

VAMPIRE DREAMS

By Michael Romkey

PROLOGUE

FADE IN:

EXT. - DUSK - A STREET OF WELL-KEPT VICTORIAN HOMES IN A QUIET TOWN OVERLOOKING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

The sweeping camera takes in Norman Rockwell images of tidy lawns, flower beds, porches. Interspersed are darker images - leafy bowers lost in gloomy shadow, darkened attic windows, the jagged points of iron fences, a bat house, a close-up of a snake, of a raptor perched in a tree - intimations of menace just beneath the peaceful exterior.

LEXI (V.O.)

This is my hometown. I was born here seventeen years ago. I've never been away, not even for a single day. Someday, I will die here. Someday soon, if I'm lucky.

The camera lingers on SAM CASTLE. He is 50-something, whippet-thin, with a gray ponytail. He is dressed for running clothes and carries a Walkman. As SAM runs down the street, a younger man comes up from behind, gaining easily on him. The YOUNG RUNNER waves at SAM as he dashes past. The YOUNG RUNNER is smirking just a little. They both know SAM would like to keep up with him, that he would like nothing better than to leave the YOUNG RUNNER in his dust. SAM stops at the corner, hungry for air, panting. The music on the Walkman swells louder on the soundtrack before fading out.

THE WHO'S "MY GENERATION"

"HOPE I DIE BEFORE I GET OLD..."

The camera sweeps past SAM, past the houses on the street, focusing in at last on a Victorian mansion with a carriage house. The property is immaculately groomed. It is the temporary residence of DR. CARTER LLOYD and his young second wife, MARGEAUX.

LEXI (V.O.)

People say I'm cynical.
 (Beat.) And I am. What else
 should you be but cynical when
 our lives are nothing but an
 elaborate illusion built out
 of lies?

INT: THE CARTER RESIDENCE, KITCHEN

MARIA, the Carter's Hispanic servant, passes a tray of wine glasses to MARGEUX. The camera follows MARGEUX into the butler's pantry. She is almost to the swinging door that leads into the living room when she stops and cocks her head, an expression of curiosity shaded with the slightest bit of irritation on her face. She takes several step backward and looks to the right. The camera records what she had only just seen from the corner of her eye the first time she walked past. In the butler's pantry are two people caring on what appears to be an intimate conversation. One of them is her husband, CARTER. The other is LAURA PAYNE, the marketing director at the hospital where CARTER is head of cardiology.

CARTER

I was just telling Laura how
 glad we'll be to move into our
 new house.

MARGEUX looks back and forth between the two. She smiles, but it requires obvious effort.

EXT. THE CEMETERY. - DUSK

We see LEXI, the narrator, for the first time. She is a teenager – the sort of teenagers adults wonder about, and worry about. It is obvious from the way she looks that she likely has emotional problems. LEXI has affected the pose of a punk Vampira. She wears in a long black dress, with a black beaded shawl and black combat boots. There are dozens of silver bracelets on her wrists, like a gypsy might wear. Her fingernails and lips are painted black. Her eyes are overly painted with mascara in a vaguely Egyptian way. Her long black hair is teased up and purposefully disheveled. She kneels and begins to light a circle of candles in front of a 19th century tombstone with a butane lighter that looks like a mini blowtorch. In the middle of the candle circle, occupying the place of honor, is a dog-eared photo of a perfectly ordinary looking

middle-aged woman. LEXI looks directly into the camera as she continues her narration.

LEXI

The world is made of lies. And that is exactly the way we all like it. We tell ourselves dazzling lies in order to to pretend we're prettier than we really are, and smarter, and witchier...

EXT. THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER. - NIGHT

At first we see a peaceful picture of the river at night as if filmed from a small boat in the middle of the gently lapping water. The far riverbank and town are in the distance on the opposite shore.

LEXI (V.O.)

People lie to us. They tell us they're going to get better, that the cancer is gone. And we lie to them, saying, 'Sure. Good. We believe it. Great news.' But the important lies are the ones we tell ourselves, the ones we make ourselves believe, even when we don't believe them when we tell them to other people. We lie to ourselves to cover up the truth and to hide the pain. Sometimes, I hurt so much I want to scream until my throat is like raw. It's as if somebody has plunged a knife into my and is twisting it, slowly twisting it. It hurts so much I pray I'll die.
(Beat) Except I don't. I go right on living.

Without warning, a dark shape looms in the darkness, blocking out the city lights, passing dangerously near. The throbbing sound of powerful engines are suddenly loud in the soundtrack. The passing barge and towboat are seen from medium distance, heading toward the town.

LEXI (V.O.)

And sometimes we lie to ourselves to cover up the possibilities, to keep from having to suffer from trying to be happy but failing. I don't really believe in happiness. I don't think it exists. But sometimes I catch myself telling myself little lies to keep from having to find out whether this is really true. This, I think, is my one true sin. If I end up rotting in Hell, if there is a Hell, it will be because of the lies I tell myself to keep from having to be reminded that there really is no reason to hope.

INT. THE TOWBOAT PILOTHOUSE

We see the captain at first from behind only – a man in black jeans and a black turtleneck. He turns to look out the window and we see CAPT. ANDREW ALISTAIR in profile. His darkly handsome face is bathed in eerie green light reflected from the towboat's instruments as the barge bears down on the little town.

LEXI (V.O.)

But sometimes something unexpected happens, something surprising that breaks down the walls that keep us safe in our private little worlds. When that happens, the machinery we use to manufacture our lies breaks down for a little while. The lies we have worn like the Emperor's clothes fall away and leave us naked.

We see ALISTAIR jump onto the dock. He's now wearing a black leather jacket and has a bag over his shoulder.

LEXI (V.O.)

And in that moment we awaken, like a dreamer waking up from

a dream. And for a brief,
shining moment, we see things
as they truly are, without our
lies to protect us.

ACT I

INT: THE CARTER RESIDENCE – NIGHT

The guests are seated in small groups in the cocktail party, chatting. MARGEAUX and CARTER LLOYD, the hosts, are present, along with LAURA PAYNE, the hospital marketing director; SAM CASTLE, the town librarian, and his wife, DR. LINDA CASTLE, a pediatrician; HEATHER MCARTHUR, the Lloyd's neighbor; and others. MARIA is in the background, serving canapés from a tray.

LAURA

It's a magnificent old house.

CARTER

Yes, it is, but we'll be more comfortable in our new house, when construction is finished. Won't we, dear?

MARGEAUX

It will be nice to have everything exactly the way we want it.

CARTER

These old places we designed for people who lived their lives entirely different than we do today. I mean, who needs not one but two formal parlors? Come on.

MARGEAUX

There are six bedrooms, counting the maid's room.

HEATHER

People had big families then. It wasn't anything to have seven or eight little ones running about.

LAURA

Seven or eight brats? Oh, my God! How did the women survive it?

LINDA

They didn't always, but then neither did the children. Pneumonia, whooping cough, even measles could be fatal before the days of vaccines and antibiotics.

MARGEUX raises her wineglass.

MARGEUX

To modern medicine.

CARTER

There's something we can all drink to.

They all follow suit.

LAURA

How do you feel about being home alone in this big old place, Margeaux?

MARGEUX

I'll admit it took some getting used to. Not that I believe in ghosts or anything.

SAM

You don't believe in ghosts? Then you haven't heard any of the stories about the Garden District.

SAM'S wife gives him a disapproving look and shakes her head, but he ignores her.

MARGEUX

Please don't tell me Raven's Watch is haunted.

LAURA

Raven's Watch?

CARTER

That's what this place is called.

LAURA

Now I know for sure I would never be able to spend the night in this old mansion! How did it get that name.

CARTER and MARGEAUX look at one another and shrug.

SAM

It is what the Alistair family named it. It's always been called Raven's Watch, as far as I know. They still own the property, don't they?

CARTER

I rented it through their agent, but yes.

MARGEAUX

But is it, Sam?

SAM

I beg your pardon?

MARGEAUX

Is Raven's Watch haunted?

SAM

Not that I've heard. There are some good ghost stories about some of the houses in this neighborhood, but I haven't heard any about Raven's Watch. Heather's house is supposedly haunted.

MARGEAUX

It is not!

HEATHER

I share the place with several ghosts, actually.

LAURA

Tell me you're putting us on.

MARGEAUX

I completely serious.

SAM

Tell about the Chief.

HEATHER

There was an Indian village on the bluff where the Garden District is today. After the Black Hawk War, the soldiers rounded the Indians up in a stockade down below us on the flat, by the river. An epidemic wiped a lot of them. The bodies were buried up here on the bluff.

LAURA

This was an Indian burial ground?

SAM

Not in a formal sense, but bodies were buried all over throughout this area. I can show you old newspaper clippings about them finding skeletons when they dug foundations for these houses. When we put in the foundation for our garage, we dug up a skull.

LINDA

Sam, you're frightening Margeaux.

MARGEAUX

It's alright. I don't believe in ghosts.

SAM

That's only because you haven't seen any yet.

LINDA

Sam!

MARGEAUX

Have you seen any?

HEATHER

Sure, lots of times. It's not a big deal. They leave me alone, and I leave them alone. There a lot less trouble to have around the house than a husband or a boyfriend.

CARTER

So you've seen this Chief Sam mentioned?

HEATHER

Yes.

LAURA

And?

HEATHER

According to the stories I've heard – the house has been in my family for years – he only appears in early winter, usually around Christmas and New Years. That's why people like Sam know about him. He tends to come around when there are guests in the house.

LARUA

What does he do?

HEATHER

Nothing much. He seems to be looking for something. I don't know for sure. That's just what it looks like.

MARGEUX

Have you ever seen him, Sam?

SAM

I'm sorry to say that I haven't.

LINDA

Sam's always wanted to see a ghost.

SAM

Witnessing a manifestation of the supernatural would be reassuring, in its own way.

CARTER

Because it would prove to you that there are supernatural entities, a God and Heaven and angels like the ones you see in a Renaissance painting.

Sam nods.

LINDA

I'm afraid my husband did not have the benefit of my Catholic upbringing. And like many people who grew up without faith, he senses he has lost something, without having any idea what it is.

LAURA

Like the Indian ghost who haunts house.

LINDA

Exactly.

SAM, grinning, is undisturbed by his wife's comments. The doorbell rings. MARIA goes to answer it.

SAM

You'll have to forgive my wife. She didn't have the benefit of my heathen upbringing.

CARTER

I'll have to agree with you, Sam. The universe is ruled by science. (Beat) And randomness, which is a bit bothersome, but only because we haven't yet figured out the rules that govern random chance. But we will. (Beat.) Rob!

They all turn their attention to ROB CHURCHILL, newly admitted by CARTER. He is younger than CARTER, not many years out of law school, closer to his hostess in age than his host. He is handsome and self-possessed. CARTER shakes his hand. MARGEUX stands beside her husband, looking on, but she doesn't know ROB.

ROB

Sorry I'm late.

CARTER

Don't mention it. You're getting her just when things are getting interesting. We've been talking about ghosts and angels.

ROB

Discussing religion? That ought to be good for at least one good fistfight.

CARTER

Well, we have doctors to set the fractures, and, now that you're here, a lawyer to file the lawsuits and counter lawsuits. And the town historian and librarian — You know Sam Castle, don't you, Rob? — to write it all down for posterity.

MARGEUX steps in as ROB finishes shaking hands with SAM, extending her hand.

MARGEUX

You must be Rob Churchill, famous the attorney.

ROB

And sometimes infamous.

CARTER

Rob is the best lawyer in town.

ROB continues to hold MARGEUX'S hand.

ROB

Which is a little like being the best heart doctor in town,

but without the respect. That
crack about the lawsuits.

CARTER

You lawyers have nobody but
yourselves to blame for your
reputation.

ROB

I tell you, Margeaux, we
attorneys are like profits
without honor in our own land.

He finally releases her hand.

CARTER

Rob also the youngest senator
in Statehouse.

LAURA

Washington is better suited to
your special talents.

ROB ignores LAURA'S remark.

ROB

You didn't tell me you had
such a beautiful wife.

MARGEUX

Flattery will get you
everywhere, Rob.

ROB

Then in your honor, dear lady,
I will elevate it to an art
form.

LAURA

Watch your wife, Carter. Rob
is a hard man to resist.

ROB

I notice you're managing,
Laura.

LAURA (WITH SARCASM)

But I'm having *such* a hard
time doing it.

EXT. THE CARTER RESIDENCE

The last of the guests are leaving, shaking hands with CARTER and MARGEUX as they make their exit. We see CARTER'S red Porsche parked in the drive, where it always is when he is home. Last of all to leave is ROB, who shakes CARTER'S hand first then MARGEUX'S, winking at her. LEXI'S commentary is heard as the leave-taking progresses.

LEXI (V.O.)

Margeaux Lloyd says she doesn't believe in ghosts, but I think she really does. I know I do. The difference between us is that she doesn't want to see them, but I do.

INT: THE CARTER RESIDENCE

The party is over. Only MARGEUX and MARIA are still in the living room.

MARGEUX

You head on home. It's late. I'll finish up the rest of this in the morning.

MARIA

Thank you, Mrs. Carter.

MARGEUX

Maria, I asked you to call me Margeaux. It makes me feel old when you call me Mrs. Carter.

MARIA

Good night, Margeaux.

EXT. THE CARTER RESIDENCE

MARGEUX comes out the front door after MARIA, watching her go. Leaning against a post on the front porch, MARGEUX is musing about the party when she notices a light on in the second-floor apartment in the carriage house. Going to investigate, she finds a black Jaguar parked outside. (CARTER'S Porsche remains in its usual spot.)

MARGEUX

Carter?

MARGEUX goes to the stairs and looks up them, wary.

MARGEUX

Carter? (Beat) Laura?

MARGEUX quietly climbs the steps. The door is ajar. She pushes it silently open and steps inside. The light inside the apartment come from several candles, the dim light seeming to obscure more than illuminate. Classical music plays softly in the background. She goes as far as the bedroom door, then pauses, steeling herself for what she is afraid she will see. She opens the door. The bed is empty. The tension is going out of her face when a hand from behind takes her by the shoulder.

MARGEUX

Oh, my God!

The hand belongs to CAPT. ANDREW ALISTAIR. ALISTAIR gives her an intense, almost angry look. Dressed as before, entirely in black, he seems to exude menace as he stares down at her.

ALISTAIR

Can I help you?

MARGEUX is too nonplussed to respond at first, but she quickly gathers her composure, and her sense of authority.

MARGEUX

Who are you and what are you doing?

ALISTAIR

I didn't mean to startle you.

MARGEUX

And what are you doing in my house?

A half smile forms on ALISTAIR'S face.

ALISTAIR

Excuse me for having to disagree, but we are not in your house but the apartment over the carriage house. And at any rate, both belong to me, though I rented the house to your husband.

MARGEUX (PERPLEXED AND WARY)

Who are you?

ALISTAIR

My name is Andrew Alistair,
and I own this property.

EXT. THE GARDEN PATH LEADING BACK TO THE HOUSE.

Despite their rocky introduction, MARGEUX and ALISTAIR have quickly gotten on more friendly terms. As they stroll slowly through the night garden, she looks up at him, listening, interested.

LEXI (V.O.)

They say you can talk to
ghosts if you hold a séance.
I've tried, but it never
works. I don't know. (Beat)
Maybe séances don't work.
Maybe that's all just more
lies, and ghosts only speak
when they want to.

ALISTAIR

The estate has been in my
family for more than one
hundred and fifty years. The
house once sat on a three-
hundred acre tract of Alistair
land, occupying all of what is
now called the Garden District
and beyond. The house was
built before the Civil War.
You used to be able to see the
Alistair Barge Lines office
down on the levee, before it
moved to St. Louis first, and
later to New Orleans.

MARGEUX

You used to live here?

ALISTAIR

More years ago than I care to
think. I only get by here a
few times in the summer, when
the river is open and I come
through on one of my tows. I
like to keep the property
leased out. It's much easier

to keep up with repairs if there are renters. But I always retain use of carriage house so I will have a place to lay my head when I'm in town.

MARGEUX

Do you think you'll ever move back here?

ALISTAIR looks away from her. It is a moment before he responds.

ALISTAIR

No. I have too many memories – unhappy memories, I regret to say, of this place.

MARGEUX

I'm sorry.

ALISTAIR

Forgive me if I do not explain further.

MARGEUX

No, that's quite alright. I didn't mean to intrude on your privacy.

ALISTAIR

For which I must thank you.

ALISTAIR stops and bows. It is an odd gesture – out of date and yet elegant and completely sincere.

MARGEUX

I only wish my husband had thought to mention it to me. It would have saved me the embarrassment of confronting you. For all I knew, you were a burglar.

ALISTAIR

There is no need for you to feel embarrassed. The fault is mine not announcing my return and causing you such unnecessary distress. It is I who must apologize.

MARGEAUX

No, I am the one to apologize.
I should have known about your
arrangement. And I walked in
on you without knocking, and
then treated you like a thief.

The stop and look at one another, each determined.

ALISTAIR

With all due respect, I will
not allow it, Mrs. Lloyd.

MARGEAUX

Allow it?

ALISTAIR

Excuse me for having
misspoken. I would not presume
to exercise influence over
your freedom to act. Years of
living in the South have had
their influence on me. My
sense of chivalry will not all
me to go unpardoned for
disturbing your peace and your
evening by returning
unannounced and catching you
unawares. If you can not find
it within yourself to pardon
me, dear lady, I will have no
other choice but to withdraw
to the somewhat less
comfortable quarters of my
towboat.

Margeaux stares at him for a beat, charmed by his old-fashioned gallantry.

MARGEAUX

Very well then, Alistair. I
accept your apology.

ALASTAIR

Then I will wish you a very
good night, dear lady.

Margeaux, blushing, turns toward the house. Alastair watches her with such intensity that he seems to be memorizing her every move.

EXT. LEXI'S HOUSE.

The camera moves along the streets at night, the houses and buildings going by too quickly to garner much but a sense that the homes are becoming more and more modest and even rundown. The camera keys in on the house where LEXI lives alone with her father. It is a small, shabby house in the poor part of town. But this house is more than just poor. It exudes a sense of despair. The inhabitants have not just stopped caring about the property. They have lost the capacity to care at all about such things, their tenuous grip on life not leaving them with enough energy left over to care whether the grass is cut or the screen door repaired. LEXI comes down the broken sidewalk and lets herself in.

LEXI

This is my house. I live here
with my father.

INT. LEXI'S HOUSE

LEXI'S FATHER — in a sleeveless undershirt, hair a mess, unshaven — is passed out at the kitchen table surrounded by empty beer cans. LEXI stands looking down on him without a glimpse of emotion.

LEXI

My dad has always had lots of
issues. And he got a lot more,
once Mom got sick. She got
sicker and sicker every year
for six years. And he drank
more and more every year for
the same six years. I thought
he'd stop drinking when Mom
died, but I was wrong. He's
stayed about the same, but you
can see that for yourself.

Still without showing emotion, LEXI takes off her black shawl and gently drapes it over her father's shoulders.

LEXI

I wish he didn't drink so
much, but I can't say that I
blame him. I've tried it
myself, but I can't stand
throwing up. It seems to work
for him, though.

LEXI proceeds to her bedroom. Her private space is decorated to reflect her Goth tastes. The walls are painted a shade of green so deep it is nearly black. There are candles everywhere. A White Zombie poster hangs over her bed. Above the desk is a poster for "Francis Ford Coppola's Dracula." LEXI lights candles, including one on the desk shaped like a wax skull, sits, and addresses the camera.

LEXI

This is my room.

She glances around with a certain satisfaction.

LEXI

I decorated it to reflect my interests. I don't too get excited about horses, volleyball, lip-synching boy bands or any of that sort of thing a lot of teenage girls obsess about. To be absolutely honest – and I'm not saying this just to shock you – the only thing that interests me is Death. It is the only thing we can depend on, the only absolute truth. I wonder what it's like to be dead? (Beat) I suppose we'll all find out. And for me, I intend for it to be sooner than later.

LEXI opens her journal.

LEXI

I like to write. It isn't exactly a hobby. It's more of a pastime. My teachers say I'm pretty good at it, but they're probably just saying that so they can feel as if they're giving me some kind of positive reinforcemtn. To tell you the truth, I think I scare my teachers. Adults are always looking at me funny, as if they're wondering if I have a loaded gun in my backpack. I'm perfectly harmless. (Beat) Really.

The camera zooms in on what's she's writing. It is a poem, titled "Vampire Dreams."

INT. THE CASTLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Linda Castle is in bed with her head and shoulders propped up on two pillows, reading a copy of the New England Journal of Medicine. Sam comes past the bed in his pajamas, limping. He disappears into the bathroom.

LINDA

You'd better take two Advil,
Sam.

SAM (V.O.)

I already have.

LINDA

I wish I had your
determination about keeping
fit.

SAM(V.O.)

No, you don't.

Linda smiles to herself and turns the page. She knows he's right. The camera remains on LINDA, who continues to read as her husband talks to her from the bathroom.

LINDA

I hate to be the bearer of bad
tidings, my dear, and I'm sure
it's already occurred to you,
but you are getting to age
when you need to start
thinking about cutting back a
bit on your workouts.

SAM (V.O. IGNORING THE COMMENT)

I take it Rob and Laura are no
longer an item.

LINDA

Who said anything about that?

SAM (V.O.)

Nobody. I'm just commenting on
they way they acted at the
Lloyd's party. You could see
it in their body language.

LINDA

Ordinarily, I'd say that's a good thing for Laura.

SAM comes back into the room, trying to conceal a slight limp – which LINDA is polite enough to pretend she doesn't notice. SAM sits on the bed across from his wife.

SAM

You don't like Rob?

LINDA

He's far too in love with himself. He's even worse than a doctor – and you know what arrogant prigs they are.

SAM

Present company included, of course.

LINDA

Of course. I've never managed to develop the delusion that I'm God, though I've tried a time or two.

SAM (WRYLY)

But if you think Rob is trouble, you should want him to be with Laura, since you detest her so much.

Linda lets the magazine fall forward.

LINDA

Is it all that obvious?

SAM

To me, but then I know you pretty well after twenty-five years of wedded bliss.

He gives her a peck on the lips.

SAM

You women stick together, don't you?

LINDA

What do you mean?

SAM

You don't approve Laura because she sleeps around at the hospital, but you'd rather see her break up with Rob than get hurt in a relationship with a self-involved, self-important egotistical male.

LINDA pulls herself up in bed until she is sitting straight up.

LINDA

You have completely missed the point.

SAM (WITH DISBELIEF)

Then what?

LINDA

I said that "ordinarily" I say it was a good thing for Laura's sake that she'd moved on to a more suitable man. The problem is, she hasn't.

SAM (TITILLATED)

Who's she sleeping with now?

LINDA

I should keep my suspicions to myself.

SAM

Who? Don't tell me she's sleeping with Carter?

LINDA

OK, I won't.

SAM

But she is; they are?

LINDA

I don't know but I have my suspicions. And judging from the chilly looks Margeaux was giving Laura tonight, I'd say that she has her suspicions, too.

Sam swings his legs under the covers. Linda puts the magazine on the nightstand and settles into her pillow.

SAM

I would have thought Carter was too smart for that.

LINDA

He's a man, isn't he?

SAM

Yes. And a doctor. That's another strike against him.

LINDA

You don't have to rub my nose in it, Sam. We don't all think we're above the rules.

SAM

She's his second wife, isn't she?

LINDA

Yes, and a good ten years his junior. Why do women always think that a man who will cheat on his wife with them, won't turn around and cheat on them, too?

SAM

Carter's hardly the only doctor we know with a trophy wife.

Something occurs to SAM that makes him swallow.

SAM

You wouldn't trade me and my creaky knees in on some sexy young guy, would you?

LINDA

Never in a million years. I'm stuck with you, and you with me, till death do we part.

Sam, smiling, turns out the light and moves to embrace his wife.

LINDA

Did you lock the door before
coming upstairs?

SAM

As if anybody needs to lock
their doors in this town.

The camera backs out the bedroom and down the stairs in the dark and outside into the night. It sweeps along the streets, finally stopping on car – a black Jaguar.

EXT. A ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

It is a rough-looking place, the sort of spot for loud music, shots of whiskey, fights – a good place to come for trouble. The loud, throbbing music inside can be heard on the street. The door flies open and CANDY runs out. She wears too much makeup and a black shirt tied up under her breasts, leaving her stomach bare, skin-tight pants that stop midway down her calf and ultra-high heels. Her blond hair is teased up high. CANDY is more than a little intoxicated. She runs, stumbles, and regains her balance, screeching with laughter, running on.

After a beat, the door opens a second time and ALISTAIR emerges. In contrast to the woman, he appears completely sober. There is a definite sense of purpose in his expression.

CANDY is waiting for ALISTAIR when he gets the Jaguar. She turns and leans back on the car, her arms flung wide, as if inviting his embrace. He leans forward – and unlocks the passenger door. He opens it for her and makes a flourish with his free hand, inviting her to enter. Delighted, she complies.

CANDY

I think your car is delicious.
Is it a Mercedes?

ALISTAIR

Actually, it is a Jaguar.

He shuts the door, walks around the rear of the car and gets in.

CANDY

A car like this makes a girl
hot, baby. But I bet I don't
need to tell you that.

ALISTAIR

To me, a car is just a conveyance one uses to get from here to there.

She rubs her hands suggestively against the car's leather upholstery. She's chewing gum.

CANDY

So sexy.

ALISTAIR

It is you, my dear, who are sexy.

CANDY

I have a naughty idea.

ALISTAIR

I would be willing to wager you have more than one.

CANDY

Let's take them one at a time, unless you have a friend you want to invite.

ALISTAIR

Only me.

CANDY

What makes me think you're more than man enough for the job?

ALISTAIR

I couldn't say. Feminine intuition, perhaps.

CANDY

Don't you want to hear my idea?

ALISTAIR

But of course.

CANDY

If we go back to my apartment, my roommate might come home.

ALISTAIR

So?

CANDY

I don't want to share you.

ALISTAIR

It's not nice to be selvish.

CANDY

I'm not a nice girl.

ALISTAIR

I noticed that right away.

CANDY

Men like that. I'm not one of those stuck-up bitches who don't want you to kiss them and smear their lipstick. You can do whatever you want to me.

Alistair move closer, sliding his arm around her shoulder. They are pressed close to one another, their lips nearly touching.

ALISTAIR

I do not believe you told me your idea – your deliciously bad idea.

CANDY

I want you do to do it to me right here in your Jaguar. Unless you're afraid of getting the leather seats wet. Because the thought of doing it with you in this beautiful car has already got me very, very wet.

ALISTAIR and CANDY embrace. She squirms, hiking up her skirt. When her hands reappear, her underpants can be seen dangling over his shoulder. ALISTAIR'S kisses move down to the hollow of her neck.

CANDY

I want you inside me. I want you inside me – now!

A look of shock comes over CANDY'S face. She shakes as if being electrocuted, her eyes open wide, her mouth open in a mute scream. ALISTAIR'S teeth are buried deep in her neck, a trickle of blood visible from the corner of his

mouth. After a moment, CANDY begins to gasp with orgiastic pleasure. Her hands – one still clutching her underpants – claw at ALISTAIR'S back, and her eyes roll back in her head in joyous delirium.

ACT II

EXT. AN ESPRESSO SHOP

The door opens and a woman comes out, carrying a coffee. A man on his way – seen only from behind (it is ROB) – takes the door, holding it open for her. The woman looks up at him and her expression changes to pleasure.

MAN

Good morning.

WOMAN

Hello...

INT. THE ESPRESSO SHOP

The camera tracks backwards as ROB enters the shop and goes to the corner, past a woman mostly hidden behind an open newspaper she is reading. ROB goes to counter, stopping behind the man who is presently being served. The man turns around with his coffee to leave. It is SAM.

SAM

Well, Rob. How are you today?

ROB

I couldn't be better.

Smiling, SAM nods goodbye and heads toward the door. The camera follows him but stops abruptly at the woman behind the open newspaper. It is LEXI, we see when she folds the newspaper shut, folding it again in half, putting it neatly on the table on the other side of a cup of espresso, a tiny slice of lemon peel in the saucer next to the cup. She is dressed as always, yet her garb seems all the more macabre, her skin all the more pale, in the bright light of day in the coffee shop. She addresses the camera.

LEXI

I know people who read Stephen King or Dean Koontz to be frightened. I wonder why they don't just read the newspaper.

She taps the folded newspaper with a black-lacquered fingernail.

LEXI

Life is infinitely more
horrible than anything a
writer with a twisted
imagination could dream up.

LEXI leans forward and assumes a confidential tone, as if she were letting a friend in on something.

LEXI

I just read a story about
something that happened in
Switzerland, in a village high
up in the Alps.

We see a montage of people we know going about their daily business as LEXI'S voice-over narration continues.

EXT. THE FLOWER GARDEN OUTSIDE HEATHER'S HOUSE

HEATHER tends her roses.

LEXI (V.O.)

The village had been there for
a long time – years and years,
situated in a valley between
two mountains capped with snow
the year round.

INT. THE LLOYD RESIDENCE, THE UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

MARGEUX helps MARIA make the bed in the master bedroom.

LEXI (V.O.)

A place of incredible beauty,
like a postcard, quiet and
peaceful. That's the thing
about the Swiss, isn't it?
They don't take sides. They
don't fight in any wars.
They're at peace with
everybody.

INT. DR. LINDA CASTLE'S MEDICAL OFFICE

LINDA with a young patient sitting on the examining table. She gives the child a sucker. He smiles up at her.

LEXI (V.O.)

There's was glacier on one of the mountains above the village. To the tourists, it was part of the gorgeous scenery. I'd bet the people who lived there didn't even know it was there. It was part of the landscape. It had always been there, and it always would be.

INT. THE LLOYD RESIDENCE CARRIAGE HOUSE

ALISTAIR reaches into a secret compartment and pulls out an antique diary bound in rich leather. He opens it and begins to read, apparently moved by whatever the entry says.

LEXI (V.O.)

Yesterday morning, while the people were going about their routines, getting ready for school, washing the breakfast dishes, walking work, they heard an ominous rumble high up on the slopes. That's what they assume, at least, because the people who live in the next town down the valley heard it.

INT. THE HOSPITAL BOARDROOM

CARTER sits in a meeting, fiddling with his pen, bored. He looks up at the vacant chair where LAURA, the hospital's marketing director, should be sitting. He frowns at her absence.

LEXI (V.O.)

The rumble was the glacier letting go. A huge part of it — tons of ice, tons of snow, mixed with rocks and boulders, came roaring down the mountain faster than you could run or even drive to get out of its way.

INT. THE TOWN LIBRARY

SAM CASTLE pauses from putting books on the shelves in the library to take a sip of the cappuccino he'd brought to work from the espresso shop.

LEXI (V.O.)

The threat of an avalanche had been there a long time, probably longer than the time village had been there.

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE LAURA'S HOUSE.

Police detective STEVE YOUNG watches grimly as a covered body on a stretcher is loaded into the rear of an ambulance.

LEXI

But nobody didn't pay any attention, though the danger had been staring them in the face all their lives.

INT. THE ESPRESSO SHOP

LEXI picks up the cup of espresso. She brings it to her lips and is about to drink when she stops herself to add one more thing to the camera.

LEXI

The truth was there for everybody to see, but nobody saw it. Instead, they bought into the lie that they were safe in their picturesque little village. And because of it, they all died.

EXT. A STREET OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY

MARGEUX gets out of her Volvo station wagon and walks toward the door.

INT. THE LIBRARY

SAM is loading books onto the book cart. He looks up to see who is coming in. The library is deserted, except for him. It is MARGEUX.

SAM

Margeaux, this is a pleasure.

She extends her hand for him to shake.

MARGEUX

I'm glad you and Linda could make it last night.

SAM

It was fun. Thanks for having us.

MARGEUX

It's good for me to match faces with the names of the people Carter works with. He says your wife is a top-notch pediatrician.

SAM

She has to be; she's the only one in town. Can I help you find a book, or did you just drop in to say hello?

MARGEUX

Both, actually. I like to read up on local history.

SAM

We have a pretty fair selection. Are you interested in anything in particular?

MARGEUX

I was hoping to find something about the Alistair family.

SAM

The Alistairs built more than the house you and Carter are renting.

MARGEUX

Oh? Such as.

CARTER

This library. They built it just after the Civil War.

MARGEUX

They must have been an important family.

SAM

The family was very prominent,
and very wealthy.

MARGEUX follows SAM into the library's main room as they talk. The portrait of the 19th century river captain hanging above the mantle of the oversized fireplace in the Carnegie-style community library bears a striking resemblance to ANDREW ALISTAIR. Unlike the man MARGEUX has just met, the man in the portrait sports long sideburns and a moustache. His clothing is also from a different era. But still, the resemblance is uncanny. In his right hand, he holds an old-fashioned gold pocket watch. The watch is open. The portrait of a woman affixed to the inside of the watch cover can be seen in the portrait. There is a ruby ring on the small finger of the same hand.

SAM

This is Ezra Alistair. He was an early settler. He founded a steamboat company and made a fortune, though railroads eventually became more important than the river for moving passengers and freight through this part of the country.

MARGEUX

I can't get over how much he looks like Andrew.

SAM

Who?

MARGEUX

Andrew Alistair.

SAM

In New Orleans?

MARGEUX

No, right here in town.

SAM

Visiting?

MARGEUX

He said he comes back to look in on the Alistair ancestral

family home from time to time. The family still owns a barge company. He sometimes spends a few days in the apartment over the carriage house.

SAM

I had no idea. I haven't run into him in the twenty years Linda and I have been in town. And we live just down the street. As far as I know, there haven't been any members of the family living here since the 1860s. I could be wrong, though. I know a lot of the old local stories, but I don't know them all.

MARGEUX smiles.

SAM

You say he came by the house after we all left?

MARGEUX

I thought he was a prowler. It was embarrassing.

SAM

You didn't know that he used the carriage house?

MARGEUX

Carter forgot to mention it.

SAM

Men.

MARGEUX

Yeah, I know. But the talk last night, and meeting Andrew Alistair, sparked my interest. So I thought I'd read up on the man that built the house we're renting for the summer.

SAM

The local history section is this way...

MARGEUX is turning to follow SAM when a woman comes into the library with an air of distracted excitement. HELEN WILSON is of late middle-age and looks a little like a bag lady. She's the town eccentric and town gossip, both rolled into one.

HELEN

Sam, you hear the dreadful news?

SAM gives HELEN an indulgent smile.

SAM

Did those Burham boys get drunk and bust up the pool hall again?

HELEN

Worse than that. I think it's the worst thing I've ever heard in all my days.

SAM begins to take HELEN seriously.

SAM

What is it?

HELEN

A woman was murdered last night in cold blood.

MARGEUX

What happened?

HELEN seems to notice MARGEUX for the first time.

HELEN

You're Dr. Lloyd's new wife, aren't you?

MARGEUX

Yes.

Helen gives her an appraising look.

HELEN

You probably know her — the victim, I mean. She worked up to the hospital with your husband and Sam's wife.

SAM

Are you sure this isn't one of your wild tales, Helen?

HELEN

I heard it straight from the horse's mouth. My sister's next door neighbor is going out with an EMT in the fire department. He rides with the ambulance whenever there's a call and he's on duty.

SAM

Helen...

HELEN

I know what I'm talking about.

HELEN points a forefinger at MARGEUX

HELEN

You probably know her, the murdered woman. Her name was Laura Payne.

MARGEUX

No!

HELEN looks from SAM to MARGEUX and back. She seems satisfied with their reaction to her news.

HELEN

There hasn't been a murder in this town since ... since I don't know when, and I've lived here all my life. When was the last time a person here got murdered, Sam? You're interested in history.

SAM is too stunned to listen to her prattle.

SAM

Laura Payne – my God.

SAM and MARGEUX look helplessly at one another, while HELEN almost explodes with the information she'd been trying to recall.

HELEN

I know! It was before World War II, when Jane Folwell was raped and murdered by a gypsy carnival worker at the fair. They wanted to drag him from the jail and lynch him, the way I heard it, but the state police stopped it.

SAM

Are you absolutely sure about this?

HELEN

I am one hundred percent positive.

MARGEUX

Could it have been an accident?

HELEN

I haven't ever heard of anybody accidentally getting their throat slit from ear to ear.

SAM

I can't believe something like that could happen here.

HELEN

Believe it, deary. The killer set the body on fire, but a neighbor saw the smoke and called the fire department before the flames did much damage. I guess there was quite a stench. One of the cops lost his lunch over it.

SAM

Helen!

SAM puts his arm around MARGEUX.

HELEN

Oh, don't I know it's terrible. It's a bad way to die, your throat cut so that

you bleed to death, like a hog
to butcher.

SAM and MARGEUX share the same stunned expression as HELEN draws her index finger sharply across her neck.

INT. A SMALL GROCERY STORE - DUSK

MARIA makes her way through the store with a basket on one arm, picking up a few things for the Lloyds. There's a close-up of an apple: bright, ripe red, glistening with water in the grocery case. MARIA picks it up looks past it to see ALISTAIR at the end of the aisle, looking in her direction. She turns back to her shopping.

EXT. THE GROCERY STORE

ALISTAIR comes out of the store. He walks up the street to a neighborhood park. It is a quiet time of day in the quiet corner of a quiet town. He sits down on a bench in the deserted park. He takes an old-fashioned gold pocket watch from his jacket, opens it, checks the time. It is the same watch seen in the portrait in the library. The camera focuses in on the portrait of a young woman affixed inside the watch's cover. It is a 19th century photo of the sort taken by Matthew Brady. The woman is young and beautiful, wearing the clothing and hairstyle of the period. ALISTAIR snaps the watch shut. The camera settles for a moment on his right hand: there is a gold and ruby ring on the pinky finger.

MARIA moves down the sidewalk at a brisk walk, carrying a small bag of groceries. She goes past ALISTAIR without looking back at him in the park. She stops a little further on, but there is no apparent reason, as if she is heeding an unspoken. When MARIA turns back toward the camera, there's a faraway look in her eyes.

MARIA makes her way back to the park like a sleepwalker trapped in a dream. She passes the park bench where ALISTAIR was seated, the bench now deserted.

On the far side of some bushes screening the view from the street, MARIA finds ALISTAIR. He is seated on the ground, leaning nonchalantly back on one arm, looking up at her. MARIA sits beside him and begins to unfasten the top few buttons to her blouse. She pulls the blouse down over one shoulder, partly bearing a breast. She leans back on both arms, turning her head to the side, displaying her neck for him.

As ALISTAIR begins to embrace MARIA, his fangs are seen for a brief moment. MARIA reflexively grips at ALISTAIR as he bites, her hands opening and closing against his jacket. As her entire body stiffens in an explosion of pleasure and pain, her foot knocks over the grocery bag she had been carrying. The camera follows a single red apple as it rolls out of the bag and across the grass.

INT. THE LLOYD RESIDENCE. - NIGHT

DETECTIVE BOB YOUNG is seated on a chair across from CARTER. YOUNG is in his fifties. He is wearing a cheap short-sleeved dress shirt with a tie that looks as if it was knotted in a hurry. MARGEUX enters carrying a mug of coffee. She hands YOUNG the cup of coffee and sits on the sofa next to her husband.

YOUNG

I'm not just a detective on the police force here. I am THE detective. You're looking at the entire detective bureau: me. I'm it. I'm a one-man show in a one-horse police department.

MARGEUX

You must have a lot to do.

YOUNG

Not really. It's not as if there's a lot of crime in a town like this. I feel a little like the Maytag repairman most of the time.

MARGEUX and CARTER smile politely at the joke.

YOUNG

I'm also the oldest cop in the department, even though my name is "Young." Another year and I'll be retiring to Missouri. The wife and I have a little place down in Branson.

CARTER

You must be looking forward to that.

YOUNG

Oh, you betcha. Branson is the best. You two ever been to Branson?

MARGEUX and CARTER shake their heads.

YOUNG

You don't know what you're missing. It's the Las Vegas of country music.

CARTER gives MARGEUX a wry look. YOUNG sips his coffee, seemingly forgetting what he'd come to the Lloyds' house to accomplish.

YOUNG

Mmmm.

MARGEUX

Would you like a muffin to go with your coffee? Maria baked some this afternoon.

YOUNG

I'd love one, but...

He pats his paunch.

YOUNG

I'd better not. My wife has me on a strict diet. My cholesterol is through the ceiling, and my blood pressure isn't far behind. That ain't so good, is it, Doc?

CARTER

Not really. Are you on medication?

YOUNG

Nah, I'm trying to take care of it by watching what I eat.

CARTER

That's a start.

Young takes one more sip of coffee and puts the cup down.

YOUNG

Now about Laura Payne.

The LLOYDS nod in unison.

YOUNG

You don't have to worry.
You're not suspects or
anything.

They both seem surprised that the idea, which offends
CARTER.

CARTER

Of course not.

YOUNG

Like I said. But she was here
last night.

CARTER

Yes...

YOUNG

So I thought it would make
sense to ask you about how she
was acting last night, whether
she said anything was
bothering her, that sort of
thing. If it's not too much
trouble.

CARTER (MORE FRIENDLY)

No, of course not. Ask us
anything.

YOUNG

In my experience, which I
admit is pretty limited in
this sort of thing, people
like you are usually involved.
I mean, we're exactly not on
the wrong side of the tracks
here, are we?

CARTER

I'd like to think not.

YOUNG

People who get in trouble with
the law tend to be, you know,
not the sort of people who
have nice houses and fancy
cars and good careers.

YOUNG pulls a narrow notebook pulled from his rear pocket and flips through its pages. MARGEUX gives her husband a disapproving look, but he shakes his head. When the policeman looks up, it is toward CARTER.

YOUNG

I wouldn't think you were involved, unless you and the victim were *involved*, if you know what I mean.

CARTER glances sideways at MARGEUX, who studiously avoids looking his way. CARTER is about to respond when YOUNG hands his notebook to MARGEUX. The dangerous subject has been avoided: CARTER is not about to be asked to define the nature of his relationship with the dead woman.

YOUNG

I got a list of people who were at your party from Rob Churchill, who happens to be Laura's lawyer. Does that look right to you, Mrs. Lloyd? Can you think of anybody else who was here that he might have forgot?

MARGEUX

Everybody's here.

She returns the policeman's notebook.

YOUNG

Did Laura happen to say anything to either of you about having trouble with anybody, either that night at the party or when you were at work together at the hospital, Dr. Carter?

CARTER

No, she didn't have an enemy in the world, as far as I know. I mean, I suppose everybody has enemies, but she hasn't lived in town long enough to make any here. Honey?

MARGEUX appears startled when her husband deflects the question her way.

MARGEUX

She didn't say anything to me, not that she would have. I didn't really know her except as the name of someone my husband worked with.

YOUNG

Did she ever mention anything about her personal life when she lived in St. Louis? Anything like that might indicate somebody from her life there would have a score to settle?

CARTER considers the question a moment, then shakes his head.

CARTER

No. I hadn't know her that long, but she never mentioned anything like that to me.

The detective closes the notebook and jams it back in his rear pocket.

YOUNG

Chances are there's a boyfriend in her background, somebody with a temper back in St. Louis. We're doing a records check and may pull something up, but it's going to take a few days. Our computer system isn't exactly what you'd call up to date. But I bet we'll find an old boyfriend with a temper problem. This was definitely a crime of passion, so I don't think we'll find it was a random kind of thing.

MARGEUX

A crime of passion? How can you know that, Detective?

YOUNG

The level of violence is the tip off. You just don't cut somebody up like that and set them on fire unless there's a lot of pent-up anger — and I mean a *lot*. I'm sorry, Mrs. Lloyd. I didn't mean to frighten you.

MARGEUX

No, that's quite alright. I hadn't heard...

YOUNG

We kept most of it out of the paper. I shouldn't be yakking about it to you, I suppose, but it's not like there's any reason to keep it secret.

CARTER

She was set on fire?

YOUNG

Yeah, though maybe that was just to cover up evidence, make it look like an accident. It's really hard to say.

The detective stands, and the LLOYD'S follow suit. They shake hands, and he hands CARTER his card.

YOUNG

Thanks a lot folks. If you think of anything, give me a call.

CARTER

We'll do that.

CARTER shows YOUNG to the door. She stares at her husband bloodlessly when he returns.

CARTER

What a completely awful thing to happen.

MARGEAUX

What would you have said if he'd asked you the question point blank?

CARTER

Asked me what?

MARGEAUX

If you were involved – you know, *involved* – with Laura?

CARTER is angry but tries not to show it.

CARTER

You're not making sense, Margeaux.

MARGEAUX

I saw you talking to her in the butler's pantry – you and Laura. The conversation seemed...

CARTER

What? What did the conversation seem?

MARGEAUX

It looked to me as if you were having an intimate conversation.

CARTER

For crying outloud, Margeaux! Are you accusing me of having an affair with Laura Payne? Or are you insinuating I might have had something to do with her death?

MARGEAUX shrinks visibly. She's gone too far. She begins to cry.

MARGEAUX

Of course don't think you had anything to do with *that*. I don't know what I think. This is all so...

CARTER puts his arms around his wife. He speaks in comforting tones, but his eyes have a shrewd, calculating look that imply he is not being altogether candid.

CARTER

Laura and I were having a laugh about Sam Castle. They went for a run together, and he got flustered because he was having trouble keeping up with her pace.

MARGEUX pulls away from her husband.

MARGEUX

Really? I thought what you said when I looked in on you two was that you had been telling Laura how happy we'd be to move into our new house?

CARTER

We were talking about that, too. But we happened to be talking about the new house when you walked by and looked at us as if we were up to something sneaky. I can't believe you are jealous of Laura Payne. Don't you trust me?

MARGEUX and CARTER stare at one another, CARTER'S question unanswered, the tension unresolved.

EXT. A STREET IN TOWN

A group of people are gathered for a 5-K race, dressing in T-shirts, shorts, Nikes. "MY GENERATION" plays in the soundtrack.

The camera pans from runner to runner. We see: a couple of jocks who look like they're on their college track team; a kid who can't be more than nine or ten; a group of women in immaculate condition, with marathoners smooth, taught, small-breasted bodies, joking with each other before the race; a couple of kids who look like refugees from a Mountain Dew extreme sports commercial; a couple of overweight middle-aged women wearing gray sweat suits. Finally, we see SAM, wearing a terrycloth headband to hold his gray ponytail in place.

The starter raised his pistol and fires. The runners sprint away from the starting line.

The camera follows SAM as he passes the middle-aged women, the kid, a couple of senior citizens who are barely shuffling.

SAM pulls even with the YOUNG RUNNER seen with him in the opening sequence. The man looks at SAM and acknowledges him with a grin and a nod. The YOUNG RUNNER starts to pick up the pace. SAM keeps up for a few moments, but we can see in his face the realization that he can't keep it up. SAM slows down and the YOUNG RUNNER pulls away.

SAM adopts a stoic expression, but appears startled when the little kid zips past him.

A moment later, the two middle-aged women in gray sweat suits pull up beside him. They look at him and grin.

The race finished, SAM, looking completely wasted, walks slowly down the street, holding a bottle of water. He stops abruptly and brings his free hand to his heart, as if feeling a pain. LEXI is sitting on a stoop, looking up at SAM, but he doesn't seem to notice her. The YOUNG RUNNER is suddenly beside him and witheringly cheerful.

YOUNG RUNNER

You all right, Sam? You look a little pale.

SAM

No, I'm fine. I couldn't be better.

The camera pulls in on LEXI for an extreme close-up.

LEXI

He's lying.

EXT. THE LLOYD RESIDENCE - MORNING

CARTER LLOYD comes out of his house, dressed for work. He climbs into the Porsche, fires it up and drives away.

INT. THE BASEMENT OF THE LLOYD RESIDENCE

MARGEUX is folding towels in the laundry room. She turns around and nearly runs into MARIA. The young Hispanic woman has a faraway look in her eyes and seems not altogether present. MARIA is wearing a scarf around her neck.

MARGEAUX

Don't sneak up on me like that!

MARIA

I am sorry, Margeaux.

MARGEAUX

I didn't hear you come downstairs.

MARIA

(Silence.)

MARGEAUX

You don't seem yourself today.

MARIA stops herself in the act of raising her fingers to the scarf tied carefully around her neck.

MARIA

I did not sleep very well last night. I feel almost as if I'm in a dream.

MARGEAUX

What happened to your neck?

MARIA hurriedly adjusts the scarf, but MARGEAUX moves in and pulls it away, seeing something that is visible only to her before the other woman pulls away.

MARIA

A cat scratched me.

MARGEAUX

Can I see?

MARIA

I would prefer not. It is nothing at all.

MARGEAUX

I could put some disinfectant on it.

MARIA

I have already done that.

MARGEUX

We should have Carter take a look at it. Animal wounds can be dangerous.

MARIA

No, really. It is just a scratch.

MARIA quickly retreats from the room, leaving MARGEUX staring after her.

EXT. THE GRAVEYARD - DAY

The camera moves slowly through the graveyard, a lyrical display of grave markers from another time, when death played a much more intimate role in daily life. We see elaborate mausoleums; ornate monuments; pathetically simple markers; family gravesites, with a big central marker and a fence around the satellites; children's graves.

The camera pauses on a family crypt, the focus tight on a name carved in the stone: "Elizabeth, beloved wife and mother, 1842-1866." The camera moves to another part of the crypt, and the inscription: "Richard Charles, beloved son, 1865-1866." And, finally: "Ezra Andrew, 1835- "

The camera pulls back until the family name can be read, carved in the stone in big letters: "Alistair."

The camera comes back farther still and we see the back of a man standing before the crypt, head bowed. It is ALISTAR.

ALISTAIR moves to the crypt and runs his fingers over the word "Elizabeth." His fingers move to the other complete inscription, "Richard Charles."

LEXI (V.O.)

"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains / One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk..."

ALISTAIR raises his head, as is unexpectedly distracted from his private grief. He turns his head, looking over his shoulder.

ANOTHER PART OF THE GRAVEYARD

LEXI sits with her back to a tombstone. Her black skirt is pulled up high on her white thighs, revealing the tattoo of a serpent. She holds a book of poetry she is reciting to herself. LEXI looks up from the book.

From a different angle, we see ALISTAIR standing a few feet away from LEXI, looking down on her without telegraphing any hint of what is on his mind.

LEXI

I didn't hear you come up on me.

ALISTAIR

I beg your pardon. I did not mean to startle you.

LEXI

What makes you think that you did?

ALISTAIR smiles faintly.

ALISTAIR

You were reading Keats.

Now it is LEXI'S turn to smile.

LEXI

A kindred spirit.

ALISTAIR

Yes, he is.

LEXI

I wasn't talking about Keats. I meant you.

ALISTAIR looks at her closely for a moment, as if trying to make up his mind about something, before deciding to sit on a stone bench.

ALISTAIR

This is hardly the sort of place I would expect to find a young lady passing a pleasant summer afternoon.

LEXI

I like it here.

ALISTAR gives LEXI a curious look.

ALISTAR

Do you really?

LEXI

Yes. I think it's peaceful.

ALISTAIR

That it is.

ALISTAIR looks around himself and sighs, whatever satisfaction he's feeling tinged with sadness.

ALISTAR

How I envy them. They are
beyond the pain of this world.

LEXI gets onto her knees, looking up at ALISTAIR, her attraction to him completely undisguised.

LEXI

We will be, too, someday.

ALISTAIR looks as if he's just been woken up in the middle of a dream. He looks at LEXI intensity, as if seeing her for the first time.

ALISTAIR

You have lost a loved one.

LEXI

My mother is here. She's
buried over in the new
section, where they don't even
let you have tombstones, just
these stupid metal plaques in
the ground.

ALISTAIR

How sad for you.

LEXI

I know. I really wish we could
get her a tombstone.

ALISTAIR

I meant that it was said that
you lost your mother.

LEXI blinks rapidly. For the first time, she displays a genuine emotion.

LEXI

She's better off. We're the ones we should feel sorry for. There isn't any pain where she is.

ALISTAIR close his eyes and begins to recite Keats from memory. The camera moves from a close-up on him to LEXI, who is completely bewitched by the handsome stranger she's met in the cemetery. Her eyes widen, her moist lips come apart. By the time he ends, she is almost panting.

ALISTAIR

"Darkling I listen; and for many a time/ I have been half in love with easeful Death,/ Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,/ To take into the airm my quite breath; /Now more than ever seems it rich to die,/ To cease upon the midnight with no pain, / While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad/ in Such an ecstasy!"

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT

MARIA stands before the bathroom mirror, staring at herself. She gently undoes the scarf she's worn around her neck all day. The bite marks where ALISTAIR bit her are easy to see. She lifts her fingers slowly toward the wounds, as if afraid they will be hot to the touch. She closes her eyes the moment her fingertips come into contact with the wounds and releases a deep, ragged sigh. Even remembering the vampire's embrace brings a flood of erotic pleasure flooding into her...

EXT. THE LLOYD RESIDENCE - DUSK

MARGEUX is sitting on the porch swing, looking off into the middle distance, obviously troubled. She brightens a little when ALISTAIR comes up the walk and joins her, speaking as he sits beside her on the swing.

ALISTAIR

You are rather melancholy for such a wonderful evening.

MARGEUX

I was just thinking ...

He briefly touches her hand. He seems to know exactly what she is thinking.

ALISTAIR

I know. I am sure we all are thinking about the same sad thing today. Such unspeakable savagery. (Beat) There are no words to describe my reaction to such a thing.

MARGEUX

To think someone could do that to another human being.

She looks imploringly at ALISTAIR, who nods in sympathy, encouraging her.

MARGEUX

This sort of thing wasn't all that rare, growing up in a suburb of Chicago. Not anybody I knew, but you'd read about it. You know - the city.

ALISTAIR

A place crowded with the best and worst of humanity.

MARGEUX

Exactly. But here, in this place, it seemed different. I'd even gotten out of the habit of locking the door whenever I left the house to run an errand. But you never really get away from it, do you?

ALISTAIR

No, I am afraid not. Evil is everywhere.

MARGEUX

Even here. And even before the terrible thing that happened to Laura Payne, you didn't ever really escape it for long. Not if you turned on the TV or picked up a newspaper or

magazine. There's nowhere to hide.

ALISTAIR

But there is goodness in the world, too. And far more of it than there is evil.

MARGEUX

I'm not so sure.

ALISTAIR

Well then I will be sure for both of us.

There is a pause as MARGEUX looks away, gathering her troubled thoughts. She doesn't look at ALISTAIR when she speaks.

MARGEUX

Who could do such a thing? What kind of monster would it take to do that to another living being?

ALISTAIR

There is a darkness in some people.

MARGEUX turns and looks at ALISTAIR.

MARGEUX

I think there must be some of that darkness in all of us.

ALISTAIR (THOUGHTFULLY)

Yes, I am sure that is true.

MARGEUX

We don't hear about most of the horrible things that people do to one another, because it doesn't rise up to a level that forces people to take notice.

ALISTAIR

I will tell you what I believe, Margeaux. I believe that every heart has the capacity for the greatest good, but also for the

greatest evil. Therein lies
the trial we each must
survive. We are the fallen.

MARGEUX gives ALISTAIR a startled look.

MARGEUX

Fallen?

ALISTAIR

Fallen from grace. Fallen from
goodness. From God's love. And
from the love we ought to feel
for our neighbors.

MARGEUX

That sounds almost biblical.

ALISTAIR nods somberly, a haunted look on his face.

ALISTAIR

The mark of Cain is upon us
all, each and every one. If we
do not seek redemption, then
we are doomed to take other
way - to follow the Shadow.

MARGEUX

You sound as if you've thought
about this a lot.

ALISTAIR nods and looks away.

MARGEUX

Laura Payne was at our house
the night she was killed. She
was at a cocktail party Carter
and I had.

ALISTAIR

No wonder you are shaken. To
have death brush by so close.

MARGEUX

A policeman came to ask us
questions. I never thought I'd
be involved in something like
this. (Beat) I'm sorry. I'm
sitting here feeling sorry for
myself. Laura is the one I
should feel bad about.

ALISTAIR

Was she a close friend?

MARGEUX

No. To tell you the truth, I
didn't even like her.

MARGEUX visibly recoils at the sound of what she's just
said.

MARGEUX

I'm sorry! I shouldn't have
said something so terrible.

ALISTAIR

It is easy to misspeak when
you are upset. Would you like
to talk about it?

MARGEUX

No.

ALISTAIR

Sometimes it helps to talk.

MARGEUX

I can't.

There is a painful silence until ALISTAIR change the
subject.

ALISTAIR

Where did you and your husband
live before coming here?

MARGEUX looks relieved.

MARGEUX

In a Chicago suburb. Carter
and I met at a fundraiser for
a children's hospital. I was a
volunteer. I was still working
then. I was in marketing at a
cell phone company.

ALISTAIR

You met, and you fell in love.

She responds shyly.

MARGEUX

I didn't used to think I believed in love at first sight. When Carter and I met, I felt this flash of, I don't know what. It was as if I knew from the moment we met that we would be married. I know that sounds crazy.

ALISTAIR

Not at all. I experienced exactly the same thing once.

He looks off into the distance.

ALISTAIR (CONT'D)

It was a long time ago. A very long time ago.

MARGEUX

Did you get married?

ALISTAIR

Yes. We were very happy.

MARGEUX

You were?

ALISTAIR

My wife died when she was still quite young.

MARGEUX

I'm sorry.

ALISTAIR

Now it is my turn to say I would prefer not to talk about it.

MARGEUX smiles, but it is a smile of understanding, sympathy, support.

MARGEUX

Are you sure? Sometimes it helps to talk.

ALISTAIR

I know, but not this time.
(Beat) And so you and Carter feel in love and were married.

MARGEAUX

We got married as soon as his divorce came through.

MARGEAUX suddenly seems embarrassed and flustered.

MARGEAUX (CONT'D)

That sounded worse than it really was. Carter was in an unhappy marriage when we met. The marriage was over by the time we met.

ALISTAIR nods, though it seems both he and MARGEAUX know she feels some measure of responsibility, of guilt, for CARTER failing to reconcile with his wife, though they may well have divorced even if MARGEAUX hadn't been in the picture.

MARGEAUX

We wanted to start over somewhere new. Not that anybody cared particularly in Naperville. It's not as if divorce is a big deal anymore. But there was the inevitable baggage. Carter's first wife is a doctor, too. There were a lot of complications, uncomfortable situations, friends lining up on one side or the other. It just seemed like a better idea to make a fresh start. When he heard about the job running the new cardiac unit here, it seemed like a perfect fit for us. I'm sorry to rattle on in such detail about such personal details.

ALISTAIR

You do not need to apologize. People often open up to me. I do not mind.

MARGEAUX

It must be because you're such a good listener.

For a moment there is a strange sense of intimacy between them, but the bubble quickly bursts by a new arrival.

HEATHER (V.O.)

Hello, there!

HEATHER waves from the sidewalk, coming toward the porch.

MARGEUX

Hi, Heather.

HEATHER

I was just out for a walk and thought I'd be neighborly and say hello.

MARGEUX

Heather, I'd like you to meet Andrew Alistair.

HEATHER accepts ALISTAIR'S proffered hand between both of hers. Her attitude is flirtatious.

HEATHER

No introduction necessary, Margeaux. Andrew and I are old friends...

INT. THE MEN'S GRILL BAR AT THE COUNTRY CLUB

CARTER and ROB sit at the bar, both still in their golf clothes after playing 18 holes. They're being served glasses of Scotch on the rocks. The bartender is CANDY, last seen outside the roadhouse with ALISTAIR. She is wearing a scarf around her throat to hide the bite marks. Rob gives her an appraising look and smiles.

ROB

Thanks, Candy. I swear, you look sweet enough to eat.

CANDY smiles, her expression a bit vacant, as if she's not completely present. CARTER shakes his head at ROB'S come on as CANDY disappears from view.

CARTER

You never stop trying, do you?

ROB

Persistence is the key to my success. It's not easy being a

rake, you know. I requires a lot of dedication and work.

ROB drops the bantering attitude as he picks up his glass.

ROB (CONT'D)

Now as I was saying, you shouldn't have talked to the police without me there to advise you.

CARTER

Oh, come on. The detective just wanted to ask some routine questions.

ROB

The prison is filled with people who decided to answer some routine police questions without their lawyer present.

CARTER

It's not as if we have anything to hide.

ROB

Everybody has something to hide. Did you tell the police about you and Laura?

CARTER appears shocked.

CARTER

What do you mean?

ROB

Come on, Carter. Don't pull that with me. I know you two had something going on the side. I can tell.

CARTER

Jesus! It was just an innocent little thing.

ROB

Right.

CARTER

Well, maybe not innocent, but,
you know, not serious. If
Margeaux ever found out...

ROB

You don't have to worry about
me telling her. Lawyers don't
gossip about their clients.

CARTER

Do other people know?

ROB shrugs.

ROB

I haven't heard anybody say
anything, but people might
suspect. The thing for you to
do is keep your mouth shut
about all of that to the
police. As your attorney,
that's a free bit of
professional advice. And I'd
recommend you do the same with
your wife, if you want to
remain happily married.

CARTER

Of course I do.

ROB lifts his glass in a toast.

ROB

Then good for you. Margeaux is
a lovely woman. And divorce
can be very expensive for a
man in your income bracket.

CARTER

You don't need to tell me
that.

As CARTER takes a guilty gulp from his glass, ROB observes
him closely from the corner of his eyes.

ROB

Did you tell the police about
me and Laura, that we were an
item for a time?

CARTER

Of course not. Why would I?

ROB

If the police are being methodical, I'd expect them to draw up a list of Laura's old flames.

CARTER

Det. Young did say something about checking records back in St. Louis to see if there was any record of domestic violence with one of her old boyfriends or something. That struck me as a remote possibility, but who knows?

ROB (SIPPING HIS DRINK)

Mmmm.

CARTER

I have to tell you that a word like "methodical" does fit well with my impression of Det. Young.

ROB

I know. He came to see me, too. I had the impression he was talking to all the people from the party at your house.

CARTER

What did you tell them?

ROB

Same as you, Carter. I said I didn't know a thing about what happened to Laura, and that I couldn't imagine why anybody would hurt her. Not I'm not surprised.

CARTER

What?

ROB

I said I'm not surprised. Cock-teasers like Laura are

bound to run into trouble,
sooner or later.

CARTER stares at ROB, too stunned to respond.

THE CARRIAGE HOUSE - NIGHT

ALISTAIR sits alone, reading a book of poetry. There is only one light on, beside where he sits reading, though a few candles add their flickering golden light. There is a glass of red wine before him on the table, untouched. Playing on the stereo is the Romanze movement from Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, the music elegant, languid, achingly beautiful. The vampire closes the book and shuts his eyes, letting the music flow into him. He opens his mind after a moment and looks up, his alert expression softening into a slight smile. There is a knock at the door.

ALISTAIR opens the door. LEXI is standing there, dressed as always. She is carrying her writing journal.

ALISTAIR

This is a surprise.

LEXI

Is it really?

LEXI slips past without waiting to be invited inside, brushing against ALISTAIR who for a brief moment gives the camera a knowing look.

LEXI is sitting on the couch in the living room when ALISTAIR returns.

ALISTAIR

May I offer you something to
drink?

LEXI wordlessly picks up his glass and drinks, her eyes locked onto his.

ALISTAIR

Some wine, perhaps?

LEXI

You said you'd like to read
some of the things I've
written. There you are.

She nods at the notebook on the table.

LEXI (CONT'D)

You don't have to pretend you like them. I'll know if you try to lie. I always know when people are lying to me.

ALISTAIR picks up the notebook and opens it, still standing.

ALISTAIR

A gentleman never lies, Lexi.

EXT. THE CARRIAGE HOUSE. LATER.

LEXI is outside, looking out at the night, somber as she awaits judgment. The Andante movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 plays in the background, evidently coming from ALISTAIR'S stereo.

ALISTAIR (O.S.)

You write beautifully.

LEXI turns, smiling, but quickly becomes more guarded. ALISTAIR joins her.

LEXI

Remember: A gentleman never lies.

ALISTAIR

The world is not as dark a place as you make it out.

LEXI

The world is built of lies.

ALISTAIR

No, it is not, even if many people do lie to themselves to escape self-contempt and shame.

LEXI

So the world is made out of lies.

ALISTAIR

No, only the shield of self-delusion people create to wall themselves off from the pain of being alive. It requires an act of formidable bravery to

smash through the lies and become an angel in the service of the truth. Which is why I admire you, Lexi. You are trying to see life as it really is, even if the part of it you understand has made you sad.

LEXI

I'm no angel.

ALISTAIR

Nor am I. Yet I have no doubt an angel is leading you toward the truth. Perhaps it is your mother, helping you from the great beyond.

LEXI looks at ALISTAIR as if she suddenly doubts his sanity.

ALISTAIR (CONT'D)

Do not be so quick to dismiss angels. They are part of the truth, as are the devils among us.

LEXI (SKEPTICAL)

What truth?

ALISTAIR

That life, if you get beyond the pain and lies, is filled with wonderful mysteries that words cannot describe or the mortal mind comprehend.

ALISTAIR gestures broadly at the soft summer evening, feeling in awe of nature, life, everything.

ALAISTAIR

They sparkle and dance before us like fireflies, glittering beyond the reach of those of us rooted to this world, like stars glittering in the summer night sky. You can see them, if you are perceptive and pay attention, but you can never possess them.

LEXI moves nearer to ALISTAIR until the distance between them has been reduced to an intimate space.

LEXI

Help me see the secrets. And help me stop the pain.

ALISTAIR

These are things you can do for yourself. You do not need my assistance.

LEXI

I've tried. I can't.

ALISTAIR

Then you must try harder.

LEXI

I can't. That's why I've already decided to end it.

ALISTAIR

What?

LEXI

I'm going to kill myself. The only reason I haven't already done it is because I can't get up the nerve.

ALISTAIR

You must never say such a thing. You make yourself a weaker every time you surrender a part of yourself to despair.

LEXI (IMPLORING)

Then help me. Become my teacher. I can tell that you (beat) know things.

ALISTAIR

My dear girl, if you had any idea what you were asking.

LEXI

I think I do - Ezra.

ALISTAIR blinks with surprise.

ALISTAIR

You are mistaken.

LEXI (WITH CONFIDENCE)

I don't think I have. What was it like here in during the Civil War? Why did you go away? Was it because you were filled with grief after your wife and child died? Or was it so people wouldn't guess the truth what you'd become?

The memories almost overcome ALISTAIR. It takes him a moment to respond, and when he does, he is far from convincing.

ALISTAIR

People will think you insane if you talk like that.

LEXI

People already think I'm insane.

LEXI goes to ALISTAIR and embraces him, a comforting gesture.

LEXI

You must be very lonely.

ALISTAIR does not answer, but it is plain she has hit a nerve.

LEXI (CONT'D)

We don't really know very much about what your kind are like, do we?

ALISTAIR

You are letting your imagination get the better of you, my dear.

LEXI

No. (beat) You don't have to be alone. I can help you, too, if you will only let me. I can give you what you need.

They share a passionate kiss, draw apart for a moment, looking deep into each other's eyes. LEXI nods slightly.

It is all the invitation the vampire needs. ALISTAIR opens his mouth to reveal his fangs, which he immediately sinks deep into LEXI'S neck. She reacts, first in pain, then in ecstatic pleasure. The camera pans out across the night garden to the sound of LEXI'S low, passionate moan and Mozart swelling in the soundtrack.

INT. THE CASTLE'S HOUSE

Sam stands in the bathroom in his pajamas. He is a little pale. He takes a pill and washes it down with a sip of water, then raises his hand to his heart. He looks mortally afraid of what the pains he's been feeling mean.

LEXI (V.O.)

I was sick of lies and wanted
nothing more than to die.

INT. LEXI'S HOUSE

LEXI'S father pops open another beer and lifts it unsteadily to his lips.

LEXI (V.O.)

I didn't want reach into the
heart of truth and see for
myself that there was order
and meaning at the center of
the universe's chaos. I wanted
to die.

INT. THE LLOYD RESIDENCE

CARTER is sitting up in bed, bare-chested, covered to the waist with the sheets. MARGEUX walks by, wearing a nightgown, carrying a book. CARTER pats the bed beside him and gives MARGEUX a come-hither look.

LEXI (V.O.)

I won't deny that I had a
thing for Alistair. But I
wasn't really looking for love
from him, or truth, or
transfiguration into the sort
of romantic creature he was.

EXT. THE CEMETERY

A couple of rough looking men sit on a crypt, drinking beers and laughing at something. They seem capable of

violence. They finish their beers, throw the cans across the cemetery, and open more.

LEXI

What I was really after at that point was death. If you don't have what it takes to kill yourself, it would seem that inviting a vampire to sink his teeth into my neck would be as sure a thing as putting a gun in my mouth and pulling the trigger.

INT. THE POLICE STATION

Det. Young is alone in the police station, the lamp on his desk to only light. He's reading information in a folder. He closes the folder and tosses it on the desk, rubbing his eyes as he reaches for the lamp and switches it off, plunging the room into darknes.

LEXI (V.O.)

How sweet to die!
 "Now more than ever seems it
 rich to die,/ To cease upon
 the midnight with no pain, /
 While thou art pouring forth
 they soul abroad/ in Such an
 ecstasy!"

INT. MARIA'S HOUSE

Maria brushes out her long black hair, her head at an angle, her eyes closed. She seems lost in a dreamy reverie. She still wears the scarf around her neck.

LEXI (V.O.)

But Alistair was right. I really didn't understand him, or what he was about. He could have drank me dry of life along with my blood. It would have given him pleasure to do so, and also me. There really are no words to describe what *that* is like.

INT. CANDY'S APARTMENT. - NIGHT

CANDY stands in her bedroom, which is a mess, laying out her clothes for the evening. She's had a shower and is wearing Victoria's Secret underwear. Around her neck, a vaguely S&M dog collar to hide the vampire's wounds.

LEXI (V.O.)

It made sense to put myself in a lethal situation to do what I didn't have nerve to do myself. But it didn't work out the way I planned. I didn't end up dead. Just the opposite, in fact.

A pair of hands grab CANDY from behind and throw her down on the bed. We see a man on her from behind. He is dressed entirely in black. It could be ALISTAIR, but we can't see enough of him to tell.

The camera focuses on wall beside the bed just before it is splattered with a stream of blood.

LEXI (V.O.)

It could have happened to me, but it didn't.

INT. HEATHER'S HOUSE

Heather is leaning back in her oversized bathtub, her eyes closed, taking a bubble bath. Candles light the room.

LEXI (V.O.)

But Alistair had other plans for me, though I had no idea at the time what it was. I was still trying to work out what was true from what was a lie.

HEATHER opens her eyes to the sound of a siren.

EXT. MARGEUX'S CAR IN THE STREET IN FRONT OF CANDY'S MODEST FOURPLEX APARTMENT HOUSE.

MARGEUX and MARIA are in the car, MARGEUX driving. She slows the car as she passes the house. There are police cars outside. The house has been cordoned off with yellow police tape.

MARGEUX

Oh, my God, that must be where
it happened.

MARIA

It was the same as with Miss
Payne?

MARGEUX

I suppose. There weren't a lot
of details in the newspaper
this morning.

DET. YOUNG comes out of the house. MARGEUX speeds up,
though YOUNG doesn't look in their direction.

MARGEUX

Oh, great.

MARIA

What is it, ma'am?

MARGEUX

It's the policeman who came to
the house to ask about Laura.
I don't want him to see us and
wonder if we know something
about this.

As the car turns the corner, the camera settles on LEXI.
LEXI, who has a black ribbon tied around her neck, looks
at MARGEUX, then back at the activity across the street.

INT. DR. CARTER LLOYD'S OFFICE - DAY

SAM CASTLE sits without a shirt on the examining table
while CARTER listens to his heart with a stethoscope. SAM
appears uncomfortable and worried, but CARTER seems
completely relaxed. He is dressed casually, as usual, but
has a white doctor's jacket on over his sports shirt.

CARTER

And you've continued running
despite the chest pains?

SAM

I haven't had any when I just
go out for an easy jog. I'm
not going to quit running.

CARTER

You are if you want to live while we sort this out. Your wife is right, you know. You're not a young man any more, no matter how hard you work at being one.

SAM

It shows, does it?

CARTER

Yep, right here on your charts.

CARTER holds up an EKG printout as if to prove to point.

CARTER

There's an indication, a pretty good indication, of a blockage.

SAM

That doesn't sound good.

CARTER

It's not a big deal, in this day and age. The procedure is entirely routine.

SAM

Procedure?

CARTER

We need to do an angioplasty. You know what that is. We'll go in through a vein in your groin and..

SAM

Yeah, I know, I know.

CARTER

There's a small risk, of course, but it's statistically insignificant. If it turns out there is a blockage, we'll go ahead and put a stent in while we're at it. If the problem is far enough advanced to require a bypass, we'll do that.

SAM

You mean you, right then?

CARTER

Why not? It's a lot easier on you than bringing you back in and putting you under anesthesia again. You're already out.

SAM

So when does all this happen?

CARTER

I'd like you here at six in the morning.

SAM

Tomorrow?

CARTER

This is serious business, Sam. And if you start having chest pains or show any symptoms, I want you to have Linda bring you into the emergency room immediately. Understand?

SAM (RELUCTANTLY)

Whatever you say.

SAM looks at the floor, dejected.

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't know why this is happening. I watch what I eat. I run every day. I lift weights at the Y three times a week. I did everything right.

CARTER

Sometimes it doesn't matter. Sooner or later, Sam, time catches up. You can't escape getting old. Nobody is immortal.

INT. ALISTAIR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The scene opens with an extreme close-up of a woman's hand, the fingernails covered with clear lacquer.

"Moonlight Sonata" fills the soundtrack. The camera pulls back to show the entire hand and wrist on a rumpled black velvet sheet. The camera dollies back to gradually reveal a bare arm, a shoulder, a naked back. The woman's head is turned to one side so we do not see her face. The camera pulls back farther still to reveal more details of the room. It is ALISTAIR'S room, we see, when we see him sitting in a chair on the far side of the bed, intently watching the woman sleep. His expression is enigmatic. He is thinking hard about something, but it is not evident what, his fingers forming a steeple in front of his face. Or is she not asleep but dead? She lies so perfectly still it is difficult to tell. The camera pauses when it has pulled back as far as it can go. The image is carefully composed, an erotic still life depicting passion spent.

ALISTAIR looks up at the camera. The woman stirs, turning her sleeping face toward the camera. It is LEXI, but she has been transformed. She is hardly wearing any makeup, a big change from the dark lipstick and excessive eye shadow. Her hair has been brushed out straight. She has taken off the dozens of jangling silver bracelets she usually wears. She appears to be naked, except for the ribbon around her neck. This, too, is changed, though. She has replaced the black ribbon with red satin.

EXT. THE GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

The music continues, an auditory link between the previous location and this one. The scene opens with a shot from a medium distance, across the cemetery, over and past the tombstones. There are no people present. The camera glides past monuments as if we are seeing what a ghost might see. The camera turns up a path between the graves, goes a little ways, turns again. Surely there is some purpose to this, something we are meant to see.

The camera fixes on a large granite monument and approaches it with singular purpose. Closer and closer we come, but angling down to the left, for it seems it is not the tombstone we are meant to see, but something near it. This object only becomes evident as the camera gets quite near to it. It is the hand of a woman in the ill-trimmed grass at the base of the monument, the rest of her body obscured behind the monument. The hand does not move. It is strangely white and flecked with blood. It's owner is quite obviously dead.

EXT. LLOYD'S RESIDENCE

MARGEUX, returning from her morning run, picks up the newspaper from the front steps. She opens it as she climbs the steps, but abruptly stops to absorb something she has read.

MARGEUX

Oh, my God. Not again.

INT. THE CARDIAC SURGERY WAITING ROOM

LINDA sits with an open magazine in her lap. She is not reading, though, but staring into space. MARGEUX enters. LINDA stands and they embrace as the dialog begins.

MARGEUX

How is Sam?

LINDA

He's still in recovery. Carter said he came through it all fine.

MARGEUX

Did they have to do a bypass?

LINDA

One. Carter says the prognosis is good. I'm glad Sam's in the hands of somebody I trust.

They sit.

MARGEUX

Did you hear the news?

LINDA

About the third murder? I'm afraid so.

MARGEUX

What is going on here? This is the last place on earth I'd expect to be terrorized by a serial murderer.

LINDA

Is that what they're calling him?

MARGEAUX

The police are not coming right out and saying so, but it must be what they're thinking. (Beat) Why did you say "him"?

LINDA

They're almost always men.

MARGEAUX

Do you think it's someone we know?

LINDA

I'd hate to think so, but it's a possibility. You know that this new one was a nurse at the hospital.

MARGEAUX

You're kidding. Anybody I know?

LINDA

Jean Simpson. Pretty little thing, but not the best nurse I ever worked with.

MARGEAUX

Her name wasn't in the newspaper, was it?

LINDA

No, but it's all over the hospital. The police were here first thing. They already talked to me. The spoke briefly to Carter, too.

MARGEAUX

Wanting to know what?

LINDA

They asked the usual policeman questions: Did we have any idea who might have killed Jean. They seem suspicious of the fact that there's been a hospital connection to all three victims.

MARGEUX

I thought the second woman worked at the country club.

LINDA

Do you know any doctors here who don't play golf or tennis at the club? Even Dr. Paranaahabarish has a membership.

MARGEUX

Do they have any suspects?

LINDA

If they do, they didn't tell me. Who knows, really? The thing that makes it hard to catch serial killers is that they pick their victims at random. Although in this instance, there at least appears to be a connection between the victims. If that doesn't turn out to be a red herring, maybe they'll identify a suspect.

MARGEUX seems about to say something, stops herself, then plunged ahead.

MARGEUX

Did that policeman come by to see you about Laura?

LINDA

Steve Young came by.

MARGEUX

Did Det. Young ask you about Laura's love life?

LINDA

He certainly did. I told Steve know a thing about her personal life. I make it a habit to ignore gossip.

MARGEREAUX

Then you never heard rumors
that Laura and my husband were
having an affair?

LINDA

Were they?

MARGEAUX

To tell you the truth, I don't
know.

LINDA

But you suspect.

MARGEAUX nods.

LINDA

Have you thought about asking
Carter?

MARGEAUX

I did, more or less. He denied
it.

LINDA

Isn't that good enough for
you? It probably should be, if
you love your husband.

MARGEAUX

It's good enough for me, but
it hasn't kept me from
wondering. I suppose what
happened to Laura, tragic as
it is, puts an end to it no
matter.

LINDA

I suppose what's really at the
back of your mind is the fear
that Carter will do to you
what he did to his first wife.

MARGEAUX

Their marriage was on the
rocks when he and I met.

LINDA

Does that put your fears to
rest? It doesn't look like it
does to me.

MARGEAUX

I wouldn't say that Carter has a wandering eye, but he does have a keen appreciation for the opposite sex. I can see that in the way he looks at other women. But looking and touching are two different things.

LINDA

Some men are pussycats. Mine is. There isn't a kinder, decent, more loyal man than Sam. But deep down, when you get down to the elemental nature of what makes men tick, they're all the same.

MARGEAUX

Meaning?

LINDA

Meaning that they all think with their dicks.

INT. THE HOSPITAL PARKING RAMP

MARGEAUX walks along the ramp. She hears footsteps behind her. She doesn't react at first, but after a moment she glances over her shoulder. She hears a slight shuffling sound, but there's nobody there. She continues on. The footsteps resume. She looks over her shoulder again. There's nobody there. She cuts between cars and begins to run, diving into her car and slamming the doors and hitting the power lock. She looks around in terror but there's nobody there. She backs out of the spot and speeds away. As she disappears around the corner, the silhouette of an unidentified man, seen from the rear, peers at her from behind the post where he was hiding.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT

MARIA and MARGEAUX stand just inside the entry. Evidently they have just entered together. MARIA continues to wear a scarf around her neck.

MARGEAUX

Are you sure you wouldn't like to stay at the house with Carter and me?

MARIA

I am not afraid, ma'am. I can take care of myself.

MARGEAUX

We have to take this seriously, Maria. Police are afraid that more women will be harmed.

MARIA

I promise not to let anyone in. I will lock the door and watch television and not leave until you pick me up in the morning.

MARGEAUX takes something from her pocket and hands it to MARIA.

MARGEAUX

I want you to have these. This is a can of pepper spray. I bought it for protection when I used to take the train into downtown Chicago a lot. You can spray the eyes of an assailant. You just need to make sure it's pointed in the right direction.

MARIA smiles.

MARGEAUX (CONT'D)

And this is a whistle. Blow it if you need to call for help. The noise might also scare off anybody who's trying to bother you.

MARIA

Do you have more spray for yourself?

MARGEAUX

No, but I have Carter to protect me. Now, lock the door and keep it locked.

MARIA

I promise.

INT. THE LLOYD HOME. - NIGHT

Maria sits at the kitchen table with her checkbook and a calculator. She does not see the outline of the man watching her from outside the window. She hears an automobile pulling up. The motor stops. She is finishing up as the front door shuts.

CARTER (V.O.)

Honey?

MARGEUX

I'm in the kitchen.

CARTER enters the room.

CARTER

Are you here alone?

MARGEUX

Not now that you're here.

They kiss. Carter goes to the refrigerator for a beer.

CARTER (HIS BACK TO MARGEUX)

You have the house lighted up like we're about to have a party.

MARGEUX

I felt better with the lights on. After the, you know...

CARTER sits down across from his wife.

CARTER

Maybe you've changed your mind about the wisdom of me buying a gun.

MARGEUX

Not yet, but if anymore people get hurt, I may send you out to buy two pistols, so that we can each have one for protection.

CARTER

The police came to talk to me today at the hospital.

MARGEUX

I know. I went to sit with Linda while Sam was in recovery. Is he OK?

CARTER

Sam? He'll be fine, although his inflated sense of machismo is going to have to recuperate.

CARTER takes a pull on his beer.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Then you know the latest one was a nurse. Police think the fact that all three women had a link to the hospital and doctors is significant.

MARGEUX

Saying that about somebody who worked at the country club seems a bit of a stretch.

CARTER

I thought so, too, but who knows. They've just looking for a common denominator.

CARTER has another drink, apparently thinking it all over.

CARTER

I wonder if it's occurred to them to talk to Andrew Alistair.

MARGEUX

Why would they want to talk to him?

CARTER

It seems to me this all started about the time he came to town. I'm no Sherlock Holmes, but that strikes me as an interesting fact.

MARGEUX

He couldn't have anything to do with those horrible murders.

CARTER

How can you tell?

MARGEUX

I've had a couple of talks with him. He's an extremely nice man. I can't imagine he could be capable of such a thing.

CARTER

I know those women didn't slit their own throats.

MARGEUX

You haven't gotten to know Andrew at all, have you.

CARTER

I've said hi a couple of times. We aren't exactly close friends. (beat) It sounds like you've been spending a lot more time with him than me.

MARGEUX

What is that supposed to mean?

CARTER

Nothing.

MARGEUX

You bastard!

CARTER

What?

MARGEUX

How dare you imply I would even think about getting involved with someone else? You must be guilty for cheating on me with Laura.

CARTER

We've already been through that.

MARGEUX

Don't lie to me, Carter. And don't ever do anything like that again, or I'll divorce

you so fast it'll make your
head spin.

MARGEAUX storms out of the room.

CARTER

Margeaux!

He doesn't follow her. He doesn't want to put himself in the position of having to continue to deny something his wife knows is a fact, but neither does he have the nerve to admit it.

EXT. THE LLOYD HOUSE. - NIGHT

MARGEAUX goes out onto the porch and looks across at the carriage house. ALISTAIR'S Jaguar is parked outside it. She sees someone moving on the other side of the vehicle. It is LEXI, still dressed in black but in a much more subdued fashion than before, looking more like a dance student or young poetess than a Goth witch. LEXI still has a red ribbon around her neck. She heads up the stairs and goes into ALISTAIR'S apartment. MARGEAUX folds her arms and continues to look at the house. She doesn't know quite what to think, but she is nevertheless troubled by seeing the teen visiting ALISTAIR alone after dark.

INT. THE LIBRARY. - DAY

MARGEAUX returns her library books on the ALISTAIRS and town history. HEATHER is behind the desk.

MARGEAUX

Hi. Filling in for Sam?

HEATHER

He'll be out for a while from
the surgery.

HEATHER gives the books MARGEAUX is returning a curious look.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Brushing up on local history?

MARGEAUX

I wanted to learn something
about the people who built our
house.

HEATHER

And impress Alexander Alistair
with your knowledge of his
illustrious forefathers?

MARGEUX

Not exactly, but I suppose
that was part of it. You know
Alistair. He's pretty cute.

HEATHER

Can you say that? I thought
you were a happily married
woman.

MARGEUX

But I am.

LEXI comes into the library. The other two women glance
briefly in her direction before returning to their
conversation.

MARGEUX

Who is that girl?

HEATHER

Her name is Lexi. She's
something of a local
character.

MARGEUX

She seems to have toned down
her look quite a bit.

HEATHER

I was just noticing that
myself. Maybe she's met a boy
who doesn't go for the creepy
Goth look.

MARGEUX

Actually, I think she's been
hanging out with Alistair.

HEATHER

Isn't he a little old for her?

MARGEUX

That's what I thought.

HEATHER

She is eighteen, I think.

MARGEUX

But still.

HEATHER

Yeah, I know. She was a senior
this year at the high school.
It's cradle-robbing, even if
it is legal.

Her voice drops to a whisper.

HEATHER

Here she comes.

LEXI sets a pile of books on the counter. They're all
about the same topic: vampires.

HEATHER

Reading up on vampires?

LEXI

That's right.

HEATHER

What, are you writing a paper?

LEXI

No. It's just an interest.

HEATHER begins to stamp the books.

HEATHER

What did you hear back from
the university?

LEXI

They accepted me.

HEATHER

Good for you. So you'll be
starting there in the fall?

LEXI

I don't know what I'm going to
do.

She picks up the books, not interested in talking.

LEXI

Bye!

HEATHER

See you later.

They watch LEXI head out the door.

MARGEUX

Did you see that ribbon around
her neck?

HEATHER

What about it?

MARGEUX

You don't think there's any
possibility that...

HEATHER

What?

MARGEUX

Never mind. If I told you,
you'd think I am crazy.

EXT. THE LIBRARY

From the middle distance, the camera focuses on MARGEUX as she leaves the library. She comes down the stairs, stops, looks off into the distance, as if deeply troubled by something. As she gets into her car to leave, the camera pulls back to show the back of a man watching her from the distance. When the car pulls out, he steps out from his concealment and turns his head, watching her go. We never do see his face.

INT. CARTER LLOYD'S OFFICE

CARTER sits behind his desk. He's dressed casually, as usual, with a white doctor's jacket over his sports shirt, as when he examined Sam.

CARTER opens up a drawer, takes out a box, puts it on the desk in front of him. He looks at it a moment, as if not sure he wants to open it. But he does. It is filled with letters.

He takes out the first letter, reads it, then feeds it into the shredder next to his desk.

CARTER picks up the second letter. Under it is Polaroid of him and LAURA. They are dressed in tennis clothes and have their arms around one another. It could be a perfectly innocent picture - and yet it obviously isn't.

SAM closes his eyes, pained by the memory and all the rest of it. He forces the photo into the shredder, putting the letter in after it.

INT. THE POLICE STATION

DET. YOUNG spreads crime scene photos out in an array on his cluttered desk. He picks several of them up and examines them, as if looking for the piece of the puzzle he has missed before now.

One of the photos is from the graveyard, where the most recent victim was found. Something about the photo catches YOUNG'S attention. He holds the photo up to the light and studies it carefully through bifocals. In the distance, behind several police officers, is a crypt with a familiar name engraved in the façade: "Alistair."

YOUNG puts down the photo and looks off into the distance, musing. Then he picks up his pen, a cheap ballpoint.

In a close-up shot, we see the detective scrawl the name of somebody he's decided he has forgotten to talk to: Andrew Alistair.

EXT. THE LLOYD HOME

ALISTAIR approaches the house and climbs the stairs, moving swiftly and silently. He pauses before the door, looking over his shoulder. He starts to open the door, then stops himself, looking a little startled. Instead of going in unannounced, he rings the bell.

INT. THE LLOYD HOME - NIGHT

MARGEUX opens the door, but not very far.

MARGEUX

Alistair..

She still keeps the door more closed than open.

ALISTAIR

I found the note on my door
asking me to stop by.

MARGEUX

Yes. Of course.

She opens the door a bit hesitantly, looking past ALISTAIR. He glances over his shoulder toward the empty driveway.

ALISTAIR

What is it?

MARGEUX

Nothing. I was just thinking
Carter should be home by now.

ALISTAIR

I can come back at another
time.

MARGEUX

No. I'm sorry. Won't you
please come in?

She opens the door and admits the vampire.

MARGEUX (CONT'D)

All of these (beat) incidents
have me a little on edge.

ALISTAIR

You and everybody else in
town. It is most unpleasant.

MARGEUX leads them into the living room.

MARGEUX

Would you like something to
drink? I have just opened a
bottle of chardonnay.

ALISTAIR

Yes, thank you.

ALISTAIR looks after her with curiosity. He then looks slowly around the room, noting the changes. It saddens him, returning to the house where he knew so much happiness – and tragedy. He brightens when his hostess returns and hands him one of the two glasses of wine.

ALISTAIR

Thank you.

MARGEUX watches him closely as he drinks, a fact that does not escape his attention.

ALISTAIR

If you will excuse me for
saying so, you are looking at
me in the strangest way.

His look for a brief moment becomes so direct that it is almost fierce.

ALISTAIR (CONT'D)

It is almost as if you were not sure I would really drink the wine.

MARGEUX is instantly flustered, though she tries to conceal it.

MARGEUX

You say the strangest things sometimes, Andrew.

ALISTAIR

Even so.

MARGEUX

Has anyone ever told you how much you look like your ancestor, Ezra Andrew Alistair?

ALISTAIR

There is a strong family resemblance.

MARGEUX

It's almost more than that.

ALISTAIR

Is it, then?

MARGEUX (SUMMONING HER COURAGE)

Yes. The resemblance is startling.

ALISTAIR

You sound as if you think that Ezra and I are the same person.

MARGEUX

You look so much alike. You're even wearing his ring - Ezra's. It's in the painting in the library.

ALISTAIR

I had forgotten about that.
(beat) The ring is a family

heirloom. Handed down from
father to son.

MARGEUX (DISMISSIVELY)

Of course.

ALISTAIR

Oh, do come along now, please.
What you're suggesting is
patently impossible – not that
I think for even a moment you
are in the least bit serious.
If I were Ezra Alistair, it
would make 166 years old.

MARGEUX

Exactly right. You have a good
mind for facts. Ezra Alistair
was born in 1835, exactly 166
years ago.

ALISTAIR

I would say *you* are the one
with a good mind for facts.
How did you know Ezra was born
in 1835?

MARGEUX knows she's revealed to much.

MARGEUX

I'm interested in local
history.

ALISTAIR (ARCHLY)

Are you really?

MARGEUX

No. Not in a general sense. I
did want to learn more about
your family, about the people
who built this house.

ALISTAIR

And did you satisfy your
curiosity?

MARGEUX

Not entirely. There isn't a
lot of detail about the people
and events, not even if you
look up the old papers on
microfilm. They didn't write a

whole lot of personal things
about themselves.

ALISTAIR

They were too busy trying to
put together a life on what
was still basically frontier.

MARGEUX

And I imagine everything was
much more compressed then.
People didn't live nearly as
long as they do now. There was
less opportunity for
reflection.

ALISTAIR nods gravely.

ALISTAIR

This is true.

MARGEUX

And the man who built this
house — Ezra Alistair — he had
a particularly unhappy life,
didn't he?

ALISTAIR says nothing but looks grim.

MARGEUX (CONT'D)

His wife was very young when
he died. And his only child,
too.

The vampire looks down and massages his temples between
the thumb and fingers of his right hand.

MARGEUX (CONT'D)

I went out to the cemetery and
visited the family gravesite.
I don't think Ezra is buried
there. There's no date for his
death engraved on the tomb.
Sam thinks he died in St.
Louis. I talked to a reference
librarian down there, and had
her look it up in the
newspaper morgue. She couldn't
find an obituary for Ezra.

ALISTAIR looks up. He seems sad and ill at ease.

ALISTAIR

That is a lot of trouble to go to, to find out about somebody who lived a long, long time ago.

MARGEUX

Maybe you're right.

They look at one another a long moment. ALISTAIR has a hunted expression on his face. He is hoping MARGEUX will let the matter drop, and yet he know this is probably too much to expect.

MARGEUX

You told me once that you could never come back here to live because there are too many unhappy memories. Would I be prying too far into your personal affairs to ask you what unhappy memories.

ALISTAIR has started to shake his head no even before the question is asked.

ALISTAIR

With all due respect, that is a question I can not answer. There are some things I can never discuss.

MARGEUX

Because they are too painful, or simply because you refuse to talk about them?

ALISTAIR (SHARPLY)

Either or both – what does it matter?

MARGEUX

You know what I'm thinking, don't you?

ALISTAIR

Listen to yourself! You are suggesting the impossible. This is the 21st century. The world is ruled by science and

rationality, not ignorant
superstition.

MARGEAUX

I'd like to say something to
you, but I'm afraid. I don't
really know you very well. And
yet I feel as if I know you
almost perfectly.

ALISTAIR gives her a menacing look, but his words are
pleading.

ALISTAIR

Then do pray say nothing more,
my dear Margeaux. Do not say
something we will both quickly
come to regret. Some words
cannot be called back once
they have been spoken.

MARGEAUX

But I need to know!

ALISTAIR takes her by both hands, the gesture tender, not
threatening.

ALISTAIR

Do you not already know
everything there is to know in
the silence of your own good
heart? How I feel, how you
feel, and so many other things
of which we must never speak?

MARGEAUX

I have to know.

ALISTAIR

Please, no. For my sake. Have
I ever done you any harm?

MARGEAUX closes her eyes, squeezing out the tears. She
speaks the first few next words without opening her eyes.

MARGEAUX

You said you could never come
back here because there were
too many unhappy memories.

She opens her eyes and stares straight into ALISTAIR'S
unblinking gaze.

MARGEAUX (CONT'D)

You said you could never come back here. But no Alistair has lived here since Ezra Alistair went away after the Civil War.

INT. THE MASTER BATHROOM IN THE LLOYD HOME - NIGHT - LATER

MARGEAUX stands before the mirror, patting her eyes with a tissue. She has been crying.

EXT. THE LLOYD HOME; FRONT DOOR

A man's gloved hand tries the front door. It is locked.

EXT. THE REAR OF THE LLOYD HOME

The silhouette of a man can be seen moving long the rear of the house. His movements are stealthy; there is no question he is up to no good. He tries a window. It is locked. He moves to another window. This time, the window opens when he pushes it upward.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM IN THE LLOYD HOME

MARGEAUX is walking toward the bed with a book when she hears the door open behind her. She reacts with surprise, this quickly replaced by fear. The man moving menacingly into the room hits her across the face with a backhand. She falls onto the bed and screams as he throws himself on her.

INT. THE KITCHEN IN THE LLOYD HOME

MARIA is drying her hands on a dishtowel when she hears MARGEAUX'S scream. She turns and runs from the room.

INT. THE FRONT HALLWAY IN THE LLOYD HOME

MARIA runs up the stairs as fast as she can. She is holding in her hand the can of pepper gas MARGEAUX gave her. She runs even faster when she hears a second blood-curdling shriek.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM IN THE LLOYD HOME

MARIA dashes into the room. The assailant is straddling MARGEUX on the bed. In his right hand is a hooked roofing knife.

MARIA throws herself on the attacker, knocking him off MARGEUX. She holds out the pepper gas and sprays a long blast into the assailant's face.

EXT. THE LLOYD HOME

A red Porsche pulls into the driveway as CARTER returns home from the hospital, late as usual.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM IN THE LLOYD HOME

MARIA backs away from the assailant, who is crumpled on the ground beside the bed, moaning and rubbing his eyes. She holds the pepper gas at the ready at the end of her outstretched arm.

Suddenly, with a roar of anguish and anger, the attacker is on his feet, still rubbing his damaged eyes on the back sleeve of his black turtleneck. He pulls his arm away. It is ROB.

MARIA

It is you?!?

ROB

That's right, bitch. And tonight I get two of you for the price of one!

ROB slaps the pepper gas out of MARIA'S hand. With MARGEUX cowering on the bed, in shock from the initial attack, ROB grabs the front of MARIA'S dress and rips it open.

CARTER (V.O.)

Rob!

The camera moves to the opposite side of the room, showing ROB, still holding the knife in one hand, trembling MARIA, and CARTER in the doorway.

CARTER

Get away from them.

CARTER'S voice is amazingly calm. ROB starts out in his usual over-confident tone, but it quickly degenerates into obvious madness.

ROB

It's not going to happen, pal. I'm not leaving these bitches to talk about me behind my back, the way they have been doing. They've been talking about me, and controlling my thoughts, and not letting me sleep at night.

CARTER

Listen to me, Rob. You're not yourself. I can help you, but you have to put the knife down.

ROB grabs MARIA'S arm with his free hand and brings the knife to her throat.

ROB

Not when I'm this close.

CARTER raises his hand: He's holding a gun. He holds it steady, but there are hints of tension in his voice.

CARTER

We're not going to be able to talk about this as long as you have that knife.

ROB (TO MARIA)

You've had this coming for a long time.

CARTER

Rob, I'm not going to ask you again.

MARGEUX has recovered from shock enough to catch CARTER'S eye and nod.

ROB

Don't think I don't know what you've been saying...

CARTER

Rob, put down the...

MARGEUX

He's going to hurt her!

CARTER

This is the last time...

MARIA

Please don't hurt...

ROB

Bitch!

The camera focuses tight on CARTER'S face as the gun explodes.

EXT. THE CEMETERY

The scene opens with the camera overlooking a funeral from the distance. As the voice-over begins, the camera moves in on the scene and we begin to pick people out of the crowd: HEATHER; LEXI (looking almost normal in a black dress and white blouse); CARTER (looking very stern); MARIA, just behind CARTER, touching a handkerchief to her eyes; and finally SAM, who has tears in his eyes.

LEXI (V.O.)

One of the things I have learned is wishing you were dead just to escape the pain of being alive is the stupidest thing you can want. Life only lasts a short time, a very short time. You need to make the most of the time you have, because you never know when it's going to be over.

The camera stays with SAM, who goes to the casket and gently puts a rose on it that he's been holding behind his back. MARGEUX comes up beside him – the first time we see her in this scene – and puts her arm around SAM'S shoulder. He embraces her and begins to weep. It is his wife, JANE, in the coffin.

LEXI (V.O.)

Jane Castle was never sick a day in her life. And then, one day without warning, her heart gave out. Everybody said she was dead before she hit the floor.

EXT. THE CARRIAGE HOUSE AT THE LLOYD HOME

ALISTAIR comes out to the Jaguar with a suitcase. He puts it in the boot, then climbs behind the wheel, starts the motor and drives away.

LEXI (V.O.)

As for Alistair – poor Ezra Alistair. His problem is that he can never die. At least, not as far as he knows. But it hasn't stripped him of his humanity. There never was a more thoughtful, sensitive, beautiful man than Alistair, even if he is a vampire.

INT. LEXI'S HOUSE; HER BEDROOM

LEXI comes into her bedroom. The room is different. She's gotten rid of some of the more macabre items. The curtains are open, the sun pouring in. She is wearing Levis, a T-shirt and Nikes. She looks like most other 18-year-olds girls.

LEXI (V.O.)

The only thing I feel bad about is that some of us – and I was one of them – though Alistair was responsible for the killings. As if he could be capable of that.

LEXI begins putting clothing into a suitcase, preparing to leave home.

LEXI

I would have loved to have gone back to New Orleans with Alistair. I asked him to take me. But he said I had too many other things to do, things he wished he could have done, if things had turned out better for him.

EXT. THE BUS STATION

LEXI is there in the crowd of people watching as the bus pulls up. She's with her father, who has cleaned up

somewhat for the occasion but still looks completely disreputable.

LEXI (V.O.)

Maybe Alistair and I will meet again one day. He said we might. I'd like to, when I'm a little more grown up and know a few more about things about the world.

LEXI kisses her father on the cheek and leaves him in the crowd. She is the last person to climb aboard the bus. She pauses on the bottom step and turns back to address the camera, which is framed tightly on her.

LEXI

Who knows what might happen? Once you punch through the lies you create to imprison yourself, you begin to see the world is filled with wonderful mysteries that words cannot describe or the mortal mind comprehend.

The camera moves in on her face in an extreme close-up. LEXI is friendly, open, relaxed – the complete opposite of the girl she was at the beginning.

LEXI

In a world magical enough for vampires, there's room even for people like me and you.

EXT. THE CARTER HOME; THE GARDEN

A high crane shot of MARIA working happily in the garden. She is alone, wearing a low-cut sundress. As Mozart plays brightly on the soundtrack, she cuts flowers and puts them in a basket. As the camera comes in close on here, we notice she no longer wears a scarf around her neck.

HEATHER comes up from behind her, putting her hands on MARIA'S shoulders. It is an ambiguous gesture; it could be merely friendly, or it could be more than that. MARIA turns her head just enough for their eyes to meet. HEATHER lowers her head to the crick of MARIA'S neck and kisses her.

The angle changes so that we see mostly MARIA'S reaction. She closes her eyes and tilts her head to one side, smiling with obvious pleasure – and then sharply gasps.

The angle changes again and we see a trickle of blood – MARIA'S blood – run from HEATHER'S mouth and down her neck.

MARIA drops the flowers and reaches up, putting her hand around HEATHER'S head. She doesn't not mean to push her away, however, but to pull her closer.

FADE TO BLACK