

ACT OF GRACE

by

Leigh Podgorski

Leigh Podgorski

818-881-5100

leighpod@aol.com

leighpod@underthehillproductions.com

Copyright 2004

FADE IN

EXT. A GALLOWES - 1768 - MORNING - (DREAM SEQUENCE)

A gallows rises, elongated, looming, out of the swirling mist of a crashing sea. A DRUM BEAT POUNDS, rhythmic and unmerciful. Liquid, black shapes swarm and focus into view. A crowd of people, jostling, shoving, ringing the scaffold. THE DRUM ROLL INCREASES IN INTENSITY and is joined with another sound, the PULSATING BEAT OF A HEART.

A WOMAN appears beside the gallows, her hands bound before her. A MAN dressed severely in black grasps her elbow and leads her up the scaffold stairs. On the platform of the gibbet, THE SHERIFF stands, his face grim and unforgiving. He speaks, his voice reverberating, heavily distorted.

SHERIFF

You are brought before us to die.

The woman is placed beneath the swaying noose. THE SOUND of the DRUM AND HEART BEAT BUILD

SHERIFF

For your crimes, to hang by the neck until dead

On the other side of the platform, a rifle is raised. The noose is placed about the woman's neck.

Almost as one, the crowd surges forward. A CHILD, a little girl about five years old is pushed out in front.

The woman sees the child. She moans and sways, nearly collapsing. Tears course down her cheeks. She raises her bound arms beseechingly out to the little girl.

The twin SOUND of the DRUM AND HEART BEATS POUND to a crushing crescendo. The RIFLE EXPLODES. The gallows trap is sprung. The woman SCREAMS, her cries piercing the air, a name, "MEGANNNN...", Her body jerks savagely, and plummets down through the trap. Blackness.

AN EXPLOSION OF VIOLENT WHITE LIGHT

And a whirring, incessant POPPING SOUND

EXT. MT SINAI HOSPITAL - NYC - NOON

A crowd of hungry reporters circle a yellow taxi cab like a swarm of hornets, mini-cams whirring, voices babbling, paparazzi flashbulbs popping.

Three women climb out of the cab, and push through the crowd led by MARGO FARBER, a non-nonsense zoftig attractive black attorney in her forties.

MARGO

All right ladies and gentleman,
let us through.

Margo places an arm around DR. BETH RUTLEDGE, a tall, graceful, striking woman in her thirties. CORDELIA LYSEK, piercing blue eyes and silver hair, follows behind. A YOUNG ASIAN WOMAN steps forward.

ASIAN WOMAN

What's the board going to decide,
Margo?

MARGO

Left my crystal ball at home, Jen.

A YOUNG HISPANIC MALE shoves his way in.

HISPANIC MALE

Is it true proceedings are in
place to pull Dr. Rutledge's
license?

MARGO

Not to my knowledge.

Now an UNCTIOUS WHITE-HAIRED MAN:

WHITE-HAIRED MAN

I understand the charges under
investigation include Murder One.

MARGO

Then you understand more than I
do. Come on, let's go. Let us
through.

Margo muscles the trio through the crowd and into the hospital.

Reporters scatter like dry leaves. The young Asian woman steps before her camera:

ASIAN WOMAN

Well, there you have it, ladies
and gentlemen. Dr. Beth Rutledge,
esteemed pediatrician and
estranged wife of Congressman
Adrian Mountzaire, about to go
before the Hospital Administration
Board of Mt.

Sinai who are right as we speak in

the process of deciding whether or not her hospital privileges will be revoked, and she will be stripped of her license to practice medicine. A bizarre case, surely, and one with unexpected...

INT. MT SINAI ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES - HALLWAY - DAY

Margo, Beth, and Cordelia move briskly down the corridor.

MARGO

Remember, whatever they say, you say nothing.

They reach a door which reads; HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION BOARDROOM.

MARGO

(to Beth)

Ready?

BETH

Yes.

MARGO

(to Cordelia)

Wait right here.

INT. MT SINAI ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES - BOARDROOM - DAY

Five doctors, three men and two women sit around a highly polished oval table. DR. NATHAN STURBRIDGE, Head of Administration addresses Beth, who sits opposite him, Margo at her side.

STURBRIDGE

We have carefully considered the evidence placed before us, and due to the ongoing criminal investigation into the death of your daughter Megan, as well as the serious nature of the charges brought against you by Dr. Holroyd in regards to that death, we find we have no other option than to temporarily suspend your privileges to practice medicine at this Institution.

Beth pales, swaying slightly, but says nothing.

STURBRIDGE

I am sorry, Dr. Rutledge.
(he uncomfortably
shuffles his papers)
You're a fine doctor. Please

believe me when I tell you that
all of us hope for a speedy,
satisfactory resolution to this
matter. That's all.

MARGO

That's not all. Not by a long shot.

INT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Cordelia approaches as Margo and Beth exit the boardroom.

CORDELIA

What happened?

MARGO

They suspended her privileges.
Let's get out of here.

They move briskly down the corridor. At the opposite end,
ADRIAN MOUNTZAIRE, an elegant, well-coifed man in his early
forties steps through the double doors.

ADRIAN

Beth...

Behind him, the doors burst open again, unleashing a swirling
mob of reporters.

ADRIAN

Oh, shit!

He throws his arm around Beth, leading her in the opposite
direction.

ADRIAN

Come on! This way!
(to Margo and
Cordelia)
Hold them off!

Adrian steers Beth away, as Margo and Cordelia head right
into the eye of the storm. Beth and Adrian escape, crashing
through a set of double doors at the opposite end of the
corridor.

INT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - STAIRWELL - DAY

Adrian and Beth rush down a stairwell.

ADRIAN

Foster's out back.

EXT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - BACK PARKING LOT - DAY

Beth and Adrian burst through an exit door. A silver limo
revs and speeds toward them.

The limo door flies open, and Adrian and Beth clamor inside.

INT. SILVER LIMO - DAY

FOSTER JAMES, a chubby-cheeked cherub-faced man in his forties sits at the wheel of the car. Adrian peers out the rear window, as Foster races down the street.

ADRIAN

We lost 'em. Good work, Foz.

FOSTER

That's what I'm here for.

EXT. MANHATTAN - COLUMBUS AVE. - DAY

The silver limo slides up and parks beside a fire hydrant that sits in front of a trim brownstone.

INT. SILVER LIMO - DAY

Adrian peers through the side and back windows.

ADRIAN

They haven't found you yet.

FOSTER

Just a matter of time, boss.

ADRIAN

Right.

EXT. MANHATTAN - OUTSIDE THE LIMO - DAY

Beth and Adrian climb out of the car. Foster slides his window down, as Beth continues up the brownstone steps.

FOSTER

You better give it everything you got.

ADRIAN

I know what I have to do.

Adrian follows Beth into the brownstone.

INT. CORDELIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A cramped two bedroom, overflowing with half-packed moving crates, books, notebooks, and papers. An archway separates the living room from the functional kitchen.

ADRIAN

You're staying here, now?

BETH

Margo thought it would keep the
beasts at bay.

She moves through the archway to the kitchen.

BETH
Would you like some coffee?

ADRIAN
I can make it if you like.

BETH
When did you learn to make coffee?

IN THE KITCHEN

Beth looks absently around the room, also overflowing with
boxes.

BETH
I know there's a pot around here
somewhere.
(she looks through
some boxes)
Did I pack it? I must have packed
it already.

ADRIAN
Forget the coffee. Beth, look...

She opens the refrigerator. It's empty.

BETH
I don't even have water to offer
you.

ADRIAN
I don't need anything. Beth. Come
on. Sit down.

She remains standing by the refrigerator.

ADRIAN
We can fight this thing. Together,
we can fight anything.

BETH
Can we?

ADRIAN
I love you, Beth.

She turns away.

BETH
Don't.

ADRIAN

I have never stopped loving you.

BETH

You just stopped ... what?
Believing in me?

The door opens, Cordelia enters.

CORDELIA

We finally gave those bastards the
slip. I don't know how Margo does
it...

(she notices Adrian)

Oh... Adrian.

ADRIAN

Cordelia.

His cell phone rings.

ADRIAN

Excuse me.

(into phone)

Mountzaire.

(looks at his watch)

Christ... Yes, of course. I'll be
right down.

(hangs up the phone)

I have a dinner meeting...

BETH

You'd better go.

ADRIAN

Beth...

(to Cordelia)

Do you mind? Can you give me a
minute?

Cordelia moves into the other room.

ADRIAN

I was stupid, okay? I said some
stupid things.

BETH

We've been all over this.

ADRIAN

Please, Beth... Don't give up on
us.

BETH

Oh, Adrian. You did that. Such a
very long time ago.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A jumble of boxes, medical journals, manilla files, and books spread across the room. In one corner, a partially dismantled loom slumps against the wall.

Beth sits in the middle of the disarray, packing. She picks up a photo album, and opens it. The picture of a child, small, blonde, eerily reminiscent of the child in the nightmare. Beth moans softly, hugging the open album to her breast.

EXT. HOME IN NEW HAMPSHIRE - NIGHT

DRUSCYLLA SHIRLEY, a woman in her late seventies, her spine twisted so severely her shape is malformed, stands stock still before her porch. A shrill wind whistles through the surrounding pines, bending the branches low, almost to the ground.

In the distance a lone owl hoots. A bloated moon rises above the silver surface of the pond that extends in front of the house. After a moment, the screened porch door squeaks opens, and AMALTHEA SHIRLEY, also in her late seventies, steps out on the porch. Amalthea stands as tall as Druscylia lilt crooked.

AMALTHEA

Druscylia.

DRUSCYLLA

The pond's rough. Look at the pines. Their branches are near bent almost double.

AMALTHEA

It's the wind.

DRUSCYLLA

There's no wind, Amalthea.
(she looks across the pond)
I can feel him. Joshua. Feel him all around.

AMALTHEA

Come inside. It's cold.

DRUSCYLLA

Feel all of 'em. Jus' waitin'.

The screen door screeches again and DOWNING PACKER, a young, darkly handsome youth in his early twenties joins Amalthea on the porch.

DOWNING

(to Druscylia)
Auntie...?

DRUSCYLLA
Can you can feel them?
Gatherin'before the wind.
Fingernails, like cat's claws,
tearing at the earth.

AMALTHEA
That's enough. Come to bed.

Druscylia spins sharply with amazing speed for one so deformed.

DRUSCYLLA
The murder's got to be avenged!
Elizabeth knew! And now she's come.

She stalks back to the porch, her gait rolling and lopsided with her deformity.

DRUSCYLLA
They're gonna use her Amalthea.
Just like they used Elizabeth.
Work through her until every last
one of us is dead.

EXT. IN FRONT OF CORDELIA'S BROWNSTONE - MORNING

Cordelia and Beth load boxes into a Renegade Jeep, its top rolled down. A vintage VW Bug squeals up beside the jeep, and double parks. Margo jumps out.

MARGO
Signatures! Look! Hundreds, and I ain't even started yet.

Beth reads the paperwork.

BETH
...An unconscionable misuse of his position and authority. Although Dr. Holroyd was the attending physician, Dr. Rutledge is not only an imminently qualified pediatrician, she is the child's mother ...

MARGO
They're lining up to sign. Doctors, nurses, cafeteria staff. I haven't even hit your private patients yet. Give me a couple weeks, month tops, and this nightmare is history.

CORDELIA

What about the criminal
investigation?

MARGO

Look, they got this gung-ho rookie
lookin' for his shot at Court TV.
I'm gonna bury him. They don't
have anything. Go on up to where
you can hear the birdies sing,
write your book, Cordelia, and the
both of you, just relax.

Beth and Cordelia climb into the jeep, Cordelia behind the
wheel.

MARGO

I'll be in touch!

EXT. THE HIGHWAY - BERKSHIRE MOUNTAINS - DAY

The jeep rolls along the highway.

CLOSE ON THE JEEP

MOZART blares. Cordelia drives. Beth looks out the window. The
jeep blazes past a sign which reads: JUNCTION ROUTE 2.
Suddenly, Beth springs forward.

BETH

Take that exit.

CORDELIA

That wasn't in their directions.

BETH

It's a shortcut to one-twelve. You
don't have to go around the
mountain.

CORDELIA

How do you know that?

Cordelia wheels off the Interstate and onto a quaint, curving
two lane highway. Rolling hills bursting with green spread
out before them.

BETH

Oh! Cordelia, look! Oh. I feel
like I'm going home.

EXT. HENNIKER MUIR REAL ESTATE OFFICE -DAY

The jeep rolls along Main Street, stopping before a
storefront with a sign that reads: HENNIKER MUIR REAL ESTATE.
A tall skeletal man exits the office, walking slowly toward
the jeep.

BETH

Mr. Muir.

HENNIKER

Ayuh.

EXT. TWO STORY HOME - DAY

The jeep pulls up in front of a two story farm house, with a wide wrap around porch. MR. MUIR sits sourly windblown in the back. They exit the vehicle, and approach the house.

HENNIKER

I do hope it's to your liking.

Beth stares at the house, a slow smile creeping across her face.

BETH

It's perfect.

HENNIKER

The Shirley sisters, your
landladies, live right over there.
Across the pond.

He turns to show them. Spread before the house is a tidy pond, rimmed with white stone, and on the other side, the two story home of the Shirley sisters -- the same house we saw earlier.

HENNIKER

But please, any problems, any
requests, come to me. The ladies
are elderly, quite genteel, and
very private.

Across the pond, a young man appears from around the back of the Shirley home. DOWNING PACKER. Mr. Muir raises his arm high in a salute, waggling his fingers.

HENNIKER

Yohoo! Downing! Hello! I've
brought your new neighbors

Downing flashes a rakish grin, then bows expansively from the waist. Cordelia and Beth smile at the young man, charmed.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - NIGHT

A fire blazes in the fireplace, spreading the living room with a warm, liquid light. Cordelia kneels in one corner, unpacking books, placing them on shelves. Beth, her hair wound up in a scarf, unpacks boxes filled with dishes, and sets these atop the gleaming dining room table. After a moment, Beth yawns hugely contented, stretching her back.

BETH

I think I'm going up.

Cordelia rests back on her haunches, cupping her chin in her hands.

CORDELIA

Me, too. My head feels fuzzy

Beth stretches again and makes her way over to Cordelia's corner of the room. She looks over the books Cordelia's been shelving.

BETH

(reading the titles)

Witches of New England.
Hobgoblins, Ghosts and Nightmares.
Hmmm. Just what kind of book are
you writing?

CORDELIA

Something completely different.
Something fresh and original that
no one has ever done before.
Something that will sell!

BETH

(laughing)

Good night.

CORDELIA

'Night.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

A beautifully appointed room with a fireplace, four poster bed with a canopy, and lacy white curtains at the windows. Beth sits at her loom, weaving.

Suddenly, a THUMP POUNDS against her window. Startled, she rises, and crosses to the window, lifting the curtains. Nothing, save her own faint reflection. She pushes the curtains aside, lifts the window and peers down into the darkness.

EXT. OUTSIDE BETH'S WINDOW - NIGHT

A figure, cape billowing, runs.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beth leans outside the window.

BETH

Hey!

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Beth bursts into the room. Cordelia, surrounded by her books, startles.

BETH
Somebody's outside!

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - NIGHT

Beth and Cordelia race around the corner of the house.

BETH
I saw him running this way!

Suddenly she stops, pointing across the pond.

BETH
Look!

BETH AND CORDELIA'S POV

Druscylla Shirley, standing on the porch, her crooked body as rigid as death, staring openly across the water at them.

EXT. THE SHIRLEY HOME - NIGHT

The screen door screeches softly open. Downing Packer enters the porch.

DOWNING
Auntie....

As if in a trance, Druscylla turns to him. With infinite tenderness, Downing goes to her, places his arm about her shoulders, and leads her back inside the house.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - NIGHT

BETH
Did you see that?

Slowly, Cordelia turns to Beth, and then in a perfect parody of Henniker Muir.

CORDELIA
Ayuh.

They begin walking back to the house.

As they move, something catches Beth's eye in the shrubbery. She moves to it, bends down and picks up a bright orange tennis ball. She shows the ball to Cordelia.

CORDELIA
Aha! Your hobgoblins.

BETH

Kids.

Beth tosses the ball straight up high in the air, and moving with an athletic ease, snatches it in mid-flight expertly.

EXT. NEW CAMEN - DAY

The jeep, Beth at the wheel, rolls down Main Street, New Camen, past grocery stores, drug stores, an emporium, banks, the post office, a decidedly old-fashioned millinery. Several of these businesses carry either the name PACKER or SHIRLEY. Beth pulls up in front of CRINWRINKLES FLOWER AND SEED shop and stops.

INT. FLOWER AND SEED SHOP - DAY

The door pushes open, chimes jangling, and Beth enters the store. HERMAN CRINWRINKLE looks up from behind the counter.

HERMAN

Can I help you?

BETH

I'd like to build the Garden of Eden.

EXT. FLOWER AND SEED SHOP - DAY

Herman, complaining vociferously, labors under a twenty-pound sack of loam.

HERMAN

This isn't good for my back. I'm not a young man anymore

Beth easily hoists the sack from him and tosses it into the exposed back of the jeep.

BETH

I told you I could handle it.

HERMAN

Ayuh.

(Dusts his hands off)

Miz Amalthea know what you're plannin' to do?

BETH

Planning to do? I'm putting in a garden.

HERMAN

Ayuh. Well. 'Tis her property. And Miss Druscylia ... she don't take too well to changes. If you know what I mean.

BETH

No. I don't.

HERMAN

Well-sir, that home you're renting
... it belonged to Miss Elizabeth.
Their grandmother. You know what
happened to her? Killed herself.
Right upstairs.

So, what I'm sayin' is, maybe you
should check things out before you
go upsettin' somebody.

BETH

I'll make sure I speak with Miss
Shirley before my hoe splays the
earth.

HERMAN

Shirley family built this town.
Biggest clan in these parts. Now,
no one's left 'cept for Miss
Amalthea and Miss Druscylla, an'
Downing, a course. All gone.
Biggest family in town, and nobody
left.

EXT. THE ROAD - OUTSIDE NEW CAMEN - DAY

The jeep rolls along a two lane roadway, strains of Mozart
exploding around it, through a lushly green New Hampshire
countryside. Beth drives easily, one hand on the wheel.
Suddenly a white stallion, powerfully built, bursts through
the foliage, and gallops in front of the jeep

Beth slams on the breaks, screeching the vehicle to a halt
just inches from the horse.

The stallion rears, forelegs clawing the air. Breathless,
Beth grasps the roll bar, and rises. The stallion rights
himself then stands frozen, staring at Beth. He paws the
ground, snorts softly, and tosses his mane. Then, with a
magnificent whinny and a toss of his head, he gallops across
the roadway.

Beth throws the jeep into gear, and follows the stallion, his
silver mane streaming around him, along a dirt path through
the woods.

They chase through the countryside, Mozart blaring, the jeep
zigzagging wildly along the rutted dirt road.

The stallion, racing smoothly, like silver silk streaming is
impossible to catch. The jeep races up over a hill, and
gaining momentum flies across a gully, bursting from the

dirt path onto another paved roadway.

Spinning in a 360, tires squealing, Beth grinds the gears terrifically and whips down the roadway in pursuit, blazing past a Sheriff's car that waits quietly at the side of the road. The Sheriff, siren screaming, takes after the maniac in the jeep

Up ahead, the stallion is winning. With one last toss of his head he streaks across the meadow and bolts out of sight. Beth screeches to the shoulder, watching him disappear on the horizon, oblivious of anything else.

Sheriff DAVE LUKOWSKI a well-built, ruggedly handsome man in his late thirties, pulls up behind the jeep, untangles himself from the interior and ambles towards Beth like a man with all the time in the world and the knowledge how to spend it.

DAVE

(rubbing his chin)

That was some rondele.

Beth, chest heaving, color high, speaks without turning toward him.

BETH

Did you see him? He's wild, I think.

DAVE

Nope. Don't have wild horses in these parts

BETH

(turning to face him)

He wanted me to race him.

DAVE

Must've broken out.

BETH

I've done a lot of riding. But I've never seen anything as magnificent as him.

DAVE

Miss ... ah...?

BETH

(extending a hand)

Rutledge. Beth Rutledge.

DAVE

I think I may just be able to arrest you for life. Let's see,

reckless endangerment, reckless driving, excess of speed ...

BETH

You want to cuff me?

DAVE

No. No. Don't think I'd like to do that. Though we could use the revenue.

(taking her in; she's beautiful)

I wonder if dinner'd be considered taking a bribe.

BETH

Dinner?

DAVE

Would that be okay? Or would you rather have the ticket?

(tipping his hat)

Lukowski. Dave. Sheriff. Saturday sound good?

BETH

Saturday sounds just fine.

Dave smiles, and begins walking back to his cruiser.

BETH

(calling out to him)

Don't you need my number?

DAVE

Oh, I got that already. Got it before I pulled you over

EXT. THE RUTLEDGE HOME - DAY

The jeep spins up in front spitting gravel, horn honking. Cordelia steps out onto the porch.

CORDELIA

You buy out the store?

BETH

Just enough to build Paradise.

Cordelia skips down the porch steps to give Beth a hand. Her eyes focus on something across the pond.

CORDELIA

Thar she blows. The Countess of creep.

Beth turns.

BETH AND CORDELIA'S POV

Druscylla Shirley standing in her front yard, holding a chicken. She coos to it sweetly, nuzzling her nose against the bird's white-feathered head. She lifts her eyes, gazing at them. Then with a sudden viscious twist, she snaps the chicken's neck.

BACK TO BETH AND CORDELIA

They both pale.

BETH

Oh...

ACROSS THE POND

Druscylla, with a self-satisfied smirk, rolls around the back of the house.

BACK TO BETH AND CORDELIA

BETH

Jesus.

CORDELIA

Couple tacos shy of a combination plate. She had an accident. Some kind of accident years ago. It's why she's all twisted up like that.

BETH

Have you been researching them?

CORDELIA

Life and Times of the Packer-Shirley's. Volume 3. 1910-1940. Her grandmother, Elizabeth was the family historian.

BETH

Elizabeth killed herself.

CORDELIA

How do you know that?

BETH

Herman Crinwinkle. Flower and Seed Shop. He told me this morning.

CORDELIA

The local library has all of Elizabeth's journals. I brought the first five volumes home.

BETH

Of all the vacation paradises in
New England, I had to pick this
one.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bethesda and Cordelia sit at the kitchen table, eating from
cartons of Deli food from the SHIRLEY GROCERY. Along with the
cartons, the table is spread with piles of papers, notebooks,
and Elizabeth's journals. Cordelia points to a journal,
chewing around a mouthful of corned beef.

CORDELIA

(reading)

"Of course our Druscylla could not
attend the festivities. A child so
young, so broken...."

The telephone rings. Beth rises to get it.

CORDELIA

"...I pray constantly for the
light of healing goodness. For, oh
sweet Lord, such brutality in our

midst... I know but one act of
grace shall be able to beat the
beast back screaming to the gates
of hell..."

BETH

(into phone)

Hello?

She blushes suddenly with all the charm of a school girl.

CORDELIA

"...But are any of us any longer,
I wonder, capable of such a labor
of righteousness..."

BETH

Oh. Hello... Of course I
remember... Eight? That'll be just

fine.

She hangs up the phone.

CORDELIA

I only want to know one thing. Is
he handsome? Where did you meet
him? And does he have a friend?

A LOUD THUD sounds on the back porch. Beth and Cordelia eye
each other, and rising simultaneously go to the door. Beth
opens the screen.

BETH AND CORDELIA'S POV

Scrambling to rise from her stumble, Druscylia Shirley slithers across the back porch.

DRUSCYLLA

Oh... oh ... oh..

She regains her feet, and hunched over and twisted, lopes away.

BETH

Hey! Wait!

But she's gone.

CORDELIA

What the hell...

BETH

(pointing)

She left a calling card.

Set on the corner of the porch, beautifully arranged and bursting with fresh fruits and vegetables, is a basket.

EXT. RUTLEDGE BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Beth and Cordelia step onto the back porch.

Beth kneels beside the basket, searching through it.

BETH

Carrots, cucumbers, lettuce.
Peaches.

CORDELIA

Perhaps a pie?

She digs her hand in further, and suddenly starts back like she's been jolted with an electric current.

CORDELIA

What is it?

Beth grimaces, and pulls out a chicken, the neck grotesquely twisted, and covered with blood.

Gently, Beth places the twisted body across the basket. She rises slowly, and crosses away.

BETH

Can you get rid of that thing,
please?

She looks down at her hands, her fingers splayed.

BETH

My hands are covered with blood

EXT. THE SHIRLEY HOME - MORNING

A bright, clear late spring day. Amalthea Shirley works in her garden, her nephew Downing Packer beside her.

AMALTHEA

Downing! Mind the thyme, child!

Clumsily, Downing steps backward, and right atop a bed of wild thyme.

AMALTHEA

Aaachhh! You've stepped right on it.

DOWNING

Oh, shit! Sorry, auntie.

He tries to move away, but Amalthea whips out her arm, her hand claspng his wrist like a vise.

AMALTHEA

Breathe!!! Deep! deep, child.

Downing obediently takes noisy, deep inhales.

AMALTHEA

Mmmmmm Can you smell it! Thyme. She is very powerful, you know. Used to conjure up sprites. The good spirits. The helpers.

She looks into his basket, examining the contents.

AMALTHEA

What've you got, now? Ayuh. Good. Sweet-briar, sweet-mary, ah, rosemary, too. I need sage and wormwood, yet. Over there -- the sage, remember? And wormwood here.

BETH (O.S.)

Miss Shirley

WIDER ANGLE

takes in Beth and Cordelia who stand at the edge of the garden.

AMALTHEA

Ahhh! Dr. Rutledge. And Miss Lysek. Good morning!

BETH

Good morning. We'd...

AMALTHEA

You know, I've been fixing on coming over and making my acquaintance, but it looks like you beat me to it. Come. Set a spell on the porch. Downing'll fix us up with lemonade.

BETH

Actually, we came to see your sister.

AMALTHEA

Druscylla.

BETH

Yes.

AMALTHEA

Ayuh.

BETH

Is she here?

AMALTHEA

Ayuh. Probably to the back.

There's a pause.

BETH

May we see her?

DOWNING

Auntie... Aunt Druscylla left early this morning. Said she was going to Goody Spencer's.

AMALTHEA

Goody Spencer indeed!

She looks back at Beth and Cordelia, and smiles once again cordially.

AMALTHEA

I'm afraid I'm going to have to do.
(to Downing)
Get the lemonade, child. I'd better fetch some glasses.

Amalthea disappears inside the house with Downing, as Cordelia and Beth settle on the porch. Cordelia gazes out across the garden. This is an herbal garden, stretching for several acres, and magnificent.

CORDELIA

Some garden, huh?

BETH

The fruits and vegetables must be
around the back.

CORDELIA

Ayuh. Not to mention the chickens.

Amalthea returns, carrying a tray with glasses and ice.
Downing walks behind her, carrying a tall pitcher of lemonade.

AMALTHEA

Come summertime, always keep a
pitcher of nice cold lemonade in
the icebox. Squeeze it myself.

(she pours)

I'd grow the lemons myself, too,
if I could. That's all Druscylia
and I eat --- what we can grow or
raise fresh. Drink up. It's tasty,
I assure you. Drink up and tell me
what havoc Druscylia has wrought
this time.

BETH

Miss Shirley Last night, your
sister, came to our home ...

CORDELIA

Slunk to our home...

BETH

... and left a basket. It was
filled with fruits and vegetables,
but buried inside was a chicken,
its neck twisted and covered with
blood.

AMALTHEA

(sighing deeply)

Oh.

BETH

Miss Shirley, we saw her. She made
certain we saw her, twist that
chicken's neck.

AMALTHEA

As hard as I try ... as hard as I
work, I cannot help her.

(with surprising
force)

One more innocent caught in this
unspeakable chain! The evil! That

damnable act! Flowing free!

DOWNING

Auntie...

AMALTHEA

(overriding him)

She was sixteen years old when it caught her in its deadly trap. That fiendish accident! And since then, she has lived life gripped in fear. And now since you've come...

BETH

Since I've come!

AMALTHEA

Well, of course. Surely you can understand why.

BETH

Understand...

CORDELIA

Miss Shirley, we understand nothing except that for some reason your sister....

AMALTHEA

You have no idea, truly, of why Druscylla would be so terrified of you?

BETH

No!

There's a long pause. Amalthea looks back and forth between them, astounded.

AMALTHEA

I'm so sorry. I beg your pardon. That's wondrous, truly. You see, naturally I had assumed...

(glancing at Downing)

We all had assumed that was the reason you'd come to New Camen.

(to Beth)

You know nothing, then, of Ruth Blay?

CORDELIA

Nothing, and we would appreciate it if...

Amalthea holds up a hand.

AMALTHEA

Please. Come.

She rises, motioning them to follow. After a moment, they do.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - DOWNSTAIRS ROOMS - DAY

Beth and Cordelia follow Amalthea and Downing through the downstairs portion of the house, Amalthea speaking as they go.

AMALTHEA

The home you're renting there across the pond was built in 1653 by the Elridge-Smythfields. My family helped them build it. That's the way t'was done then. Neighbours helping neighbours. My family built this town. Been here since...

CORDELIA

Sixteen-fourty-five. William Downing Packer headed a colony of thirteen men, their wives and children, who came up from Portsmouth. With Packer as their leader, New Camen was founded and settled.

AMALTHEA

Ayuh.

They've reached a back room.

AMALTHEA

This is the library.

Amalthea opens the door. The walls of the room are covered with framed drawings, etchings, photographs, and old newsclippings. Bookshelves line the remaining available space from floor to ceiling, bulging with old leather volumes, journals, and diaries. A huge oak desk sits squarely in one corner, the top spread with more documents. Amalthea motions them to enter.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - THE LIBRARY - DAY

Cordelia and Beth, astonished by the sheer mass of records, take in the surroundings. Downing crosses to a black and white ink sketch on the wall.

DOWNING

This is Packer. I was named after him.

He moves to another ink sketch.

DOWNING

And that's his grandson, Thomas.

Beth moves in closely to look at the picture. Downing continues speaking.

DOWNING

Meanest son of a bitch to ever
walk the valley.

FLASHBACK - BETH

A face in a severe black hat, the face of Thomas, swims before her eyes. Behind him, a scaffold rises.

OUT OF FLASHBACK

AMALTHEA

Our little settlement thrived and
prospered. We lived well, and
happily....

CORDELIA

Until 1768.

AMALTHEA

Right again, Miss Lysek.

CORDELIA

That was the year a lot of people
left New Camen.

DOWNING

That was the year of the curse.

BETH

The curse?

DOWNING

The curse of Ruth Blay.

AMALTHEA

In the spring of 1768 a hired hand
found in the barn of Ruth Blay,
wrapped in sheepskin ...

DOWNING

Frozen harder'n a brickbat...

AMALTHEA

(with a look to
silence him)

A child. Ruth Blay was unmarried.
The child was illegitimate. She
was accused and found guilty of
the murder of her daughter, and
sentenced to death by hanging.

Beth pales, swaying

FLASHBACK

Beth's nightmare. A gallows rising through the mist of a raging sea. The woman, Beth, hands bound, led to the scaffold. A crowd, jostling, shoving, surrounding the gibbet. Amalthea's voice continues through Bethesda's FLASHBACK, even at times appearing to come from the mouth of SHERIFF THOMAS PACKER who stands on the platform.

AMALTHEA (V.O.)

On December thirtieth of that same year, after countless reprieves, at ten o'clock in the morning, the final order was issued...

Still in FLASHBACK, the rifle is raised.

SHERIFF

...shall hang by the neck until dead...

The rifle fires. As Amalthea speaks:

AMALTHEA

.... and Ruth Blay flew howling to her tortuous end

The gallows trap springs and Ruth Blay plummets violently downward.

BACK IN PRESENT TIME

Beth, ghostly pale, sways.

AMALTHEA

The man who issued that fateful order, Sheriff Thomas Packer, was my forebear.

(turning to Beth)

The woman who was hanged so ignobly, Ruth Blay of Southampton, was.

Beth's knees buckle, she slumps to the floor. Cordelia rushes to her side.

CORDELIA

Beth!

BETH

It's so warm...

DOWNING

Let me help you to the chair.

His face creased with concern for her, he helps her to her feet. As he does, a medallion swings free from beneath his shirt.

CLOSE ON MEDALLION

A heavy gold medal embossed with the outline of a Satyr.

BACK TO SCENE

AMALTHEA

I have all the records, Miss Lysek. You're welcome to everything I have.

CORDELIA

Thank-you.

Amalthea moves to the desk, gathering journals, diaries, and notebooks.

AMALTHEA

Her grave is in the churchyard. The bluff above the sea. She's buried on the same site where she was hanged.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - NIGHT

A RHYTHMIC HUMMING dominates - the sound not easily placeable.

IN THE KITCHEN

Cordelia sits at the large table poring over the books, ledgers and documents given to her by Amalthea. She reads, her lips moving silently, then stops at a passage, and frowns. She jots down notes in a pad, and glances upwards

IN BETH'S BEDROOM

The RHYTHMIC HUMMING intensifies and we recognize the sound as that of the loom Beth sits at, working fiercely. She works for several seconds then abruptly stops

IN THE KITCHEN

The sudden cessation of the loom arrests Cordelia. She looks upwards towards the second story, a worried frown creasing her forehead

IN THE BEDROOM

Beth pushes back from her chair, and crosses to the window. She is about to part the curtain, when she stops herself. Suddenly, she crosses to her bureau, yanks open a drawer, and

rummages underneath the clothing. She takes out a Bible, and hastily throws it open, flipping through the pages until she comes to the center of the book. The page opens out. Her hands shaking now, she folds out the page

INSERT

A family tree. Beth's shaking finger underlines the section which reads: 1860. ELLEN ANASTASIA CROWTHER BORN TO SAMUEL ADAM CROWTHER AND LOUISA TAYLOR BLAY CROWTHER

BETH
(shouting)
Cordelia!

CORDELIA enters the room on a dead run. Beth holds out the book to her. Cordelia takes it, reading the entry. Beth turns away, her face pale

EXT. THE GALLOWS - NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE - DAY

The SINGLE POUNDING OF A HEARTBEAT. A gallows rising from the mist. A DRUMBEAT working in eerie synchronization with the beat of the heart.

Beth, heavily pregnant appears in the mist, hands tied before her, a man in severe black dress standing behind her, pressing her forward, up the scaffold stairs. The HEARTBEAT and DRUM build, intensify, and added in now is another sound, the FORCEFUL POUNDING OF GALLOPING HOOFBEATS.

The man in black grasps the noose, fitting it firmly around Beth's neck. A rifle is raised. In the crowd before her, a child, a little girl about five years old stares. The woman raises her bound arms toward the child, a SHOT RINGS OUT, the trap springs, Beth's body jerks and flies. A scream ..

INT. THE RUTLEDGE HOME - NIGHT

Cordelia bolts up in bed.

CORDELIA
Beth...!

She flies from her room.

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - THE PORCH - NIGHT

Druscilla Shirley, her long, thin grey hair falling in wisps down her shoulder and across her back steps out onto her porch, dressed in flowing white, a shawl draped about her

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beth sits up, wide-eyed in bed, Cordelia perched beside her.

BETH

I know where it is.

CORDELIA

What?

BETH

Where I'm hanged.

She gets up abruptly, pulling on her robe.

EXT. SHIRLEY PORCH - NIGHT

Druscylia stands stock still, her head cocked to one side, listening intently. Suddenly, she giggles

DRUSCYLLA

Sssshhh. We have to be quiet.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Cordelia and Beth enter their front porch. They cannot see Druscylia from this side of the house. Cordelia pulls a worn leather aviator jacket over her pajamas.

CORDELIA

Where are we going?

BETH

To the graveyard.

EXT. SHIRLEY'S BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Druscylia smiles coyly, like a young girl, and steps forward, holding her hands out before her

DRUSCYLLA'S POV

Rising from the mist of the pond, a young man dressed in the style of the late '30's comes smiling towards her. A white silk scarf is wrapped about his neck. He is leading a magnificent silver stallion. The horse WHINNIES softly in the darkness. Save for his smile, the young man's face is immobile, impenetrable, as if masked.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Beth and Cordelia make their way from the porch to the jeep.

BETH

To the bluff. Overlooking the sea.

CORDELIA

Whoa, Beth, hold on a minute.
We're going to need some light.

BETH

There's a flashlight in the jeep.

CORDELIA

What? No lantern?

In the darkness, Beth smiles fleetingly at her friend. They climb into the jeep, the top still down. Beth turns the engine over.

CORDELIA

What about garlic? Have you
thought about garlic?

The jeep roars away.

EXT. SHIRLEY'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Still several paces from Druscylia, the young man mounts the steed in one gracefully fluid motion, and sets the horse to gallop. At full tilt, the horse sweeps by Druscylia.

Extending his hand, the young man bends down and pulls her astride. Though horribly crippled and deformed, Druscylia mounts with the nimbleness of a young girl.

DRUSCYLLA

Ride! Joshua, ride!

They gallop across the moonlit countryside, Druscylia's hair streaming out behind her.

AS THEY RIDE - MOVING

DRUSCYLLA

(laughing girlishly)

Hello, Mr. Moon. All fat and
orange.

She hugs him tightly, resting her cheek against his back.

DRUSCYLLA

Feel the wind! Joshua! That's the
taste of freedom!

In the distance a LOW GROWLING. Druscylia starts.

DRUSCYLLA

Dogs?

The GROWLING erupts into VISCIOUS HOWLS. Over the ridge a pack of hounds, BAYING, BARKING, HOWLING, races across the field toward the riders.

DRUSCYLLA

Joshua! Dogs!

The horse rears, clawing the sky. Druscylia clings desperately to the young man, sobbing. The hounds surround

them, teeth bared.

A high thin whistle pierces the air. The hounds freeze, then, as one, turn and flee. Slowly, the young man turns to Druscylia. His face looms before her in the moonlight -- a death mask, covered with blood. Druscylia screams, and faints.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Beth and Cordelia walk among the gravestones, the single beam of the flashlight leading them, the moon high in the sky. The SEA CRASHES below, sending up mists of foam.

BETH

Over there.

She points with the flashlight. Following the arc of light, they move deeper into the churchyard.

BETH

This rise was covered with people.
As far as you could see.

She climbs the rise.

BETH

And here. Right here. The gallows.

CORDELIA

You saw this in your dream?

BETH

Yes. Exactly.

She points again with the flashlight.

BETH

There's a headstone over there.

She moves toward the stone, training the beam full upon it.

BETH

(gasps)

Oh...

CORDELIA

What is it?

INSERT

the headstone reads: RUTH BLAY.

BETH

Ruth Blay

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Bright, blinding sunshine floods the rolling hills. In the b.g. we can make out the Rutledge and Shirley homes separated by the pond gleaming silver in the sunshine.

Over the rise Downing Packer appears, tossing a bright orange tennis ball, and surrounded by several dogs, yapping playfully. Packard fires the tennis ball across the field. The dogs give chase. Suddenly, Downing drops into an exaggerated, rolling limp, a broad parody of Druscylia Shirley.

DOWNING

Step on thyme, release its
fragrance. In the light of the
full, full moon. Turtles and toads
and chickens blood, and deadly
nightshade, too.

He cackles ferociously.

DOWNING

My lover died in the light of the
full, full moon. Horses running,
and dogs baying, and flesh ripped
into teeny, tiny pieces. Joshua
Sherebourn! Joshua Sherebourn!
Joshua Sherebourn!

Amalthea appears in the fields beside him, watching him, her mouth turned down in disapproval.

AMALTHEA

Downing?

DOWNING

Oh, auntie! Glorious morning,
isn't it?

AMALTHEA

What were you doing?

One of the dogs snags the ball. The pack gallops happily back to Downing.

DOWNING

I had to get the dogs. Did you
hear them last night? Must've
busted loose again.

AMALTHEA

Where's your Aunt Druscylia?

DOWNING

Haven't the foggiest, auntie.
Isn't she still in bed?

Amalthea studies him very closely.

AMALTHEA

No.

DOWNING

Well, can't have gone far, can she.

He turns, signalling the dogs, and runs with them back toward the house.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BACK PORCH - MORNING

Beth, wearing a terry cloth robe, her hair entwined in a towel, crosses the backyard to the porch. Cordelia enters, carrying two mugs of coffee.

CORDELIA

I found out about her.

ACROSS THE POND

Druscylia appears from around the corner of her house still dressed in her flowing white of the night before. Her gown is torn, and muddy, patches of it sprinkled with blood. She walks heavily

BACK TO CORDELIA AND BETH

who watch Druscylia's appearance.

CORDELIA

The accident.

ACROSS THE POND

Downing runs into frame, the dogs nipping at his heels.

DOWNING

Yo, auntie! There you are!

BACK TO CORDELIA AND BETH

BETH

Let's go inside.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Cordelia leans against the stove as Beth sits at the kitchen table.

CORDELIA

She was eloping. With a young man named Joshua Sherebourn. Her father, Zachariah Shirley didn't approve

As Cordelia speaks, FADE TO:

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - CIRCA 1938 - NIGHT

A YOUNG DRUSCYLLA, dressed all in white, slips onto her porch. A YOUNG MAN approaches from the rising mist of the pond, leading a silver stallion. Young Druscyllyla holds out her hands. The young man mounts and gallops towards her, sweeps her up, and together off they ride.

CORDELIA (V.O.)

The night they were planning to elope, he was ready for them.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

A dark, towering figure, ZACCHARIAH SHIRLEY, his mouth cruel and hard, a hat pulled down low shadowing his features, waits, holding onto several hounds that leap frenetically, straining to be let loose.

ZACHARIAH

Easy. Easy. You'll get your chance.

Druscyllyla and Joshua flee through the moonlit countryside. Druscyllyla's long, dark hair streams out behind her as she grasps onto Joshua, laughing, tilting her head back, letting the wind whip across her face. Suddenly we hear a tremendous YOWLING.

Zachariah releases the dogs. They fly at the horse, surrounding the stallion, baying, yowling, baring their teeth in ferocious growls. Joshua fights savagely, but the dogs battle until the terrified horse bucks, throwing them to the ground.

Druscyllyla cannot move. Brutally, the dogs attack Joshua.

Zachariah whistles. The dogs back away. Joshua's flesh is ripped and torn beyond recognition

BACK TO PRESENT

BETH

He set dogs on them.

CORDELIA

Oh, he was a sweet old boy.

BETH

No wonder she's not playing with a full deck. What else did you find out?

CORDELIA

(dodging)

There's a ton of material.

BETH

Are my roots here?

CORDELIA

I've only just begun sorting
through everything...

BETH

Am I a descendant of Ruth Blay?

CORDELIA

(long pause)

Yes. There's a lot more research
I need to do, but, the line is
verified.

Beth turns from her and walks away.

BETH

I picked this town.

CORDELIA

The name is in your family Bible.

BETH

I wanted to come here.

CORDELIA

A story like that, that kind of...
of legacy, someone, sometime must
have mentioned it to you.

Beth turns fully toward her.

BETH

She murdered her baby.

CORDELIA

She was accused of murdering her
baby.

BETH

And found guilty. And hanged by
the neck until dead.

CORDELIA

That has nothing to do with you.

BETH

Seventeen sixty-eight. And right
after, yes, right after that, the
blackness came.

EXT. THE SHIRLEY PORCH - DAY

Druscylla sits on the porch, Downing's arms wrapped around
her.

DRUSCYLLA

I had a dream last night. Such a beautiful dream.

Amalthea appears. She approaches her sister, and speaks quite gently.

AMALTHEA

Where have you been?

DRUSCYLLA

Just as clear as yesterday was my dream.

AMALTHEA

You've been gone all night long.

Druscylia pulls herself away from Downing and fixes Amalthea with a long cold stare.

DRUSCYLLA

I've been working. In your garden.

From beneath her nightdress, she pulls out a poppet, a rag doll with hair and eyes the color of Beth's.

AMALTHEA

Druscylia!

DRUSCYLLA

You won't help me! All right!
Goody Spencer made it for me! Now
I know what to do!

AMALTHEA

Aahh!

Amalthea grabs the poppet from Druscylia and flings it into the garden. Druscylia hobbles after it.

DRUSCYLLA

(grabbing the poppet)

The moon is waxing. Not quite yet full. You've got to gather them in the night, isn't that right, Amalthea? That's when they hold the most power. In the night. In the moonlight. Henbane, foxglove, deadly nightshade, too...

AMALTHEA

I won't listen to any more of this foolishness!

Druscylia advances back to the porch, holding the poppet.

DRUSCYLLA

Mandrake. Dig deep, the roots grow long, and cut, always three times in a circle.

AMALTHEA

I've had enough!

She turns to go into the house, but Druscylia pounces, grabbing her.

DRUSCYLLA

What would you have me do? Just wait! Like Elizabeth! Wait until they gather! Wait until they force me, like they did her to take up the knife and end my life with it!

AMALTHEA

Druscylia...

DRUSCYLLA

Wait until she is filled with their power!

AMALTHEA

Beth Rutledge is not here to harm you!

DRUSCYLLA

You're blind! Throughout the centuries, violently, bloodily, one by one we have been taken. And it will continue until the last descendant of Thomas Packer lies in the grave!

She releases Amalthea. Druscylia turns to Downing, holding her hands out to him.

DRUSCYLLA

When Joshua comes for me, he will not be beautiful. He's waited, lying in the earth for fifty-five years. Waited, while I withered, my life turned to dust.

AMALTHEA

Evil cannot be thwarted with evil.

Druscylia cradles the doll.

DRUSCYLLA

The spell has already been cast.

AMALTHEA

All my life, and what have I

accomplished? All my life, and I
have been unable to bring you any
peace

Druscylla sinks down onto the porch, rocking the doll as if
it were a baby.

AMALTHEA
(to Downing)
See that she comes inside. Her
clothes are filthy.

EXT. THE RUTLEDGE HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Beth works in her garden, attacking the soil with the same
ferocity with which she worked her loom.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - FRONT - DAY

Adrian's car pulls into the driveway. He gets out of the car,
and checks out the house.

The SOUND of a hoe striking against rock rings out.

BETH (O.S.)
Hell!

Adrian smiles, and moves to the back of the house.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Adrain sees Beth bent over the hoe.

ADRIAN
Digging to China?

Beth glances up, startled. her face is flushed and sweat-
streaked.

BETH
Adrian...

ADRIAN
I think you might've hit granite.

He notices her hands. They are raw and bleeding.

ADRIAN
Beth. Jesus.

BETH
Oh, it's all right. It's nothing.

She drops the hoe to the ground, and moves past him into the
house.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Beth stands at the sink, flushing water over her hands.

ADRIAN
Maybe you'd better let me do that.

BETH
I've got it.

ADRIAN
You okay?

BETH
Why wouldn't I be?
(turns to him)
What are you doing here?

ADRIAN
I miss you.

Beth moves impatiently away from him. She doesn't want to hear this.

ADRIAN
Okay. All right. I won't say it.

He glances at the kitchen table that is still covered with Amalthea's records.

ADRIAN
What is all this? Cordelia's opus?

Beth gathers the documents up.

BETH
Research.

She moves the documents to the counter.

ADRIAN
She was always so messy.

BETH
I'll get them out of your way.

ADRIAN
It's okay. Forget it.

She continues to move the documents.

ADRIAN
Will you please sit down? Jesus,
you're revving like a race horse.

She remains standing.

ADRIAN

You've got mail coming to the house in droves. I brought it up for you.

BETH

Thank-you.

ADRIAN

Beth... There's something else.

(she looks at him.)

I have an idea, a plan I think may be a way out of this. I spoke with Holroyd. And my people have been in contact with the D.A.'s office in Albany. Now just listen to me, okay, before you pop off with that famous temper of yours. Regardless of what I may have said in the past, you know, you know, Beth, that I will use every angle I can to stop these people from hanging you out to dry.

(he takes a moment)

Both Holroyd and the D.A. Have agreed to drop all charges...

BETH

If...

ADRIAN

You agree to go into treatment.

BETH

Into treatment!

ADRIAN

Six months. A year at the most...

BETH

You want me to say I'm crazy!

ADRIAN

Not crazy!

BETH

Poor woman! She couldn't help herself! She was stark raving mad!

ADRIAN

Beth...

BETH

That's why she killed her daughter!

ADRIAN

Goddamn it, Beth! There is a very

real possibility here that you could be sent to prison for a significant amount of time. Do you understand that? Do you?

(he rises from the table)

You place yourself into treatment. Some goddamn country club that specializes in these things... Six months, a year, and it's over. You'll be fully reinstated at the hospital. You can wipe the slate clean.

He moves close to her.

ADRIAN

Beth. We could, we could even have another baby.

She doesn't speak, her face a mask of conflicting emotions.

ADRIAN

Don't say anything now. Just think about it. Okay, baby? Just think about it.

Adrian sits beside her, taking her hands.

ADRIAN

We've got a shot here. A chance to start all over. Beth -- I'd give anything, I'll do anything you say, if you just give us this one last shot.

He moves back.

ADRIAN

I've got to be back in the city tomorrow afternoon. I can stop by tomorrow morning, if that's okay. Would that be okay, Beth?

BETH

Yeah.

ADRIAN

Good. That's good. I'd better go. I'll leave the mail in the front hall.

He rises.

ADRIAN

See you in the morning, then?

Beth nods. Adrian leaves. Beth rises, moving back to the counter. Slowly, she sinks to the floor.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beth sifts through the mail while seated at the table with Cordelia.

CORDELIA

You've got to call Margo.

BETH

She's out of the country.

CORDELIA

Out of the country? Now?

BETH

She does work for other clients.

CORDELIA

I don't care if she works for his high holiness the Pope! We need her here now.

BETH

I am perfectly capable of conversing with my husband without benefit of counsel.

CORDELIA

Ex. Ex husband. And may I remind you, snake oil salesman extraordinaire.

BETH

You never did like him.

CORDELIA

I never did trust him. I trust him even less now. This whole thing stinks.

Cordelia picks up a letter.

CORDELIA

(reading)

Dear Dr. Rutledge. I hope they hang you from the highest tree...

She rips the letter in half.

CORDELIA

These are the letters he just had to bundle up from New York to share with you?

The DOORBELL SOUNDS.

CORDELIA
That better not be him.

Beth goes to the front room to answer the door.

CORDELIA
(calling)
If it's him, he's a dead man!

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sheriff Dave Lukowski, dressed casually but elegantly, stands on the other side, carrying a bouquet of flowers and a white plaster statue of a stallion rearing.

Beth still wears her gardening clothes, her hair wound carelessly in a scarf. Clearly, she has forgotten their date.

BETH
(startled and
embarrassed)
Oh. Hello.

DAVE
You would not believe what I had
to go through to find this.
(inspects the statue)
Hardly seems worth it, does it. I
think it just may have been
somebody's kindergarten art
project.

BETH
(taking the statue)
I think it's wonderful.

DAVE
You know, I do not believe it's
me. I circled the date on my
calendar. In red.

BETH
I'm so sorry. I'm so embarrassed.

DAVE
Ah, forget it. It happens. Just
usually not to me.

Cordelia enters the room, leaning against the door jamb.

CORDELIA
(to Dave)
Well. Hello.

DAVE
Good evening.

BETH
Dave, Cordelia Lysek. Cordelia,
Dave Lukowski. Sheriff Lukowski.

DAVE
Dave'll do.

CORDELIA
Nice to meet you.

DAVE
(to Beth)
Rain check?

CORDELIA
Rain check?

BETH
Oh, no. Please. If you can stand
me keeping you waiting just a few
minutes longer, I think I can make
myself almost presentable.

DAVE
Seems to me you're kind of beyond
that right now.

BETH
I'll be right down. Cordelia, can
keep you entertained.

Cordelia takes Dave's arm, leading him to the sofa.

CORDELIA
So Dave, any others like you at
home?

INT. A SQUARE DANCE BARN - NIGHT

The barn is festooned with crepe paper, balloons, and strings
of colored lights. At one end a raised platform is set up
where for the band. Couples dressed in bright plaids dance
across the sawdust-littered floor as the CALLER yells out
positions.

CALLER
And dosey-doe ...

Among the dancers are Dave and Beth. He follows the
instructions easily, without effort, but Beth, laughing
struggles to remember the steps that go with each call. As
they move various DANCERS call out happily to Dave. He is
well known, well liked. They also, not too subtly, check out
Beth. Expertly, Dave guides Beth through the calls. The

FIDDLER stands, bringing the number to a rousing finish, and the couples burst into applause and catcalls. Breathless, Beth applauds.

BETH
I haven't square-danced since
junior high.

DAVE
Come on. I'll buy you a drink.

They cross the floor to a makeshift bar serving homemade applejack. Dave signals the bartender.

DAVE
Two.
(to Beth)
That wasn't really square-dancing.
Junior high. Boys on one side.
Girls the other. Every body stiff
as a prisoner before the firing
squad. I used to hide out in the
back behind the bleachers. There
was this one little pig-tailed,
buck-toothed girl, no matter how
far back I hunkered, she'd always
managed to find me.

BETH
Radar.

DAVE
What's that?

BETH
Pig-tailed buck-toothed pink
cateye glasses orthopedic-shod two
left feet radar.

Dave laughs. The BAND STRIKES UP.

DAVE
Ready?

He pulls her back onto the dance floor.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cordelia pores over the letters Adrian brought up. She spots a newspaper clipping attached to a memo. The headline reads:

MOUNTZAIRE MAY NO LONGER FAVORITE SON

Cordelia scans the article.

CORDELIA
(reading)

Congressman Adrian Mountzaire,
once thought to be the unstoppable
front runner for govenor, is
stumbling along the campaign trail.

(she scans down)
...When his prominent physician
wife, Bethany Rutledge, lost her
post due to an ongoing
investigation into the death of
the couple's daughter...

(she flips to the
memo)
Adrian: Damage Control. Ground
Zero. Clean up that mess! Foz.

EXT. SQUARE DANCE BARN - NIGHT

A beautiful soft spring night with a waxing moon. Dave and
Beth sit amidst a grove of maples, their leaves lime green
against the soft light. The STRAINS of the SQUARE DANCE
filter out from the barn.

DAVE
Can you smell the maple syrup? You
sit still on a quiet night like
this, you can even hear the sap
running in the limbs.

BETH
You really love it here, don't you?

DAVE
I do. Tried leavin' once, but
couldn't do it. Went to school in
Boston, studying to be a lawyer,
thinking I'd move out to the big
city. Found out I liked being a
lawyer about as much as I liked
leaving home.

(he glances at her)
What about you? You like the big
city?

BETH
Oh. I don't know. I used to.

DAVE
Liking the country better?

BETH
(laughs)
Jury's still out on that one.

DAVE
Let me guess. Miss Druscylia.

BETH

Ayuh.

DAVE

About as mad as a March hare, I'd say.

BETH

And then some.

DAVE

Sad case, Miss Druscylia. Tears Miss Amalthea up something awful. Spent her life taking care of people...

BETH

Amalthea Shirley?

DAVE

She's a healer. Birthed just about everybody in New Camen. Yours truly included. When I lost my wife, I think I would've lost my mind without her guidance. Can't seem to help ease Miss Druscylia's malady, though, no matter how hard she tries.

He stands, offering his hand.

DAVE

Come on, Doc. Better get you home before they pack in the sidewalks.

He lays his arm lightly around her shoulder, escorting her back to the car.

EXT. SQUARE DANCE BARN PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The parking lot is deserted. Dave open's Beth's door.

DAVE

Beth, when Laurel died, for quite awhile, I thought I might as well die, too. I can see you've got something pretty high and miserable piled up on your plate, and, I'd just like you to know I got a pretty good set of ears, if you'd ever like to try 'em out.

BETH

Thank-you.

DAVE

(cupping his ear)
How's that?

BETH

I said...

She stops, realizing he's teasing her, squares off and smacks him a good one on the arm.

DAVE

Ow!

(rubbing his arm)

Wow.

(looking closely at her)

Wow.

He cups her chin, and kisses her.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beth enters the kitchen from the back porch. Cordelia rises to greet her, her face grim, holding out the newspaper clipping and memo.

EXT. THE RUTLEDGE HOME - FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Beth stands on the porch watching Adrian approach. As always, he is dressed impeccably, a white silk scarf flowing about his neck. Adrian smiles when he sees Beth.

ADRIAN

You look lovely this morning.

He bends to kiss her cheek. She reels back and slaps him ferociously.

BETH

You son of a bitch!

ADRIAN

What...?

She hurls the clipping and memo at him.

BETH

I should have known! "I love you, Beth. I'll do anything to help you, Beth!" Liar!

He picks up the clipping.

ADRIAN

Goddamn it.

BETH

All you wanted to do was clean up
the mess.

ADRIAN

That's not all.

BETH

What a goddamn fool I was! To
think there was even a shred of
humanity left in you! This is what
it always comes down to, isn't it?
This is what it has always come
down to -- your goddamn career!

ADRIAN

For God's sake! You think this is
just about my career?

BETH

You wanted to lock me up! Have me
committed for Chrissakes!

ADRIAN

Goddamn it! I know what this looks
like, but you're wrong. You're
wrong Beth. I do still love you.

BETH

Oh, stop!

ADRIAN

I never stopped loving you!

BETH

You've been playing the part so
long you don't know where the
truth ends and fantasy begins. The
edges are all blurred.

In the B.G. Downing Packer appears. He sees Beth and Adrian
on the porch, and immediately drops to a crouch. He slinks
closer to the house, finding a place to secret himself among
the bushes, and eavesdrop.

ADRIAN

All right! Think what ever the
hell you want.

But you'd better believe one
thing. Without me, they'll hang
you.

BETH

That's what you want me to believe.

ADRIAN

That's the truth. This case is a

circus. Your only hope is me.

BETH

My only hope! I haven't been the wife of a politician for nothing all these years. If we split up -- whether the case even goes to trial -- if you leave me now, or I leave you, you're finished. I'm your only hope, Adrian. Without me, you're dead.

ADRIAN

Not quite, sweetheart. Not quite. I can make sure they hang you. Influence swings both ways, darlin'. A cold murderous mother, bent of the destruction of her damaged only child.

BETH

You wouldn't dare.

ADRIAN

Try me.

BETH

You bastard.

ADRIAN

You took my daughter away from me. You think I'm going to let you take my career, too?

BETH

I am not responsible for Meagan's death.

ADRIAN

Ah, come on! This is me, remember! Adrian! Not some cub reporter you're trying to con! I know what happened! You had no business taking her up that mountain.

BETH MEMORY FLASH

Beth, a walking stick in her hand climbs a mountain passage, a little girl trudging before her. The wind begins to rise, snow blowing.

ADRIAN (V.O.)

Holroyd warned you she'd never make it. You're a doctor for Christ's sake. A pediatrician. You knew she'd never make it.

BACK TO PRESENT

BETH

She wanted to go.

ADRIAN

She was five years old. That's not exactly the age of reason.

Adrian moves in closer. Downing still slinks hidden, listening.

ADRIAN

What'd you do, Beth? How hard did you push her?

BETH MEMORY FLASH

The storm builds; snow swirls in a blizzard. As Adrian speaks, Beth mouths the words:

ADRIAN (V.O.)

"Come on, come on. Higher. Come on. You can do it!"

BACK TO PRESENT

ADRIAN

All the time waiting for her heart to fail. All the time waiting for the moment when you'd be rid of the burden forever.

BETH

She wasn't a burden.

ADRIAN

She was born a burden. Weak. Sickly. Demanding such time. Time away from what you really wanted to do.

BETH

She was never a burden!

She picks up a ceramic flower pot set on the porch railing, and hurls it wildly at him. Adrian dodges. The pot shatters against the wall of the house. Adrian strides toward her, grabbing her shoulders.

ADRIAN

Is that how you did it? Is that where her head wound came from?

BETH MEMORY FLASH

Through the rising storm, mother and daughter fight their way

up the mountain path. Meagan stumbles. Beth, rushing forward, raises her walking stick.

ADRIAN (V.O.)

What was it? A rock, a stick ...

BETH (V.O.)

Let me go.

ADRIAN (V.O.)

When her heart refused to quit...
it must've been so easy...

BACK TO PRESENT

BETH

I didn't kill her!

ADRIAN

You wanted her out of the way!

BETH

I didn't kill her!

She tears loose from his grasp, and bolts from the porch. He flies after her.

From his position among the bushes, Downing rises.

DOWNING'S POV

Adrian racing after Beth, grabbing her again.

ADRIAN

I will not let you destroy me!

Violently, she tears free, fleeing blindly down the road. Adrian follows.

DOWNING

stands a moment, watching. Then an eerie smile spreads across his face, and he lopes after them

EXT. THE SEA - BLAZING MID-AFTERNOON

The sea laps peacefully against the shore, the tide ebbing.

WIDER ANGLE

Reveals Beth laying in the sand

Her clothes are ragged, torn, and sprinkled with blood.

Up the sand further, Adrian lies in a heap, a gaping wound, still oozing thick pools of blood, carved deep into his forehead.

Seagulls squawk and swarm, swooping down upon the lifeless body.

BETH

stirs. Moans. Opens her eyes painfully against the high noon glare. She looks about her dazed, confused. Her hands are covered with blood. She turns. Sees Adrian. Screams.

EXT. THE BLUFF - HIGH NOON

The bluff swarms with DEPUTIES from the top of the rise to the sea. Dave moves among them commanding the investigation.

The CORONER, WILSON STROH bends over the lifeless body of Adrian. DEPUTY ESTHER RINALDI, a wizened old salt in her fifties, her hands encased in thin plastic gloves picks up a branch of driftwood that lies beside the body. The cudgel is covered with blood.

AT THE TOP OF THE BLUF

Beth, a blanket loosely draped about her, sits on the tailgate of an ambulance, it's light still swirling. A wound on the back of her head is covered with gauze. Cordelia

crouches beside her.

Off to one side, Downing talks to two DEPUTIES, Amalthea at his side. Her keen eyes roam the scene, taking in everything.

After a moment, Dave and Esther Rinaldi approach Beth.

DAVE

Beth...

But he can't go on. Esther steps in

ESTHER

Dr. Rutledge. It is my duty to inform you that we are placing you under arrest for the murder of Adrian Mountzaire.

Beth sits mutely, as motionless as death. Dave, his face stretched thin and pale, looks away from the sight, his eyes tortured.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSK

Dave stands in front of Esther's desk. A nameplate reads: ESTHER RINALDI, NYPD. Covering the desk, and hanging behind it are photographs of a much younger Esther as a rookie in Manhattan. Esther holds a check in her hands, turning it over and over.

ESTHER
Sheriff. Dave. This is...

DAVE
Highly irregular.

ESTHER
Not to mention...

DAVE
The ethics.

Dave unpins his sheriff's badge, and lays it on her desk. Next he unbuckles his gun belt, laying the weapon next to the badge.

DAVE
That should take care of the ethics.

ESTHER
This case could ruin you.

DAVE
This case stinks.

ESTHER
It was a clean arrest.

DAVE
Oh, it was clean all right.
Picture perfect. Too perfect.

The door suddenly flies open and Foster, with another man enters the office.

FOSTER
Just what the hell is going on up here, Sheriff.

DAVE
And you would be...

The other man steps forward, extending his hand.

HOWARD
Howard Orbach, Sheriff. Campaign Manager for Adrian Mountzaire. And this is Foster James.

FOSTER
Adrian's not answering his cell. The wire's are buzzing. What the hell is going on.

DAVE
Sit down, gentlemen.

INT. JAILHOUSE - BETH'S CELL - DUSK

The jailhouse is an old-fashioned brick block, circa 1912.

Beth sits huddled on an iron cot, eyes vacant. There is only one window in her cell, a high, tiny rectangle striped with bars.

Beth stares vacantly at the window. A thin stream of sunlight pushes through the dirty glass, dust motes swirling in the ray.

As Beth stares, the swirl seems to gather strength, whirling in a tiny tornado of dust and light, until it forms a vague shape -- the outline of a woman. The figure reaches out her arms as if beseeching.

BETH
(a whisper)

Ruth?

The door to the outer area CLANGS open, and Esther Rinaldi escorts Cordelia into the outer area.

The figure dissolves.

CORDELIA
I got ahold of Margo.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Esther and Dave sit opposite Foster and Howard.

DAVE
All I'm asking is for a little time.

FOSTER
You're asking us to sit on it.

DAVE
You get the media involved...

FOSTER
They're already involved!

DAVE
Hold 'em back. Can you do that?

HOWARD
Nobody wants a circus, Foz.

DAVE
You get a pack of wolves descending on this town, this thing'll never get solved.

FOSTER

Oh, it's solved. There's no
mystery about that.

DAVE

Okay. Fine. Just give me the space
to prove it without those vultures
destroying everything in their
path -- including the truth.

INT. JAILHOUSE - BETH'S CELL - EVENING

Cordelia sits beside Beth. Dave enters.

DAVE

Come on. I'm taking you home.

INT. JAILHOUSE - OUTER OFFICE - EVENING

Dave, holding Beth by the elbow escorts her quickly through
the office, nodding to the officer on duty as he passes.
Cordelia follows behind.

A small television on the officer's desk flashes pictures of
Beth and Adrian.

REPORTER ON CAMERA

We understand that Howard Orbach
will be holding a press conference
later this evening...

EXT. OUTSIDE NEW CAMEN JAIL - EVENING

Dave leads Beth to his Bronco, which is parked in front of
the jail, Cordelia walking beside them.

INT. DAVE'S BRONCO - EVENING

Beth sits huddled on the front seat next to Dave, staring out
the window at the jail.

BETH

That was her cell wasn't it?

DAVE

Whose cell?

BETH

Ruth Blay. She sat right there.

DAVE

Beth. The jail was built in 1912.

BETH

But they wanted to preserve the

village exactly as it was when it was founded. Isn't that right?

Isn't that right, Cordelia.

CORDELIA

Yes.

BETH

The jail is an exact replica.
Right down to the cells.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beth has changed and showered. She sits at the kitchen table with Dave and Beth, looking over the newspaper clipping and memo. Cordelia is on the phone.

DAVE

(to Beth)

Has anyone else seen this?

BETH

Just Cordelia and me. And Adrian.

DAVE

Did you mention it to anyone?
Rinaldi?

BETH

No.

Carefully he folds the clipping up, putting it in his pocket.

DAVE

I'm going to have to. You realize that.

BETH

It's evidence.

CORDELIA

Margo told me a week's the best she can do.

DAVE

Doesn't matter. It's not going to come to that.

(to Beth)

What happened next?

BETH

He threatened me. He said he could make sure they hang me.

CORDELIA

Hang you!

BETH

Figure of speech. Lovely, isn't it. He said ... he accused me of killing Megan. I went wild. I grabbed something, a pot, and threw it. Oh, God, I wanted to kill him.

(she stops, gathers herself together)

The pot shattered behind him. And he came at me again. I, I tore loose. I ran.

DAVE

And he followed you?

BETH

(nods)

But I kept running. Blind. I ran and ran.

The next thing I knew, I was lying on the beach. And Adrian...

She turns from the memory. Dave covers her hand with his.

DAVE

It's all right.

BETH

I could have done it. I have the strength. I wanted him dead.

CORDELIA

You didn't kill Adrian.

BETH

How do you know?

CORDELIA

Because I know you.

BETH

Do you? What if he was telling the truth?

CORDELIA

What truth?

BETH

I knew the risk. Her heart was so weak.

CORDELIA

Megan's death was an accident.

BETH

How do you know? How can you be so sure? Maybe I did really want her to die.

DAVE

Beth...

CORDELIA

Listen to me...

BETH

It would have been so easy. Pick up the walking stick. Bring it down.

CORDELIA

Stop it!

BETH

Make it look like an accident.

CORDELIA

NO!

(grabs her by the
shoulders)

You loved her, Beth. You loved her.

BETH

(breaking down)

Oh, God! My baby. My baby.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

The pulsing incessant SOUND of the loom fills the house as Beth sits before it, working desperately. Cordelia enters the room. After a moment, Beth stops, the quiet stretching between them.

BETH

I've gone back there, a thousand times. Searching. The moment before is seared through my brain. But after... After is only blackness.

(she rises)

The blizzard came from nowhere. All of a sudden so much snow. I knew there was a cabin at the top of the mountain. We had to make it to that cabin.

(she turns to the
window)

I didn't even want her at first..

CORDELIA

Beth ...

BETH

Hush. You know it's true. At first, the pregnancy was such a burden.

(turns to Cordelia)

But then.... she started to grow. Inside And I was filled with such wonder. And I knew I wanted that little girl more than anything else on earth.

(a moment)

I used to visit her grave every day. Take her flowers. Cry. So many tears.

But afterwards, I'd feel cleansed. I haven't been there in so long. I can't go anymore.

CORDELIA

What happened, Beth?

BETH

The dream.

CORDELIA

The nightmare?

BETH

It's my fault she's dead.

CORDELIA

No.

BETH

Sssshhhh. Adrian knew. Adrian always knew.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Beth alone now, leans against the window, holding the curtain aside, gazing out. A low light burns by her bedside.

BETH'S POV

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - OUTSIDE BETH'S WINDOW - NIGHT

Outside the pond shimmers in the moonlight. Across the pond, the porch light at the Shirley home blinks on. Druscylia steps onto the porch, cradling the poppet we saw her with earlier. She stands a moment, as if in a pose, then looks sharply up at Beth's window.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Beth gasps sharply as Druscylla stares. She leans in closer to the window.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - OUTSIDE BETH'S WINDOW - NIGHT

Druscylla stands rigid, her stare unbroken. She lifts the poppet high in the air, as if in triumph.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Beth backs away from the window, letting the curtain drop.

Her eye falls on the picture of Megan that sits atop her vanity. She picks up the photograph, cradling it.

In the mirror of the vanity, she catches her image. The image wavers, fading into the image of Ruth Blay.

Beth clutches at the glass. SOUND BUILDS: THE TELLTALE BEATING OF A HEART exploding to THE BEATING OF A DRUM, and the POUNDING OF HORSES HOOVES until the SOUND crescendos, clanging.

Beth moans, covers her head, and drops to her knees in agony.

FLASHBACK

The beach. The SOUND of the HEART, DRUM, and HOOVES continues. Adrian's body lies white and still in the sand. Beth moans again. Suddenly, in the white-washed sunlight, something glints in the sand.

Beth, in the flashback glances up to the rise. Ruth Blay stands atop, pointing down to the sand. Again, something buried in the scorching sand, glints. Beth reaches out her hand.

OUT OF FLASHBACK

All SOUND CEASES. Beth rises. The room is still and silent.

Beth pulls a long coat from her closet, and walks out the bedroom door.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - FRONT STAIRS - NIGHT

Beth winds down the dark and silent stairs, and out the front door.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - FRONT OF HOUSE - NIGHT

The jeep roars to a start and pulls away.

EXT. THE BLUFF ABOVE THE OCEAN - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The jeep roars up over a rise and stops at the top of the bluff. Yellow police tape stretches from the hill to the beach below. Beth gets out of the jeep

The SEA CRASHES. On the horizon, a rosy dawn streaks across the slate-grey sea. Beth slips under the police tape, and down to the beach, to the spot where Adrian was murdered.

The rising sun shoots slender beams of light across the sand. Suddenly in the early morning light, as in her vision, something glints.

Beth lunges forward, her fingers splayed, digging in the rocky sand. Suddenly, she stops. Out of the sand, next to the spot where Adrian had lain murdered, Beth pulls out a large gold amulet bearing the image of a Satyr.

MEMORY FLASH

the quick image of Downing Packer, standing over her, his amulet embossed with a Satyr, swinging free.

BACK TO PRESENT

Beth grasps the medallion.

Crooked, deformed fingers seize her shoulder.

WIDER ANGLE

reveals Druscylia Shirley, eyes maniacal thrusting the poppet into Beth's hands.

DRUSCYLLA

Murderer! Now I'm safe from you!

A POWERFUL THUNDERING of HORSES HOOFS explodes on the horizon. Beth and Druscylia spin towards the sound.

BETH AND DRUSCYLLA'S POV

The white stallion, the same horse Beth saw earlier, the same horse Druscylia rode with Joshua, thunders, riderless, bearing down upon them.

BACK TO SCENE

DRUSCYLLA

Joshua!

She turns to Beth, eyes wild with fear.

DRUSCYLLA

Where is he?

As the horse pounds a frenzied BARKING of dogs erupts. A pack

of snarling hounds tears across the hillside.

DRUSCYLLA

(mad with fear)

It's too late! Too late!

(to Beth)

You're too strong!

Wildly, blindly, Druscylia runs.

BETH

Wait!

The dogs attack Druscylia, tearing at her, bringing her screaming hysterically, to her knees. Beth searches the ground frantically for a weapon. Finding a driftwood branch, she wields it over her head advancing on the snarling pack, swinging forcefully.

A HIGH THIN WHISTLE PIERCES the air. The dogs stop frozen. Then as one they withdraw and run.

Beth moves to Druscylia. The old woman lies broken, ripped ragged, her eyes glazed and glinting, staring madly into some unfathomable void only she can see.

INT. CORONER'S LAB - MORNING

Adrian's body lies stretched out upon a stainless steel table as the coroner, DR. WILSON STROH, completes his examination, Dave beside him.

DAVE

The blows to the head're what
killed him?

STROH

Ayuh. There's a pile of 'em.
Overkill, you might say.

Dave moves in closer.

STROH

The first one did the damage.
Powerful blow to the base of the
skull causing massive hemorrhaging
to the brain. Say good night.
These here ... superficial.
Insurance. Madness. Take your
pick. But take a look-see over
here.

Stroh leads Dave to another area where a pile of bloodied clothing sits.

STROH

Your number one's. That many blows

to the head, these should've been
awash with the victim's blood. But
lookit. Sprinkled. Dappled. And
most of that's from the
superficial Dr. Rutledge
sustained to the back of the head.

Now I'm really gonna make your
day. We got three types. He's A
positive. She's O negative. But
the body somehow got itself
flecked liberally with AB positive.

The PHONE RINGS. Stroh goes to answer it.

STROH
(into phone)
Yeah?... You bet.
(hands the phone to
Dave)
Esther.

DAVE
What's up, Sheriff?... What? ...
When? ... Jesus... I'm on my way.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE WARD - MORNING

Beth sits outside the Intensive Care Unit, Cordelia beside
her. After a moment, Amalthea comes out of the room. She
walks past Beth, as if in a fog, not seeing her.

BETH
Miss Shirley?

Amalthea stops, her reverie pierced. Beth rises, moving
toward her.

BETH
How is she?

AMALTHEA
At peace I'd guess. Finally. She
thought that silly doll was going
to save her. A doll on guard
against a cloak of evil.
(she looks at Beth as
if seeing her for
the first time)
Ah, my dear. How are you? Are you
all right?

BETH
Oh, yes.

AMALTHEA

They didn't hurt you? Hounds.
Viscious. Bred to attack. I told
Downing I wanted them destroyed.

But he wouldn't hear of it. Said
it was all he had left of his
father. Aaach! As long as your all
right.

She pats Beth's hand absently, then turns away.

BETH
Miss Shirley? Is there anything I
can do?

AMALTHEA
(turning back)
Do? Oh, there's always a great
deal we all can do, isn't there.

She turns and walks down the hall.

Dave appears from the other side.

DAVE
Beth!

He sprints down the corridor to join them.

DAVE
Esther just called. What the hell
is going on?

BETH
I went out to the bluff. Druscylla
must have followed me.

DAVE
Druscylla? Why?

Beth and Cordelia exchange glances: Where to begin?

CORDELIA
Just how much time have you got?

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Beth, Dave, and Cordelia sit at the kitchen table, Amalthea's
journals spread out before them.

DAVE
And this is conclusive? These
records prove Beth's a descendant
of Ruth Blay?

CORDELIA

There's still plenty of research left to do. But the lineage is definite.

DAVE

Amalthea always said it wasn't finished. A murder like that...

CALLER

You mean the original murder?

DAVE

Right. The original murder of purest innocence she calls it. She said there was an evil unleashed that day that would continue until the circle was closed.

BETH

She said something about evil today. A cloak of evil.

DAVE

That sounds like Miss Amalthea.

Beth reaches into her pocket.

BETH

Look at this.

She pulls out the medallion she recovered at the murder scene.

BETH

I found that. On the beach.

DAVE

Where Mountzaire was murdered?

BETH

Right.

DAVE

Did you handle it?

BETH

I picked it up and put it in my pocket. I think it belongs to Downing.

DAVE

Downing?

BETH

I saw him wearing an amulet like

this.

Dave shakes out his handkerchief, and picks up the medallion, looking it over carefully.

DAVE

Downing was the one who discovered
you and Mountzaire.

(to Cordelia)

You have a plastic bag.

CORDELIA

Here.

She pulls one from a kitchen drawer. Dave drops the amulet inside.

BETH

Where are you going?

DAVE

To have a little chat with Downing
Packer.

BETH

I'm coming with you.

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - THE GARDEN - LATE MORNING

Amalthea wears a wide-brimmed straw hat and carries a large basket as she works in her garden. Dave and Beth approach.

DAVE

Miss Amalthea?

AMALTHEA

Ah, Sheriff. And Dr. Rutledge. Hot
as blazes already, isn't it?

DAVE

It is.

AMALTHEA

I've been out here all morning
gathering herbs for my sister.

DAVE

How is Miss Druscylia?

AMALTHEA

Oh, well, I guess it's all over
for her finally, isn't it. Doctors
say she's gone someplace far away.
Don't think she'll come back. Come
on, let's set down. Get out of

this sun.

She leads them to a tree-shaded garden bench.

AMALTHEA

Her face puts me in mind of when she was just a little girl. Soft now around the mouth and eyes. Peaceable. Well, what can I do for you, Sheriff?

DAVE

I'm looking for Downing.

AMALTHEA

Ayuh.

She sighs deeply, gazing out across her magnificent garden.

AMALTHEA

This garden's been growing since sixteen-forty-five. Down through the centuries. Always, there's been a body to tend to it. Wondrous, truly, isn't it

DAVE

Miss Amalthea ...

AMALTHEA

He left early this morning. Didn't say where.

DAVE

Do you expect him back anytime soon?

AMALTHEA

I expect him. Where else is the boy going to go?

DAVE

Miss Amalthea, when he returns, would you let me know?

(handing her his card)

It's very important I speak with him.

AMALTHEA

Is there something wrong, Sheriff?

DAVE

I don't know, Miss Amalthea.

AMALTHEA

I'll let you know soon as I hear from him.

DAVE
Thank-you, Miss Amalthea.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SHIRLEY HOME - THE POND - DAY

Beth and Dave sit at the pond's edge.

BETH
Three blood types?

DAVE
Mountzaire's body was covered with
the third type.

BETH
Whose?

Dave skips a stone neatly across the water.

BETH
Downing?

DAVE
I don't know.

BETH
But you suspect so.

DAVE
I've been trying to nail Downing
Packer for years. Last summer,
Downing's father died in an
accident. Boating. Day was as
clear as a bell. Water still and
smooth as glass. But somehow, Ray
managed to fall out of that boat,
crack his head, and drown. Two
years before that, same time of
year, Louisa, Downing's mother,
fell down the cellar steps, hit
her head, and died. Both times,
accidents, right?

Both times, only one person around
when it happened. Downing.

(beat)

I never could prove anything. Both
cases just as neat and tidy as a
Christmas present under the tree.
Both cases sticking in my craw
like a splintered chicken bone.

He gazes up at the Shirley home.

DAVE
I want you to stay away from him,

Beth. I don't know what the hell's
going on, but please promise me
you'll stay the hell away from
Downing Packer

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - FRONT OF HOUSE - AFTER MIDNIGHT

An old Dodge pulls up to the house and stops.

INT. THE DODGE - AFTER MIDNIGHT

The dim light of the waning moon reveals Downing Packer. His face is bloody, streaked with mud. He springs open the glove compartment taking out a thick, brown envelope, rifling through the contents: herbs, roots, barks and grasses sealed inside clear plastic bags.

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - FRONT OF HOUSE - AFTER MIDNIGHT

The porch light snaps on. Amalthea opens the screen door.

AMALTHEA

Downing?

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - THE KITCHEN - AFTER MIDNIGHT

Downing sits hunched over at the kitchen table, eyes red-rimmed from crying, face drawn in misery. Amalthea sits close beside him, watching him carefully.

DOWNING

Every single one. First I tied
them all up, then one by one ...

He is overcome with a spasm of grief, sobbing heavily, his shoulders shaking.

DOWNING

I shot them. I shot them all! Oh,
auntie!

He turns to Amalthea, collapsing in her arms.

DOWNING

I should have listened to you! Now
it's my fault Aunt Druscylia ...

AMALTHEA

Sshhh...

He pulls back and looks at her, his eyes streaming with tears, mouth twisted in grief.

DOWNING

She won't get better now, will
she? She'll never get any better.

AMALTHEA

No.

DOWNING

Never ever. And it's all my fault!
I hate those dogs! I hate them! I
shot every one of them! And then
I buried them, deep, deep in the
ground!

He weeps again, Amalthea holding him tightly, rocking him gently.

INT. NEW CAMEN POLICE STATION - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MORNING

Downing enters the station, making his way to Sheriff Esther Rinaldi's desk.

DOWNING

Hey, Esther. Sheriff Lukowski
around?

ESTHER

Nope. Can I help you, Downing?

DOWNING

My auntie told me he wanted to
talk to me. Do you know where
maybe I could find him?

ESTHER

He was over at the coroner's
earlier.

DOWNING

I'll try there. Um, if I don't
find him, could you tell him I was
looking for him?

ESTHER

If I see him. He doesn't work here
anymore, you know.

DOWNING

Yeah. I heard that. But he's like
a regular bloodhound, isn't he?
Gets a whiff of that scent, and
wham! Off he goes! Can't rest
until he goes in for the kill.

INT. CORONER'S LAB - MORNING

Wilson Stroh places the medallion in a plastic evidence bag, having just dusted it for prints. In the B.G. the stainless steel examining table can be seen.

STROH

The boys down in Manchester might have better luck. If they don't, we'll send it to Boston.

DAVE

They're not going to get anything either.

STROH

Their equipment is a lot more sophisticated. You'd be surprised what they can pick.

DAVE

Goddamn it! We blew it! There were deputies all over that scene. How'd we miss the goddamn medallion.

STROH

It happens. You know that. We'll just have to get something else.

Downing's voice breaks through their conversation.

DOWNING

Ah...Sheriff Lukowski?

Dave and Stroh turn to see Downing standing in the doorway, a stange smile playing about his face.

DAVE

Downing.

DOWNING

My auntie told me you wanted to see me? MIss Klingel said it'd be okay if I just came down. I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

Dave is not sure just how much he's heard.

DAVE

Not a thing. Come on in.

Downing steps into the lab, checking the place out.

DOWNING

Wow.

He walks over to the guerney.

DOWNING

Nobody on the slab?

STROH

Not so far.

DOWNING

(to Dave)

So, you what'd you want to talk about?

DAVE

I had a few more questions about Adrian Mountzaire.

Downing suddenly spies the medallion on the table, his eyes growing wide.

DOWNING

Hey! What's this?

Dave and Stroh observe him closely.

DOWNING

Where'd you guys get this?

DAVE

It was recovered on the beach. Where Adrian Mountzaire was murdered.

DOWNING

Right at the murder scene?

DAVE

That's right. You have any idea how it might've gotten there?

Downing snatches the medallion from the table.

DOWNING

This is too wierd.

He holds the amulet up to the light, examining it through the plastic baggie extensively.

DOWNING

Yeah. But, no. Not exactly.

He drops the medallion back down on the table, and reaches inside his shirt, pulling out an amulet strikingly similar to the one in the bag.

DOWNING

When I first saw that thing, I thought I was going nuts. But mine is different. See? Saint Michael casting out the devil. It was my father's. He gave it to me. For

protection.

(he drops the medal

back into his shirt)
I don't know what the hell that
one is. Do you?

EXT. CORONER'S LAB - MORNING

Dave and Downing stand on the steps.

DOWNING
That's right. About one-thirty.

DAVE
You didn't see anything else?
Nobody else?

DOWNING
Nothing. it was quiet as a tomb.
Just the two of them down there on
the beach. And the seagulls of
course.

DAVE
You're sure.

DOWNING
Yes.

DAVE
Nobody else.

DOWNING
I don't know how many times you'd
like me to answer that question,
Sheriff.

DAVE
Uh-huh. It's just that...

DOWNING
Yeah...?

DAVE
Well, you see, Downing, you are
our only witness. There's the
victim, and Dr. Rutledge, and you.
And, well, we've discovered
something kind of bizarre.

DOWNING
Yeah?

DAVE
Uh-huh. There were three different
blood types.

DOWNING
Three?

DAVE

Three. So you see, there had to be three different people down there on that beach.

DOWNING

Unh-hunh.

He pauses. A long moment stretches between them. Dave appears to be studying the tip of his boot. Actually he is measuring Downing's every breath. After several seconds, Dave pulls himself out of his reverie, slapping Downing on the back.

DAVE

Well, thanks for coming down, buddy. I do appreciate it.

DOWNING

Well, a course. My civic duty and all that.

Dave moves down the stairs. At the bottom, he turns back to Downing.

DAVE

Oh... you aren't planning on leaving town or anything, are you?

DOWNING

Why would I want to leave town?

DAVE

Just what I'd like to know.

EXT. NEW CAMEN POLICE STATION - MORNING

Dave moves quickly up the steps and into the building.

INT. NEW CAMEN POLICE STATION - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MORNING

Esther glances up from her desk, and sees Dave enter.

ESTHER

Downing find you?

Dave picks up the phone on her desk.

DAVE

He found me.

(into phone)

Wilson...Package up that medal. I'm taking it to Boston.

INT. CORONER'S LAB - MORNING

Stroh on the phone.

STROH
Anyone tell you you resigned.

INTERCUT BETWEEN LAB AND STATION

DAVE
Details.

STROH
You're going to get me fired.

Dave glances over at Esther.

DAVE
Esther says she won't tell if you
won't. I'm on my way.

He hangs up the phone.

ESTHER
Got something?

DAVE
Not yet.

ESTHER
My money's on you, boss.

EXT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY

Wilson meets Dave out front, carrying the medallion, and the
cudgel that was found at the scene of Adrian's murder.

STROH
(handing him the
weapon)
Maybe they can find something on
this.

DAVE
Thanks.

Dave begins walking away.

STROH
Dave. Downing's AB positive.

He freezes mid-step, looking slowly at Downing.

STROH
School records.

Dave exhales a long, thin stream of air.

STROH
Unofficial. We ain't got a legal

leg to prop up our butts on that
info yet.

REVERSE ANGLE

Downing hiding in an alley across the street, watches them.

BACK TO DAVE AND STROH

DAVE

This time, I'm gonna nail him.

DOWNING

watches from the alley as Dave pulls away.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SHIRLEY HOME - AMALTHEA'S GARDEN -DAY

Amalthea works in her garden. The porch door SCREECHES open,
and Downing steps out.

DAVE

Auntie, come! I've made tea.

Amalthea turns toward him, her eyes surveying him a long
moment. Then carefully she eases her hoe to the ground and
comes to the porch.

ON THE PORCH

Downing pours Amalthea a cup of tea. She takes it, settling
into a wooden rocker. Before she drinks, she breathes in the
aroma of the brew deeply.

AMALTHEA

Peppermint.

DOWNING

Peppermint And comfrey, chamomile,
and dill. Steeped for three
minutes. Then to be drunk very
hot, to let the healing warmth
spread deep inside.

Her keen eyes study him shrewdly.

AMALTHEA

You've learned well.

DOWNING

Everything you've taught me.

AMALTHEA

And more, I think.

(beat)

Did you speak with Sheriff
Lukowski.

DOWNING

He's not the Sheriff anymore.

She ignores this remark.

DOWNING

He just wanted to know if there was anything else I could tell him about that Adrian Mountzaire guy.

AMALTHEA

Was there?

DOWNING

I've already told him everything I know, Auntie.

She leans back into the rocker, moving rhythmically back and forth, her gaze out to her garden.

AMALTHEA

Once you cross over to the dark, Downing, it is nearly impossible to cross back.

(she looks full at him.)

Do you understand?

DOWNING

Yes.

AMALTHEA

I wonder, truly, if you do.

DOWNING

I told you yes about a thousand times.

AMALTHEA

Do you think I don't know how tempting the power is? Do you think when I was young, like you,

that I was never tempted? It would have been so easy.

(beat)

Do you know how much land we used to own. Not just this town. Half the valley. And up into the mountains. As far as your eye could see. But the power of evil destroyed nearly everything. Bit by bit. In the end, Downing, evil, like a vile serpent will twine itself about itself until the snake has devored his own tail.

DOWNING

Drink your tea, Auntie. I made it especially for you.

Amalthea rises from the rocker, draining her cup.

AMALTHEA

Too much peppermint. Can't taste anything else.

She sets the cup down, moving across the porch towards her garden.

DOWNING

Don't worry so, Auntie. You've done your work well.

She turns back towards him.

AMALTHEA

I hope so, Downing. Truly, I do.

She walks down the porch steps and into the garden.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Downing stands at the kitchen sink, whistling, the tea things beside him on the counter. He scoops the tea leaves from the bottom of the pot, rinsing them forcefully down the drain.

He reaches for the cup, when outside the kitchen window he spies Beth pass by in her jeep. Hastily, he grabs the cup, rinsing it quickly, and setting it in the drainer. He turns and bolts from the room

INT. GROCERY STORE - NEW CAMEN - DAY

Beth stands at the register as the CLERK bags her purchases. Suddenly, something catches her eye. She looks out through the large plate glass window.

BETH'S POV

Downing, wearing a full length black cape with Adrian's scarf wrapped loosely about his neck stands on the other side staring in at her.

BETH

(gasps)

Oh.

Then she throws the grocery bag down on the counter, and runs out the door.

CLERK

Hey!

EXT. GROCERY STORE - NEW CAMEN - DAY

Beth runs into the street, but Downing is gone, vanished as if he had been nothing but a mirage. Beth stands shaken on the sidewalk. The clerk appears.

CLERK

Ma'am? You want your groceries?

EXT. THE COUNTRYSIDE - OUTSIDE NEW CAMEN - DAY

Beth wheels the jeep through the deep green bloom of the New Hampshire countryside. Suddenly, the white stallion, the same stallion we have seen throughout, bursts through the foliage and bolts in front of her.

Riding astride, Adrian's scarf flowing, black cape billowing, is Downing Packer. The horse rears. Beth slams on the breaks.

The stallion rights himself, tossing his silver mane. Downing yanks the reins and the stallion gallops across the fields. Beth throws the jeep in gear, and follows.

They chase deep into the wooded land, up over a rise, and to a rambling secluded farmhouse. At full speed, the horse gallops behind the house. Beth roars the corner, and bucks the jeep to a stop.

Downing stands, dismounted, pointing a gun.

DOWNING

Crude, isn't it?

Waving the pistol, he motions for her to get out of the jeep.

DOWNING

Does the trick, though.

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - AMALTHEA'S GARDEN - DAY

Amalthea kneels beside a patch of rosemary, gathering bunches of the herb. Under her wide-brimmed hat, her face looks unusually pale. Beads of sweat line her upper lip. She takes off her hat, wiping her brow.

O.C. we hear the sound of a car pulling up, and the voice of Henniker Muir calls out.

HENNIKER (O.S.)

Yoohoo! Miss Amalthea!

Henniker rounds the corner. Amalthea rises to greet him, but stumbles dizzily, collapsing to the ground. Henniker breaks into a run.

HENNIKER

Miss Amalthea!

EXT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - DAY

With the gun trained on Beth, Downing moves to the jeep, pulls the keys from the ignition, and pockets them.

DOWNING

Let's go.

BETH

Where are you taking me?

DOWNING

If you don't shut up and do what you're told, the same place as them.

With the gun, he motions toward the edge of the woods where a mound of loose dirt surrounds a freshly dug grave.

DOWNING

I think we might find some room.

With the motion, he turns his back partly away from Beth. Suddenly, she springs, knocking the gun loose and Downing to the ground.

They struggle for the weapon. Downing overpowers her, slaps her viciously, and grabs the gun.

DOWNING

Stupid shit!

He kicks her. Beth moans, rolling in agony. Downing lunges, grabbing her hair.

DOWNING

Don't even think of trying anything like that again. You understand!

She doesn't respond. He hits her again.

DOWNING

I asked you if you understand!

BETH

Yes.

Downing steps back

DOWNING

All right, then. That's more like it. Come on. Get up. let's go.

INT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - DAY

The house is filthy, in advanced decay, encrusted with grime and dust. Thick drapes block out the light. Downing keeps the gun trained on Beth as he prods her through the living room.

DOWNING

Sorry about the mess.

And to a staircase.

DOWNING

Upstairs.

They climb the stairs, the gun pressed against the small of Beth's back.

DOWNING

Nobody's lived here since my father's untimely demise.

INT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALL - DAY

Downing continues to prod her through the upstairs hallway and into a back room.

INT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

Downing opens the door to the room. It overflows with clutter. A long table spills over with herbs, grasses, roots and the paraphernalia to prepare these into potions. Latex masks are heaped in a corner. Books, notebooks, papers, and records of all kinds, jam the corners.

DOWNING

What do you think?

The walls of the room are covered with blown-up newspaper clippings -- every one of the stories about her.

INSERT

A quick succession of flashes reads: PROMINENT PHYSICIAN DISMISSED FROM SINAI; DEATH OF DAUGHTER UNDER INVESTIGATION; HOSPITAL PRIVILEGES REVOKED.

BACK TO SCENE

DOWNING

I've got everything.

He waves the gun to the adjoining wall. Hanging here are more blow-ups, but these chronicle Beth from childhood up through her college years.

DOWNING

Science fair. You're first, no?
You were, maybe eight? High school
graduation. College. Oh, Auntie
Amalthea was the one that gathered
them. She was keeping watch.

BETH
(stunned)

Why?

DOWNING
Why! Why! Why! To close that
stupid circle of hers! To enact
the one act of amazing fucking
grace that will save us all!

Suddenly, he springs, slapping her savagely. Beth reels from
the blow, falling back against the newspaper-plastered wall.

DOWNING
Do you know what she's done? Given
half of everything to you!

He hits her again. Her head reels.

DOWNING
After all my plans! All my work!
And I find out half of everything
goes to you.

BETH
I don't want it.

DOWNING
You don't want it.

BETH
I have money.

DOWNING
Oh, you have money all right. More
than you fucking know.

BETH
You can have everything.

DOWNING
Yeah? You think so? You don't get
it, do you.

He tosses her his handkerchief.

DOWNING
You're bleeding all over the place.

Beth takes the handkerchief and wipes at the blood.

DOWNING
(suddenly, very
gentle)
Come on. Get up.

She doesn't move.

DOWNING
Come on, now.

He goes to her, she shrinks away from him. He smiles, gently moving her hair from her eyes.

DOWNING
I won't hit you again.

He helps her up and into a chair.

DOWNING
I gotta do this right, after all.
Lukowski's breathing down my neck.

He lashes her tightly to the chair with rope.

BETH
He knows you killed Adrian.

Downing mimes smashing a club down.

DOWNING
Whoosh. Head smashed like a
pumpkin. Of course he knows. Knows
all about Ray and Louisa, too.
Thing is, he can't prove a thing.
(he looks directly
into her eyes)
And he won't be able to prove
anything about you, either.

O.S. The SOUND of a car pulling up, door slamming.

DOWNING
What the fuck?

He sprints to the window, looking out.

EXT. OUTSIDE DOWNING'S HOUSE - DAY

Henniker Muir stands in front of the house, looking up.

INT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - BACK BEDROOM - DAY

Beth screams:

BETH
HELP!!!

Downing sprints back to her, slapping her brutally.

DOWNING

Shut up!

He whips off Adrian's scarf and gags her. Through clenched teeth he whispers viscerously:

DOWNING

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

Then he renders one more powerful blow, knocking Beth unconscious.

EXT. OUTSIDE DOWNING'S HOUSE - DAY

Henniker reacts to the muffled scream, looking up towards the bedroom, but he can't be sure he heard anything. A CROW CRAWLS RAUCOUSLY.

Henniker raps on the front door. No answer. He steps back, and is about to go around the back, when Downing opens the front door.

HENNIKER

Oh, Downing! Oh, thank God! I was hoping I'd find you here!

DOWNING

What is it?

HENNIKER

Your auntie! Miss Amalthea! She's taken sick!

DOWNING

Sick?

HENNIKER

Where's your car? Did you walk? You'd better come with me.

DOWNING

Wait a minute...

HENNIKER

I just left her. She's refusing to see a doctor...

Downing glances nervously over his shoulder.

HENNIKER

For God's sake boy! Whatever you're doing can wait!

He turns abruptly heading for his car.

HENNIKER

If anything happens to Miss
Amalthea, I'll never forgive
myself!

Downing follows Henniker to the car.

INT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - BACK BEDROOM - DAY

O.S., the SOUND of the CAR STARTING. Groggily, Beth comes to. She lies on the floor, bound and gagged, beads of perspiration gathering across her brow. She moves slowly, testing the strength of her bonds.

She begins working the rope tying her hands. Perspiration drips down her face, mingling with the blood that still trickles from the blows.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Amalthea stands woozily at the kitchen sink, examining the tea pot and cup in the drainer. They've been washed clean. She turns to the sink. A few leaves stick to the sides. She gathers them, examining them closely, rubbing them through her fingers, tasting them gingerly with her tongue.

AMALTHEA

Belladonna.

She turns from the sink, and still unsteady moves to the stairs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - DOWNING'S BEDROOM - DAY

Amalthea sits on Downing's bed, the thick manilla envelope we saw earlier and the plastic bag of herbs spread on either side of her.

DOWNING (O.S.)

Monkshood. Adder's tongue. Deadly
nightshade.

Amalthea whirls around. Downing stands in the doorway.

DOWNING

You've been drinking it for weeks.
Every day, a little stronger. I
never thought I'd get you to do it.

AMALTHEA

(rising to meet him)
Peppermint.

DOWNING

Ayuh.

INT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - BACK BEDROOM - DAY

Beth works one hand free. With her one free hand, she pulls on the ropes that still bind the other one. She cranes her head looking for something she can use to saw the ropes free. Over her shoulder, she spies the window. Inching the chair backward, she scrapes across the wooden floor, lining up the tall spindles of the chair with the glass.

Once she is close enough, she rocks, kicking her feet high in front of her. The chair tumbles backwards, the spindles crashing against the panes, shattering the glass

The chair slams to the floor. Beth grunts, the sound muffled with the gag. She stretches her bound hands out behind her, every muscle straining, until she grasps a shard of ragged glass. Maneuvering the piece, hacking away savagely, she saws at the rope. The glass cuts deeply into her flesh, blood flowing freely. The rope begins to fray.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - DOWNING'S BEDROOM - DAY

Facing the evil that is her nephew, Amalthea's strength is returning in waves.

AMALTHEA

You will never win.

DOWNING

I already have.

He advances on her. The old woman stands her ground fearlessly.

AMALTHEA

You will devour yourself.

For a moment, Downing hesitates, and then with renewed purpose, he slams her backward. Amalthea raps her head against the corner of the desk, and slumps to the floor.

Downing picks her up and carries her downstairs.

INT. DOWNING'S HOUSE - BACK BEDROOM - DAY

Beth saws through the last strands of rope. The rope breaks free. Her wrists bleed profusely. Untying Adrian's scarf from around her mouth, she tears it into strips, and bandages her wrists. She cuts the ropes that bind her legs, rises from the chair, and runs.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Downing places Amalthea on the floor, goes to the stove, opens the oven, and turns the gas on full.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - THE LIBRARY - DAY

Downing sets a fire roaring in the grate.

EXT. DOWNING'S HOME - DAY

Beth races out the back door of the house. The jeep is useless, Downing has the keys, but the stallion stands tethered where he left him. Beth unties the horse and leaps astride.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - LIBRARY - DAY

Downing gathers the papers of four centuries, the books, notebooks, journals, clippings, diaries, and scatters them before the fireplace. Then scooping out burning coals, he spreads the embers across the documents. the papers ignite like dry leaves.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Amalthea begins to stir, moaning. She rises shakily to her knees.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - LIBRARY- DAY

The fire leaps and dances, spreading to the thick drapes, licking up the curtains to the ceiling. Downing backs away into the hall.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Amalthea hears Downing's footsteps. She drops back to the floor as if still unconscious.

Downing enters, checking her. Sure she will not awaken, he turns and flees.

Hearing him leave, Amalthea rises unsteadily, the back of her head covered with blood.

EXT. THE SHIRLEY HOME - FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Downing flies out the front door, and races across the fields.

INT. THE SHIRLEY HOME - THE KITCHEN - DAY

Amalthea crawls across the kitchen floor trying to reach the porch.

EXT. THE FIELDS SURROUNDING THE SHIRLEY HOME - DAY

Beth, astride the stallion gallops across the meadow. She sees the Shirley home, and reins the stallion in sharply.

BETH'S POV

Smoke curling through the library windows.

BETH

whips the stallion fiercely, racing across the field.

THE HOUSE

explodes with fire.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

The dining room is ablaze.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Amalthea is rocked by the blast, slammed across the floor, knocked unconscious. Her head bleeds heavily. A wall of fire spreads towards her.

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - DAY

Beth leaps from the stallion and races to the house.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - DAY

The blast brings Cordelia out in a dead run. Seeing Beth, she screams:

CORDELIA

Beth!

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - DAY

The fire explodes through the porch windows, glass splintering.

Beth reels from the blast, knocked back off the porch.

ACROSS THE POND

Cordelia runs screaming Beth's name, toward the Shirley home.

OUTSIDE THE SHIRLEY PORCH

Beth scrambles to her feet. Cordelia grabs her.

CORDELIA

You can't go in there!

Beth breaks free.

BETH

Amalthea!

She races up onto the porch and grasps the red-hot screen

door handle. She screams in agony, throws the door open, and plunges inside.

INT. SHIRLEY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

The smoke is thick and deadly. Flames dance everywhere. Amalthea lies unconscious. Beth grasps her beneath the arms, and pulls her out to the porch.

FIRE ENGINES WAIL IN THE DISTANCE

EXT. SHIRLEY HOME - DAY

A corner of the porch collapses.

Beth grasps Amalthea firmly, dragging her off the porch and into the field away from the house.

She works feverishly on Amalthea, administering CPR.

Fire engines roar up to the house, and right behind them, several news trucks. In the B.G. the firefighters leap from their truck, working in a frenzy to fight the blaze

Beth continues working on Amalthea. The old woman lies deathly pale, unresponsive. Sharply, Beth slaps her face.

BETH

Come on!

She breathes into her mouth. Pumps her chest. And repeats the process. But still there is no response.

BETH

Breathe!

She works again, sweat pouring down her face.

BETH

Breathe, goddamn it! Breathe!

But Amalthea does not respond. Her head lolls to one side, lifeless. Cordelia steps close to Beth, laying a gentle hand on her shoulder.

CORDELIA

It's too late.

Beth shoves the hand aside.

BETH

NO!

She works on Amalthea again.

BETH

I won't let you go! You hear me!

I won't let him take you!

She works again. Breathing into her mouth. Pounding her chest.

BETH

Breathe. Breathe! BREATHE!

Amalthea's eyelids flutter.

BETH

That's it. Come on. Come on back.

Amalthea's eyes open.

BETH

BREATHE!!!

Amalthea gasps. Coughing and choking, she sputters back to life.

IN THE B.G

The blaze is slowly dying, the firefighters gaining control.

THE FIRE CHIEF

walks away from the house to the women grouped in the yard.

IN THE YARD

A spent Amalthea lies against Beth who encircles her.

FIRE CHIEF

Dr. Rutledge? Sheriff Lukowski radioed in. He's on his way.

BETH

Tell him to get Downing.

FIRE CHIEF

Sheriff Rinaldi's on it already. We'll get him, Dr. Rutledge.

The Fire Chief walks away.

FROM ANOTHER ANGLE

Several reporters approach, speaking over each other.

REPORTER ONE

Dr. Rutledge...

REPORTER TWO

Is it true, Dr. Rutledge..

REPORTER THREE

We've heard reports.

The Fire Chief steps in.

FIRE CHIEF

Excuse me. This here is private property. Go on now, get on back over there, unless you want to spend the night courtesy of Sheriff Lukowski.

He ushers the reporters away.

Amalthea reaches a shakey hand up to Beth.

AMALTHEA

You saved my life.

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BACK PORCH - DAY

Amalthea sits on the porch with Beth, Cordelia, and Dave. The Shirley home is a smudged and broken outline rising behind them. Though ravaged by the fire, the house is still standing.

AMALTHEA

Ruth Blay was young and beautiful and innocent. She sat in prison for over one year as one reprieve after another was granted. But finally, the thirtieth of December came, and this time, no reprieve was at hand.

As Amalthea speaks FADE TO:

INT. NEW CAMEN JAIL - CIRCA 1768 - MORNING

Ruth Blay sits in her jail cell. The CLANG of an iron door, and Sheriff Thomas Packer stands before her.

AMALTHEA (V.O.)

Sheriff Thomas Packer came for her at nine o'clock in the morning.

EXT. NEW CAMEN - CIRCA 1768 - MORNING

Packer leads Ruth Blay to a wagon, and escorts her aboard. the wagon rolls through the streets that are clogged with a mob of observers.

AMALTHEA

In a wagon, he dragged her through the street, through the mob, and out to the churchyard.

EXT. NEW CAMEN - THE GRAVEYARD 1768 - MORNING

A gallows rises in the background. The churchyard is choked

with a mob of people. The little wagon bearing Ruth Blay and the Sheriff arrives in the shadows of the gallows.

AMALTHEA

It was cold that morning, and the Sheriff was hungry.

PACKER

Come on. Let's go.

Packer takes Ruth Blay down from the wagon, and leads her up the gallows steps.

AMALTHEA (V.O.)

And so at ten o'clock, two hours before her time, he ordered her up the gallows stairs.

In the distance beyond the crowd a horseman rides fiercely.

AMALTHEA (V.O.)

Even as she was mounting them, a horseman was riding fiercely. At the last moment, the governor in a magnificent act of grace, had granted yet another reprieve.

The horseman struggles to push his way through the throng.

AMALTHEA (V.O.)

But the crowd was too thick, spread all across the rise, all through the valley, and the horseman couldn't get through.

Ruth Blay is placed beneath the noose. Packer, astride the platform, raises his rifle, and fires.

AMALTHEA (V.O.)

Packer gave the order, and Ruth Blay was unmercifully hanged.

The gallows trap springs open, Ruth Blay's body drops through.

BACK TO PRESENT

From inside the telephone rings.

DAVE

That'll be for me.

He goes inside to answer the phone.

AMALTHEA

That day, with the brutal murder of purest innocence, evil, like a raging beast was unleashed.

Dave re-enters the porch.

DAVE
They've got him.

AMALTHEA
The beast shall be beat back
screaming to the gates of Hell.

INT. THE RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beth sits before her vanity holding the picture of Megan.
Dave comes up behind her.

DAVE
Come to bed.

Tears spring to her eyes, coursing down her cheeks. Dave
wraps her in an embrace.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOME - BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dave and Beth lie asleep.

EXT. THE CHURCHYARD - 1768 - (NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE) - NIGHT

A gallows swirls out of the mist of a crashing sea. A DRUM
BEAT POUNDS. A woman -- Beth, appears on the gallows, hands
bound. Beside her, dressed in black, stands Sheriff Thomas
Packer.

The DRUM ROLL builds, joined with the SOUND of a pulsating
HEART BEAT, and the steady rhythm of HORSES'S HOOVES. The
executioner places the noose around Beth's neck. Packer
raises his rifle.

From the crowd that jostles restlessly below, a little
girl -- Megan -- is pushed forward. THE RIFLE EXPLODES. The
trap springs, but this time, miraculously, the rope snaps in
two. Like an angel taken wing, Beth flies upward, free.

A white stallion thunders below. In a glorious arc, her hair
flowing behind her, Beth soars through the air, and lands
astride the horse.

The moon is swollen and full. The stallion thunders through
the throng, toward the child. With absolute grace, Beth
swoops down, encircling the child, and lifting her astride
the horse.

The gallows melt in the mist that swirls until it forms the
figure of a woman -- Ruth Blay. White gown billowing, she
stands on the rise that marks her grave, beckoning.

BACK TO PRESENT

Beth awakens. She climbs out of bed, pulling on her robe.

DAVE
(groggily)

Beth?

But she's already gone.

Dave stirs fully awake.

DAVE
Beth!

EXT. THE RUTLEDGE HOME - FRONT OF HOUSE - NIGHT

Dave and Cordelia watch as Beth speeds away in the jeep.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE OUTSIDE NEW CAMEN - NIGHT

The jeep flies along the road by the sea to the graveyard,
Dave's Bronco right behind.

EXT. NEW CAMEN - CHURCHYARD - NIGHT

The cars turn into the graveyard, and continue to the rise
where Ruth Blay lies buried.

AT THE RISE

Beth stops the jeep, climbing out. Dave and Cordelia follow.

The wind howls through the trees, sweeping their branches
across the sky and the waning moon.

Beth moves through the headstones to the grave of Ruth Blay.

AT THE GRAVE SITE

the headstone of Ruth Blay glows faintly in the moonlight.
Below, the sea crashes, above, the wind howls. Beth holds her
arms out, beseeching, in an eerie imitation of the vision in
her dream, her gown billowing, a white cloud, rising behind
her.

Dave and Cordelia continue to watch, uncertain what to do.

Beth lays her hand lightly against the stone.

BETH
Did you find peace at last?

The wind rises, and carried on the whirl of sound is a
whisper: BETH. Beth glances up. A glimmer of white glistens
before her, ethereal, shimmering in the wind.

Slowly, the vision grows clear. Ruth Blay, as we saw her in

the dream, standing upon the rise, the same rise where she was hanged. She stands, her arms raised out before her, beckoning.

Dave and Cordelia stare, seeing the vision.

Beth moves gently toward the apparition.

A second vision begins to take shape. At first, only a glimmer, a shadow. Ruth, smiling, lowers her hands, bringing them to rest before her, folded, as if in prayer.

The shadow focuses clear. Megan.

The wind rises. Megan calls out:

MEGAN

Mama!

The child holds out her hands. Beth, tears flowing, moves toward her.

MEGAN

I climbed so high!

Megan throws her head back in ecstasy.

MEGAN

I was so free!

Full of joy, the child rushes into her mother's arms. Beth, her face shining, embraces her daughter. Like a thousand particles of light, the vision glows, then whirls apart, and like a stream of healing radiance, flows inside Beth.

On the rise, the vision of Ruth Blay shimmers, glowing almost unbearably bright, then whirls, spiralling upwards in a flowing stream.

Her face beatific, Beth stands immobile, holding her hands over her heart, over the healing light that has entered her, that is Megan.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE GRAVEYARD - WINTER - DAY

Amalthea and Beth stand before the grave of Ruth Blay. Beth brushes a drift of snow from the headstone. Amalthea hands Beth a wreath of rosemary. Kneeling, Beth lays the wreath upon the grave.

Amalthea helps Beth rise. As she stands, Beth's coat falls open, revealing a full, round belly -- a pregnancy about six months along.

With one hand over her ample stomach, the other clasped about

Amalthea's waist, the two women walk down the rise through the snow from the final resting place of Ruth Blay.

FADE OUT: