

Whispers from the Ashes
by
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FADE IN:

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - NIGHT

Cars stop at a red light on a one-way street. A mime stands on the sidewalk trying to break out an invisible box.

Two kids play guitar on the street corner. Tourists drop pennies into their guitar cases.

Palm readers and psychics line the back lot. Signs hanging from the tables announce PALM READINGS HERE, TAROT READINGS, and DISCOVER YOUR FUTURE.

Tourists wander around the street fair. The sun sets behind them. TARA, 19, walks side by side with KATIE, 20, through the bustling street. Tara tugs on Katie's arm and points to a cafe.

TARA

I'm starving. Let's grab a bite to eat.

KATIE

Sounds good...uh!

Katie slaps her arm and flicks away a dead mosquito.

KATIE

I swear if one more mosquito bites me...

Tara laughs.

TARA

Bugs beware. Katie has just declared war!

Katie sticks her tongue out at Tara.

KATIE

Keep talking, girl. They only like plump juicy girls to feast on.

Tara grins and shakes her head.

TARA

I'm wearing a special herbal blend.

KATIE

How come you aren't sharing?

TARA
Last time you broke out for three days.

KATIE
Oh, that one. Go ahead. Make me jealous. But, you can't wear that stuff all the time.

TARA
Simple. Bug zapper.

KATIE
How's that gonna help me?

TARA
Dunno. Have you tried those bracelets that ward off pests?

KATIE
More like a flee collar.

Katie flaunts her two silver braided bracelets.

KATIE
I'll stick to these, thanks.

TARA
You love those things, don't you?

KATIE
They were my great grandmother's.
I'd die before I take them off.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

They enter an outdoor cafe. Sitting down in the well-lit patio, Tara and Katie stare at the large sign of prices.

A waiter brings them two small glasses of water. PAUL, early 20s, sits in a corner holding up a newsletter and sips on a latte.

Paul watches Tara pull her long blonde hair up into a pony tail while Katie slumps in her chair, swirling her stirrer around in the water. Tara orders for both of them.

They walk up to the souvenir counter. Tara buys two crawfish key chains and hands one to Katie. They chat as they walk back to their table. Paul continues watching them. The waiter returns with two plates of beignets and two hot chocolates.

Tara and Katie simultaneously throw two ice cubes into each of their hot chocolates and nibble on the beignets.

TARA

I can't believe we're in college.

KATIE

Took me over a year to save up.
Why'd you sit out?

TARA

Couldn't leave without my best
friend.

Katie smiles. She watches the street fair for a moment.

KATIE

Think one of those palm readers
could help me pick out a major?

They watch the eager tourists line up in front of the psychics.

TARA

If you had the choice, would you
want to know the future?

KATIE

Of course! Why? You wouldn't?

TARA

I'd only want to know the good
things.

KATIE

Yeah, well, if it could get me
ready for Thursday's test, then I'd
want to know. Good or bad.

TARA

It would be interesting to see who
we'd marry. Do we settle or fall
madly in love?

KATIE

I'll be lucky to settle.

Katie dips her straw in and out of the water.

TARA

There's someone out there for
everyone.

She looks out into the glimmering city lights.

KATIE

Whatever. None of that stuff
really exists anyway.

TARA

How do you know?

Katie bites into a beignet. Tara laughs at the big glob of sugar left on her nose. Looking away, Katie wipes her nose with a napkin.

KATIE

It's entertainment. That's all.

Katie sips on her water.

KATIE

Smoke and mirrors. One big
illusion.

Tara disagrees. She takes her last sip of hot chocolate and hops up from the table.

TARA

Watch my purse, will you?

Katie nods and stares into space as Tara walks to the bathroom.

One psychic is looking into her crystal ball, while another flips over cards, and another follows the lines on a tourist's palm.

Tara leaves the bathroom as Paul stands up. He bumps into her and knocks her off balance.

PAUL

Oh.

Paul reaches out and catches her arm.

PAUL

Excuse me. Sorry about that.

Tara flashes him a warm smile.

TARA

No problem.

While moving out of her way, Paul stares at her college T-shirt.

PAUL
I transferred there last week. Are
you a student, too?

Katie glances in their direction, taps on the table, and
sighs. She rolls her eyes shifting her gaze back into space.

Tara blushes, unable to hide a grin.

TARA
Freshman, yeah.

Paul snaps his fingers a couple of times. He points at Tara
and smiles.

PAUL
I thought you looked familiar.
Science lab, right?

TARA
Yeah, that's right.

Paul pulls a pen out of his pocket and motions with it.

PAUL
Hey, would you mind swapping phone
numbers with me?

Walking over to the counter, Tara grabs a napkin and accepts
the pen.

PAUL
Being new in town and all, it's
good to have a buddy in class.

TARA
Yeah, I know what you mean.

Tara scribbles her name and number on the napkin. Paul eyes
glow with dark excitement.

PAUL
Yeah, you know, anything could
happen and cause me to miss class.
The traffic is murder out here, and
if it's not an accident, it's a
fire...

Tara slowly hands him back the pen, shooting him a strange
glance. Paul nudges Tara.

PAUL
Road rage must be pretty high
around here.

Taking the napkin, Paul reads it and extends his hand.

PAUL
Hi, Tara. I'm Paul.

Tara shakes his hand, relaxing a bit.

TARA
Nice to meet you.

Paul jots his information down on another napkin and hands it to her. Tara stuffs it into her pocket.

PAUL
I'll see you in class.

They smile at each other. Paul leaves the cafe. Tara returns to the table and slides into her chair, grinning.

Katie shakes her head and tosses her napkin onto the table.

KATIE
I can't believe you, picking up
guys on the way to the bathroom.

TARA
Oh, please, Katie. He's in my
science lab.

Katie glances at the mess on their table; two half eaten beignets and powdered sugar everywhere.

KATIE
Yeah, yeah. All I ask is to be set
up with a few of your leftovers.

Katie frowns and shoves her plate away with a sigh.

KATIE
You finished?

Tara nods and stands. She frowns at the darkening sky.

TARA
Let's go. I overheard some guys
mention a shortcut.

Katie and Tara each leave a dollar on the table.

EXT. BACK LOT - NIGHT

Leaving the cafe, Tara and Katie walk toward the psychics. They walk down the street until Tara points to an old building.

TARA
Through here.

EXT. ABANDONED PROJECTS - NIGHT

Tara and Katie cautiously walk through a dark alley way. Car lights flash in the distance, but the streets are empty.

Old abandoned houses line the area. Scorch marks, mold, decay, boarded windows, and caving roofs mar the falling structures.

KATIE
I thought they were tearing these down.

TARA
Eventually. They had to get everyone out.

The houses CREAK from the wind. Shivers travel down Katie's spine. Graffiti graces the walls.

KATIE
Wasn't a body or something found out here?

Tara halts and spins around to face Katie.

TARA
Now's really not the time, Katie.

KATIE
Fine...you gotta listen eventually.

They stop at an intersection. Katie glances around the dark abandoned streets.

KATIE
I don't see how this route is any shorter.

Katie and Tara study the next street sign they come across. Only the letters AN are visible.

TARA
We must have made a wrong turn.

A large black cat runs across the street. Tara and Katie scream.

KATIE

You think? Come on, let's go back.

TARA

Wait, if we just follow the levee, we're bound to run into something familiar, right?

KATIE

(sarcastically)

Oh yeah, that makes sense. We'll wait for some psycho to find us, and he'll show us the way home.

Tara rolls her eyes. Katie frowns as they approach the end of the street. A tall wire fence blocks their path. A large field with a factory in the center are between them and the levee.

Katie folds her arms.

KATIE

Great.

Katie looks back at the houses, shaking her head. They follow the wire fence.

KATIE

All I see is an old factory, Tara. There is nothing out here!

TARA

Yes, but if I'm not mistaken, behind the factory is the levee, so we should be going in the right direction.

Taking Katie's arm, Tara leads the way. Smoke rises from the ground surrounding an old wooden table on the other side of the street.

Lightening streaks across the sky. Tara and Katie look up, startled.

Across the street MADAM VISSAR, a tarot reader, is sitting behind the table. Her raspy voice cuts through the air.

MADAM VISSAR

What brings you girls my way?

Tara and Katie jump. Katie looks at Tara for reassurance before they carefully take a few steps toward the table.

TARA

We're on our way home.

Thunder RUMBLES down the street. Tara and Katie duck by the table, frightened.

KATIE

Do you know the way out? We're lost.

MADAM VISSAR

The spirits have drawn you here.

Madam Vissar places several cards face down and motions to them.

MADAM VISSAR

Come, children, Madam Vissar will read your fate.

Tara sifts through her purse.

TARA

Oh, no. We spent our last dollars tipping the waiter.

MADAM VISSAR

The cost of your fate is in your hands. Money will not change your future.

Tara and Katie slowly approach Madam Vissar. She flips two cards, The Chariot and The Tower. She looks at Tara.

MADAM VISSAR

The Chariot. Adversity and strife will override all in your life.

Madam Vissar brushes her hand over The Tower card.

MADAM VISSAR

The Tower, such a pity. You will never be the same.

She flips over a third card, The Moon.

MADAM VISSAR

Hmm, The Moon, deception is a powerful tool. Do not fall for such illusions.

Madam Vissar motions to Katie and flips over two more cards. Death and The Devil. She taps the cards, shaking her head.

MADAM VISSAR

Dreary, very dreary. I am sorry, child. There is nothing here...

Katie stares down at the cards. A skeletal reaper and a devil cause her to gasp. The eyes of the devil glow red. It grins at Katie.

Madam Vissar slaps her hands over the cards.

MADAM VISSAR

Do not stare into the eyes of the devil. He ensnares souls. Once the devil smiles there is no...

She flips over a final card, Strength, and sits up.

MADAM VISSAR

Wait, there is some hope.

Madam Vissar takes Tara by the hand and traces a line on her palm.

MADAM VISSAR

Strength follows you, my young one. Fate is in your hands, for you and your friend.

Tara looks at her hand, touching the same line.

TARA

Fate is in my hands?

MADAM VISSAR

Your presence balances his star, for now.

TARA

His star?

A cockroach flies at Madam Vissar. She swats at it but misses. It lands on the ground next to Tara.

MADAM VISSAR

Kill it quickly. It is a bad omen.

Tara stomps at it, but it crawls into a crack in the street.

Madam Vissar frowns.

Katie rolls her eyes in disbelief.

KATIE

Then the city's crawling with bad omens.

MADAM VISSAR

Time to go children, but beware.
There are many dangers in the path ahead.

An empty can RATTLES across the road. Tara and Katie are startled. When they look back at Madam Vissar, the street is empty.

Lightning streaks around them and the buildings reverberate from the thunder. Rain begins to fall. They run down the road away from the wire fence.

Turning down an alley way, Katie dashes ahead of Tara and into a busy street.

A car lurches to a stop. The driver HONKS his horn. Katie twists her ankle when she tries to stop. Tara pulls Katie out of the street. The driver swears at them and drives on, shaking his fist.

Catching their breath, they laugh.

KATIE

What happened back there? We didn't really see...

Tara gasps for breath.

TARA

We can't both be hallucinating.

Katie clutches her chest as she leans against a building.

KATIE

I guess my fate is up to you, so who are you going to set me up with?

TARA

Huh?

KATIE
I'll start with that cute guy you
met at the cafe. Do you think he
has a brother?

TARA
What are you talking about, Katie?

KATIE
(sarcastically)
My dreary future. You can change
it. Weren't you listening?

Tara chuckles.

TARA
You're crazy.

KATIE
Anyone who believes that stuff is
crazy.

TARA
You're right about that.

Tara points to a sign in the distance: CAFE. Katie looks and
sighs in disgust.

TARA
We're right back to where we
started.

KATIE
I need something to drink.

TARA
Come on. There was a water fountain
in the cafe next to the bathrooms.

Katie nods and hobbles a few feet forward.

KATIE
I can't believe I twisted my ankle.

Tara places an arm around Katie and helps her walk toward the
cafe.

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara answers the KNOCK on her front door. A toothbrush is
hanging from her mouth.

Katie grins and cheers. A beige bandage is wrapped around her ankle.

TARA
Foot any better?

KATIE
A little sore, but I'll live.

TARA
Did they give you any pain
medicine?

KATIE
Who wants that stuff?

TARA
I would!

KATIE
Oh, I'm so glad we don't have class
today.

Smiling, Tara closes the door behind Katie. While Katie makes herself at home, Tara walks into the bathroom.

TARA (O.S.)
I just need a few more minutes.

KATIE
(mumbling)
Yeah. Yeah. You know you're
gorgeous.

Flipping through the television, Katie finds nothing but commercials. Before setting the remote control down, she mutes it.

Katie yells at Tara.

KATIE
Are we going to Pat's or Karen's
first?

Tara walks back out wearing dark red lipstick. She shrugs.

TARA
Doesn't matter. Who's driving?

KATIE
I can...

Katie's gaze wanders back to the television as a picture of a young woman flashes across the screen. She stares at it.

She grabs the remote and presses the mute button again.

KATIE

That girl's in my lit class.

Tara focuses on the television screen. An ANCHOR MAN is sitting at his desk. A picture of a shop flashes on the screen.

ANCHOR MAN

She was last seen three days ago at this sandwich shop. An old white truck was reported at the scene. Police aren't releasing many details at this time, but they are urging anyone with information to call.

KATIE

That sucks.

Tara turns off the television.

TARA

You still want to go?

KATIE

As long as we don't get lost again. I told you. They are finding bodies out there.

TARA

Relax, Katie. Do you know how long the Mississippi is? If a body was discovered, it could have been dumped from anywhere. Besides, this girl looks like she is missing, not dead. Argh, I just don't want to think about it.

KATIE

Me either. Let's go.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Smoke fills the back room while patrons socialize and listen to the local band. Despite the cramped quarters, everyone is smiling and laughing.

Walking into the packed bar, Katie and Tara squeeze up to the counter to order drinks.

KATIE

This place might be too crowded for me.

TARA

Okay, let's see who's here and if nothing is happening in fifteen minutes, we'll bail.

KATIE

Deal.

Tara glances at the waiter.

TARA

Two hard lemonades.

Looking around, Tara scopes out the place. She notices Paul, who is sitting on the other side of the bar lighting up cocktails.

Paul motions to the patron sitting at the bar.

PAUL

One flaming cocktail coming your way.

He lights up a drink and slides it down the counter to another young college girl. Tara walks over to him.

She laughs as he continues to slide burning drinks.

TARA

Paul, what are you doing?

PAUL

I'm the bartender's assistant tonight.

He lights another drink when Katie walks up to them. She hands Tara her drink.

KATIE

What's going on over here?

Turning to face them, Paul plays with his lighter, flicking it a few times.

PAUL
Oh, just practicing some tricks I
picked up.

Paul pockets his lighter.

PAUL
Hey, can you two stay right here?
I'll be back in like two minutes.
I just have to grab something from
the back.

Tara nods. Paul disappears. Tara and Katie browse their
surroundings.

TARA
Not our kind of place if you ask
me.

KATIE
Yeah, we should go somewhere else.

Paul walks up behind them.

PAUL
Sorry about that.

They turn back to face Paul.

KATIE
That was quick.

PAUL
Only had to grab one thing. So,
what are you girls up to?

TARA
Checking the place out to see who
was here, but we were thinking
about heading over to the club
across the street. Care to join us?

PAUL
I'd love to, but I was getting
ready to leave. I've got some
errands to run. I'll walk you out,
though.

Tara raises an eyebrow and sips her drink.

TARA
Errands...what kind of errands
could you possibly be running this
late at night?

PAUL
Late?

Paul taps his watch.

PAUL
It's only eleven.

Paul smirks at them. Tara flirtatiously smiles back at him.

TARA
Let's go.

Tara motions to Katie to follow.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

The parking lot is packed with vehicles. They head toward the
back row looking for Katie's car.

Katie shows a sigh of relief when they spot her car, but it
melts away into a mixed puddle of shock and anger.

Katie gasps as she walks around her car.

KATIE
Oh, no! My tires.

The front and back tires on the driver's side are flat.

Katie holds her head and leans over her car.

KATIE
I only have one spare.

Tara runs to Katie's side to inspect the tires. Paul follows
slowly behind them and taps the back flat tire with his foot.

Tara frowns and holds her stomach while she looks around.
She reaches for Katie. She looks at Paul, hope beaming in
her eyes.

TARA
Paul, you're parked out here. Can
we borrow your spare?

PAUL
Oh, I, uh, used mine. Yeah, a couple of nights ago, actually. I can give you a ride. My car's over here.

Tara eagerly nods. Katie frowns and steps back.

TARA
Sounds good.

Paul takes a step back, looking at the tires. Pulling his lighter from his pocket, Paul clicks it a few times.

PAUL
Some teenager probably didn't get the car making everyone else pay for it.

He scratches the back of his head and gazes into the dark sky.

PAUL
Childhood trauma. Messes some kids up.

Paul walks Tara and Katie over to his car.

TARA
The car should be okay for now, Katie. We'll get the spare out of my car and come right back for it.

KATIE
That'll have to do. Thanks for the ride, Paul.

Paul holds the door open for them.

PAUL
Anytime.

Paul points to the back seat.

PAUL
Just brush my junk over to the side there.

Katie scoots over the mess of boxes, tape, rope, tools, towels, and papers.

KATIE

Gee, Paul, you sure have a collection of stuff back here.

Paul tosses his lighter onto the dash and picks up a lighter fluid can. He shakes the bottle. Its empty. He drops it onto the floor with the rest of the junk.

PAUL

Damn...yeah, I found a nice little camping spot around here. It helps me mellow out from all the stress.

He motions to all the assorted junk.

PAUL

I'll clean it one of these days.

TARA

Stress, huh? Not surprising. Midterms alone could drive a person to kill.

Paul smirks.

PAUL

Tell me about it.

Paul closes the door. He dashes around the back of his car and climbs in.

A HOMELESS MAN emerges from the shadows of the bar. He looks at Katie's car and kicks a can in frustration. He hurries over an old white truck and hops in.

He turns the key but the truck refuses to start. He bangs on the steering wheel.

He walks to the back of his truck and pulls out a red gas can. Next to it lies a rope, black garbage bags, and a college text book with burnt edges.

Pulling out the parking lot, they drive passed the sandwich shop that was on the news.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - NIGHT

KATIE

Oh, Tara, look.

Tara looks out the car window and sees nothing but closed shops.

TARA

What?

Katie turns around to look out the rear windshield.

KATIE

Back there. Wasn't that the store
from the news?

TARA

Katie, I told you. I don't want to
talk about that.

Katie cranes her neck further to see the disappearing shop.

PAUL

About what?

Katie is surprised by Paul's sudden remark and stammers over
her words.

KATIE

You didn't hear about the missing
college girl?

TARA

Katie.

Paul palms his lighter, clicking the lid between his fingers.

PAUL

No.

TARA

Oh, the thought of it gives me the
creeps.

PAUL

Hey, they say you can never be too
careful.

KATIE

I heard they questioned her
boyfriend because he caught her
cheating the day before she
disappeared.

Katie looks back at the store in the distance. The full moon
illuminates the sandwich shop building.

Clouds roll in and the rain descends from the sky. Tara
stares out the window.

Two bright stars move toward each other. Tara clears her head. The stars return to their original position.

Tara frowns and leans back into the seat.

The clouds close over the moon plunging the street into darkness.

EXT. COLLEGE ENTRANCE - DAY

Three story mansions line the opposite side of the road from the college. Large oak trees fill the lawns extending their branches over the streets.

A large elaborate gate and fence encase the private college. Expensive sports cars pull in and out of the parking lot.

A young GIRL is riding her bike on the sidewalk. The homeless man walks down the slick street.

A loud CRACKING noise comes from one of the oak trees still soaked from the night's storm.

Tara turns the corner in her car.

INT. TARA'S CAR - DAY

Tara taps the steering wheel to the beat of the music BLARING from her speakers.

She mutters to herself despite the loud music.

TARA

Only two classes to sit through
today, just two classes.

EXT. COLLEGE ENTRANCE - DAY

POPS and CRACKLING noises come from the branch. A large limb breaks from the top of the tree and falls near Tara. The branch lands on its end.

Tara veers off the road and CRASHES into a pole as the limb topples over, crushing the roof of her car and SHATTERING the windshield.

The little girl screeches to a halt and screams.

GIRL

Help, somebody. Help.

A maintenance man and a SECURITY GUARD emerge from the college buildings, running to Tara's car. The security guard pulls his radio off his belt and yells into it.

SECURITY GUARD

A car crashed outside the school's gates. Have dispatch send some officers to assist and an ambulance immediately.

The security guard brushes the leaves off the car.

SECURITY GUARD

Looks like one woman. I can't tell on her condition. We need a recovery crew as well. A tree branch fell on her car.

The homeless man runs over to the growing crowd.

HOMELESS MAN

Is sheee urt? I hearrrd them. It f-f-felll.

The security guard glares at him.

SECURITY GUARD

Haven't we told you to scram? Don't make me haul you off.

Rage masks the homeless man's face. He scowls at the security guard but shuffles away.

SECURITY GUARD

I've got my eye on you.

The security guard peers through the cracks of the window. Tara lies hunched over her steering wheel. Blood oozes down the side of her face.

SECURITY GUARD

Hang on, Miss. Help is on the way. Just hang on.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A large cup sits on top of the night stand. A tray is set up on the side of the hospital bed. Monitors BEEP and BUZZ throughout the room. Tara's head is wrapped in gauze bandages.

DREAM - DARK NIGHT

The homeless man turns and looks forward, appearing to look at someone. Flames erupt in front of him, and he backs up. The hand of a woman falls to the ground. The flames consume it.

The homeless man holds up his hands to block the heat. The flames rise higher. He disappears.

BACK TO SCENE

Tara wakes up, groaning. Her eyes blink open.

She sees three blurred images of Katie standing over her, which converge into one blur after a few seconds. Tara rubs her eyes and the image of Katie comes into focus.

Grimacing in pain, Tara holds her head.

TARA

What? Where am I? What happened?

KATIE

You're in the hospital. A branch broke off one of those old oak trees and hit your car.

Tara squeezes her eyes closed and touches the bandage on her head.

She looks at Katie, narrowing her eyes in disbelief.

TARA

Seriously? A tree hit me?

Katie nods, and Tara pouts as she tries to sit up but fails.

TARA

My head hurts.

Picking up the nurse call light, Katie presses the button.

KATIE

It's probably a good idea to tell them you are awake, and I'm sure they can give you something for the pain.

Tara's gaze fixes on Katie's eyes. Small wiggly lines of light appear all around her. A quiet RINGING noise fills the room and grows louder.

Tara grabs the side rail to her bed. The light and sound fade away.

KATIE

You okay?

Before Tara can answer, NURSE VICKY enters room. She walks over to Tara.

NURSE VICKY

You're awake. Wonderful. My name is Vicky. I will alert the attending physician. He will want to examine you.

TARA

Can I get some medicine? Everything hurts, especially my head.

NURSE VICKY

I have just the thing.

Nurse Vicky checks Tara's vital signs.

NURSE VICKY

I'll be right back.

She leaves the room, closing the door behind her.

TARA

Like I could go anywhere.

Tara glances around, squinting at the bright light from the window.

TARA

How long have I been here?

KATIE

A couple of days. I called your parents. They are still out of town. I wasn't able to reach them.

Disgusted by her parents, she leans back.

TARA

Typical.

KATIE

The college is going to take care of the medical expenses.

TARA

How nice of them. They are probably terrified I will sue them. How bad is my car?

KATIE

Bad. You hit a pole trying to avoid the branch. We'll get you a new one.

Tara moans.

TARA

I loved that car. Just gotten used to everything.

KATIE

At least you won't be stranded.

TARA

True.

Tara props up on her elbow.

TARA

Did you get new tires put on your car yet?

KATIE

Yeah, it's been taken care of.

TARA

Not like I need my spare back. We're just not having any luck with cars.

KATIE

I know.

Katie jumps. A tiny cockroach disappears under the bathroom door.

KATIE

Oh.

Nurse Vicky walks in with a small paper cup containing two pink pills for Tara to take. She sets the cup on the tray.

NURSE VICKY

Doctor Bradley will be here in just a moment. See if you can swallow these.

Nurse Vicky helps Tara sit up and swallow the pills.

She glances at her watch and looks at Katie.

NURSE VICKY
I'm sorry but visiting hours are
over. You can come back and visit
your friend tomorrow.

Katie touches Tara's shoulder and forces a smile.

KATIE
I'll see you bright and early then?

TARA
Sounds good.

Katie stands and head to the door. Tara sits up a bit.

TARA
Katie?

Katie pauses and half turns.

KATIE
Yeah?

TARA
Thanks for everything.

KATIE
Any time, but there are better ways
of getting attention. Promise me
you won't get in a wreck ever
again.

Tara chuckles then groans from the pain.

TARA
I would have avoided this one had I
known it was coming. It's not like
I can see the future.

Katie grins and leaves. The nurse follows her out and closes
the door. Tara closes her eyes for a minute. The door opens,
and she looks to see who it is.

DOCTOR BRADLEY walks in carrying a clipboard. A stethoscope
hangs around his neck.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
I'm Doctor Bradley. I am your
attending physician.

He examines Tara's head and lifts the bandages enough to see
the wound.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
That's quite a bump you sustained.

Tara shrugs and looks away.

TARA
I don't remember much.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
I'm sure it happened quite suddenly. Any other gaps in your memory?

Tara shakes her head.

TARA
Don't think so. I remember hearing a crash.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
How is your vision? Is it blurry? Clear? Seeing anything strange?

Looking down, Tara blushes

TARA
A little blurry at first. I felt a little dizzy too and saw lights everywhere, but they are gone now.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
Lights? Are they all the same color, or are they different?

TARA
Yellow and white lights.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
What else did they look like?

TARA
Like wiggling worms.

He scribbles some notes down.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
How long did it last?

TARA
Ten seconds, if that.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
Interesting. Have you had any
visitors?

TARA
My friend Katie was here when it
happened.

He jots down a few more notes and tucks the clipboard under
his arm.

DOCTOR BRADLEY
The bump on your head was pretty
severe. The lights, as you have
described them, sound like
floaters. It's your body recovering
from the trauma. It's not uncommon
to have a few episodes like that.
There is much to learn about head
injuries, and each patient is a
little different. I don't see any
cause to worry.

Doctor Bradley stands.

TARA
Doctor?

DOCTOR BRADLEY
Yes?

TARA
How much longer do I have to stay
here?

DOCTOR BRADLEY
A couple of days for observation, a
mere precaution. Brain swelling is
a risk I'm not willing to take.

Tara nods and closes her eyes. She hears the door CLICK as it
closes.

INT. - HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tara jerks in her sleep. Her eyebrows press together with
worry.

DREAM - HOSPITAL ROOM AT NIGHT

A pale image of NURSE JANE walks into the room. The white of her eyes are yellow. She carries a medicine bottle with skulls and bones on the label.

NURSE JANE
Time to take your medicine.

TARA
But I didn't ask for it. My head
doesn't hurt.

Nurse Jane pushes Tara into the bed and speaks louder.

NURSE JANE
Take your medicine like a good
little patient.

Tara puts her arms up trying to fend the approaching nurse off, but the nurse pushes Tara's arms away. She holds up the bottle, grinning.

The nurse forces the pills down Tara's throat. As Tara struggles with the nurse, her bandages become undone and some of her stitches rip. Blood flows out of Tara's head and drips onto the blankets.

Tara screams.

TARA
No!

BACK TO SCENE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tara bolts into a sitting position. She looks around, gasping for air. The room is dark and empty.

Squinting her eyes, she touches her head. Most of the bandages are still in place, but the center is soaked with blood.

She looks around. Everything is in order. Her breathing slows.

The nurse from her dreams walks in holding a small paper cup of pills. She turns on the light.

Two cockroaches on the floor scatter away.

The nurse walks over to Tara's side and sets the cup of medicine down. She touches Tara's shoulder and eases her back into the bed.

NURSE JANE

Are you okay?

Tara rubs her eyes and struggles to focus, squinting at the nurse.

TARA

Yeah. It was just a bad dream.

The nurse takes vital signs. She shakes her head.

NURSE JANE

You must try to relax. Your blood pressure is elevated.

The nurse examines Tara's bandages and frowns.

NURSE JANE

Looks like you are bleeding again. I will bring a fresh set of bandages. Here is your medicine. I will return in a moment.

Nurse Jane hands her a cup of water and the cup of pills. Tara looks at the pills. They are blue. The nurse opens the door.

TARA

Wait, these aren't mine.

NURSE JANE

Yes, they are. According to your chart, the doctor has prescribed pain medicine.

TARA

But these aren't the same ones.

NURSE JANE

It's okay. Doctor Bradley said to expect some short term memory loss due to your extent of injuries.

TARA

My memory is fine. I distinctly remember taking pink pills. These are blue.

Nurse Jane rolls her eyes and stalks over to the bed. She takes the pills from Tara.

NURSE JANE
You are being paranoid. These pills are...

Nurse Jane's hands shake. Avoiding eye contact with Tara, she drops the cup of pills.

NURSE JANE
Ms. Jones's blood pressure pills. She's allergic to your pain medicine.

Nurse Jane runs from the room leaving the door wide open. She runs across the hall into another patient's room. A red light flashes above the patient's door.

NURSE JANE (O.S.)
Code blue. Code blue.

Several people run down the hall. Tara watches as a bed is rushed past her door, monitor alarms BEEPING.

Pressing up against the bed, Tara watches in shock.

DREAM - BY THE LEVEE AT NIGHT

A dark car drives up a hill. The trunk POPS open. A man picks up a large object from the trunk.

The man GRUNTS from the weight.

Pulling down the edge of the blanket, he stares into the eyes of a burned corpse. The eyes are wide open and unharmed, but the face is unrecognizable. The teeth and nose bones are exposed due to the extent of the burns.

The man drops the body to the ground.

Kicking it hard, he watches the body roll down the hill. Pebbles and rocks tumble down with it. The body hits some broken slabs of cement at the bottom of the hill before SPLASHING in the water.

Closing the trunk, the man returns to his car. Several stars are scattered in the sky. The moon glows red. The two bright stars begin to slowly rotate around each other.

DREAM - OUTSIDE A PLANTATION HOUSE AT NIGHT

The man drives up to the abandoned plantation style house. The red tail lights glow in the dim light. Katie falls to the ground, bound and gagged. A faded white light surrounds her.

A man with no face walks around the back side of his car. A dark orange glow emanates from him. Light flickers on the license plate 123 FIR.

Katie lies on the ground. She does not move. The man slings her over his shoulder and walks into the house.

One by one dark cars appear until the entire lawn is covered. Rocks strike the center of each windshield. The cracks grow, engulfing the windshields.

The glass EXPLODES.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tara wakes up gasping for air. Sweat drips down her face. She looks around and sags back into the bed.

TARA

Oh, it was just a bad dream.

Tara bolts into sitting position.

TARA

But the nurse...

Tara digs through a bag laying on the side of the bed. She pulls out her cell phone and scrolls down to KATIE'S HOUSE. She starts to hit SEND, but then notices the time: 3:30 A.M. She flips the cell phone closed.

TARA

No, it was just a dream.

Tara chuckles to herself.

TARA

Katie wouldn't believe me anyway.

Tara soothes her headache and attempts to find a comfortable position in bed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A nurse assists Tara into a wheelchair.

The news is on a television set in the background. A picture of the missing girl from Katie's lit class flashes across the television screen.

ANCHOR MAN

Her body was found badly burned,
washed up against the river's bank.

Tara's eyes droop, and she sinks into the wheelchair - shoulders sagging. Her hair is tousled and out of place.

Katie stands to the side, holding a bag.

KATIE

Ready to go home?

TARA

Yes.

KATIE

I'll grab the car and meet you out
front.

Tara's eyes widen.

TARA

Car?

KATIE

How else do you expect to get home?
By bus?

Katie leaves before Tara can respond. The nurse takes hold of Tara's wheelchair.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

Tara stares blankly at all the people she passes. She clutches the sides of her wheelchair. RINGING fills her ears. Tara closes her eyes tightly.

KATIE

Tara.

The RINGING fades. Tara opens her eyes to see Katie holding the side car door open.

Tara stands up, off balance, steadying herself with the door. Small lines of white light surround Katie's car and wriggle away. Tara freezes for a moment until the nurse insists on helping her into the car.

TARA

Thank you.

The nurse smiles and returns to the hospital.

INT. KATIE'S CAR - DAY

Tara fastens her seat belt and double checks that it is secure. Katie climbs in and stares at Tara.

KATIE

Since when do you wear a seat belt?

TARA

Katie, you should put your's on too.

Katie shakes her head and buckles up. Turning on the local rock radio station, Katie starts the car.

KATIE

You know, if this is about the accident, no seat belt can prevent a tree from falling on you.

Tara rubs the bandages on her head and mumbles.

TARA

It would have at least saved my head from the steering wheel.

Tara runs her hand over Katie's windshield. There is a small crack. Tara touches the center of it.

TARA

What happened?

Katie stares at Tara.

KATIE

A rock hit it. Are you for real?

Tara folds her arms and looks back.

KATIE

I don't know if I like the new you.

TARA

Me either.

Tara gazes out the window as they drive away. Katie pulls off, but the car in front of her has a break light out. Katie slams on the brakes when she realizes the car has stopped. Tara tenses.

Katie gasps and raises her shoulders.

KATIE

Sorry.

They continue driving. Katie stops at the red light. Tara tenses as the light turns green, and Katie pulls away.

Katie half chuckles.

KATIE

Tara, it's okay. I promise. I won't drive near any trees.

Tara stares straight ahead.

TARA

You know, if you don't get that crack in your windshield fixed, it could grow.

KATIE

Oh, please. That's been there for over a year.

TARA

I've never noticed it.

Katie sighs.

KATIE

Happy to be going home?

Tara eases back into her seat.

TARA

Am I ever. Hospital beds are moveable rocks I swear, not to mention all the nightmares.

KATIE

Nightmares?

TARA

It's nothing.

Katie scans the radio channels. She stops on one and turns up the volume.

RADIO D.J. (O.S.)

This just in. Another young woman has been reported missing, and although police are remaining mum, there appears to be a strong pattern with a recent abduction turned homicide. The police are on the look out for an old beat-up white truck reported at two of the scenes at the time of the disappearances. Please, everyone, listening out there, be mindful of your surroundings.

KATIE

Oh, that's creepy.

Tara mumbles while staring out the side window.

TARA

That's an understatement

EXT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara climbs out of Katie's car, dragging her hospital bag with her. She leans in to close the door.

Katie leans closer to the window, concern etches her features.

KATIE

You sure you wanna be alone? I don't mind staying.

TARA

No, thanks...I just want to lie down.

KATIE

Okay, I'll stop by tomorrow.

TARA

Bye.

Tara closes the car door, waves, and watches Katie drive away. Katie stops at an intersection and barely avoids a red sports car running through the stop sign.

Katie HONKS her horn and drives away, unharmed. The bumper sticker of the back of the red sports car displays SPEED THROUGH THE DAY.

TARA
She'll be fine. It was just a dream.

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara tosses her bag by the front door and secures the chain lock.

TARA
Nothing's going to happen to Katie.
It was just a dream.

Pouring a glass of water from the kitchen sink, Tara swallows two pain pills. She takes a deep breath and curls up on the sofa. She closes her eyes.

DREAM - A ROOM AT NIGHT

Shades cover the windows. Tara sits in the center of the room. Slats of light dance around the room.

A black cat appears in the left corner and HISSES. Tara moves to the right in order to get away from it.

Another black cat appears in the right corner and HISSES. Tara backs away, trying to avoid both cats. Two cats appear on the back wall and GROWL.

Tara jumps back.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. TARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tara tosses and turns in her bed.

DREAM - A ROOM AT NIGHT

The HISSING cats continue to appear throughout the room until the floor is covered, and they pile on top of each other.

Tara panics and looks around the room for a door. There is no door - only windows.

A large black cat emerges from the mess of smaller cats with a scar across its eye and down its face. Saliva drips from his sharp fangs.

The smaller cats sit back and watch, their tails twitching in the air.

DREAM - OUTSIDE THE ROOM AT NIGHT

Tara jumps through a window. She lands on her side, lying several feet away from a dead young woman.

Tara is covered with glass and groans, unable to move from the pain caused by her fresh wounds. Blood drips from several scratches covering Tara's face and arms.

Tara turns and stares into the eyes of the dead woman. Both Tara and the dead woman's eyes are wide open, showing a sheer look of terror.

The body is dragged across the lawn through overgrown weeds. Blood smears underneath it. The limbs are bruised, mangled, and beaten, but the silver ring on its hand looks clean and undamaged.

Sparks of light flicker around the corpse.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. TARA'S ROOM - DAY

Tara's eyes pop open. She sits up and examines her room.

An alarm BUZZES. Tara jumps. Then she slams her hand onto the snooze button. The clock reads: 6:00 A.M.

TARA

Ugh, seven o'clock science labs. I hate these.

She tosses the covers aside and stumbles out of bed. Feeling a loose bandage, she tries to reseal it.

The homeless man peers into her window. He slips and hits the window with his hand before falling to the ground. Startled, Tara looks out the window but sees nothing.

EXT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara walks around the cars parked on the street. Her overstuffed backpack is slung over her shoulder. She notices an object behind the wheel of an old white truck and walks back to investigate.

She jumps when she sees a dead black cat. A trail of blood leads to a large puddle a few feet away in the middle of the street.

The stomach is flattened and the head is oddly cranked to the side. Tara leans over the cat and gasps. The cat looks identical the large cat in her dreams had, but there are no scars on its face.

Paul walks up behind her. He scratches his head as he looks at the cat.

PAUL
Road kill, huh?

Tara spins around and steps back in surprise. She steps on the dead cat. It squishes below her foot. She gasps and lurches forward.

Tara touches her chest.

TARA
Paul, you scared me.

Small wiggly lines of light surround Paul. Tara hears a faint RINGING sound and leans against the neighbor's car to regain her balance. The lights and sound fade.

PAUL
Heh! Sorry. Is it yours?

Tara touches her head while light flashes and sparks around her.

Tara stares at the dead cat.

SUPER: Face of the cat from her dream.

TARA
It doesn't make sense.

PAUL
Tara.

Paul places his hand on Tara's shoulder and shakes her a little.

PAUL
You okay?

Tara shakes herself out of her thoughts and stares at Paul.

TARA
No. Yes. What are you doing here?

PAUL

One of the guys in my electrical engineering class lives around here.

He points to the apartment complex and holds up a book titled FUNDAMENTALS.

PAUL

I'm borrowing his book for our test tonight. Where are you headed?

Tara relaxes.

TARA

I was walking to science lab. My car's wrecked.

Paul points to Tara's head.

PAUL

I was going to ask you what you did to yourself.

Tara touches her head and looks down at the ground. She shifts on her feet.

PAUL

Looks like it banged you up pretty bad.

TARA

Yeah, I was lucky.

PAUL

I'm headed that way. Can I give you a ride?

TARA

Oh, no. That's okay.

PAUL

It's no problem, really.

Tara shrugs and smiles.

TARA

Okay.

They walk to Paul's car. Tara notices the back custom license plate A18 S 15N. Paul holds the door open for her, but Tara pauses before climbing in.

She drops her bag to the ground and stares into Paul's backseat.

TARA

Oh.

PAUL

Still haven't cleaned it out.

TARA

Oh, no. No problem.

Tara walks to the back of the car.

TARA

We can just throw my bag in the trunk.

Paul steps in front of the trunk.

PAUL

That won't be necessary.

Tara's eyes narrow in suspicion.

Paul laughs and moves to the side of the car. He opens the back door of the car and shoves some boxes, tools, rope, masking tape, and bags to the side. He forces Tara's front seat to slide back a few inches.

PAUL

That should give you some extra room.

Paul closes the back door while Tara climbs in to the front seat. He jogs around the car, climbs in, and they drive away.

The homeless man limps toward his truck.

INT. COLLEGE FOOD COURT - DAY

Students roam the college campus. A red flyer is posted on the door. A picture of the security guard is at the top. It reads: MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR JOHN DELL.

Tara and Paul walk through the food court. Katie is sitting at a table and waves Tara over.

KATIE

Hey! Over here.

Tara and Paul stop at her table.

Paul waves to Katie.

PAUL
Hi, there.

Katie examines Paul. Her gaze approvingly sweeps up and down. She smiles at him shying a bit.

KATIE
Uh, hi. Where are you two headed?

TARA
Science lab.

Tara fakes gagging herself.

KATIE
In a rush?

Tara glances at her watch.

TARA
We're a bit early, actually.

Katie sets down one of the red fliers. Tara picks it up.

TARA
What happened?

KATIE
Not sure.

PAUL
Heard he witnessed a murder.

TARA
A murder?

KATIE
It's that killer. I'm telling you
it's getting worse!

Tara shivers and rubs her arm.

TARA
Let's not talk about that. Excited
for the week?

KATIE
I hate Mondays!

TARA
Why did I ask? You say that every
week.

PAUL
I'll grab us some coffee.

He turns to Katie.

PAUL
Want anything?

Katie holds up a large cup. Her braided silver bracelets slip
down her arm.

KATIE
No thanks. I'm good.

Paul nods and walks over to the food counters. Tara sits next
to Katie, setting her backpack down. Katie nudges Tara.

KATIE
Did you see the news?

TARA
No, why?

KATIE
Another college student went
missing. They think it's a serial
killer.

TARA
It's a scary world.

KATIE
Her name is Amber Paisley. Do you
know her?

TARA
Should I?

KATIE
She lives right by you - in the
same complex and everything.

Tara shrugs and looks away.

TARA
So do hundreds of other students.

Katie frowns. Paul returns with the coffee and hands Tara her
cup.

KATIE
I'm thinking about dying my hair a
lighter shade. What do you think?

Tara looks up at Paul and accepts her cup.

TARA
Thanks.

Tara half shakes her head and frowns at Katie.

TARA
Suit yourself.

PAUL
Nah, you should go darker. Would
fit your features.

KATIE
Hmm.

PAUL
Ready? We don't want to be late.

TARA
Yeah.

Tara pulls her backpack over her shoulder. She pauses at the
table.

TARA
Oh, Katie, before I forget, do you
mind if I catch a ride home with
you?

KATIE
Not at all. You still haven't gone
car shopping?

Tara shakes her head.

TARA
No, shouldn't the car insurance
people be sending me a check or
something?

Katie smacks her forehead.

KATIE
I forgot to give you the paperwork,
didn't I? It's sitting on my table.
Where do you want to meet?

TARA
Back here, around three?

KATIE
Okay, see ya then. I'm free this evening if you want to pass by the dealership.

Paul rubs the back of his neck.

PAUL
Well, there goes my question.

KATIE
What's that?

PAUL
Oh, I was just doing a little bit of celebrating after my test tonight.

KATIE
We shouldn't be out that late.

Tara looks away and shrugs.

PAUL
Well, I've got Tara's number. How about I give y'all a call tonight?

KATIE
Sounds good.

Tara hugs Katie.

TARA
Thanks. See ya 'round three.

Paul waves to Katie

PAUL
Bye.

Tara and Paul walk to class.

EXT. TARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tara pulls up in a new car. Katie pulls up behind her. Katie jumps out of her car and walks up to Tara's car. Tara climbs out and leans against the car, touching the roof.

KATIE
How was the ride?

TARA

It's a nice car, but I still miss my old one.

KATIE

You will forget about it soon enough.

Tara frowns and eyes the car.

TARA

I don't know.

Katie returns to her car. Wiggly lines of white light shine around her. Tara lifts her head from the car after the light disappears.

KATIE

The future's all that matters.

TARA

You're right.

Tara closes the car door.

KATIE

I'll be expecting a phone call tonight.

Smiling, Tara pretends to shoo Katie away.

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tara walks in and throws her book bag by the side of the door. She collapses on the sofa and flips through several television channels before settling on the news. A news anchor is in the middle of a report.

A picture of a young college student flashes across the screen.

ANCHOR MAN

Jessa, a third college student, has gone missing. Meanwhile, police have identified the second badly burned body as Amber Paisley and can directly link it to what appears to be a serial killer on the loose. He is believed to be mid forties and driving an old white truck. Police have few leads and encourage anyone with information to call crime stoppers.

Pictures of several items owned by the victims are shown on the television screen: a cell phone, gold hoop earrings, and a silver ring.

ANCHOR MAN (O.S.)
 These are some of the items missing
 from the victims.

FLASHBACK - OUTSIDE OF THE ROOM DREAM

The body is dragged across the lawn through overgrown weeds. Blood smears underneath it. The limbs are bruised, mangled, and beaten, but the silver ring on its hand looks clean and undamaged.

BACK TO PRESENT

TARA
 The ring...

Tara flips off the television. Clutching a small pillow, she closes her eyes. Tears drip onto the pillow.

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - LATER

BUZZ. Tara's phone vibrates across the living room table, waking her up. Reaching for it, Tara rolls off the sofa. She grabs the phone from the table and climbs back onto the sofa.

TARA
 (groggily)
 Hello?

PAUL (V.O.)
 Hey, Tara.

TARA
 Hey.

PAUL (V.O.)
 Oh, no. I didn't wake you, did I?

TARA
 No, no, it's okay.

PAUL (V.O.)
 Great. I'm swinging by to grab you
 and Katie. Be ready.

TARA
 Okay. Bye.

Tara yawns and arches her back.

PAUL

Bye.

Tara hangs up the phone and calls Katie.

KATIE (V.O.)

Hello?

TARA

Get up!

KATIE

What? Did he call?

TARA

He's on his way.

KATIE (V.O.)

Oh, what should I wear?

TARA

Clothes.

KATIE (V.O.)

Brat.

Tara hangs up the phone with a grin. Tara grabs a glass of water. Opening up her pain medicine, she swallows two pills. Looking back into the bottle, she sighs.

TARA

Time for a refill.

EXT. TARA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tara opens her front door. Paul stands on the doorstep grinning.

PAUL

Ready?

Tara locks the door behind them.

TARA

How can you wear pants in this southern humidity?

PAUL

Because I'm the whitest Cajun in the south.

TARA

Do you ever wear shorts?

PAUL
Not if I can help it. Not with my
scrawny chicken legs.

Tara laughs and touches Paul's arm.

TARA
Let's go.

Paul escorts Tara to his car. Several stars shine in the night sky. Two bright stars rotate slowly around each other, staying on opposite sides of the moon. The moon takes on an orange hue.

TARA
Did you see...?

Paul looks up. The stars and moon are normal again.

PAUL
What?

TARA
Nothing, it was nothing.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - NIGHT

Tara slides in to her seat. Paul climbs in, his pant leg catching on the seat, exposing part of his muscular calf.

TARA
Those are some chicken legs.

Paul shoves his pant leg down past his ankle. Tara shakes her head.

TARA
I don't get it. Most guys here
would kill for tone like that.

Paul doesn't say anything. Tara looks down, unsure.

They secure their seat belts while the car warms up. Paul flips on the radio.

TARA
So, where are we headed?

PAUL
Oh, I have a little spot I like to
go to when I want to disappear.

Tara studies Paul.

TARA
Ever get the feeling there's
something more going on?

PAUL
What do you mean?

TARA
Something's not right. Like
something's trying to speak to me.

PAUL
Uh oh. Is that a good or a bad
thing?

Tara touches the healing wound on her head.

TARA
I don't know.

PAUL
Ouch. That doesn't sound like it
could be good. What happened?

TARA
You wouldn't believe me, if I told
you.

PAUL
How do you know if you won't tell
me?

TARA
Oh, never mind.

Tara gazes out the window and jerks back.

TARA
Katie! Not that I don't want to be
here, but she is really looking
forward to this.

PAUL
Oh. Why do you say that?

TARA
She's not usually forward with
guys. I think she has a bit of a
crush on you.

PAUL
Katie, huh?

Paul grins and considers it.

PAUL
I'm sure I can plan something
special for her one of these
nights.

Paul pulls over to the side of the road, and Katie hops in. Trying not to stare at Katie's short skirt and blobs of makeup, Tara stares out the window.

KATIE
Hey, guys. Where are we headed?

PAUL
Not far.

Paul cautiously pulls onto the road.

PAUL
Hey, Katie, did I leave a grocery
bag back there?

Katie digs around the heap of junk pushed aside in Paul's car. A brown grocery bag sits on the floor. She leans over and peers into it.

Katie grins and holds it up.

KATIE
What's in it?

Tara glances at the backseat. The lights appear as Tara rests the side of her head against the headrest.

PAUL
Open it.

Katie pulls out a bag of marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers.

TARA
Mmmm.

EXT. LEVEE - NIGHT

Paul's car turns off the interstate. They drive through some back roads before turning onto a secluded dirt road. Driving through the trees, Paul stops the car at the bottom of a hill.

They climb out of the car. Katie carries the bag of snacks. Paul walks to the side, gathering sticks and twigs. Tara and Katie run up the hill.

Dark clouds gather in parts of the sky.

TARA

Wow! This is so peaceful.

Katie shivers and glances around.

KATIE

I don't know. It's a little too quiet.

Tara nudges Katie and grins.

TARA

No, if you listen, you can hear everything.

The wind blows their hair out of place. The moon light reflects off the placid surface of the water. Tara and Katie stand at the top of the hill watching the river below them on the other side.

The waves CRASH against the chunks of cement that separate the shore from the river.

FLASHBACK - LEVEE DREAM

The body hits some broken slabs of cement at the bottom of the hill before SPLASHING in the water.

BACK TO SCENE

Tara shakes the picture from her head.

Paul walks over the hill and sets the twigs in between a circle of stones. Pulling out his lighter, he shields the sparks from the wind. The twigs catch fire. He grabs a few small logs and sets them in the pit. The fire grows.

Tara and Katie walk over by him and sit by the fire. Paul puts the marshmallows on sticks and hands each of the girls one.

As Paul sits, Tara notices a red mark on his leg.

TARA

What happened to your leg?

Paul fixes his pant leg and frowns.

PAUL
Nothing, just an old scar.

Paul turns his marshmallow over the flames. It catches fire. Paul watches it for a second before blowing it out.

PAUL
Had I listened to my father, it
never would have happened.

Tara blows on her marshmallow and looks at Paul. He stares into the fire.

TARA
Come here often?

Paul wipes his forehead and leans back.

PAUL
Like I said, only when I want to
disappear for awhile.

Looking up at the sky, Katie sees the two stars. The clouds circle around them.

TARA
Ever see anything strange?

KATIE
Hmm. That's something you never see
in the city.

Katie points to the bright stars.

PAUL
Supposedly, the stars are what
guide our lives.

KATIE
My star must be cursed, then.

TARA
Mine, too.

Katie stares at Paul.

KATIE
Do you really believe in that
stuff?

PAUL
I'm sure there is some truth to it.

TARA
(muttering)
Wish there wasn't.

Tara stares at the stars. The two brightest ones move closer together, spiraling inward.

TARA
Hey, look at that.

Katie and Paul look up.

KATIE
What? I don't see anything.

TARA
The stars, they are moving.

KATIE
The stars always rotate, it's
caused by...

Tara interrupts Katie.

TARA
No, those two bright ones, they are
moving together, circling.

Katie stares harder at the sky, then looks at Tara.

KATIE
Are you feeling okay? Nothing is
happening to the stars.

Tara looks at Katie confused then looks back up at the sky.
The stars are normal.

Tara's eyes fill with tears.

TARA
I'm fine. It's nothing.

Tara stands, turning her back to the fire.

A faint sound of leaves CRUMBLING and twigs CRACKING comes
from the woods in front of Tara. Tara jumps.

TARA
D-did you hear that?

KATIE
You mean the wind?

Tara turns around and walks to the trees.

TARA

No.

Tara yells into the darkness.

TARA

Hello? Who's out there?

KATIE

Tara, you're scaring me.

Paul looks at Katie and puts his finger on his lips. He creeps up behind Tara.

Paul grabs Tara by her sides.

PAUL

Rarr.

Tara screams at the top of her lungs. Paul and Katie laugh hysterically. Tara chases Paul back by Katie, slapping him on the arm.

TARA

That's not funny. You nearly gave me a heart attack.

PAUL

What did you expect to be out there? It's probably a deer or something.

Rain drops start rapidly falling, extinguishing the fire.

KATIE

Oh, no!

PAUL

Run for it.

They grab their stuff and climb into the car, soaking wet. Lightning CRASHES around them, sparking on the ground nearby.

Katie screams and grabs onto Paul. He pats her hand and grins.

Tara stares out the window. The two brightest stars move away from each other.

DREAM - SCHOOL LAB DURING THE DAY

Several students stand against the wall. Their faces are hidden, but a red glow surrounds all of them. A computer turns on.

A small image of a fire appears in the center of the screen. It grows until it covers the screen. Real flames burst through the monitor shattering the glass.

The room fills with smoke as the fire grows. The students disappear into the wall of flames.

Faint SCREAMS come from the behind the flames.

The fire engulfs everything before fading into the darkness.

DREAM - LEVEE AT NIGHT

Jessa, lies flat on her back. Her facial expression is frozen. A hand grabs her head and another hand lifts her body from the trunk.

A man grunts as he pulls her out.

He places her body on the ground, watching her for a while. Brown liquid splatters on her face. A light sparks. She erupts in flames.

Her body rolls down the hill, hitting several rocks on the way down. Some of the flames die. The body plunges into the river below.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara opens her eyes. She glances at the clock: 7:25 A.M. She jumps out of her bed and runs to the bathroom.

TARA

Oh, I'm late. I'm late. I'm late.

She changes her shirt, tossing it toward the laundry bin. It misses and falls to the floor. She slips on her sandals, grabs her keys, and bolts to the door.

She slams the door behind her. A cockroach appears from behind the laundry bin and crawls under Tara's old shirt.

INT. SCIENCE BUILDING - DAY

Swinging the door open, Tara runs into the building. Construction men are working outside. The BUZZ of the drills and saws fade as Tara makes her way through the building.

Tara runs up the stairs and walks very fast down the halls. Her shoes CLANK against the floor.

The hall is deserted and she rushes past several empty classrooms. A cockroach runs across one of the empty classrooms.

She stops half way down the hall. Tara takes a deep breath, pauses, and takes another deep breath. She looks around. No one is in the hall or surrounding classrooms.

Tara sniffs the air.

TARA

Gas.

A red phone hangs on the side wall. Emergency in bold red letters marks the receiver. Tara picks it up and presses 0.

TARA

Hello, Campus police? Yes, there's an unusual gas smell on the 5th floor of the science building.

Tara pauses long enough to listen.

TARA

Yeah. I did notice all of the construction. Oh, that's what it probably is. Okay...yeah...it's probably nothing, but I thought someone should know.

Tara hangs up the phone and sneaks into her lab class through the back door.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - DAY

Paul, sitting in one of the front rows, turns and smiles at Tara. TEACHER, male early 40s, stops talking and turns to Tara.

Flashes of light and RINGING appear around him then fade away.

TEACHER

Nice of you to join us, Tara.

Tara sags into her back row seat. She sets her backpack under her desk and pulls out her textbook.

TARA

Sorry.

The fire alarm RINGS. Tara looks around and drops her book back into her bag.

TEACHER

Okay, class. Nothing to worry about. I'm sure it's just another fire drill. You've been doing these since kindergarten.

INT. SCIENCE BUILDING - DAY

Students calmly exit the room and walk down the stairs. Several cockroaches scatter as the students enter the stairwell.

Students from other classes join them in the hall. Tara pushes ahead. Paul follows her.

Tara does not slow down. Paul runs up to her side and touches her arm.

PAUL

Overslept?

TARA

Yeah, these dreams are keeping me up at night. Plus, on my way to class, I stopped to call...

Two female students, KRISTY and ANDREA, start talking. They rudely push ahead, walking in front of Tara and Paul.

KRISTY

Oh, it's always a fire drill, Andrea.

ANDREA

I know there is no fire. I mean, there isn't even any smoke.

KRISTY

They probably have some stupid quota they have to meet.

ANDREA

Yeah, I always hated these.

Paul looks at Tara and shakes his head. He leans closer to Tara.

PAUL

You know, you're walking pretty fast for a fire drill.

TARA

Paul, honestly, I think something's wrong. Before I came into class, I smelled gas. I called security and told them...

KRISTY

Gas!

Andrea yells.

ANDREA

There's a gas leak in the building!

Panic spreads among the students, and they push each other to get down the stairs. Screams erupt from the crowd. They surge out of the building.

EXT. SCIENCE BUILDING - DAY

A fire truck arrives. Two security guards escort students away from the building. The crowd becomes more and more hysterical. Some start crying.

Tara and Paul meet on the other side of the sidewalk. The last STUDENT walks out. He stands with the door open, pulling out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. The door begins to close.

The student holds out his arms.

STUDENT

What's the big deal?

He flicks the lighter.

The door closes.

A RUMBLE from inside the building brings silence to the crowd. The doors and several windows throughout the building explode.

The door behind him is carried by the explosion and hits the student, knocking him down. Glass sprinkles throughout the yard below. Most of the students fall to the ground by the force of the explosion.

Students scream and scatter in all directions seeking cover.

Tara is frozen in her tracks. Fire emerges from the broken windows. Glancing at Paul, she notices he is intensely watching the fire and stands unafraid.

A grin twitches at the corner of his mouth.

Tara stares at the building, stunned. The student lies dead, blood seeping from his mouth. A faint RINGING noise rises around Tara.

The SCREAMS grow louder, blending in with the rising pitch of the RINGING.

INT. TARA'S ROOM - DAY

Tara runs into her room and throws herself onto her bed. Screaming into her pillow, she punches at the mattress.

She looks up. Her face is red. Her hair mats to the tears running down her face.

Angrily grabbing the bottle of pills on the side table, Tara dumps several in her mouth and gulps them down.

The phone RINGS. Tara hesitates then picks it up.

TARA

Hello?

PAUL (V.O.)

Tara, are you okay? You disappeared today.

TARA

Yeah, I'm fine.

Tara wipes away her tears.

PAUL (V.O.)

Well, I won't keep you. Take it easy and see you tomorrow.

TARA

Bye.

Tara hangs up the phone. She walks into the bathroom and throws up.

DREAM - A HOUSE - DAY

JACK and his PARTNER are putting up house siding. Jack climbs a ladder and nails a piece of siding to the house. His partner hands him another section.

Jack lines it up against the house, but he pushes it too far out. He almost drops it, but as he pulls it back, he hits an electric wire and gets shocked. ZAP!

Jack drops the siding. It falls into a bed of roses.

PARTNER

Oh, my God! Jack! Jack, are you all right?

His partner's eyes widen. He climbs down the ladder. His Partner walks up to him, grasping his shoulder in worry.

PARTNER

Jack?

Jack sits on the ground. His body holds rigid. His eyes roll into the back of his head, and he falls backwards.

Partner runs to the front of the house.

PARTNER

Someone call 9-1-1.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. TARA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tara lies in her bed covered with pillows and covers. Her hair is knotted from tossing and turning in bed. Her eyes pop open, and she sits up.

ZAP! ZAP! A spark of light flashes twice in the window. Tara jumps out of bed.

She peers out the window. The bug zapper flashes again - ZAP.

TARA

Stupid bug zapper.

Tara hits her head on the wall a few times before climbing back into bed.

TARA

It's just a dream.

Tara's eyes pop open. The color drains from her face.

FLASHBACK - SCIENCE LAB DREAM

The room fills with smoke and the fire grows. The students disappear into the wall of flames. Faint SCREAMS come from behind the flames.

FLASHBACK - OUTSIDE OF SCIENCE BUILDING

SCREAMS erupt from the crowd as they surge out of the building...Most of the students are forced to the ground by the force of the explosion.

Students scream and scatter in all directions, running for cover.

BACK TO SCENE

TARA
It's some kind of sign.

The BUZZING of drills fills her ears.

TARA
Oh, no.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Tara cautiously walks through the campus paying particular attention to maintenance men and construction workers.

The sidewalks are dug up as they lay cable and pipes for the new building. Another crew surveys the damaged building from the fire.

Katie walks up behind her.

KATIE
Hey, girl.

Tara jumps.

KATIE
What's with you lately? You've been so...so jumpy.

INT. FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

They take a short cut through the food court. As they enter through the front door, a cockroach scampers away from them.

Tara pauses a minute, clutching the door knob tight before continuing to walk.

Flashes of light erupts around her. The RINGING rises and fades.

TARA
No, I haven't.

KATIE
I hardly hear from you anymore. Are you seeing Paul? Is that why you never call me?

TARA
No, he's just in my science class. I told you that.

KATIE
Well, don't let him go to waste. Set him up with me.

TARA
If it makes you happy.

KATIE
It would.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

Katie walks across the sidewalk, away from the food court.

TARA
Oh, I hate these late afternoon classes. I'll see you, Katie.

KATIE
Bye.

JACK is sawing boards with a power saw for the new building. The power saw makes a CLANKING noise and jams. Tara closes her eyes.

TARA
No, not now.

JACK
Oh, shit!

Tara shakes her head as the maintenance guy fiddles with his tool. The blade guard is stuck.

Tara whispers to herself.

TARA

Don't come true. Don't come true.

The saw turns on, ripping through Jack's sleeve.

JACK

Ahh!

Blood spurts from his arm. Another maintenance guy, his partner, runs over to him.

Partner yells at the gathering crowd.

PARTNER

We need something to tie his arm.
It looks like he hit an artery.
Someone call an ambulance.

He rips off a sleeve from his jacket and ties it around Jack's arm.

PARTNER

Hang in there, Jack. Help is on the way.

Jack groans, slowly losing consciousness. Students gawk at the scene before one student finally calls an ambulance on his cell phone.

Tara runs away, crying.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

There's a KNOCK at the door. Katie looks through the peep hole before answering it. Tara is standing on her doorstep, pale. Her eyes are red from crying. Mascara stains her cheeks.

KATIE

What's wrong?

TARA

Can I crash here tonight?

KATIE

Of course.

Katie pulls Tara inside.

KATIE

What happened? You look like you've seen a ghost.

TARA
If I told you, you wouldn't believe
me.

They sit together on the sofa.

KATIE
Since when do we keep secrets?

Tara rubs her face and leans back.

TARA
I'm exhausted. Can we talk
tomorrow?

Katie grabs a pillow and blanket.

KATIE
Whatever it is, it can't be as bad
as this final I have first thing in
the morning.

Tara lies down on the sofa. Katie walks to the bedroom and
flips off the light.

KATIE (O.S.)
It's not like anyone died.

Tara closes her eyes tight.

DREAM - A STREET - DAY

A kid is laughing and running down the street. His blonde
hair is blowing with the wind. He jumps and giggles. A kidney
shaped birthmark mars his face. He stops and stares at Tara.

A car appears in the street and hits him. He is crushed to
the ground. Tara runs to him. His eyes are open, staring at
her, lifeless.

Blood drips from his mouth and nose.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara screams. She wakes up and looks around. The blinds are
open and the sun is shining bright. She blinks at the clock:
10:00 A.M.

Tara pokes her head in Katie's room. Her wallet is on her
night stand. Clothes are scattered on the floor.

Tara slips on her shoes and leaves.

EXT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara steps on Katie's keys laying on the front porch halfway under the doormat. Tara leans over and picks them up. She pulls out the crawfish key chain and studies it. She walks back into the apartment.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

TARA

Katie?

Tara searches Katie's room, closet, pantry, and back porch. She becomes more panicked with each opened door.

EXT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara runs back outside and looks down the street. Katie's car is still there. She looks down the other side of the street.

Tara screams with a sob.

TARA

Katie!

KATIE (O.S.)

Tara?

Tara spins around.

TARA

Katie, I thought you had a test this morning.

KATIE

Yeah, I just got home. I had to stop at the office and pay the rent. The test was boring. All about coding and how numbers correspond to letters and...

TARA

(hysterically)

But you left your keys and your wallet...

Katie pulls out a wallet and keys from her pocket.

KATIE

Oh, no. I just bought this new one. I had to pull everything out of the old one last night. And my keys are right here.

KATIE(cont'd)

I left the spare ones under the mat
in case you needed to get back in
before I came home.

Katie rubs Tara's shoulder.

KATIE

What is going on?

Tara cries and walks to her car.

TARA

I'm sorry, Katie.

Katie watches her for a second. Then she follows Tara once
she realizes she is starting her car.

KATIE

Tara, wait.

TARA

I'm okay, Katie, really.

Tara closes her car door and drives away.

INT. TARA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tara turns up the volume knob to the radio. She shakes her
head a few times.

TARA

Oh.

Glancing at the gas gauge, the needle points to empty.

TARA

Damn it! Damn it!

EXT. QUICK STOP - DAY

Tara pulls into a quick stop. Paul is standing by the gas
pumps filling up a small red container with gas. He waves.

PAUL

Hey, Tara.

Tara walks toward him, wiping her eyes.

TARA

Hey, Paul. What are you doing here?

PAUL

Filling up.

Paul examines the container.

PAUL
Taking care of a few chores.

TARA
How'd you do on that lab test?

Paul places the container in the back of his trunk. Tara stares at it, confused. There are no lines of white light this time.

Paul slams the trunk closed and grins.

The homeless man peers around the corner of the gas station. A beat up white truck sits a few feet behind him.

PAUL
I do okay with chemistry. You?

Tara tears her gaze away from him.

TARA
I'll find out today when the grades are posted.

PAUL
Yeah, I'm headed over there myself.

TARA
All right. I'll see you there.

Paul nods and smiles.

Tara starts to walk inside, but she notices a little boy with blonde hair riding a scooter. Tara hurries over to him. The boy comes to the corner and starts to cross when a car turns right into the intersection.

Paul runs up behind them. He grins as the car approaches the boy. Tara pulls the boy off the scooter, and the car hits the scooter.

Paul looks more disappointed than relieved. The DRIVER stops and runs out the car.

DRIVER
Is anyone hurt? I'm so sorry. My brakes didn't want to work.

The little boy begins to cry.

TARA
He's fine. Physically anyway.

Tara looks at boy, but he has no marks on his face. The boy runs up the street. Tara is confused and rubs her head.

PAUL
That was close.

A red sports car speeds through a red light and slams into a station wagon that was pulling out into the intersection. The bumper sticker on the back of the red sports car reads SPEED THROUGH THE DAY.

An object flies through the window of the car. A crowd quickly gathers. Tara and Paul follow.

As they approach, they sees an overturned car seat. Tara turns and shields her eyes from the site.

A WOMAN starts screaming hysterically. Paul watches intently. The woman holds her head and sobs.

WOMAN
I thought I'd buckled him.

A toddler crawls out the front door of the woman's car. He rubs the big goose egg on his forehead.

The woman grabs her child and kisses his head, holding him tight.

WOMAN
Oh, my God! Oh, my God!

TARA
This doesn't make sense.

PAUL
What doesn't make sense?

The OWNER of the sports car is leaning into the passenger's side. A man is slouched over on the dashboard. A large circular crack covers the right hand side of the windshield.

OWNER
(panicky)
He's not breathing.

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara returns home. Tears are streaming down her face. She throws her bag to the side, slamming her fists over and over again into the wall.

The phone RINGS. Tara takes several breaths before answering the phone.

KATIE (V.O.)
So, are you going to tell me what's
going on?

Tara snuffles and wipes her eyes.

TARA
Nothing, Katie.

KATIE (V.O.)
Are you crying? I'm coming over.

TARA
No, my head just hurts.

Tara grabs her pain medicine off the side table. She unscrews the child safety cap and pops two pills.

KATIE (V.O.)
I'm worried about you. I'm coming
over.

Tara lies back on the sofa.

TARA
Fine.

She hangs up the phone and turns on the television. Her eyes droop, and she passes out.

ANCHOR MAN
Several reports have placed a man
in his mid 40s driving an old white
truck at the scene of the crimes,
the nights the girls have gone
missing.

DREAM - ABANDONED PLANTATION - NIGHT

Katie is pushed out of a car with her hands tied up and her eyes blindfolded.

A man walks around the back of the car. His face is not visible, but she sees the license plate 123 FIR.

The man walks over to Katie, bending down to touch her.

His hand sweeps across the side of her face. Her body is picked up and tossed over his shoulder. He carries her to the house. The door loudly SQUEAKS as it opens. FOOTSTEPS travel through another room.

Katie is thrown to the floor. A thumb flicks a lighter. It sparks in the darkness.

MAN

Soon Katie...soon.

The man walks out of the room and slams the door shut. The lock CLICKS, and Katie whimpers in the dark.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara wakes up to the late night news. She looks at her clock and calls Katie. The phone rings.

TARA

You should be here by now. Where are you?

The answering machine picks up and BEEPS.

TARA

Katie, this is Tara. I fell asleep, so if you tried to come over, I missed you. Please give me a call the moment you hear this.

Tara hangs up the phone and folds her arms, leaning against the wall. Tara touches her head and cringes.

She grabs the bottle of pills and walks into her bedroom, closing the door behind her.

INT. TARA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tara lies asleep in bed, tossing and turning. Her hand is to the side of her head. She moans.

SUPER: Images of fire and Katie bound and gagged.

A red glow surrounds Katie. A man approaches with a red tank of gas.

SUPER: Street sign 3780, bent and rusted.

SUPER: licence plate number 123 FIR on a car parked outside an abandoned house. White light from the mirror of the car reflects and grows, encompassing view.

SUPER: A freckled FACE.

FACE
Are you aware?

The face multiplies overlapping each other.

FACES
Are you aware?

The voices ECHO.

SUPER: One face emerges from the group and the others fade.

FACE
Are you aware?

INT. TARA'S ROOM - DAY

Sunlight fills the room through an open window, shin on Tara. She squeezes her eyes shut, knotting her forehead not wanting to wake up. Tara squints at the clock: 11:45 A.M.

TARA
Katie!

Tara flings aside the covers and stumbles out of bed. She dials Katie's phone number several times, but the answering machine continues to pick up, BEEPING each time.

Lines of light and a RINGING sound appear. Tara drops the phone and covers her ears. She closes her eyes and screams.

INT. TARA'S ROOM - LATER

Tara calls Katie, no answer. Tara grabs her purse, and leaves her apartment. As the door closes behind her, a cockroach appears from under a book shelf. It crawls back into the dark.

EXT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara pulls up behind several police vehicles and one ambulance. Yellow crime scene tape surrounds the front patio of Katie's apartment.

Darting out from her car, Tara runs up to the crowd of people. She passes a black van marked CRIME SCENE UNIT on the way.

TARA
Katie? Katie!

An OFFICER stops her, but Tara fights getting closer and closer to the crime scene tape.

One of Katie's bracelets lays unprotected on the front porch. Another officer picks it up and bags it.

TARA
Oh, no!

OFFICER
Ma'am, first of all, I need you to calm down.

TARA
Katie! Katie, where are you?

OFFICER
Ma'am, if you insist on crossing that line, I will have no choice but to arrest you.

Calming down to speak, Tara points to the front door.

TARA
My best friend lives there. What's going on?

OFFICER
Ma'am, please step back. I'll find a detective to talk to you.

TARA
Wait, you have to find Paul. He will help find her...he will!

OFFICER
Who is Paul? Does he have a last name?

TARA
I...I don't know his last name. We just met.

Tara looks lost.

TARA

Wait, I know his license plate number. It's uh, A 1 8 S 1 5 N

The officer jots it down.

OFFICER

Stay here ma'am. I will be right back with a detective. Don't worry. We caught the guy. It will only be a matter of time before we find her.

Tara glances at a police car. Two officers maneuver him into the car. She recognizes him. His voice is halted

HOMELESS MAN

The girrrrls, he urt them.

He reaches to Tara.

HOMELESS MAN

Youuur friend, sheeees in d-d-dange-ge-ger.

OFFICER

What have you done with her? Where is she?

HOMELESS MAN

Heee hasss her. He urts them. Big fi-fi-fire.

An officer steps forward with the partially burnt textbook.

OFFICER

And how do you explain this?

HOMELESS MAN

I f-f-found it.

Tara backs away from him in fear. The officer pushes him into the car and slams the door.

OFFICER

Where you're goin', you're gonna to need every excuse you can find.

Tara looks to the side of Katie's house. An old white truck is being hauled off with a tow truck.

Katie's car sits next to her apartment in the driveway. A cockroach crawls across the window. Tara cocks her head and walks closer.

Cracks expand under the cockroach's feet. It stops walking. The cracks crawl over the windshield. The cockroach leaps off, and the glass EXPLODES out.

Tara screams and ducks holding her head. A news REPORTER runs up to her, followed by the cameraman. He shines a bright light in her face.

REPORTER

Are you a friend of Katie Tremble?

Tara looks at the car. The windshield is fine except the small crack. The cockroach is gone. She looks around frantically.

REPORTER

Miss? Are you aware?

Tara steps back, alarmed by the reporter.

TARA

Excuse me?

Tara studies the reporter's face. It is the same face from her dreams. Her I.D. tag ANNE, but the last two letters of her name have faded leaving only AN in bold print.

REPORTER

Are you aware the police are suspecting foul play?

The reporter points to the crime van.

REPORTER

Are you aware her disappearance might be linked to the serial killer? Miss, are you aware?

Tara backs up and runs to her car. As she drives away, a detective approaches the reporter.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - DAY

Tara parks on a one-way street. Every meter flashes NO TIME. DEPOSIT COINS. Shoving her keys into her pocket, she quickly walks to the cafe bypassing several acts on the street.

The sun sinks in the sky.

EXT. ABANDONED NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECTS - NIGHT

Disappearing through the dimly lit back lot, Tara continues walking, searching for the partially printed AN sign.

An alley cat knocks over several cans, startling her. When she looks up, the street sign is staring her in the face.

A cockroach flies at her. She ducks and screams.

Tara dashes to the wire fence looking for the wooden table. The street is empty.

Tara yells down the dark street.

TARA

Where are you? I understand now. I understand.

Tara's walking slows while she looks left and right. She sees nothing. Holding her head down, she begins to traces back her steps.

Lightening CRASHES in the sky. Tara jumps. Turning around, she sees a table appear behind the clearing smoke. Then Madam Vissar rises behind it.

MADAM VISSAR

You return, child.

Tara runs over to Madam Vissar's table.

TARA

Madam Vissar, I understand now.

MADAM VISSAR

You understand what, child?

TARA

My fate. I have to save Katie. The dreams all relate back to her. She's missing, and I...

Madam Vissar calmly lays out three more cards.

MADAM VISSAR

The answers are here, if you want to know.

TARA

I need to know where she is. The killer has been caught, but Katie's still out there.

MADAM VISSAR

Perhaps.

Madam Vissar flips the first card.

MADAM VISSAR

This is the Hanged Man. Your transition has only begun.

Madam Vissar flips the second card.

MADAM VISSAR

This is the Strength card. It was drawn once before. It has returned.

TARA

I understand that, but I need to know where Katie is.

MADAM VISSAR

Things aren't always as they appear, child. Sometimes we see things differently or through other's eyes.

Madam Vissar presses her lips together.

MADAM VISSAR

A warrior must know her limits, though.

Tara's voice rises in panic.

TARA

Limits? Katie is gone, and there is a serial killer preying on college students. Please, help me.

MADAM VISSAR

Do you see that star?

Tara looks up and nods.

MADAM VISSAR

It can help you.

TARA
Will it lead me to Katie?

Madam Vissar shakes her hand.

MADAM VISSAR
No, you must call upon it.

Madam Vissar bows her head.

TARA
What?

MADAM VISSAR
The spirits can help you once if
you summon them. They are like
warriors, powerful and brave.

TARA
How do I call on them?

Madam Vissar shrugs.

MADAM VISSAR
It is a matter of the heart, not
the mind.

Madam Vissar flips the third card, and thunder CRASHES in the
sky, reflecting in her eyes.

MADAM VISSAR
This is Death. You path teeters
along the edge, beware.

Tara hears a GROWL behind her. She turns around. A street dog
stares at her. It is scarred like the cat from her dream.

Closing her eyes for a minute, then opening them, she glances
back at Madam Vissar. Madam Vissar is gone. Saliva drips down
the dogs fangs.

Tara's voice chokes, barely above a whisper.

TARA
Hail, great warrior.

The dog steps forward.

TARA
Star warrior?

The dog growls and draws closer.

TARA

Help.

The dog lunges for her. She turns and runs for it, screaming. The dog snaps at her. She leaps onto the fence, scaling the side. As she reaches the top, the dog catches her pant leg and tugs.

She slips down a little, her fingers straining from the added weight. She kicks at him. The dog releases. Tara swings over the fence and drops down. The dog BARKS at her through the fence.

EXT. EMPTY FIELD - NIGHT

Tara runs into the field. The barking fades into the distance and she stops, gasping for air near the old factory.

She wanders past the vacant parking lot before coming upon two street signs at a corner ITHACA and FIRMAN.

SUPER Image of the license plate from her dreams 123 FIR

Tara looks around at the overgrown fields and follows Firman street. The large hills in the distance protect the land from the river.

Wiggly lines of light appear. Tara sits on the edge of the road while waiting for them to disappear. A faint RINGING sound lasts for a few seconds. Tara stands up and continues walking.

EXT. BAYOU - NIGHT

Tara hurries passing three old dirt roads that turn off Firman street. She counts them as she passes.

TARA

1,2,3...I've got to be close.

The pavement turns to a dirt road that winds into a tree lined driveway. Tara clenches her fists and walks down it, watching all around her. She glances up. The two stars begin to change color. One red, the other blue. They spiral toward each other.

A twig snaps near Tara. She ducks into an overgrown hedge. Her heart beat grows louder. A series of CRACKING twigs and RUSTLING leaves move closer.

Tara holds her breath and presses further into the bush, the branches scratch her arm. Blood bulges to the surface. A raccoon scurries out of the bushes, munching on some leaves.

Tara sighs. Her shoulders sag. She climbs out of the bush, watching the raccoon scamper away.

EXT. OLD PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT

A bent and rusty mailbox labeled 3780 sits not far from her.

A light in a distance house comes on. Tara sneaks toward it, staying in the shadows. Her hand touches the hood of an old car.

The windshield is broken out. A rock sits on the driver's seat. A cockroach climbs over Tara's hand. She stifles a scream and shakes it off.

Tara creeps closer to the house. She gasps as she recognizes it from her dream. The yard is overgrown, and the paint has peeled away from the house. A group of gas tanks rest near the house.

TARA

Please, you have to be here...

Lightening CRASHES in the sky. She jumps, frightened.

TARA

Alive.

Tara quietly approaches the side of the house. Crouching down low, she moves to the front porch.

The door bangs open, hitting against the side of the house. Tara stifles and scream and creeps closer.

Her attention turns to some soft crying. Tara turns around and realizes she is sitting beneath a window. She peers in and sees Katie bound and gagged, squirming on the floor. A cockroach crawls up her leg, but Katie frantically shakes it off.

The door to the room is closed. Tara tugs on the window. It won't budge. Tara taps on the window. Katie spots her. She squirms frantically, screaming through her tape.

Tara puts her hand up trying to signal Katie to stop, but Katie only grows louder.

Tara sneaks onto the back porch. Each stair SQUEAKS louder with each step Tara takes.

TARA

Please, let no one else be here.

Turning the doorknob, Tara pushes the door. It doesn't budge. She tries again and fails. Tara starts to cry.

Tara whispers in the dark.

TARA
No, fate is in my hands. My hands.

Tara pulls her keys out of her pocket. She holds out her grocery card. She slides it through the opening and over the door lock. It CLICKS and the door CREAKS open.

Tara takes a step back and waits. Nothing happens. Tara peers into the dark inside.

INT. OLD PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT

The room is empty. Tara slips inside and over to another door. Tara finds Katie struggling on the floor, crying and choking on her own tears.

TARA
Shh!

Katie panics. She begins to kick and scream.

TARA
Shh! Katie, it's me, Tara.

Katie calms down, mumbling something underneath the tape that covers her mouth. Tara pulls off the tape and struggles to untie Katie's hands.

TARA
Is anyone here with you?

Katie trembles and grabs onto Tara.

KATIE
There's a guy. I couldn't see his face.

TARA
They arrested him, your safe now.

KATIE
When?

TARA
Almost an hour ago.

KATIE

But that's impossible, he was just here.

Tara unties Katie's legs.

Tara grasp Katie by the hand and heads toward the door.

TARA

But if the old man wasn't the killer, then who...?

A man shrouded in shadows stands at the door. Tara and Katie edge backwards. Tara feels an open doorway behind them.

Tara pulls on Katie's shirt and they run for it. The shadow figure, Paul, follows them.

Following the hall, it turns leading them back to the front door.

Tara tugs on the door. It won't open. She pounds her fist on it.

Paul stands in the doorway, laughing.

TARA

Paul...it can't be...why?

Katie throws a lamp at a drape covered window. The glass shatters and she tugs on Tara.

KATIE

Come on.

Paul runs for them. Katie pushes Tara out of Paul's reach and runs for the window. Tara cries out to Katie.

TARA

No.

Katie casts aside the curtains and stares at the broken glass and black bars in horror. Paul grabs her. She struggles with him, grabbing a piece of glass.

As Katie turns to slash at her attacker, she gasps when Paul's face comes into the moonlight.

His fingers clamp around her throat. She slices his face with the shard of glass. Paul grabs his face with his hands releasing Katie. Katie runs through the house catching up to Tara.

Katie pauses to catch her breath.

Tara grabs her by the hand and tugs her up the stairs. Paul pulls out a lighter, flicking it a few times. He stalks slowly behind them up the stairs, blood dripping from his face.

INT. UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Frantically tugging on every door, Tara and Katie are unable to open any of them. Paul appears at the other end of the hallway.

His eyes bulge out his head. Slow taunting steps, he makes his way toward them, flicking his lighter.

PAUL

Your friend is about to pay for her misdeeds. It was good of you to come and watch. I've never had an audience before.

Backing up to the opposite end of the hallway, Tara and Katie cram against the door. Tara feels behind her back for the doorknob. Paul walks closer. Tara turns and tugs on the door.

Flashes of light swirl around Katie then disappear.

TARA

Help us...save us!

A bright light flashes around the door, and it swings open. She yanks Katie into the room, slamming the door in Paul's angry face.

INT. SHRINE ROOM - NIGHT

The room is windowless. It is pitch black with the exception of the light coming from the crack underneath the door. Paul BANGS against the door with his body. Tara and Katie plant themselves against the door forcing it to stay closed.

Katie screams in the dark.

KATIE

Tara, I can't see anything.

Paul muscles the door open enough to grab Katie's shirt. Tara and Katie scream. Katie bites Paul. He hollers in pain and they push the door closed again.

TARA

Just hold the door, Katie. Just hold the door.

The pushing stops. FOOTSTEPS echo down the hall. Tara and Katie slowly ease off the door.

KATIE

Is he gone?

Tara shakes in fear. She feels across the wall for a light switch. The light underneath the door goes out. Tara feels along the wall until she touches a light switch. She flips it on.

Katie trembles and tears fall down her cheeks.

The room is from Tara's dreams. Carved designs in the walls take the place of the windows.

Tara spots the dead bolt, and locks the door. Katie's jaw drops. A shrine of newspaper clippings cover part of the wall. A cell phone, silver ring, one of Katie's bracelets, and gold hoop earrings sit on top of an altar.

Smoke seeps in from underneath the door while Tara and Katie walk up to the altar. Several pictures of girls lay toward the back of the altar. Three of them are the missing girls from the college. There is an old newspaper clipping.

Tara reads it.

TARA

Young girl commits suicide by dowsing herself with gasoline and lighting herself on fire. Young teenager only witness. Paul Boyd was volunteering at the local hospital when the incident occurred.

Katie sifts through and finds a picture of herself.

KATIE

Oh, my, God.

Yanking her picture and bracelet from the altar, Katie shoves the picture into her pocket. She slides the bracelet over her wrist.

Tears stream down Tara's face.

TARA

The signs they were all right in front of me. The gas cans, the lighter, the license plate.

KATIE

What are you talking about?

TARA

A one eight S one five N, if you change the numbers to letters it spells ARSON.

KATIE

Don't blame yourself, he fooled everyone.

Tara coughs from the billowing clouds of smoke.

KATIE

Are you okay?

Katie turns around and sees the smoke coming in from under the door.

KATIE

Tara!

Turning around, Tara stares at the smoke. She darts for the door tugging on the handle. She releases it, and stares at her shaking hand.

It glows red. The lights flicker from the fire.

KATIE

We're going to die. Tara, there's no way out. We're going to die.

Both girls start gagging and coughing. Tara looks up at the ceiling. She notices a string and jumps a few times before grasping it. Attic stairs fall down grazing Katie's shoulder.

Katie grabs her arm where it hit while Tara pushes her onto the steps.

TARA

Katie, come on.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

Climbing up into the attic, Tara scrambles through the boxes and dust to reach a small window.

TARA
Through here.

KATIE
Are you crazy? You can't going to
jump! We've climbed up two flights
of stairs already.

TARA
There's no other way. You know that
old saying, "If everyone else
jumped off a bridge, would you do
it, too?"

KATIE
Yeah, so?

Tara thrusts the window open.

TARA
If you don't jump, you're going to
burn. Come on.

KATIE
Wait.

Smoke is quickly filling up the room. Katie runs to some old
boxes and pulls out several old sheets. A newspaper article
lies buried at the bottom of the box.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

"Father burns mother alive, little boy only witness."

A picture of a young boy with the caption PAUL BOYD.

BACK TO SCENE

Tara picks up the article, but Katie grabs her arm. Tara
shoves the article into her pocket.

KATIE
Help me tie these together. Hurry.

They work together tying all the sheets into one big rope.
Tara places one end around a house beam and throws the bundle
out the window. Katie climbs to the ground. She backs away
and signals for Tara to follow.

EXT. OLD PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul watches in sheer amusement as flames erupt from the house. Then he notices the girls escaping from the attic. He runs to them.

PAUL

There is no escape for you. Bad girls must burn!

Katie runs, but Paul catches up to Tara. Paul flicks his lighter, catching the bottom of her hair on fire.

TARA

No.

Tara drops to the ground, rolling around until the fire in her hair is out. Tara tries to stand up. Paul kicks her in the stomach. She doubles over.

Katie runs to an old shed. On the side is an old wheel barrel and several farm tools.

Paul pulls Tara into an abandoned barn and tosses her on the floor.

Katie grabs a pitch fork and charges at Paul.

Paul moves out the way, and Katie grazes his shirt, ripping the side of it exposing a kidney shaped birth mark. Dizzy and confused, Tara tries to stand up. Paul grabs the pitch fork from Katie. Tara runs after him. Paul turns and knocks Tara against the wall with it.

Tara sinks to the floor, blood seeping from her old wound.

He turns to Katie and smiles. Katie runs to Tara's side. He grabs her by the shoulder and shoves her down, pinning her to the ground with the pitchfork.

DREAM - OUTSIDE A BURNING HOUSE

Tara walks through a field and approaching a burning house. A woman is tied to the porch screaming as the flames lick her body.

BACK TO SCENE

Tara remains unconscious. Paul flicks his lighter, restlessly pacing near Katie.

PAUL
It's your time Katie. Time to burn
like the rest.

Struggling with the pitch fork, Katie sobs.

KATIE
What did I ever do to you?

DREAM - OUTSIDE A BURNING HOUSE.

Tara walks closer to the woman. She cries out.

PAUL'S MOTHER
Help me...forgive me!

A young boy runs up to her. It's Paul.

PAUL
Momma!

FATHER
Stay back Paul.

Paul runs onto the porch and tugs at the ropes. The flames catch his pants on fire. He screams.

Tara reaches for him.

BACK TO SCENE

Paul grabs one of the gas canisters and douses Katie with it. Katie coughs out the gas that enters her mouth. She screams and cries out.

KATIE
I haven't done anything!

DREAM - OUTSIDE A BURNING HOUSE

Paul's father walks up to Paul and pulls him away, patting out the flames with his coat. He moves him further from the screaming woman.

PAUL
What about Momma?

The man eases down on one knee and pulls Paul closer. He whispers in his ear.

BACK TO SCENE

PAUL
Daddy said.

SUPER: Image of Paul's father's face while he speaks to Paul as a boy.

PAUL	FATHER
Bad girls must burn, and all girls are bad.	Bad girls must burn, and all girls are bad.

Tara shakes herself awake and sees Paul setting down the gas can. Spotting the second full gas can, she crawls forward cringing from the pain.

Paul flicks his lighter, pacing at the feet of Katie. Tara twists off the lid of the gas can and steadies herself against the wall as she lifts it.

PAUL
Bad girls must burn, Katie, and you are a bad girl. You were after the forbidden.

KATIE
What are you talking about?

PAUL
You were after my heart, Katie, but no one came closer than Tara.

Paul edges toward Katie, bringing the lighter closer. Katie screams and struggles with the pitchfork.

Tara lurches forward.

TARA
Burn forever, bastard.

Paul snaps his head toward Tara. Katie wriggles free from the pitch fork and scurries away from Paul. Tara throws the gas can at him just as he flicks the lighter.

A stream of gas contacts the flame and explodes. The force throws Tara back into the wall. She slides down, unconscious. Paul disappears in the wall of flames.

Katie runs back to Tara. Blood covers the side of Tara's face. Her body sits, lifeless.

Katie pulls Tara's arm over her shoulder and limps out of the house with her. The house explodes from the half empty gas cans.

Katie falls to the ground from the shock wave. Tara tumbles off to the side. Katie pulls Tara up next to her and lays against a brick wall, her eyes closing from exhaustion.

Katie watches the house crumble to the ground.

Emergency vehicles line the street. The fire fighters aim their hoses to battle the growing fire. A police officer spots the two girls and calls help over.

Paramedics rush to Tara's side. They load her into the ambulance. Katie sits on the ground unable to move. Paramedics drape a blanket over her. The officer walks over to her side.

OFFICER

Some people saw the smoke from
miles away and called us. It's a
good thing they did. What a mess.

Katie rubs the red marks on her wrists. A fire fighter walks up and points over his shoulder.

FIRE FIGHTER

We've got a body.

The officer runs to the house. Smoke fills the air, covering the stars in the sky, casting a red hue over the glowing moon.

A paramedic check's Katie's pupils with a flashlight and signals another paramedic over.

PARAMEDIC

It's over now. We've got you.

After a moment Katie brings herself to look at him. Her face is emotionless.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A cup of water sits on top of the night stand. A tray is set up on the side of the hospital bed. Monitors BEEP and BUZZ throughout the room.

Tara's head is wrapped in gauze bandages. She sees three blurred images of Katie standing over her, which focus down to one blur after a few seconds.

Tara rubs her eyes, but there are no floaters or rays of light as Katie's face comes into clear focus. A few bruises and cuts are on Katie's face.

TARA
Where am I?

KATIE
The hospital. Man, you must have
nine lives. The explosion knocked
you out. We thought we were going
to lose you... again.

Tara closes her eyes tight and reopens them.

KATIE
Tara?

TARA
Yeah?

KATIE
Thanks.

TARA
For what?

KATIE
Saving me. I thought I was going
to...

TARA
Don't even think about it Katie.
We are friends for life.

A NURSE enters the room and smiles at Tara.

NURSE
Ah, you're awake. How are you
feeling?

Tara glances at Katie. Then back to the nurse. She rubs her
eyes.

Tara smiles at them.

TARA
Fine, just fine.

NURSE
I'll let the doctors know. They'll
be glad to hear you're awake.

Tara nods.

NURSE
Can I get you anything for pain?

TARA
No, I'm fine. Everything is
finally back to normal.

NURSE
Excuse me?

Tara grins.

TARA
It's nothing.

The nurse leaves, and Katie walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A fat cockroach hangs onto the shower curtain. It flies
toward Katie.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katie runs out the bathroom, shooing at the air. She smacks
it and it falls to the floor. Katie stomps on it, crunching
through its hard shell.

KATIE
Ahh.

Tara sits up.

TARA
Katie, what's wrong?

Katie calms down and wipes off her arms.

KATIE
Sorry. Argh. I hate cockroaches.

Tara breaths a sigh of relief.

TARA
If only they made zappers for them.

KATIE
No kidding.

INT. TARA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tara returns home from the hospital. She slings her bag to
the side and grabs a glass of water. Tara stares at the bag
and sighs.

TARA

Oh, if I don't pick this up now, I never will.

She digs through her bag. She separates the clothes from the toiletries. Scooping up her dirty clothes, she takes them to the hamper. She digs through the pockets.

She pulls out an old dollar bill, some change, a mint, and the newspaper article. Tara sits down as she slowly unfolds the paper.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

"Father burns mother alive, little boy only witness."

A picture of a young boy with PAUL BOYD across the bottom.

BACK TO SCENE

Tara reads the clipping out loud.

TARA

Paul Boyd, surviving son of Alice Wayne Boyd, was the only witness to the gruesome murder of his own mother. Police say he was badly burned on his legs, apparently from attempts at trying to save his burning mother. His father, Jacob Boyd, was taken into custody with only one thing to say. "Bad girls must burn, and all girls are bad."

Tara cringes as she slowly folds the article back up.

FLASHBACK - OUTSIDE THE BAR

Paul looks at the tires. He flicks his lighter a few times.

PAUL

Childhood trauma. It can mess some kids up.

BACK TO SCENE

Tara whispers at the folded article.

TARA

It messed you up, didn't it Paul?

Tara reaches into her pocket and pulls out an old napkin. She unfolds it. Written in faded ink is Paul's name and phone number.

Tara throws the napkin away.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - EVENING

An elaborate display of candles and mirrors are shown through one store's window. Tara and Katie walk pass a ONE WAY sign then by the store before approaching the cafe. Katie stops and fixes her reddish blonde hair in the mirror. Tara frowns at her short locks.

KATIE
It'll grow back.

TARA
I know, but look at you.

Katie rubs her hands down her flattening stomach.

KATIE
Ten to go.

Katie grins at the thinner reflection in the mirror. Sweat drips down her face and she wipes it away.

KATIE
Oh, the humidity.

Tara grins at Katie.

TARA
I never thought I'd be so happy to walk around in humidity like this.

KATIE
Ha! Come on, you are crazy.

TARA
Look at you though, you look amazing.

Katie smiles at her reflection.

KATIE
Hey, who was that guy anyway? The one they arrested.

TARA
Turns out he's some harmless old man, trying to warn us about Paul.

TARA(cont'd)

He has some mental disorder that makes it really hard to talk to people.

KATIE

Hope he's not stuck out on the street.

TARA

His family came and got him. He wandered off and got lost almost a year ago.

Katie enters the shop, but Tara notices a flutter. Looking closer into the mirror, she sees a head on collision in the reflection of the glass.

Tara spins around. Traffic crawls through the streets. No wrecks in site. Tara takes a deep breath before entering the cafe.

As the door closes, a car makes a wrong turn onto the one-way street and slams head on into another car. People gather and gawk around the scene.

Madam Vissar is standing outside on the sidewalk, smiling. She walks out of view.

Tara runs outside, the sidewalk is empty. Tara looks around. A tarot card, The Six of Swords, is laying on the sidewalk. She picks it up.

She glances up, standing face to face to a reflection of Madam Vissar in the mirror.

MADAM VISSAR (O.S.)

Your journey has only begun.

Tara glances around, Madam Vissar has vanished.

Tara looks up at the darkening sky. A center star shines down on Tara, it twinkles brighter. A shooting star flies past it, and it dims back to normal.

FADE OUT.