just then Eliot hears a creaking sound behind him. He turns. Jack's at the top of the stairs. Staring down curiously at the Prep Room door.

Eliot observes him cautiously. Did Jack hear the sound as well? Jack looks back at Eliot. Smiles. Then without a word, turns and heads back up the stairs.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna sits on the floor in the middle of the room. Hugging her legs to her chest. Rocking to and fro. Surrounded by broken glass, torn papers and instruments. Eliot enters the room. Coldly surveys the destruction.

ELIOT

(angry)

Why did you do this?

Anna ignores him. Eliot strides over to her.

ELIOT

WHY DID YOU DO THIS?

Anna stares at him blankly.

ANNA

Is this the afterlife? Am I in heaven?
Or am I in hell?

Strangely Eliot's not surprised. He nods his head. His anger gone now.

ANNA

The door...
(points distractedly)
There was a door. Just there.

ELIOT

(gently)

It won't be long now.

ANNA

I used to believe in God. I thought I'd
see him when I died. Instead I saw you.

Eliot softly strokes her hair. Comforting her.

ANNA
 (whispers)
 Maybe you are God.

ELIOT
 You'll be at peace soon. I promise.

For a moment we see a deep sadness in Eliot's eyes. He's conflicted. But then abruptly he pulls himself together. Moves away and starts clearing up. Anna closes her eyes. Hugs her legs closer to her chest.

ANNA
 Paul.

She lets out a DESPONDENT SIGH. The SIGH carries into the next scene...

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The tall trees stand motionless amongst the graves. A sudden GUST OF WIND bends the dense foliage. Their leaves ripple. Languid and fluid like a wave. RUSTLING EERILY. The sound almost malevolent.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - DAY

Paul's red-rimmed eyes snap open. He lies on his bed fully clothed. An empty bottle of bourbon on the bedside table. Behind him the curtains stir.

The KITSCHY DOLL'S head begins to slowly nod. Turning towards us. We hear the eerie rustling sound again. Like a MURMURING WHISPER...

ANNA (O.S.)
 (whispers)
 Paul.

Paul turns quickly. Sees the open window. It's only the wind. He shivers. It suddenly got very cold. He gets up and closes the window. The WHISPERING starts again. This time from the bathroom.

Paul walks over to the bathroom door. As he touches the door handle... the whispering STOPS. Paul hesitates. The room's strangely silent. He slowly opens the door...

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nothing. The bathroom's empty. Paul looks around nervously. He catches the reflection of his pallid face in the mirror. Leans wearily against the washbasin.

Water DRIPS from a leaky pipe. The fluorescent bulb over the mirror CRACKLES softly. Paul turns on the taps. Splashes cold water on his face. He's about to reach for a towel when he senses something. He cocks his head slightly. A feeling.

He turns and checks out the bathroom. Nothing. Paul dries his face. As he replaces the towel... the sound of dripping water ABRUPTLY STOPS. Silence.

Suddenly the SHOWER STARTS RUNNING.

Paul's paralyzed with fear. Steam wreathes the room in a cloud of vapor. He turns slowly towards the shower.

PAUL'S POV

Anna stands in front of the shower with her back to him. She slips off her bathrobe and hangs it on a hook. Then her hand moves to her chest. There's a STRANGE WET SUCKING sound...

...as Anna rips out her heart and hangs it casually on the hook next to her bathrobe.

ON THE STILL BEATING HEART

dripping crimson blood onto the bone white tiles.

BATHROOM

PAUL
(whispers)
Anna.

Anna turns slowly. Her skin's like alabaster. Unnaturally translucent. A bloody gash where her heart used to be.

The steam from the shower curls around her like a mist. She looks hauntingly beautiful. Mesmerizing. A line of thick black fluid trickles from her nose. Paul turns away. Horrified. When he turns back a second later Anna's not there. The bathroom's empty. The shower's not even running.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - EVENING

Jack opens the fridge. It's almost empty. He takes out a carton of milk. Sniffs it. Recoils from the smell. From the living room we hear the LOUD sound of a TV.

JACK
(shouts)
Mom! We're out of milk.

There's no reply. Jack grabs his jacket.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - EVENING

Anna's still sitting on the floor. The place is clean and ordered again. She watches Eliot unzip a garment bag. He lifts out a plain black dress.

ANNA

What's that?

ELIOT

It's your dress. For your funeral. Your mother brought it round this morning.

As Eliot takes out a pair of shiny black shoes from a plastic bag, Anna moves haltingly over to the dress. She touches the material puzzled.

ANNA

This isn't my dress.

(realizes with shock)

This is my mother's dress! It was supposed to be for her funeral. Why has she given it to me?

Eliot starts folding the plastic bag. He notices something else inside. He opens the bag. Hesitates then takes something out.

ON ELIOT'S HAND

An old-fashioned wooden rosary.

PREP ROOM

Eliot looks at it for a moment. Then glances over at Anna. She's still staring at the dress. He opens a drawer beneath the counter. It's full of rosaries and printed Holy cards. He quickly drops the rosary into the drawer. Closes it. Then turns back to Anna.

ANNA

It should have been her not me.

(turns to Eliot)

She was the one dying. Not me.

Eliot unlocks the door. Jams it open with a door stop. Slips his keys back into his jacket pocket. Takes off his jacket and hangs it up. He moves over to a collapsible gurney folded on the floor. Bends down and snaps open the side-rails. Anna looks at the open door.

ANNA

I'm not ready to die.

Eliot looks up at Anna sadly.

ELIOT
Why are you still struggling?

ANNA
(plaintively)
I'm not ready to die. Not yet.

She glances at the open door again. Eliot follows her look.

ELIOT
There's nothing out there for you
anymore.

As Eliot turns back to the gurney, Anna notices Eliot's jacket hanging beside her. Realizes the KEYS are in the pocket. She quickly glances back at Eliot. He's still busy adjusting the gurney. She leans over to his jacket.

ON ELIOT

as he gets up and turns to Anna.

PREP ROOM

Anna looks at him calmly. We can't tell if she managed to get his keys or not. Eliot pulls on his jacket and wheels the gurney through the door. He steps back into the room. Nudges the door stop away with his foot.

ELIOT
I'll be back soon.

The door locks behind him with a CLICK.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot pushes the gurney to a WHITE VAN with black tinted windows (Note: The same kind of van that cut in front of Anna just before the accident).

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna listens anxiously to the CRUNCH of Eliot's feet on the gravel outside. After a moment she hears the van drive away. She unfurls her fist revealing Eliot's keys.

INT/EXT. ELIOT'S VAN. STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

As Eliot slides in a CD he notices the fuel gauge. He's low on gas. He glances into his rear-view mirror and makes a left turn.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna staggers to the door. There's at least a dozen keys. She frantically chooses one and shoves it into the lock.

ANNA
(begging the door to open)
Please.

It doesn't fit. She's panicking. She fumbles for another key. It almost fits. She forces it. The key SNAPS OFF LOUDLY in the lock.

ANNA
No!

Anna looks around desperately. Sees a tray of instruments on the steel trolley. She scrambles over. Finds a pair of surgical pliers. She moves back to the door.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Eliot replaces the pump nozzle. Walks over to the cashier.

CASHIER
Thirty-four fifty.

In the b.g. Jack, a carton of milk in his hand, steps out of the gas station. Eliot doesn't notice him as he pulls out a roll of notes. Hands over two twenties. Then he frowns. Something's wrong. He checks his pockets again. He can't find his keys. He walks quickly away.

CASHIER
Sir. Your change.

Eliot ignores him. Scrambles into his van. Intrigued, Jack watches Eliot drive away. Then unlocks his bicycle.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna's still trying to pry out the broken key.

ANNA
(desperately)
Come on. Come on.

INT/EXT. ELIOT'S VAN. STREETS - SAME TIME

Eliot's at a red light. Drumming his fingers in frustration as he waits for the light to change.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Finally Anna pulls out the broken key. Quickly chooses another. Turns it gently. Again it doesn't fit. Anna's hysterical now. She tries the next key. It fits! She's stunned for a second. Then pulls open the door.

INT/EXT. ELIOT'S VAN. STREETS - SAME TIME

Eliot turns sharply into a small road by the cemetery.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Anna staggers to the front door. She pulls at the door. It won't open. Frantically she finds the key. Unlocks the door, leaving the keys in the lock. As she opens the door, HEADLIGHTS sweep across the hallway.

ANNA'S POV

Eliot's van pulls up in front of the house.

ENTRANCE HALL

Anna's trapped. We hear the CRUNCH of Eliot's footsteps on the gravel outside. Anna looks round desperately.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Eliot reaches the front door. It's slightly ajar. He pushes it open. Steps warily inside.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Eliot looks around. The entrance hall's empty. Then he notices the keys in the lock.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

It's dark. Anna pulls at the back door. It won't budge. She panics. Sees a kitchen knife on the counter. Quickly grabs it. As she steps back, she knocks over a metal bucket. The sound's DEAFENING in the silent house.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Eliot hears the NOISE. Smiles. He calmly locks the door and puts the keys into his pocket. Moves down the hallway towards the kitchen.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot switches on the light. The kitchen's empty. He steps back into the hallway.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He stands very still. Watching. Waiting. We pull back.

JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Anna pushes herself against the wall clutching the knife.

HALLWAY

Eliot turns towards her... then at the last moment changes his mind. Heads in the opposite direction towards the viewing room.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot steps carefully into the viewing room. Looks around. Just then we hear the sound of bare feet STAMPING along the hallway behind him.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ENTRANCE HALL - SAME TIME

Anna runs to the front door. It's locked. She glances around anxiously. Sees a staircase leading upstairs. She weakly stumbles up the stairs.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Anna walks along the corridor. She peers into a room. Notices a TELEPHONE on a table. She moves over to the telephone. The door CREAKS closed behind her.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ENTRANCE HALL - SAME TIME

Eliot hears the CREAKING DOOR upstairs. He cocks his head upwards. Straining to listen.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. UPSTAIRS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna frantically punches the buttons on the phone.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

A telephone RINGS in the empty kitchen.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. UPSTAIRS ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna rocks back and forth as she anxiously listens to the RINGING on the other end.

ANNA
(desperately)
Please pick up. Please pick up.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. STAIRS - SAME TIME

Eliot slowly climbs the stairs.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

The phone continues to RING. We pull back. Paul stares at the phone blankly. A drink in his hand. He looks worse than before. Dark circles under his eyes.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. UPSTAIRS ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna glances back to the door in panic.

ANNA
Paul. Please pick up.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Finally Paul reaches across and picks up the phone.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. UPSTAIRS ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna cups her hand around the mouthpiece.

ANNA
(frenzied whisper)
Paul. I'm here.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

ANNA (O.S.)
(filtered)
Help me Paul.

Anna's HOARSE DISTORTED VOICE sounds almost malevolent. Paul's stunned. He stares at the phone as if it was possessed. Then slowly puts it down.

PAUL
Leave me alone.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. UPSTAIRS ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna looks at the phone in disbelief. The MONOTONOUS TONE DRONES in the ear piece. She doesn't notice Eliot appear in the doorway.

ANNA

Paul.

Suddenly the light comes on.

ELIOT

I'm the only one who can hear you now.

Anna drops the phone. Backs away towards a window. Eliot walks over and calmly replaces the phone.

ELIOT

I'd be very careful if I were you. The dead have such a hold over the living.

ANNA

What do you mean?

ELIOT

(nods to the phone)

He still feels your presence. You're only causing him more pain. If you really loved him, you'd accept your death and let him go.

ANNA

Then prove to me I'm really dead.

ELIOT

You people. You always need proof.

Eliot places his hands on her shoulders. Turns her towards a tall mirror.

ON MIRROR

A PALE CADAVEROUS WOMAN. Sunken eyes. A blood-stained tear in the side of her RED SLIP.

UPSTAIRS ROOM

Anna's stunned. She moves closer to the mirror. Touches her reflection through a thin layer of dust.

ANNA

Why do I look like a corpse?

ELIOT

Because you are a corpse.

ON MIRROR

Anna stares blankly at her image in the mirror.

ELIOT (O.C.)

It's time you finally accepted the truth.
You are dead. You will never live again.

ANNA

I am dead.

UPSTAIRS ROOM

Eliot smiles. Like a father proud of his child's first step. Just then he notices something outside. We see a brief flicker of unease in Eliot's eyes.

ELIOT'S POV

Jack stands in the driveway holding his bicycle. Looking up at the Funeral Home. Transfixed.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY

JACK'S POV

Anna in her RED SLIP by the mirror. She looks frightening in the harsh light. Deathly pale. Like a ghost.

DRIVEWAY

Strangely Jack isn't scared. He continues staring up at the window. Calmly. Curiously.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. UPSTAIRS ROOM - SAME TIME

Eliot coolly turns back to Anna. She hasn't noticed Jack. Still staring at her reflection in the mirror.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Paul stares at the telephone. After a moment he slowly pulls the telephone plug out of the wall. Mechanically grabs a plastic bin liner from underneath the sink.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Paul opens the wardrobe. Pulls out Anna's clothes. Stuffs them into the bin liner. He notices the Kitschy Doll. Shoves it in with Anna's clothes.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAY

Anna lies on the slab. She stares at us blankly. Her face emotionless. Resigned. Eliot rinses her hair now dyed back to brown. She slowly closes her eyes.

CLOSE ON RED DYE draining into the sink.

Eliot picks up the scissors. Carefully slices open Anna's red slip. Delicately peels the slip off her body. Anna doesn't react.

CLOSE ON Anna. She opens her eyes. Confused. She turns her head... she's in PAUL'S BEDROOM.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul lies in bed next to her watching her intently. He looks different. Clean shaven. Sober.

ANNA
(relieved)
Oh God.

PAUL
Bad dream?

ANNA
I was dead. I had a car accident. Did you ever dream you were dead?

Paul doesn't reply. She turns... the bed's empty.

ANNA
Paul?

PAUL (O.C.)
Yes?

Anna looks up. Paul's in the doorway. She gets up. Suddenly the light goes off.

ANNA
Paul.

The light comes back on. Paul stands by the light switch.

ANNA
What are you doing?

PAUL
(puts his finger to his lips)
Ssh. Don't talk so loud. You'll wake the neighbors.

Anna's getting nervous. Something's not right.

ANNA
What neighbors? You don't have any
neighbors.

Suddenly he looks at her reproachfully.

PAUL
Did you ever love me Anna?

CLOSE ON Anna's face. She looks away guiltily.

PAUL (O.C.)
Did you?

Anna closes her eyes. Unable to answer.

PAUL (O.C.)
Say it. Say you love me.

Suddenly we hear the strident ringing of a phone.

ANNA
Aren't you going to pick it up?

PAUL (O.C.)
Me? No. It's probably for Eliot.

Anna's eyes snap open in shock...

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eliot stands over her. We're back in the PREP ROOM. We hear the faint ringing of a phone from upstairs.

ANNA
Is it always like this?

ELIOT
What do you mean?

ANNA
I thought when you died you wouldn't
feel anything. You wouldn't feel any
more pain. You wouldn't have to
struggle anymore.
(beat)
But it just doesn't stop does it?

Upstairs the phone keeps on ringing.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot takes notes as he talks on the phone. He looks at a day calendar on his desk. Idly flips over the page from Tuesday to Wednesday.

ELIOT
No. It's no problem at all.

He glances at his watch.

ELIOT
I'll pick up the deceased from the hospital. Yes. This afternoon? That'll be fine. It's my pleasure Mr. Merano.

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - DAY

GRAY BODIES lie on steel tables. Eliot moves over to one of the CORPSES. Examines it with professional interest. Just then the Old Guy walks in with the Pale Assistant pushing a gurney with a BODY wrapped in plastic sheeting.

OLD GUY
Well here he is. Frank Merano.

The Old Guy hands Eliot a clipboard. The Assistant unties the rope. Pulls the plastic sheeting away.

ON BODY

FRANK (40s), the top half of his head has been flattened. His head split open. Grotesquely distorting his face.

ASSISTANT (O.C.)
Ouch. That had to hurt.

MORGUE

Eliot glances at the Assistant with disdain. Signs the release form and hands the clipboard back to the Old Guy.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. TEACHERS' COMMON ROOM - DAY

Paul stands by a PRINCIPAL as they watch a JANITOR snap off the padlock on Anna's locker.

PRINCIPAL
(to Paul)
I'll leave you to sort out her things.

PAUL
Thank you.

The Principal and Janitor walk away. Paul reaches inside the locker. Pulls out a stack of exercise books. An empty pills bottle. Then he notices something in the back of the locker. He pulls it out.

It's a PHOTOGRAPH of Paul and Anna together on vacation. Smiling. Happy. Paul looks at it for a moment. Trying hard to hold back his emotions.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. CORRIDOR - LATER

The DEAFENING NOISE of schoolchildren. Paul weaves his way through the crowded corridor.

JACK (O.C.)
Mr. Conran?

PAUL
(turns)
Yes?

JACK
My name's Jack. Miss Bryant was my teacher.
(beat)
I saw her last night.

Paul looks at Jack coldly for a second. Then walks away. Jack follows him.

JACK
I was going past the funeral home. Miss Bryant stood there. In the window. In a red dress.

PAUL
(irritated)
Anna doesn't have a red dress.

JACK
You think I'm lying. I'm not lying.

Paul stops. Turns to Jack angrily.

PAUL
Look...
(trying to remember his name)
Jack. I'm in no mood--

JACK
She needs your help.

PAUL
(shouts)
Jack. Anna's dead.

Paul's words ECHO loudly. The bustling corridor goes silent.

PAUL
 (almost to himself)
 I can't help her anymore.

Paul turns and walks away. Jack grabs his arm.

JACK
 Maybe you just don't love her anymore?

Paul turns and hits Jack with the back of his hand. Jack falls to the ground. Paul stands over him enraged.

PAUL
 You little fuck. You think this is funny?

He's about to hit Jack again when a STOCKY TEACHER grabs him. Paul tries to struggle loose.

STOCKY TEACHER
 Hey!

The CHILDREN stare at Paul. A SECURITY GUARD runs across talking into a walkie-talkie. Another TEACHER bends down.

TEACHER
 Are you alright sweetie?

Jack nods numbly. Looking up all the time at Paul. The Security Guard grabs Paul's arm.

SECURITY GUARD
 The police are on their way.

Paul watches Jack stand shakily. Realizes what he's done. He reaches out to Jack.

PAUL
 Jack... I'm sorry...

SECURITY GUARD
 Step back sir.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. SECURITY ROOM - DAY

Paul sits at a table. Staring blankly at a row of CCTV monitors. The door opens. Tom walks in.

TOM
 You're lucky.

PAUL
 Am I?

TOM
 They're not pressing charges.

Paul doesn't look up. He's miles away.

TOM
 What the hell's wrong with you?
 (holds his fingers close together)
 You're this close to fucking up your
 career.

PAUL
 (suddenly looks up)
 You know what he told me? He told me
 Anna's alive.

TOM
 You didn't believe him did you?

PAUL
 No. Of course not.

Tom's relieved. Paul turns back to the monitors. The ghostly figure of a YOUNG FEMALE TEACHER drifts hypnotically across the screen.

PAUL
 It's just... I'm having these...

TOM
 What?

PAUL
 Nothing. Forget it.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAY

Eliot leans over Frank's body on the slab. Rolling a ball of wax in his hands to warm it up. He gently moves Frank's head to one side. In the b.g. Anna lies on her slab watching Eliot work.

ANNA'S POV

Frank stares back at her with open dull eyes. His face partially reconstructed with plaster of Paris.

PREP ROOM

Eliot smooths the wax over the plaster to give Frank's face a more natural texture. Then picks up a piece of wire with a fishhook-like barb at each end.

ANNA (O.C.)
 What's that for?

Eliot looks up surprised. Anna stands beside him. He leans down. Peels back Frank's upper lip.

ELIOT

His mouth. To keep it closed.

Eliot imbeds one barb into the upper gum then pries back Frank's lower lip. He attaches the other barb into the lower gum, then twists the wires tightly together. He picks up two plastic caps covered in small knobs.

ELIOT

Now his eyes.

He inserts the caps into Frank's eyes. Pulls his eyelids over them. Glues the eyelids together.

ANNA

Is this how you'll prepare my body?

Eliot looks at her for a moment. Smiles reassuringly.

ELIOT

No. There's no need. I had to rebuild his face. You're still beautiful.

ANNA

Does he have family?

ELIOT

Yes. A brother. He's coming in later.

Anna touches the white sheet covering Frank's body.

ANNA

My mother... She didn't cry did she? When she came to see me?

ELIOT

(shakes his head)
I'm sorry.

ANNA

And Paul?

ELIOT

It's not important anymore.

ANNA

I need to know.

ELIOT

(hesitates)
No. He didn't cry.

We see a brief flicker of pain in Anna's eyes.

ANNA

I knew he wouldn't. He always got upset when I cried. He said crying never helped.

Anna suddenly looks very weary. She leans heavily against the slab. As if she's about to fall.

ELIOT

You should rest.

He guides her back to the slab. Helps her lie down.

ELIOT

You're getting weaker. It's almost time.

Eliot strokes her hair tenderly. She looks up at him.

ANNA

Can I ask you something?

ELIOT

Yes. Of course.

ANNA

Why do we die?

A long beat.

ELIOT

To make life important.

Anna's fingers curl around his hand. Like a vulnerable child. Totally trusting in him. Eliot looks down at Anna sadly. We sense he's conflicted. Confused. Wavering.

But then reluctantly he reaches for a SYRINGE filled with AMBER LIQUID on the steel trolley. He injects her gently in the neck. Watches over her for a moment. Then moves to the window. He picks up a window pole. Pulls the shutter across the window plunging the room into darkness.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Eliot moves through the Funeral Home pulling heavy drapes over the windows and closing doors. It feels like a ritual. The once airy sunlit rooms are darker now. More ominous. Claustrophobic.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON a stream of crystal blue water. We pull back.

Eliot picks up a white towel. Dries his hands. Deep in thought. He moves to his desk. Picks up a Polaroid.

ON POLAROID

The Old Woman, Mrs. Whitehall, lying in her casket.

ELIOT (O.C.)
Mrs. Whitehall. Susan. I hope you found
what you were looking for.

ROOM

Suddenly Eliot looks up sharply. As if someone had spoken to him.

ELIOT
Think nothing of it Mr. Houseman. No
need to apologize.

Eliot moves over to the wall.

ELIOT
I really enjoyed our time together.

We pull back slowly. Eliot's talking to a POLAROID of an OLD MAN. We pull back further... the wall's covered in HUNDREDS OF POLAROIDS of BODIES in open coffins.

Most of them have closed eyes but we glimpse some with their eyes wide open. Eerily staring at us. Eliot touches the Polaroid of a YOUNG MAN. We see the fear in the Young Man's eyes.

ELIOT (O.C.)
Anthony. Anthony. Always confused.

Just then we hear the doorbell ringing downstairs. Eliot moves to the window.

ELIOT'S POV

A POLICE OFFICER stands at the front door. A SQUAD CAR parked on the driveway.

ELIOT'S ROOM

Eliot steps back. Calmly continues to dry his hands.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. HALLWAY - DAY

Eliot leads the Police Officer through the hallway.

ELIOT
How can I help you Officer?

OFFICER
I'd like to see the body.

Eliot stops. We see a brief flicker of unease in his eyes.

OFFICER

Frank Merano. I'm his brother. Vincent Merano? I called this morning.

ELIOT

Mr. Merano. Yes. Of course.

VINCENT (OFFICER)

I hope it's no trouble. I'd just like to see him before the funeral.

Eliot glances at his watch. Smiles at Vincent.

ELIOT

It's no trouble at all.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot leads Vincent to Frank's covered body. Vincent looks over at Anna. The white sheet only comes to her shoulders, her head facing straight upwards.

ELIOT

Your brother's here.

Vincent turns back to Eliot. We're not sure if Eliot was speaking to Frank or to Vincent. Eliot pulls the sheet away. Frank's face is flawless. No sign of any damage.

VINCENT

He looks so peaceful. You've done a beautiful job. Thank-you.

ELIOT

You should remember him as he used to be.

Suddenly we hear a FAINT RUSTLING sound. Vincent glances again at Anna's body. Her head is now turned to one side. Wasn't she facing upwards a moment ago? Vincent's puzzled for a second then shrugs. Must have been his imagination.

VINCENT

That's the schoolteacher isn't it?

Eliot pulls the sheet over Anna's face.

ELIOT

(quickly)
Yes. Very tragic. Now is there anything else I can help you with?

Vincent frowns. Turns back to Eliot.

VINCENT
Something's not right here.

ELIOT
(looks up sharply)
Not right?

Vincent nods towards Frank's body.

VINCENT
His smile. It was a bit more...

Vincent raises his fingers to his mouth, trying to find the right word.

VINCENT
...smiley.

ELIOT
Smiley.

ON FRANK'S MOUTH

Eliot manipulates Frank's lips.

VINCENT (O.C.)
A touch more.

PREP ROOM

VINCENT
That's much better. Thank-you.

ELIOT
I'm glad I could help.

VINCENT
Do you mind if I have a couple of minutes alone with him?

Eliot hesitates. Then smiles.

ELIOT
No. Not at all. I'll wait outside.

As Eliot leaves, Vincent looks at Frank's body. After a moment he glances at Anna again. Then at the door. He quickly moves over to Anna. Looks at her curiously then pulls down the sheet. He reaches over... and CARESSES HER BREAST. Mesmerized by her naked body.

As Vincent's hand moves down her body, he bumps against the trolley. Instruments CRASH to the floor. He pulls back the sheet just as Eliot enters the room.

VINCENT
I'm sorry. I didn't see...

Eliot notices the sheet covering Anna's body is slightly askew. He reaches over and straightens it. Then looks coldly at Vincent. There's an uncomfortable silence.

VINCENT

Well. I guess I should be off then. I'll see you at the service. Thanks again.

Vincent glances one last time at Anna then leaves. The door locking shut behind him. Eliot stares at the door.

ELIOT

I just told you. That was your brother.
(turns to Frank)
You had an accident. You're dead. Why do you people never listen to me?

Frank doesn't move. His mouth still wired shut.

ELIOT

No. It's not a gift. It's a curse.

Eliot picks up a compact. Roughly layers Frank's cheeks with thick rouge. With every word he gets more agitated.

ELIOT

I take care of each of you as if you were my children. I wash the shit from your bodies. I dress you. I do everything to make you look more beautiful than when you were alive. And what do you do?

Eliot's extremely irritated now. He grabs a garish red lipstick. Smears Frank's lips.

ELIOT

You argue with me. As if it were my fault you're dead. As if I was to blame.
(slams down the lipstick.)
What? You're not talking to me now? You don't want to?

ON FRANK'S FACE

The crudely drawn bright red lips. Clown-like circles of rouge. Gaudy and macabre.

ELIOT (O.S.)

You don't talk because you have nothing to say. And you have nothing to say because you're a corpse.

PREP ROOM

From Eliot's reaction it seems as if Frank has started to talk again.

ELIOT

No. Now I don't want to talk to you anymore.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The curtains are drawn. Jack's Mother, still motionless, in front of the blaring TV. Jack stops in the doorway.

JACK

I'm off to school now.

His mother doesn't reply. Jack leaves. After a moment she slowly turns her head. Stares at the empty doorway.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Jack cycles through the cemetery. He pulls up by a bush. Stares at the Funeral Home in the distance.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The service hasn't started yet. Jack walks nervously through the empty room to an open casket. He glances back, then leans over the coffin.

JACK'S POV

Frank Merano lies nestled in the velvet interior. His face placid. No sign of the gaudy make-up.

VIEWING ROOM

Jack stares in fascination at Frank's body. He reaches into the casket. Touches Frank's cold hand.

In the b.g. Eliot walks into the viewing room. He stops surprised. Watches Jack intently.

ON JACK

JACK

(to Frank)

What's it like? Are you afraid?

ELIOT (O.C.)

Jack.

VIEWING ROOM

Jack turns quickly. Eliot stands over him.

ELIOT
 You have empathy with the dead. You're
 drawn to them. Just as they're drawn to
 you. It's a rare gift.

Jack can't look Eliot in the eye.

ELIOT
 I know you saw Anna.

Jack hesitates. Then nods his head.

ELIOT
 You're frightened by it. I was scared
 too the first time. But you shouldn't
 be. Christ had the same gift. He raised
 Lazarus and spoke to the dead.

JACK
 (intrigued)
 You spoke to Miss Bryant?

ELIOT
 Yes.

JACK
 You've spoken to others?

ELIOT
 Yes. Many others.

JACK
 Who was the first one you spoke to?

A long beat.

ELIOT
 My mother.

Jack looks up sharply. Eliot's words have clearly struck a
 chord.

ELIOT
 You shouldn't be afraid.
 (beat)
 The others. They won't understand. They
 don't see what we see.
 (beat)
 I can help you. I can teach you.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAY

Anna stares vacantly at the ceiling. Eliot places a bunch
 of tulips on the trolley. Turns on a CD. CLASSICAL MUSIC
 fills the room as before. He moves over to Anna. Gently
 Pulls away the sheet.

ANNA

Your fingernails are dirty.

Eliot smiles. Examines his nails.

ANNA

Your hands are normally so clean.

ELIOT

I've been gardening.

He walks over to the sink. Scrubs his nails.

ANNA

Is it sunny outside?

Eliot fills a bowl with water. Carries it to the slab.

ELIOT

Yes. The tulips love the sun.

ANNA

I miss the sun.

Anna glances up at the shuttered window. Eliot snaps on his latex gloves. Picks up a sponge and wets it in the bowl of water. Anna turns to the tulips.

ANNA

Are they your favorite flower?

ELIOT

Tulips? Yes. I think so.

Eliot raises Anna's arm. Delicately washes her armpit. Along the length of her arm. Her skin pale.

ANNA

I thought it'd be lilies. White lilies.
Don't they symbolize death?

ELIOT

No. They symbolize purity.

He moves to her breasts, following the contours of her body. Pausing every now and then to rinse the sponge.

ANNA

And tulips?

Eliot hesitates for a second before replying.

ELIOT

Unrequited love.

(beat)

What's your favorite flower?

ANNA

Violets.

Eliot softly washes her legs.

ELIOT

A beautiful flower. They need shade and lots of water.

ANNA

What do they symbolize?

ELIOT

Faithfulness.

ANNA

(distractedly)

Do they?

Eliot puts down the sponge. Dries her body with a towel.

ANNA

Roses are red, violets are blue...

He reaches over to the CD player to switch it off.

ANNA

No. Leave it on. It's so peaceful.

Eliot smiles. Leaves the music on.

INT/EXT. PAUL'S CAR. STREETS - DAY

Paul drives aimlessly past strip malls. He stops at a red light. Lights a cigarette. Just then he notices something across the street. He looks puzzled.

EXT. STREET/STORE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Paul gets out of his car. Quickly walks over to the store window.

ON STORE WINDOW

A RED-SLIP on a mannequin. Just like ANNA'S RED SLIP.

STREET

The light's turned green. The DRIVERS HONK angrily. Paul doesn't hear them. He places his hand against the plate glass. Stunned.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Eliot prunes a low hedge by the front door.

PAUL (O.C.)

Deane.

Eliot turns. Paul's clearly agitated.

ELIOT

Mr. Conran. A pleasure.

Eliot stands stiffly. Rubs his back.

ELIOT

I love gardening, but I'm not sure gardening loves me anymore.

PAUL

She's not dead is she?

ELIOT

(amused)

Mr. Conran.

PAUL

Someone saw her.

ELIOT

I'm sorry?

PAUL

One of Anna's students.
(nods towards the funeral home)
In the window.

ELIOT

Do you mean Jack?

Paul's momentarily taken aback.

PAUL

You know him?

ELIOT

Of course I know him. He's often round here. He seems to have a strange fascination with death. He's eleven years old Mr. Conran. And like all young boys has a vivid imagination. Now if you'll excuse me--

PAUL

I don't think he imagined it. I think he really saw her.

ELIOT
Maybe you just want to believe he saw her.

PAUL
Fuck you.

Paul pushes past Eliot and strides into the Funeral Home.

ELIOT
Mr. Conran!

INT. FUNERAL HOME. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paul moves quickly through the hallway.

PAUL
(shouts)
Anna!

Eliot calmly heads towards Paul.

ELIOT
Mr. Conran. I think you should leave
before I call the police.

Paul notices the stairs leading down to the Prep Room.

PAUL
What's down there?

INT. FUNERAL HOME. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Paul runs over to the Prep Room door. He grabs the handle.
It's locked. Eliot appears behind him. Paul turns.

PAUL
She's in here isn't she? Give me the
key.

Eliot stares at Paul with pity.

PAUL
Give me the fucking key.

Paul turns back. POUNDS the door in rage.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

The POUNDING echoes through the room. Anna awkwardly
sits up. Struggling with her emotions. She wants to
call out but knows she has to let Paul go.

PAUL (O.S.)
Anna!

Anna gets up. Hesitates. Weakly stumbles to the door.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

PAUL
I'm here Anna.
(desperate)
I'm sorry. Please Anna.

He places the palm of his hand against the door.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna places her palm against the door. As if touching Paul's hand. A tear falls down her cheek.

PAUL (O.S.)
We'll be happy again. I promise.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

PAUL
I can't live without you.

Eliot looks up at Paul with sudden interest.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna shakes her head. Takes her hand away from the door. Walks back to her slab.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

PAUL
Anna!

Eliot gently puts his hand on Paul's shoulder.

ELIOT
Mr. Conran. She's dead.

Paul pushes him away.

ELIOT
I know what you're going through.
Denial's a natural part of grieving...

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - SAME TIME

Anna lies down on the slab. Closes her eyes. ELIOT'S VOICE seems far away now. Receding.

ELIOT (O.S.)
 ...but you've got to accept she's gone.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

PAUL
 She needs my help.

Eliot looks at him for a moment.

ELIOT
 You can't help her anymore. Believe me.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

An open plan office. Paul weaves quickly through the rows of desks. He seems unbalanced. Manic. DETECTIVES cautiously watch Paul approach Tom sitting at his desk, his head bent over paperwork.

PAUL
 I need you to issue a search warrant.

Tom looks up. He's shocked by Paul's appearance.

PAUL
 (loudly)
 I need a fucking search warrant. Now are you going to help me or what?

JEFF (20s) a Young Detective at a nearby desk stands. Tom nods to him. It's under control.

TOM
 Paul. Sit down.

Paul hesitates for a second.

TOM
 (firmly)
 Sit. Down.

Paul sits. Tom leans forward. He's not amused.

TOM
 Just what the hell do you think you're doing? I got a call from Eliot Deane. Are you out of your fucking mind?

PAUL
 Anna's not dead Tom. He won't let me see her. He's keeping her there--

TOM

Anna was in a car accident. Her car was wrecked Paul. Remember? It's downstairs.

PAUL

She's not dead.

Tom calmly gets up. Moves to a filing cabinet. Takes out a file. Hands it to Paul.

TOM

Here's the Coroner's report.

Paul manically rifles through the file.

PAUL

Look.

(shows file to Tom)

The paramedics phoned it in. They only checked for eye dilation and pulse. The doctor signed the death certificate without even seeing her body.

TOM

(irritated)

So? That's standard procedure.

PAUL

There was no EEG. Nothing. He could have drugged her to make it look like she was dead.

TOM

Drugged her? Are you serious?

Jeff looks up eagerly from his desk.

JEFF

There are drugs like that chief. Hydronium Bromide. Total paralysis within seconds. The heartbeat slows to almost nothing.

Tom shoots Jeff a look.

PAUL

See? I'm telling you. She's not dead. The boy at school. Jack. He saw her.

VINCENT (O.C.)

I saw her.

Paul turns hopefully. Finally someone believes him. Vincent Merano stands by Jeff's desk.

VINCENT

She was on the slab. Dead.

PAUL

No!

VINCENT

I've seen dead bodies. Believe me, she was definitely dead.

PAUL

Tom. Just go down there and check the place out.

TOM

On what grounds Paul? Do you have any evidence?

PAUL

No. But--

TOM

Do you have anything?

Paul hesitates. We sense his uncertainty.

PAUL

I think she called me.

TOM

Called you?

PAUL

(weakly)
On the telephone.

Jeff snickers. Paul's beginning to realize how absurd this all sounds.

VINCENT

Collect or long distance?

Jeff snorts with laughter.

TOM

First you hit a fucking kid. Then you attack Deane. And now you're telling me your dead girlfriend called you? What the fuck's going on? You're losing it Paul.

Merano and Jeff shake their heads, looking at Paul as if he were crazy. Tom's voice softens.

TOM

I know you feel guilty but you've got to pull yourself together.

Paul slumps in the chair. Rubs his face.

PAUL

Maybe you're right. But why won't he let me see her?

Tom signals to Merano and Jeff. Merano walks back to his desk. Jeff turns back to his work.

TOM

Look Paul. The funeral's tomorrow. You'll see her then. It'll help. It will give you closure. Trust me.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun's low on the horizon. Eliot whistles softly to himself as he digs a grave. Working meticulously. Like everything else he does. Suddenly a SHADOW falls over Eliot. He calmly looks up. The sun's behind the figure. For a moment Eliot can't tell who it is.

JACK

You said you could teach me.

Eliot smiles. Gestures to Jack to come inside the grave. Jack steps back. The grave terrifies him.

ELIOT

It's only a hole in the ground. I'm digging it for--

JACK

Miss Bryant.

ELIOT

Exactly. For Anna. She belongs here.

JACK

Because she's dead.

ELIOT

No. Because there's no life left in her.

Jack carefully considers Eliot's words.

ELIOT

Don't you see? I have no choice. I'm the only one who can see all these corpses. Wandering the earth aimlessly. All they do is piss and shit. Suffocating us with their stench. Doing nothing with their lives. Taking the air away from those who actually want to live. I have to bury them all. I have no choice.

(beat)

Now there's two of us.

Eliot holds up the shovel. Jack looks at him for a moment then reaches for the shovel.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - EVENING

Anna watches Eliot brush an invisible speck off her mother's black dress.

ELIOT
You did well this morning.

ANNA
This morning?

She talks with difficulty now. Her voice SLURRED and HOARSE. Her words muddled and rambling. Her eyes even more sunken. Her skin even more pale.

ELIOT
When Paul came. You did the right thing.
You let him go.

ANNA
He'll be all right now? Won't he?

Eliot looks away. Doesn't reply. He drapes the dress over his arm, picks up a pair of shiny black shoes and moves over to her.

ANNA
(confused)
Why do I have to get dressed?

ELIOT
Tomorrow's your funeral.

Eliot lifts Anna's arms and puts them through the sleeves of the dress. Her body's stiff and unyielding.

ANNA
Already?

ELIOT
I told you. You only had three days.

He delicately turns her onto her side. Buttons up the dress.

ELIOT
I told you to use your time well.

Anna frowns. As if trying to remember something. Eliot gently lifts her legs. Pulls on a pair of black tights.

ANNA
I need to... I have so many regrets. I
have nothing but regrets.

She looks up at him. Suddenly realizing.

ANNA

That's why I'm here isn't it? To be judged.

Eliot picks up Anna's shoes. Slips them onto her stiff feet.

ELIOT

You're here to understand your life. So you can finally be at peace.

ANNA

I wanted a different life.

Eliot picks up a nail-clipper. Gently holds Anna's hand as he carefully cuts her long nails.

ELIOT

Then why didn't you do anything about it?

ANNA

No matter what I did everything just stayed the same. I'd wake up. I'd shower. Sit in the same traffic everyday on my way to work. Go home. Go to sleep. Then wake again.

Eliot stops clipping her nails. Irritated.

ELIOT

What did you really want from life?

ANNA

I just wanted to be happy.

ELIOT

(derisively)

Happy? You all say you wanted to be happy. What does it mean Anna? To be happy?

ANNA

I don't know. Don't you understand? That's the whole point. I don't know.

ELIOT

Yes you do! You're just too scared to admit it to yourself.

Anna turns away ashamed. She knows he's right.

ANNA

I don't want to talk about it anymore. I just want this to be over.

ELIOT

What did you want from life?

ANNA
I don't fucking know!

ELIOT
WHAT DID YOU WANT ANNA?

ANNA
(screams back)
I WANTED LOVE! OK!

Anna's stunned. She's finally admitted it.

ANNA
(quietly)
I wanted love.

ELIOT
You had love. Paul loved you.

ANNA
No. You don't understand. I was scared.
I wanted to love but I didn't know how.
I was...
(beat)
When I was a child... my mother.

Anna struggles to pull together her thoughts.

ANNA
When I was a child. I learnt that love.
That when you love someone. You get
hurt. So I learned not to love. That
way no one could ever hurt me again.

She looks down at the slab. Touches the cold marble.

ANNA
I was always pushing Paul away. He
thought I didn't love him.

ELIOT
Did you?

ANNA
He was the only one I ever loved. But I
never told him that. And then he stopped
loving me.

Eliot stares at her intently. Comes to a decision.

ELIOT
What would you do if you had another
chance?

Anna's puzzled. Eliot goes to the door and unlocks it.
Moonlight floods in from upstairs. Washing it with a cold
light. Anna doesn't move.

ELIOT

Well? Isn't this what you wanted?

Eliot holds out his hand. Anna takes it hesitantly and rises from the slab.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Mist drifts through the cemetery. Anna stands in the driveway. Pale and ghoulish in her black funeral dress and shiny black shoes. She starts walking.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Anna approaches her mother's house. Paul opens the door. He's not surprised to see her.

Beatrice stands just behind him. A black shawl over her head and arms.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE. HALLWAY - NIGHT

In the candlelight we can see the house is full of OLD WOMEN. Their faces deeply lined. Wearing identical black shawls. They stare at Anna, whispering in different rhythms. Unintelligible words undulating like an ANCIENT PRAYER.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul and Beatrice lead Anna to the bed. As she lies down we realize the bed is full of BLACK SOIL. Clouds of ugly flies hang in the air. BUZZING noisily.

The Old Women surround Anna in a tight circle. Leaning over her. Making her feel claustrophobic. She can smell their rotting breath as their prayers grow LOUDER. Through the chaos of words we begin to make out...

OLD WOMEN

Spit it out.

Anna doesn't understand. Then she feels something in her mouth. Growing. Gagging her. The Women are SCREAMING.

OLD WOMEN

Spit it out.

Anna spits out... white maggots. She gags again. Closes her eyes. Shakes her head.

ANNA

No.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - NIGHT

Anna's eyes snap open. She's still in the Prep Room. She steps back from the doorway. Terrified.

ELIOT

I thought you were different. You all say you're scared of death. But the truth is you're more scared of life.

Eliot switches off the lights.

ANNA (O.C.)

I'm glad I'm dead. I'm glad it's over.

EXT. ROAD BY FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Paul sits in his car. Staring out at the Funeral Home as he nervously smokes a cigarette. The light in Eliot's room goes off. Paul waits for a moment. Then gets out of his car. Stubs out his cigarette.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Paul treads carefully along the side of the Funeral Home. It's a full moon. The trees rustle ominously in the wind. Casting eerie shadows against the dark house.

He finds a window. Tries to open it. It won't budge. Just then he hears a noise in the bushes. He crouches down quickly. Listens hard. Nothing.

FROM THE BUSHES

Someone watches Paul tentatively move to another window.

FUNERAL HOME

Paul strains to open the window when suddenly... he's caught in a circle of bright light. Paul turns quickly. A DARK FIGURE stands over him. Menacing.

MAN'S VOICE

What the fuck are you doing here?

The Figure lowers the flashlight. It's Tom.

TOM

I'm taking you home.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE. GARDEN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON black earth. A trowel digs into the soil.

We pull back. Jack's just finished digging a hole in the flower bed. A shoebox beside him. He takes off the lid.

The Chick trembles in the corner of the box. Jack slowly replaces the lid. Puts the box into the grave. He pushes the earth over it. The box jerks. We hear the faint RUSTLING of the Chick inside.

JACK

Don't be scared. It's better this way.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S ROOM - DAWN

Eliot lies on his bed. Dressed in a dark suit. He hasn't slept at all. His eyes rimmed red. He checks the clock on the bedside table. It's 4.30am. He glances to the window. Dawn light seeps into the room.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAWN

Eliot walks through the garden. A pair of small secateurs in his hand. He stops by a bed of violets. Still covered in morning dew. He kneels and starts cutting the delicate flowers.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAWN

Anna lies on the slab in her burial dress. Her eyes closed.

Eliot enters the room. He doesn't lock the door behind him. Doesn't turn the lights on. Doesn't change into his mortician smock.

He approaches the slab. The violets in his hand. Pulls over a chair and sits next to Anna. Places the violets on the steel trolley beside her.

He looks at her intently. For the first time he seems uncertain. Vulnerable. As if questioning himself.

After a while he suddenly gets up and heads towards the door. He's about to close the door behind him...

ANNA (O.C.)

I don't even know your name.

ON ANNA

Her eyes still closed.

ON ELIOT

Eliot pauses. Too confused to look back at her.

ELIOT
 It's...
 (beat)
 It's not important.

He closes the door.

INT. BEATRICE'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON Beatrice's face. Her eyes closed.

A HAND delicately powders her forehead. As if she's being prepared for her own funeral. We pull back.

Beatrice, dressed in black, sits in front of a mirror. Diane applies her make-up. Beatrice opens her eyes.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM - DAY

Paul, badly shaven, leans against the washbasin. Wearing a crumpled black suit. Staring vacantly in the mirror.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - DAY

Anna lies in a casket as Eliot arranges her hair.

ELIOT
 (gently)
 It's time now.

She looks up smiling. Eliot positions her hands, entwining her fingers.

ELIOT
 You have to look beautiful for your funeral.

He picks up a SYRINGE and an ampoule of AMBER LIQUID. Fills the syringe.

ON AMPOULE

We glimpse the label: *HYDRONIUM BROMIDE*.

ELIOT (O.C.)
 This will relax your muscles. Make your skin radiant. As if you were still alive. Just sleeping.

PREP ROOM

ELIOT
 This is how they'll all remember you.

ANNA

Can I see myself for the last time?

Eliot smiles. Picks up a mirror. Hands it to Anna.

ON MIRROR

Anna looks peaceful. Beautiful. Serene.

ANNA

Is this the end?

ELIOT (O.C.)

The last part is the most difficult.
You'll have to face it alone. But you'll
be at peace soon.

Anna nods. SIGHS deeply... her BREATH FOGS the mirror.

She frowns. Touches the SMALL CIRCLE OF CONDENSATION on
the glass. Looks up at Eliot in shock.

PREP ROOM

Eliot glances anxiously at the fogged mirror, then at Anna.

ANNA

You lied to me.

ELIOT

Anna. We've been through this before.
You're just imagining--

ANNA

You lied to me.

Eliot injects her in the side of the neck. Anna tries to
raise her hand to push him away but she's too weak.

ELIOT (O.C.)

You're still clutching onto life. Don't
give in to your fears. You're so close.

Anna's fading away. Her hand drops limply to her side.

ANNA

(whispers)

Why did you lie to me?

She stops struggling. Stares blankly at us.

Eliot looks at her for a moment. Sadly. Regretfully.
He picks up a Polaroid camera. The flash explodes in a
blinding white light. He pulls out the Polaroid. Peels
off the front and fans it in the air. Then...

ON ANNA

...delicately closes Anna's eyelids.

ELIOT (O.C.)
Good bye Anna.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Anna's funeral is in progress. Eliot stands by her casket. Surrounded by wreathes of tulips and lilies. Beatrice, in her wheelchair, in the front row. Diane beside her. A SCHOOLTEACHER sits behind them with Jack and other CHILDREN.

FATHER GRAHAM (O.C.)
I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.

Tom and Paul appear at the door. Tom guides Paul to a seat near the back.

FATHER GRAHAM (O.C.)
They that sleep in the earth will awake
and shout for joy; and the earth will
bring those long dead to birth again.

ON CASKET

Anna lies in an open casket. Her eyes closed. She can hear the DISTORTED VOICE of the Priest.

FATHER GRAHAM (O.C.)
We have come here today to remember
before God our sister Anna. To give
thanks for her life.

ON ANNA'S FACE

We see an almost imperceptible frown.

VIEWING ROOM

Eliot gestures to Beatrice. Diane wheels her to the casket. Beatrice looks at Anna for a moment, then touches the violets in Anna's hands.

DIANE
Violets. They were her favorite flowers.
(turns to Eliot)
How did you know?

ELIOT
Violets just seemed appropriate somehow.

Next we see Mrs. Hutton at the casket. Then Jack. He stares at Anna's body before being moved on by the Schoolteacher. Finally Paul and Tom approach the coffin.

PAUL'S POV

Anna looks serene.

VIEWING ROOM

Paul takes out the ring box from his pocket. Gently slides the engagement ring onto Anna's stiff finger. Suddenly he looks alarmed. Turns quickly to Tom.

TOM
(whispers)
What is it?

PAUL
She's so cold.

Paul turns back to Anna. Tears prick his eyes. He touches her cheek again. Finally accepting her death.

PAUL
I'm sorry Anna.

He kisses her lips. Eliot watches him carefully. It's almost as if he's jealous. Jack notices Eliot's look then turns and stares at Paul.

As Paul and Tom walk away Eliot closes the casket. Begins to screw down the lid.

INT. INSIDE THE CASSET - SAME TIME

It's dark. We hear the screws TIGHTENING. Anna's eyes FLICKER OPEN then close again.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. VIEWING ROOM - SAME TIME

Just then Paul turns back sharply. As if he sensed Anna's reaction inside the casket. Tom gently stops him.

TOM
(shakes his head)
She's at peace now.

Paul glances at the casket again, then reluctantly allows Tom to lead him away.

Eliot tightens the last screw. His back to the room. Suddenly the screwdriver slips. Gashes his finger.

ON COFFIN

A drop of blood falls onto the polished wood.

VIEWING ROOM

Eliot stares at the blood for a moment. Takes out a pristine white handkerchief. Carefully wipes off the blood. Then places his hand on the coffin.

ELIOT

(softly)

Don't be scared. It's better this way.

Eliot turns. Signals to the PALLBEARERS standing nearby.

EXT. CEMETERY. ANNA'S GRAVE - LATE AFTERNOON

The Pallbearers slowly lower Anna's casket into the open grave. The casket lurches as it settles in the grave.

INT. INSIDE THE CASKET - SAME TIME

Anna's eyes SNAP OPEN in terror. She tries to scream out. But only a SOFT RATTLING WHISPER escapes from her throat.

EXT. CEMETERY. ANNA'S GRAVE - SAME TIME

The TEACHER throws a handful of earth onto the coffin. Jack steps up. Looks down curiously. As if he could sense Anna. Then slowly pours the soil from his hand.

FATHER GRAHAM (O.C.)

We have but a short time to live. Like a flower we blossom and then wither. In the midst of life we are in death.

INT. INSIDE THE CASKET - SAME TIME

Blackness. Earth CLATTERS HEAVILY onto the wooden lid. Anna GASPS softly. Hyperventilating. The earth keeps falling. The sound becoming SOFTER with each shovelful. She struggles. Bangs her fists against the wood.

EXT. CEMETERY. ANNA'S GRAVE - LATER

The grave's covered with a stone slab now. Votive candles flicker on top. In the b.g. MOURNERS head to their cars. Paul and Tom stand by the grave.

TOM

You sure you're going to be OK?

PAUL
Yeah. Thanks Tom.

Tom squeezes Paul's shoulder then walks away.

INT. FUNERAL HOME. ELIOT'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Eliot carefully pins Anna's Polaroid to the wall.

ON POLAROIDS

We pan slowly across the other photographs we saw before. But now we look at them differently. In some faces there is the glimmer of life. In some a despairing pleading look. In others passive resignation.

ELIOT'S ROOM

Eliot moves towards the window.

ELIOT'S POV

The dark cemetery. In the distance flickering candles illuminate Anna's grave.

ELIOT (O.C.)
Imagine Anna. The whole world, your mother, your fiancée, your friends. Everyone has buried you. They've placed a stone above your body.

ELIOT'S ROOM

ELIOT
They've said their good byes and gone back to their TV dinners and shopping malls. Thinking that this is never going to happen to them. Until it's their turn to be buried. Think about it Anna...

Eliot glances at his watch.

ELIOT
...think about it while you still can.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paul unlocks his car. He's about to open the car door when he feels someone watching him. He turns. Jack's observing him carefully.

PAUL
You said she was alive.

JACK
I never said she was alive. I just said
I saw her.

Paul simply nods his head. Too drained of emotion to react.

PAUL
You need a ride?

Jack shakes his head.

PAUL
OK. See you.

Paul opens the car door.

JACK
Mr. Conran?
(Paul turns)
Don't forget to fasten your seat belt.

Paul nods. Gets in his car. Jack looks up at the
Funeral Home.

JACK'S POV

Eliot stands in the window smiling at him.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

We're at Anna's wake. PEOPLE talk quietly in small groups.

Paul fills a glass with whiskey. Knocks it back in one.
PEOPLE stare disapprovingly. WHISPERING to each other.

ELIOT (O.C.)
Don't you think you've had enough to
drink?

Paul turns. Eliot stands beside him. Paul pours himself
another drink.

PAUL
Go to hell.

An ELDERLY COUPLE shake their heads and walk away.

ELIOT
(amused)
Mr. Conran. We're at a wake. You should
show more respect.

PAUL
I know she wasn't dead.

ELIOT
Wasn't she?

Eliot's suddenly tired of Paul's allegations.

ELIOT
Mr. Conran. You come to my Funeral Home, making wild accusations. You have no idea what happens when someone dies. What happens to their body. What happens to their soul.
(taunting)
You think Anna was alive after the accident? Maybe you're right.

Paul's stunned.

ELIOT
Maybe she's still alive. You obviously don't believe a word I say. So why don't you go and find out for yourself Mr. Conran. Find out whether she's alive or dead.

Paul grabs Eliot by his lapels. Shoves him against the wall.

PAUL
(loudly)
You twisted fuck.

The room's SILENT. Everyone turns towards Paul. Eliot whispers in Paul's ear.

ELIOT
You don't have much time left.

Father Graham puts his hand on Paul's arm.

FATHER GRAHAM
Please. Paul. You're not well.

Paul pushes his hand away. Eliot shakes his head sadly. Everyone looks at Paul with pity as he runs out.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul sprints across the lawn to his car.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - NIGHT

Paul slips his key into the ignition. His hand's shaking.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Eliot watches Paul's car ROAR OFF.

INT. INSIDE THE CASKET - SAME TIME

We can't see a thing. But we can hear Anna's SHORT SHALLOW GASPS. And the sound of her nails desperately SCRATCHING at the coffin lid.

INT/EXT. PAUL'S CAR. ROAD - NIGHT

Paul drives fast. Accelerating then quickly braking as he weaves through heavy traffic. He comes up behind a slow Tractor-Trailer. Hits the HORN.

PAUL
Come on. Come on.

He swerves into the middle of the road. There's a blind curve ahead... suddenly an SUV comes out of the corner.

A bright white light sweeps through his car. Paul's momentarily blinded.

THE SCREEN FLASHES TO WHITE.

Paul opens his eyes. The ROAD'S EMPTY. No sign of any traffic. He's confused. The road was busy a moment ago.

Just then flashing red and orange lights illuminate the car. Paul looks in his rear-view mirror.

ON REARVIEW MIRROR

An AMBULANCE moves quickly towards him. Blasts past.

CAR

Paul looks through the front windshield. Nothing. He frowns. Where did the ambulance go?

UP AHEAD

We see the Funeral Home. Bone white in the moonlight. The cemetery next to it.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Eliot's White Van sits by the side of the road.

EXT. CEMETERY. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Paul's car slams to a halt. He jumps out. In the distance the candles still burn on Anna's grave.

EXT. CEMETERY. ANNA'S GRAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Paul grabs a shovel by the grave. Starts digging. Then the shovel clunks against wood. He kneels down. Scrapes away the earth from the coffin. Then pulls open the lid.

Anna's eyes are WIDE OPEN. Her fingernails torn and bloody.

Paul grabs her shoulders. Pulls her out of the grave. Her body slumps limply like a rag doll.

PAUL

Anna. I'm here. Please God. Anna.

He desperately tries to revive her. But there's no life left in her. He's about to give up when...

Anna's hand TWITCHES. Then after a moment she GASPS. Her eyes slowly focus on Paul.

ANNA

Paul?

PAUL

Baby. Thank God.

Paul gently helps Anna to her feet. She looks round. Dazed. Turns back to Paul.

ANNA

You came back for me.

PAUL

I came back for you. You're safe now.

ANNA

Promise?

PAUL

(smiles)

Promise.

Just then Paul hears a rustling sound behind him. He turns. Nothing. He cocks his head slightly. There's something unnerving about the silence.

Suddenly a CROW rises noisily into the air. Paul starts. Then watches, relieved, as the crow disappears into the dark sky. He turns back to Anna... she's not there.

PAUL

Anna?

Paul looks round desperately. Runs between the stone crosses and statues of grieving angels searching for her.

PAUL

Anna!

Just then he glimpses SOMETHING MOVE among the trees. Runs over. Nothing. The cemetery is empty. The trees appear to SHIMMER for a moment. Paul shivers. Pulls his jacket around him. He doesn't notice the candles on Anna's grave behind him suddenly BLOW OUT.

INT/EXT. ELIOT'S VAN. ROAD - NIGHT

We hear the sound of a SIREN. The AMBULANCE blasts past. Eliot slides a disc into the player. CLASSICAL MUSIC fills the van. He strums the wheel. Enjoying the music.

EXT. CEMETERY. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Paul frantically runs into the parking lot. Still calling out for Anna.

PAUL

Anna!

Suddenly the interior light in his car comes on. Paul looks at the car nervously.

He heads over to it. Apprehensive. Then... the car door slowly CLICKS open.

Paul stops. Stares into the car. There's no one there.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Through the windshield we see Paul approach the car.

He peers in nervously. Then cautiously gets in. As he switches the interior light off, the camera moves slowly around him revealing...

... ANNA sitting in the passenger seat.

ANNA

Are we going home?

Paul turns sharply. Stunned. Anna moves towards him.

ANNA

Or do you want to make love here?

PAUL

Where did you go?

Anna puts her fingers on Paul's lips. Clearly turned on. We hear the sound of something being UNZIPPED.

ANNA
(whispers)
I've been waiting for you. I missed you
so much.

A line of BLOOD trickles from his nose. He touches his
lips. Looks blankly at the blood on his fingertips. A
drop of blood falls on Paul's white shirt. It unfurls
like a flower. Spreading out over the material.

ANNA
I love you. I always did.

Anna hungrily kisses him. He responds passionately.
Suddenly we hear a SHARP METALLIC SOUND.

PAUL
(alarmed)
What was that?

Anna responds as if it was nothing strange.

ANNA
It's only the scissors...

We see the growing anxiety in Paul's eyes. Anna's just
interested in his lips.

PAUL
Scissors? What scissors?

ANNA
Scissors. For your clothes. Eliot just
put them on the table.

Paul pulls back. Terrified.

ANNA
You're safe now. We're finally together.

A strong bright light sweeps across Paul's face. Like
the headlights of the car on the blind curve earlier.

FADE TO SEARING WHITENESS.

Paul blinks as he gradually gets used to the harsh light.
Slowly the room comes into focus...

INT. FUNERAL HOME. PREP ROOM - NIGHT

Eliot stands over Paul holding a pair of BLOODY SCISSORS.
Paul looks down. His white shirt soaked with blood, the
material sliced open.

PAUL
Where am I?

He talks with difficulty. His breath labored.

ELIOT
 You're in a funeral home.
 (beat)
 You're dead.

PAUL
 I'm not dead.

Jack appears at Eliot's side.

ELIOT
 You had a car accident. You swerved off
 the road. On the way to the cemetery.
 Hit a tree.

PAUL
 I saw Anna. You buried her alive.

ELIOT
 I'm sorry Mr. Conran. You never made it
 to the cemetery. You never saw Anna.
 You're dead.

Paul's glazed eyes widen in shock.

PAUL
 I'm not dead.

Eliot speaks calmly. Soothingly.

ELIOT
 Your skull was crushed. Your spinal cord
 pulverized. Your brain cells are slowly
 dying. Your body's already decomposing.

PAUL
 I'm not dead.

Eliot sighs wearily. He's had this conversation many
 times before.

ELIOT
 You people. You all say the same thing.

Eliot's voice, with each word, fades further and further
 away. Paul closes his eyes.

FADE TO SEARING WHITENESS.

PAUL (O.S.)
 I'm not dead.

FADE OUT.