SHUT IN

by
Christina Hodson

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(310) 815-9600

EXT. THE HOUSE, FRONT YARD - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is shining on a balmy spring day. MARY (38) is scrubbing down a little floating dock that juts out into the cove behind her large family home in coastal New England.

She is a natural beauty and the physical exertion and fresh air only serve to make her feel more relaxed.

Content with her work, Mary heads up the jetty into the dense fir woods that line this part of the coast.

She walks up a steep meandering path through the woods, arriving at the back of the house.

The windows are open and as she enters the clearing surrounding the house she catches the sound of a phone ringing inside.

INT. THE HOUSE, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mary enters, leaving the front door open behind her. As she heads for the phone in the kitchen, we continue to move freely through the house, hearing snatches of her conversation.

MARY (O.C.)
...It looks like you weren't the only one trying to get hold of me... We just put the dock on the water. It's so beautiful out... They left a few hours ago...

The house is bright, and warm, full of light thanks to the skylights in the kitchen and the open design.

MARY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
No, Richard took him on his own. I think it just would have made it harder on everyone if I'd gone...

The walls are covered with family photos. Mary and her husband, RICHARD, going back some 15 years. At their wedding a young STEPHEN aged 5 plays ring bearer.

On the fridge a woman other than Mary lies in bed holding a baby. She looks frail but she is glowing with pride.

Along side it, holiday photos show Stephen growing up: a shy little boy always clinging tight to Mary, his face peeking out from behind her skirts, holding her hand like a life-line.

The most recent photos show him in his teens, a handsome young man with a serious face and his father's eyes.

MARY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
No, I know. I know... That's what Richard keeps telling me... No, you're right. It's the right thing to do and it's a much better school for- exactly-

Eventually we find our way to the kitchen where Mary is on the phone, now with a glass of wine in hand. The voicemail light is flashing.

MARY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
I'm okay. I'll be okay... To tell you the truth I'm kind of relieved to have some time off after all this. I think it'll be good for all of us...
(laughing)
We absolutely should!.. I'd love that... Thanks for checking in on me... Let's get lunch this week-
Okay, great. Bye.

Mary hangs up the phone and absent mindedly clicks PLAY on the answering machine before moving over to open the fridge.

ANSWERING MACHINE
First new message.
(a man's voice)
My name is Andrew Wiseman. I'm calling from Mercy Hospital for a Mary Portman? Please call us immediately on 207-662-0111. I'm afraid there's been an accident.
(automated voice)
Next new message.

Mary staggers away from the fridge and lunges for the phone, stumbling with the handset. The machine keeps rolling.

ANSWERING MACHINE (CONT'D)
(same man's voice)
Mrs. Portman, this is Andrew Wiseman calling again from Mercy Hospital...

As Mary's world begins to fall apart we move out through the big kitchen window. Outside the sun has just dipped below the tree line and it is starting to get cool.

ANSWERING MACHINE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
...please call us urgently. Again, our number is 207-662-0111. Your son is in critical condition...

The sound of the answering machine fades out.

Lifting up above the trees, we see the faint glimmer of red and blue lights approaching the house.

INT. THE HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

It is winter outside as we move once again through the house. The warmth has left the building and the place feels a little rundown.

We move through the downstairs, exploring the kitchen, the family room, the unused dining room. Many of the photos on the walls have been removed leaving clean squares on faded walls.

A room off to one side remains closed, as does the door to the basement at the bottom of a flight of stairs.

Small ramps have been installed wherever there is a step between rooms and there are scuff marks from a wheelchair on the walls.

Through the window, the dawn air is cold and clean and the snow on the drive is unploughed.

Moving up the stairs and along the balcony, we enter Mary's room and see her lying in bed awake.

Mary has changed since we last saw her. Much like the house, she looks tired and a little worn around the edges.

She moves to get up out of bed just as the ALARM goes off. She silences it immediately.

Throughout the ensuing routine her movements suggest total familiarity. She could do this blindfolded. She doesn't have time to feel weary or hard done by, this is just how it is.

She walks from the bedroom, down the hallway to the cluttered upstairs bathroom.

Barely taking a moment to look at herself in the mirror she begins brushing her teeth.

INT. KITCHEN, THE HOUSE - MORNING

Now dressed in jeans and a thick knit jumper, Mary enters the kitchen. Again, her movements are mechanical and efficient, the result of repetition and routine.

She flips a switch on the coffee machine and raises the enameled lids on a big old-fashioned wood-burning stove. The cooking plates remain hot and she puts a pot of oatmeal on to cook before throwing in a few extra logs for good measure.

INT. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM, THE HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Mary opens the door into total darkness and finds her way easily to the window. She draws open the heavy curtains to let in cold white morning light.

Turning, we see a figure lying stretched out neatly in the bed. This is STEPHEN (18). He still has his father's handsome blue eyes but now they are cold and empty.

His skin is pale and his limbs are thin. Despite this he is strangely beautiful. Like a doll or a cadaver.

MARY
Wakey wakey rise and shine.

Mary's voice is flat, as though she talks more out of habit than anything else.

She pulls the sheets back and opens Stephen's nightshirt. From beside the bed she takes a clunky electronic muscle stimulator (EMS) unit, similar to the ones that TV shopping networks promise will give you perfect abs with no effort. She begins attaching it to Stephen's arms and chest.

MARY (CONT'D)
Time for your work out.

She flips a switch and the machine clicks into action, pulsing current through Stephen's inert muscles.

INT. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM, THE HOUSE - LATER THAT MORNING

Mary's morning routine continues but now the EMS is attached to Stephen's legs and he is propped up in bed.

Mary plucks two prescription pill bottles from a neat array on Stephen's bedside table. She opens Stephen's mouth and places the pills at the back of his throat, lubricating his mouth with water and then gently rubbing his throat until there is a swallow reflex.

Then she takes a bowl of oatmeal and painstakingly spoon feeds her grown son.

Stephen’s eyes remain vacant, staring ahead of him, but he is able to eat, albeit messily.

INT. STEPHEN’S BEDROOM, THE HOUSE - MORNING

Stephen is now dressed neatly lying on the bed. Using all her strength, Mary maneuvers him into a wheelchair: shifting his legs into position, then hoisting him under the armpits.

The exertion takes its toll: Mary is strong and lean but Stephen is not a boy any more and the daily ritual is exhausting.

Finally ready, Mary pushes the wheelchair out of the bedroom and into the living area.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mary wheels Stephen over to a scuffed patch of carpet in front of the big windows overlooking the drive.

She clicks on a TV but leaves the volume low, as if only to break the silence.

On screen a local 7-day weather report shows clear skies preceding stormy weather. Average daily temperatures are well below freezing.

With Stephen all set up, Mary walks towards the door and takes a few seconds to look at her own face in the mirror.

She pulls back her long dark hair and applies a quick dab of blusher on each cheek. The touch of color is enough to remind us that she is still beautiful.

Her coat and boots are ready for her by the door. She slips them on without doing either up and opens the front door.

EXT. THE HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The air is cold and bright from the snow as Mary steps out. With a final look at the back of Stephen’s head, she closes the door behind her.

She breathes in deep lungfuls of fresh air before taking a few steps to her left and opening the door to an extension of her own house.

This is Mary's commute. The two room office over the garage serves as Mary's clinic. A discreet sign on the door displays: "Mary Portman, Clinical Psychologist".

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Mary is mid-way through a session with a patient, a young boy, TOM (9).

They both sit on the floor, the low table between them covered in cards, toys and drawing paper. Tom is using a pencil to carve into the rubber sole of his sneaker, refusing to look up.

Mary watches him. They have been at this for some time. She lowers her head, trying to catch his eye.

MARY
Tom?

There is no response from Tom, who keeps his gaze downcast.

Tentatively, she reaches out and very gently lifts his chin with her fingers.

As if burned by her touch, Tom lashes out, knocking her hand away with the back of his wrist.

Mary tries not to flinch. She speaks slowly, careful to articulate each word.

MARY (CONT'D)
Tom, it's your turn.

Tom's eyes focus on her lips as she speaks. He ignores the cards on the table and instead looks up and stares her in the eye.

His cold gaze is at odds with his young face. His eyes are hard. He is challenging Mary and though she does well to hide it, this strange little boy is unsettling her.

Outside the sound of a car door SLAMMING causes Mary to jump. The boy does not react.

She glances quickly at her watch and is relieved to see that the hour is up.

INT. WAITING ROOM OUTSIDE MARY'S OFFICE - LATER

Tom is sitting in an armchair in the waiting area.

TOM'S POV:

SILENCE.

A slim woman with a mass of curly hair, LUCY (30s) is standing behind a small desk, filing papers. She has a friendly face. She looks up and gives Tom a wave hello.

He looks away.

Over by her office, Mary is talking to someone. Tom tries to focus on their mouths, which open and close noiselessly.

END POV.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - SAME

Mary is standing just inside her office. A plump social worker, JOAN (40s) with ruddy cheeks is standing in the doorway. She pulls the door closed enough so that Tom cannot see her face as she talks to Mary.

She has a rather brusque manner; the result of years working a thankless job in a frustrating system.

JOAN
I appreciate you trying.

MARY
I'm sorry Joan. I don't know what to tell you. I know a woman down in Boston who specializes in deaf and hearing impaired kids. I can put you in touch-

JOAN
Right. Who's going to pay for that?

MARY
I'd keep trying but I don't think it's helping. If he refuses to communicate there's not much I can do.

Mary hesitates before continuing.

MARY (CONT'D)
Between you and me, there's something about him that-

JOAN
(irritated)
What'd he do?

MARY
Nothing. He just-

Joan, impatient, has heard this before.

JOAN
I told you. You've got to watch him. He's got a temper this one. Half the staff at Sweetzer are scared of him. Broke a kid's arm last month. I don't know how in God's name I'm going to place him.

Joan opens the door connecting to the waiting room and STAMPS the floor hard, making Lucy and Mary jump. The VIBRATION in the floorboards makes Tom look up.

JOAN (CONT'D)
(clearly, to Tom)
We're leaving.

Tom stands and shuffles to the door, followed by Joan.

Lucy and Mary share a look.

Mary waves Joan off before closing the door.

LUCY
I hate that woman.

Mary laughs. She and Lucy have an easy rapport.

Lucy continues filing papers behind the desk. Mary collapses into an armchair feeling conflicted and defeated.

MARY
I hate turning kids away.

LUCY
You can't take care of every kid in Maine.

Mary picks up the local newspaper: a paltry looking publication. The front page story is an over-dramatic WARNING about the storm at the end of the week.

LUCY (CONT'D)
(gesturing at the paper)
Looks like a bad one. Want me to pick up some supplies? We're stocking up now before people start raiding the stores.

MARY
(rubbing her eyes in exhaustion)
Thanks Luce, that would be great.

Lucy is clearing papers from the desk. She finds a brochure for WILLOWBROOK ADULT CARE HOME along with a letter addressed to Mary in regards to Stephen.

LUCY
Mar, is this..? Are you finally moving Stephen to Willowbrook?

Mary snaps out of her daze and looks at her friend. She gives a sort of defeated shrug.

MARY
I was going to tell you last week. I just can't do it anymore, Luce.

Lucy moves around the desk and takes Mary in her arms.

LUCY
You don't have to.

Mary gives a half shrug, half smile. It's hard for her to talk about this.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I know you're trying to be a good mom, but you never should have brought him home. It's too much for you to handle on your own. He needs professional care, and you need time and space to grieve for Richard and move on with your life. When was the last time you even left home for more than an hour?

MARY
I can't just leave him.

LUCY
That's what I'm talking about. You've given up your whole life for him. Don't you remember before the accident-

Lucy stops herself. She doesn't want to push it.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I just... I want you to be happy Mar. You deserve that.
(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)
You have been such a wonderful mother to that boy but this situation can't go on. No one will judge you for needing help. Lord knows you've been through enough this year.

MARY
I'll judge me.

Lucy pulls Mary into another embrace. Mary lets a tear escape but laughs it off.

LUCY
It's not like you're pulling the plug on him! He'll be in great hands and you can go see him whenever you want to. But at least you can live again. While you're still young. And hot!

Mary pushes her off playfully and they laugh as Mary wipes her eyes.

EXT. BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND THE EXTENSION - EVENING

Evening has fallen and it is bitterly cold as Mary and Lucy say goodbye outside the house. Mary is holding a casserole in one arm. Lucy leans out of the car window.

LUCY
I'll see you Thursday and I'll pick up Stephen's pills from the pharmacy.

She starts backing up.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Oh, I almost forgot. Your therapist's office called. They want to move your appointment up to six tomorrow.

MARY
Thanks Luce.
(lifting the casserole)
And thank you for this. I don't know what we'd do without you.

Lucy drives off and Mary enters the house.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The lights are low in the house but it is warm and welcoming. Stephen remains seated in his wheelchair just as Mary left him.

Mary begins her evening routine with the same mechanical familiarity as her morning routine.

She removes her coat and boots and hangs them by the door. She puts the pot on the range before throwing in another couple of logs.

She lifts the lid of the casserole.

MARY
Thank god for Lucy.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - LATER

Mary spoon feeds Stephen a bowl of soup, blowing on each mouthful. He wears a bib around his neck and he dribbles like a baby.

Under the blanket laid in his lap, Stephen’s legs are hooked up to the EMS machine again. The indicator light flashes like a pulse.

INT. BATHROOM, UPSTAIRS - LATER

Mary is sitting on a stool, bathing Stephen in the tub.

The bath is only half full and she uses a jug to pour water over his head like a child. Stephen sits inert as Mary washes him with a soapy washcloth.

Suddenly his leg spasms, splashing water out of the tub. Ever patient, Mary rubs the leg gently, massaging the muscles as she lowers it back into the water.

She leans over him to clean the far side of his body. They are physically very close.

When she is done rinsing under his arm she looks down and notices that Stephen is aroused. If anything the sight of her grown son’s erection seems to make her sad.

She pulls the plug on the bath and lets the water get lower before hoisting Stephen out of the tub. She struggles under the weight of him but manages to get him into his waiting towel-lined wheelchair. She starts drying him down.

INT. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM, DOWNSTAIRS - LATER

Clean and dry, Stephen is propped up in bed. Mary picks up another selection of prescription bottles, including benzodiazepine sleeping pills.

She helps Stephen to swallow the medication just as she did in the morning.

Carefully she moves the pillows and lies Stephen down, closing his eyes gently with her hand. She tucks him in tightly, making sure he's warm and safe.

Picking up a mug of hot tea from the bedside table she moves to leave. She pauses as she gets to the door, looking back before turning off the light.

MARY
(quietly, and without conviction)
Good night.

Mary closes the door behind her and moves back through the family area and the kitchen, turning off lights as she goes.

The house is big and old. The snow outside creaks and the wind whistles in the chimney but Mary pays no notice as she ascends the staircase in the dark.

INT. BATHROOM, UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Mary is giving Stephen another bath but everything seems slightly different.

The decor looks a little less shabby, the light a little warmer, and now the tub is full of steaming hot water.

Mary washes Stephen tenderly, SINGING to him under her breath. It is a scene of maternal love and Mary almost glows as she smiles down at her son.

Cradling the back of his head in her hand, Mary lowers Stephen back into the water. She takes him lower, and lower, until the water comes over his face and he is fully submerged.

She continues to HUM and look down at him lovingly.

Stephen's beautiful blue eyes remain open, staring vacantly through the water at the ceiling.

For a moment, all is still.

Suddenly, Stephen's eyes dart over to make eye contact.

Mary continues singing and smiling at him. She holds him down firmly as his look turns to fear and he struggles to sit up.

His thrashing becomes wild as he starts to drown.

SMASH CUT TO:

Mary's eyes flick wide open.

It is she who is in the bath. She has dozed off while soaking in the tub, her cup of tea beside her.

But it was not the dream that woke her. Something in her weary expression tells us she's had dreams like this before. It was a NOISE, somewhere within the house.

Mary lies still in the cooling water, unafraid but listening.

She hears it again.

There is something outside the house.

And it sounds like it is trying to get in.

Mary gets out of the bath and pulls on a robe.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary opens the bathroom door onto the balcony upstairs, letting light spill into the darkened house.

She hears the usual concert of nocturnal sounds in the big house. Then another noise from outside.

Her head whips round towards the front of the house.

She pads down the stairs softly in her robe and slippers. Without turning on any lights, she finds her way towards Stephen's room.

The big glass windows are uncovered as Mary passes by, her movements reflected against the darkness outside.

The door to Stephen's room is ajar and as she reaches out to push it open there is a loud CRASH from outside.

She stops in her tracks and turns, moving towards the front door and grabbing the phone as she goes.

Behind her, in the kitchen, a shadowy figure passes by the darkened window. It is impossible to tell if it was inside or outside the house.

EXT. FRONT DOOR, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary's hand is steady as she dials 911 on the handset. She stops before hitting the CALL button.

She opens the front door and with her free hand she grabs the coat waiting for her on the hook and steps into her boots.

She walks out into the snow. In front of the automatic garage door is a pile of shovelled snow 4 feet high. No car has come in or out of this garage for some time.

The side door is accessible but it is closed and no light is visible through the glass window.

Further past the door, the garbage cans are lined up against the wall.

Mary waits for a moment, listening again.

Nothing.

She takes another step towards the garage door.

As she does a large raccoon scurries out from beside the garbage cans, startling her.

Mary shakes off a shiver and turns back towards the house.

Suddenly, from inside the garage, the sound of BREAKING GLASS, followed immediately by the piercing WAIL of a car alarm.

Shocked, Mary throws herself against the wall. She presses CALL on the handset.

She waits for someone to emerge from the garage or for the alarm to stop.

Nothing happens. Mary remains calm and collected.

MARY
(whispered)
Hello, this is Mary Portman calling from 28 Delphi Lane...Someone's trying to steal my car...

As she says this she looks over at the mound of icy snow blocking the garage exit. This doesn't make any sense.

Tentatively, Mary moves towards the side door.

The car alarm is still BLARING, piercing the otherwise silent night.

She takes the phone from her ear as she cups her hands around her face to peer through the window.

VOICE ON THE PHONE
(muffled)
Hello? ...Ma'am?

Inside, the garage looks empty.

VOICE ON THE PHONE (CONT'D)
...Are you still there?

Mary pushes the door open. Still no sign of anyone.

She takes a step inside, towards the car that sits gathering dust.

A small back window on the car has been smashed, fragments of glass lie scattered on the floor.

The room is dark but Mary seems strangely calm. She steps right up to the car and looks inside.

Mary lifts the handset to her ear. She hesitates for just a second before-

MARY
I'm sorry. I made a mistake. It was just a raccoon.

She hangs up and we look inside the car at what Mary is seeing.

Nine year old Tom is lying on the back seat of the car, shivering, completely oblivious to the shrieking alarm.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - LATER

TOM'S POV:

SILENCE.

Tom is sitting on the sofa, wrapped in a blanket. His gaze is downcast as Mary approaches with a hot cup of cocoa.

Mary squats down and her lips move as she hands over the drink. In spite of her serious expression, there is something about her. She seems almost to radiate warmth.

Suddenly, something catches her attention. The phone in her hand must be ringing.

She stands and starts talking into the handset.

Tom's gaze roves around the cosy house. His eyes lingering over the expensive-looking clock on the mantelpiece, a simple silver frame containing a pencil drawing of the house, with a woman standing on the porch.

While the drawing is naive, almost a little cheesy, it shows some skill. The signature at the bottom says "Stephen Portman, 15" and the woman is recognizably Mary. She looks beautiful, like a heroine in a romance novel.

Tom turns to see Mary now. She looks different, stressed.

END POV.

Mary is pacing. Her voice suddenly audible.

MARY
I didn't want to involve the police but someone has to come and pick this boy up... How did he even get here?

She glances up and sees that Tom is watching her. His gaze is steady and unnerving.

Mary turns her back on him so that he can't lip read.

MARY (CONT'D)
No, I'm sorry but that's not an option.

She can feel Tom watching her and it makes the hairs stand up on her neck. She glances back and sure enough he is staring at her, his expression unreadable. The presence of this little boy in her house feels alien, almost hostile.

Mary steps into the den, a small room adjacent to Stephen's bedroom. She pulls the door to.

INT. DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Even though she knows it to be illogical Mary lowers her voice.

MARY
Listen, I can't keep him here...
(irritated)
Well after hours I'm also a mother.
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
This is my home. I have to think of Stephen....

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

The boy continues to sit perfectly still, his gaze once again wandering around the house.

MARY (O.C.)
...You're the one who said-... I'm sorry Joan, I really don't feel comfortable-...It's either that or we involve the police...

Tom's eyes suddenly go wide. We see real fear in his eyes for a brief moment.

INT. DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mary spins round as the door to the den suddenly SLAMS closed behind her.

Immediately she moves to the door and tries to open it. It jams. For the first time, Mary actually looks afraid.

MARY
Shit.
(into the phone)
Call the police. He's locked me in my fucking den.

Mary drops the phone and rattles the door handle, trying to get it open.

MARY (CONT'D)
Tom? TOM?

She pounds on the door before realizing the futility of shouting.

MARY (CONT'D)
Fuck.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

From the outside we see that the door to the den has been hastily propped closed with a chair.

As Mary bangs on the door and rattles the handle, the chair, which is balanced on its back legs, starts to shift.

INT. DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mary continues to rattle the door handle and push against the door.

Finally she hears the chair SKID on the hardwood and come CRASHING to the floor.

The door bursts open.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS

Mary stumbles out to find Tom gone and an icy wind rushing through the house. The living area is empty.

The front door BANGS against its hinges, blowing in the wind.

Mary pauses to pull Stephen's door shut, protectively, before rushing to the front door.

As quickly as she can, she puts her boots and coat back on and heads out into the night.

She looks from side to side but there is no sign of Tom. The ground is frozen solid and there are no footprints to follow.

All she can see is the dark trees and a pale moon.

MARY
(instinctively)
TOM?
(to herself, in frustration)
Jesus.

She stops about 50 yards from the house. The snow covered trees surround her. Suddenly she feels vulnerable, exposed. Almost as though she's being watched. It scares her.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, THE HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

The front door opens and Mary enters. The LOCAL SHERIFF (50s) is right behind her but stops on the door step.

MARY
You sure you don't want another cup of coffee, Joe?

SHERIFF
Thanks Mary. We're going to press on, start going door to door.
(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
The kid’s got to be around here somewhere. Too cold to be out here alone.

MARY
And you’ll let me know?

Joe tips his hat and nods before heading back to his car.

Mary closes the door and rubs her eyes. She hasn’t slept all night.

She catches sight of the time and curses quietly to herself.

INT. STEPHEN’S BEDROOM, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary moves through Stephen’s room, opening his curtains and getting him up and hooked to his EMS machine, with hurried distraction.

Suddenly overwhelmed, she drops onto the side of Stephen’s bed, emotionally drained and exhausted.

She sits still for a beat.

Finally she takes a deep breath and gathers herself before continuing the inescapable duties before her.

INT. DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - EVENING

The day has been long and fruitless and Mary looks even more shattered. The clock on the wall says it is nearly 6pm.

She sits at a cluttered little desk in front of an old desktop computer, the phone to her ear.

The door to the den is ajar. Through the crack we can just make out the wheels of Stephen’s chair in its usual spot.

MARY
Still no sign?... Oh god Joan, I feel terrible. What was he thinking coming here?

Suddenly the computer comes to life as a Skype call comes through from a DR WILSON, ringing loudly.

MARY (CONT’D)
Just call me as soon as there’s news.

Mary hangs up the phone and clicks ACCEPT on the screen.

INT. DR WILSON'S OFFICE - EVENING

Dr Wilson (50s), a kindly but serious academic with a beard, is sitting before his (much newer) computer screen. His office is impressive: full of dark wood, books, expensive rugs and leather chairs.

He adjusts his collar as the call with Mary connects and her face appears on screen before him.

MARY
Dr. Wilson. Hi!

DR WILSON
Hello Mary.

INTERCUT WITH MARY IN HER OFFICE.

Mary adjusts the webcam on her outdated computer and pushes her hair behind her ears when she sees herself in the little window on screen.

DR WILSON
How are you? I hope you don't mind me saying, you look a little tired.

MARY
Long day... Long week...

DR WILSON
Everything alright? How's Stephen?

MARY
(trying to make a joke)
The same as last week and the week before and the week before.

Dr Wilson waits for a moment. Mary stands briefly and pushes the door closed.

MARY (CONT'D)
I've decided to go ahead with the plan.

DR WILSON
You're moving Stephen to Willowbrook?

Mary nods silently. She keeps her eyes downcast, almost too ashamed to make eye contact.

MARY
End of the month.

Dr Wilson waits patiently. She looks up and a tear rolls down her cheek. She wipes her face with the palm of her hand and tries to muster a smile.

INT. THE DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - LATER

Mary and Dr Wilson are still chatting over Skype. She is more composed now, talking fluidly.

MARY
Physically I can manage it. Just about. But I guess what I need to ask myself is, *why* am I doing it?

DR WILSON
And can you answer that question?

MARY
No. That's exactly it. I don't know why I'm doing it. That body I'm washing and feeding is not my son. It's not Stephen. Stephen's gone. I've been punishing myself by taking on this impossible task because I feel this desperate need to atone.

DR WILSON
For the accident?

MARY
For everything. I was the one who was sending him away. Stephen always blamed Richard. But the truth is I was the one- Even before he got expelled. You remember- I didn't want to be his therapist and his mother. I was the one who found the school. I was the one who thought the distance might help. It was my fault they were in the car in the first place. If I had just-

DR WILSON
Mary, we've been through this. No one was to blame for that accident.

Mary has heard this a thousand times before. She goes silent for a moment, lost in thought.

MARY
You know, a boy, a patient, turned up at my house last night. Tried to break in.

DR WILSON
Are you okay?

MARY
I'm fine. He's nine years old. Deaf. No parents. They can't find him a foster home. They brought him to me for assessment but I said I couldn't help him. Then last night he ran away again and of all places he came back here.

She pauses.

MARY (CONT'D)
And I turned him away.

Without waiting for a response, Mary continues, as if she needs to justify her actions, if only to herself.

MARY (CONT'D)
I was scared. I was scared for Stephen. For myself. Something about the way he-
(not wanting to finish that thought)
Now he's out there somewhere in the freezing cold. Half the town's looking for him. If he hasn't been abducted he's probably frozen to death or drowned in the harbor.

She stops, suddenly. When she continues, her voice is quiet. Full of shame.

MARY (CONT'D)
Who am I to help these kids if I can't even-
(resigned)
I feel like I failed him. Just like I failed Stephen.

DR WILSON
You haven't failed Stephen, Mary. You are a good mother.

MARY
I'm still having the dreams.

DR WILSON
What you do in your dreams does not undo the good you do every day.

Mary is tired, surrendered. Dr Wilson glances at his watch. It's nearly 7pm.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
You are doing the right thing, for both of you. It's time for you to move on with your life.

She knows he is right but it's hard to accept.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - DAY

It's a new day and although Mary has slept she pinches her brow to offset a throbbing headache.

She is coming to the end of a session with a teenaged boy, named AARON.

At sixteen, Aaron is a fairly typical messed-up teenager. His hair is long, his clothes deliberately oversized and grungy.

He sits indian-style in the armchair, mid-rant.

AARON
Don't you see how fucked up that is? The kid's been bouncing around foster homes for half his life but no one gave a fuck then.

Aaron is holding a rolled up copy of today's local newspaper. On the front page is a photo of Tom beneath an oversized headline: MISSING.

AARON (CONT'D)
Now suddenly the whole fucking town's decided it's time to give a fuck? They're all a bunch of fucking hypocrites. Do you know how many children run away or go missing every year in the United States alone?

MARY
Would you rather they didn't look for him?

AARON
I don't know. Maybe.

He slumps back in his chair, dropping the newspaper on the coffee table. Mary's eye cannot help drifting down to meet the eyes of the little boy in the photo.

AARON (CONT'D)
At least it would be honest. Besides, the kid's dead. Everyone knows it.

Mary flinches almost imperceptibly.

MARY
Aaron, I'm afraid that's the end of our time for today.

AARON
Whatever. Sure. Thanks a lot.

Aaron stands sulkily and moves toward the door. Mary is unmoved by his behavior.

MARY
Is your dad coming to pick you up?

Aaron has already opened the door and passed through into the waiting room. He makes an affirmative grunt.

Mary quickly reaches into a purse beside her chair and checks her appearance in a small mirror.

She pulls out a clip and lets her hair down before muttering to herself self-consciously and clipping it back up.

EXT. BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND THE EXTENSION - LATE AFTERNOON

Mary says goodbye to Aaron just outside the office door. She stands in the snow, arms crossed to keep warm.

Aaron barely acknowledges her before skulking over to the station wagon.

The driver, Aaron's father DOUG (44) is already out the car and heading towards Mary.

When Aaron breezes past him, Doug makes a face as if to say, "Really?" but Aaron ignores him and gets into the car.

Doug watches him go but then turns and walks over to Mary.

He is ruggedly handsome and has a winning smile that he flashes at Mary now.

He clearly has a soft spot for Mary, and as awkward and new to this as she may be, she appreciates his attentions.

DOUG
(jokingly)
Teenagers, huh?

Mary chuckles.

DOUG (CONT'D)
How's he doing? Does he hate me more or less than the rest of the world today?

MARY
Aaron's a good kid. He's just going through a rough time with the move and the divorce.

DOUG
Sometimes it's hard to remember that he was just a cute little kid who liked throwing a ball around with his dad a few years ago. He's so angry all the time.

MARY
He's at a difficult age. He'll get through it.

DOUG
Let's just hope I do! I'm public enemy number one these days.

Doug glances back at his son waiting for him in the car. He doesn't want the conversation to be over yet.

DOUG (CONT'D)
You hear about the storm coming in?
(off Mary's polite nod)
If it turns into an ice storm we could be without power for at least a couple of days. You probably shouldn't be up here all alone. Aaron and I were thinking of moving into one of the hotels in town to ride it out. Maybe I could take you to dinn-

MARY
I'll be fine. We'll be fine. I've got my...
(gesturing to the house)
My son's sick. I can't really move him.

Doug is thrown for a loop.

DOUG
Oh. I'm sorry to hear that. Wow. I didn't know you had kids. How old is he?

Mary is getting increasingly uncomfortable.

MARY
He's eighteen. Stephen's eighteen.
(off Doug's reaction)
He's my step-son.

DOUG
Oh. I didn't know you were...

Doug awkwardly raises his left hand to avoid having to say "married".

MARY
My husband actually passed away last spring. So it's just me and Stephen now.

There is a moment of uncomfortable silence as Doug wonders how to recover from this.

DOUG
Well maybe one night we could all get dinner. The four of us. You, me, and our angry teenagers.

Doug laughs at his joke. He's not good at this.

Mary is embarrassed and uncomfortable. She puts her hand on the door to the house behind her and starts to open it, wanting to get out of this conversation.

MARY
That wouldn't really be appropriate. Aaron's my patient. And he's waiting for you so-

DOUG
Sure. Of course. Sorry, I was just. Okay, well, thank you. And goodbye. I hope your son feels better.

Mary doesn't say anything in response. She opens the door and steps inside the house.

Over her shoulder Doug glances into house and sees Stephen sitting in his wheelchair, just as Mary closes the door.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Shit.

He walks back towards the car, embarrassed and annoyed.

INT. FRONT HALL, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mary has just closed the front door behind her feeling embarrassed and annoyed.

MARY
Shit.

She shakes her head, wishing that she'd handled that differently.

Then she looks up and sees her son waiting for her in his wheelchair. Her face is suddenly awash with guilt, exhaustion and frustration. This is her life.

INT. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM, THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary enters Stephen's room. She picks up her usual cup of tea which is going cold on the nightstand next to a rumpled copy of the local paper.

Tom's warped image looks up at her. She puts her tea back down so that it blocks his face before turning to Stephen.

Stephen's pale vacant face is damp with perspiration. She touches his brow and is concerned to find him warm and clammy. His breathing is fast and shallow.

She moves to pull down the blankets when she hears an indistinct NOISE from somewhere within the house.

Instinctively she turns to look at the doorway. Through the cracked door she can see nothing but blackness.

The noise comes again. It's a LOW MOANING.

In this old wooden house it's almost as though the sound is emanating up through the floor into the walls themselves.

It could be the wind but outside the weather is calm.

Mary looks frightened. She keeps her gaze fixed on the slice of darkness in the door frame.

She holds her breath.

A second passes. Two. Three.

Silence.

Then another noise. A dull THUD in the walls.

Suddenly Stephen's hand reaches out and grips her wrist.

Mary jumps.

She looks down and sees Stephen still staring vacantly up.

MARY
Shhhhhh...shhhhhh...

She reaches down to prize his fingers from her arm. His fingers are stiff but she gently lifts each one and then lays his arm back down by his side.

She touches his forehead again. His breathing seems to have slowed.

Her fear abated, Mary picks up her tea and leaves Stephen's room, switching out the light and closing the door as she goes.

Uncomfortable now in the dark, Mary turns on a light. She moves to the front door and peers out through the glass, half expecting to see Tom.

Nothing.

She gets a shiver down her spine: that same horrible feeling of being watched and she takes care to double lock the door and put the chain on.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM, UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Mary is lying in bed in the near darkness. The bedside clock tells us it's past 2am but Mary is awake staring up at the ceiling.

The old house is making its usual array of winter noises: the hum of the fridge downstairs, the heating pipes and the creak of snow on the roof. Mary hears them all.

The rhythms seem to lull her finally into sleep as her eyes drift closed.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM, UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Mary's eyes suddenly open wide.

It is not clear how much time has passed. She remains motionless, eyes wide, staring up at the ceiling.

She has heard something.

At first there is silence. Then the distinct sound of FOOTSTEPS downstairs.

The whites show around Mary's irises. Fear.

She tries to move, to sit up, but she doesn't seem to be able to move anything but her eyes.

MARY'S POV.

Lying on her back, Mary can see the ceiling, the closed bedroom door and the window, through which moonlight enters.

She hears it again: BARE FEET on the hardwood floor downstairs. A child's footsteps. RUNNING.

Her breathing speeds up and we feel her panic as she tries to make a sound but finds herself paralyzed.

The footsteps seem to circle the downstairs area before finding the stairs.

The soft footfall begins to ascend. It's getting closer, slowing down.

The old floorboards outside the bedroom creek gently under the weight of the approaching footsteps.

Mary's eyes flick desperately towards the door.

For a moment there is silence.

Then she sees the door handle move. Tilting downwards. Slowly. CREAKING.

She shuts her eyes, trying to wake herself from this nightmare.

BLACKNESS.

When she opens them the room is still dark.

But now the door is open.

The hallway outside is dark but she can make out a figure in the doorway.

It's the silhouette of a child. Entering her room. Moving towards her.

Mary starts to hyperventilate.

She screws her eyes shut plunging us into BLACKNESS once again.

Only the sound of her terrified BREATHING. Otherwise silence.

She deliberately tries to calm herself down. Taking control of her breath. Forcing it to slow.

The BLACKNESS remains as she keeps her eyes shut.

Silence.

She opens her eyes.

Above her. Hovering over her bed. The ashen face of young Tom.

His eyes are sunken and red-rimmed, burning into her, painfully close.

From Mary's perspective she can see only his face and his scrawny shoulders. Dressed in a filthy sleeveless shirt his limbless torso seems to float above her.

The horrifying vision lasts only a second before his face begins to distort: his mouth seems to open impossibly wide.

A terrible MOANING WAIL emanates from deep within his throat. Its timbre is alien and jarring.

Mary's panic begins to overwhelm her. Her breath eludes her and her peripheral vision starts to blur.

All she can see is the boy's face, directly above hers. Angry. Threatening to consume her.

In the climax of her panic she BLACKS OUT.

INT. DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - MORNING

Mary is in the middle of a Skype conversation with Dr Wilson. Her tired eyes are puffy with crying and she is getting worked up.

MARY
You don't understand. It wasn't like any of the other dreams. It was awful. I couldn't move. My whole body was frozen. I was in my room. Awake. And then I saw it. Either I'm losing my mind or I-

INT. DR WILSON'S OFFICE - MORNING

Dr Wilson is sitting at his desk, looking sedate as usual.

DR WILSON
Mary... Mary, calm down. Listen to what you're saying. You're a rational adult. There's no such thing as ghosts. You know what.

INTERCUT BETWEEN DR WILSON AND MARY

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
It sounds to me like you experienced a case of sleep paralysis.
(off Mary's blank look)
It occurs when the body is stuck between REM sleep and waking. The mind is awake and alert, the eyes open, but the body is still asleep. Paralyzed. Just like you said.

MARY
But I saw the boy. I saw Tom. Everyone's been saying he's dead and I didn't want it to be true but- He must be. I saw him.

Dr Wilson continues, undeterred.

DR WILSON
Sleep paralysis often involves some degree of auditory or visual hallucination. Terrifying precisely because of how real they seem and how physically disabled you feel. You are quite literally trapped between the dream world and the waking world.

Dr Wilson's words ring true and Mary quiets a little.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
It's actually thought to be the explanation behind most experiences of ghostly apparitions. Even alien abduction.

Dr Wilson searches for something on his computer. A moment later a window pops up on Mary's screen with a link.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
In Anglo tradition it's known as "Old Hag" syndrome because victims share a vision of an old woman sitting on their chests.

Mary clicks on the link and a new window opens up.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
Take a look for yourself. Sleep paralysis can be very unsettling but it is not something to be worried about medically unless it becomes a recurring problem.

A smattering of images appear on Mary's screen: Fuseli's famous painting THE NIGHTMARE showing a demon sitting on a woman's supine figure; etchings of the "Old Hag"; modern cartoons of aliens lurking in bedroom corners.

The images seems to soothe Mary, reassuring her that Dr Wilson is right. When he can see that she is calmer:

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
With the amount of stress you're under and the existing pattern of disturbed sleep, it makes sense. And the fact that you imagined seeing the runaway boy is no surprise. You've been concerned about him.

At this Mary looks almost guilty. She doesn't want him to know that she's been more afraid than concerned.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
It doesn't mean that he's dead. Let alone haunting you.

Mary sits back, rubbing her eyes. She knows he is right. She's back in control now. The psychologist once again.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
You said the other day that you felt you had turned your back on Tom just as you had on Stephen. Do you think that the sound of the child's footsteps in your dream was a reminder of the child you lost? The son who used to come into your room at night when he was scared?

This touches a nerve with Mary.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
The child you dedicated your life to protecting who lost *his* limbs in an accident that left him frozen, voiceless?

Mary's eyes go to a candid photo on the desk. Stephen, 9, sits in her lap. They are laughing together, happy.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
Long before the accident you used to say that you felt you had lost Stephen, that you had lost your little boy. Do you think that that is who your dream was really about? The Stephen you remember from before the accident, before his behavioral problems at school, before his-

Mary's eyes are glazed. She interrupts him, lost in her own train of thought.

MARY
I should have known better. He was such a sweet little boy. He'd been through so much.

Dr Wilson waits to see where she is going with this. For a moment he thinks she might be talking about Tom again.

MARY (CONT'D)
I worried that if he stayed with me he would never...
(interrupting herself)
He begged me. I never told you that did I? That morning he begged me not let Richard take him away. But I sent him away and now he's gone.

She seems to come back to earth.

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm sure you're right. The nightmare about the boy was probably about Stephen.
(her voice is weary)
But only because everything has been about Stephen, for as long as I can remember.

They have come back to a familiar place.

DR WILSON
You know, after Stephen's move you're going to have a lot more time and space to live your own life. Perhaps you should start easing yourself into it. Try to get out of the house. See a friend.

Mary smirks sadly as if to say, "What friends?".

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
We'll speak next week about prescribing something to help you regulate your sleep cycle. I'd like to run those tests first. Take care of yourself Mary.

Mary smiles goodbye as Dr Wilson ends the call on his end.

She minimizes the disconnected Skype window and remains seated at the desk, absorbing Dr Wilson's words.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, THE HOUSE - DAY

The sky outside is flat and grey. Someone is knocking at the front door.

Stephen sits alone in his wheelchair, in the living area.

EXT. THE HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - SAME

A young West Indian nurse, GRACE (20s), is waiting on the doorstep. Her car, parked in the drive, bears the logo: MCA LabTech.

She peers through the small window beside the door and catches sight of Stephen in his wheelchair.

GRACE
Hallo?

Suddenly the door is thrown open by Mary, somewhat dishevelled as though she has just woken up.

MARY
Hi. Sorry. Come in. Come in.

Mary shakes her head as if to wake herself. She feels unusually tired.

Grace makes a bee-line for Stephen as she takes off her coat.

GRACE
So what we doing for this young man today then?

MARY
Actually, it's me. I just need to get some blood work done.

Grace looks from wheelchair-bound Stephen to Mary.

GRACE
And what's wrong with you?

MARY
Nothing. I'm fine.

GRACE
Then why you not take yourself to the doctors.

MARY
I don't like to leave him. Alone. I try not to leave the house.

Grace has pulled up a chair next to the sofa and pushes Mary into sitting. She starts pulling out syringes, vials, gloves.

GRACE
He born like that?

MARY
Car accident.

GRACE
Shame. Handsome boy. Got your eyes.

MARY
Actually he's-
(not wanting a discussion)
Thank you.

GRACE
You take care of him on your own?
(off Mary's nod)
He looks good. Strong. You must be doing something right.

Mary smiles politely. Grace has wrapped a blood pressure strap around Mary's arm and is pumping it up. She raises her eyebrows.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Blood pressure too high for a woman your age.

Grace looks at Mary, sympathetic for a moment. She takes in the dark circles under her eyes.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Maybe what's right for him not right for you.

MARY
I'm fine. Could we just..?

Grace pulls off the blood pressure monitor and pulls out a tourniquet, preparing to take the blood sample.

GRACE
None of my bees wax. I get it. You just wait. Your doctor tell you the same thing when he get the results.

Mary, who has been looking away, turns to see the blood pumping out of her veins into three neat little vials.

EXT. THE GROUNDS SURROUNDING THE HOUSE - DAY

Mary and Lucy walk the winding path through the fir woods with the house only just visible through the trees.

The air is cold and damp. Something about the weather feels heavy and oppressive.

LUCY
You want to know something ridiculous? I think this is the furthest from the house I've seen you since you brought Stephen home from the hospital.

MARY
Don't be crazy... I get out.
(off Lucy's expression)
Sometimes.

The path grows steeper until eventually it feeds into the wooden stairs at the top of the jetty. Close by an old canoe sits rotting and frozen.

They walk out onto the jetty. Apart from a few chunks of ice, the water in the cove is a fluid black beneath them.

At end of the jetty, the floating dock that we saw in the Spring now hangs loosely on one hinge, swaying with the gentle current, broken beyond repair.

MARY (CONT'D)
Feels like a lifetime ago. Hoping that he would wake up. That I would get one of them back.

She continues, without a hint of self-pity in her voice.

MARY (CONT'D)
The doctors kept telling me he was doing great. That he was recovering. And then one day he opened his eyes and I thought, this is it. I waited for him to speak, to say something, anything. I thought, Oh God, he's going to be so angry. I didn't care. I just wanted to hear that voice.

Mary inhales sharply, summoning her courage.

MARY (CONT'D)
I realize now that I lost Stephen the same day I lost Richard. He never really came home with me.

Lucy takes Mary's arm tightly in hers and they start walking back up the jetty.

LUCY
So when are you taking him in?

MARY
End of the month. Dr Wilson says I need to start practicing leaving the nest. He thinks I'm obsessing about this runaway boy as a way to continue punishing myself.

LUCY
It wasn't your fault. I'm sure he's fine. Dr Wilson's right. You need to get a life!

Mary elbows her playfully.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I saw Doug Hart in town yesterday. He was asking after you.

MARY
Oh god. I was so rude to him.

LUCY
Funny. He thought he'd offended you.
(feeling her out)
You should call him. Ask him out.

MARY
I think we just established that I don't do out.

Lucy doesn't push her. But after a few steps:

MARY (CONT'D)
Maybe I should call him to apologize.

Lucy laughs good naturedly at her friend. She leans into Mary as they trudge on through the woods.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - EVENING

Mary is sitting curled up on the couch. Stephen is in his wheelchair nearby. She has an address book open in her lap and is nervously looking at the phone.

Eventually she takes a deep breath, readying herself before picking up the phone and dialling.

MARY
Hello, Doug? ... Hi. It's Mary... Portman.
(finally, smiling)
Hi.

INT. DINING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - EVENING

The dining area, which until now has looked unused and dusty, has been cleaned. Mary and Doug are sitting at the table, the remnants of dinner surrounding them.

At last they seem relaxed, comfortable.

DOUG
I'm not going to lie. I was pretty surprised to hear your voice. In a good way. It was a good surprise.

Mary smiles, enjoying this.

DOUG (CONT'D)
I felt like such an ass the other day. I had no idea.
(MORE)

DOUG (CONT'D)
(gently)
About your husband, or Stephen. I'm sorry. Lucy told me what happened.

MARY
Course she did.

DOUG
She didn't say much. Just that there was a car accident. That you lost your husband and your step-son's been in a coma ever since.

MARY
I guess that's the gist of it.
(matter of fact)
Richard died immediately. Wasn't wearing his seatbelt. Stephen was. Which at the time seemed like a blessing... He's in what they call a waking coma.

Over in the living area, Stephen is parked in front of a muted television on which a meteorologist is pointing out a warm front moving in and heavy rain predictions.

Doug feels awkward talking about Stephen as though he's not there, but Stephen's face, as always, remains impassive.

DOUG
And you've been taking care of him ever since?

MARY
They wanted me to put him into a home but I refused. I thought I could do everything myself. Guess I was wrong.
(off Doug's confused look)
I'm moving Stephen into a care home.

Doug isn't quite sure how to respond and Mary realizes that she's probably said too much.

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I- I haven't done...this, in a while.

Doug gives her a reassuring smile.

DOUG
We all have our baggage. You've met my son. You know better than anyone.

Doug laughs, lightening the mood. Mary stands and starts carrying plates over to the sink.

MARY
Divorce may be tough but being a teenager is even tougher.

DOUG
Why don't they come with a warning label? If I'd known it was going to be this hard...

MARY
No psychology degree in the world can prepare you for being the parent of a teenager. When Stephen hit puberty is was like having a stranger in the house.

Doug laughs knowingly. Mary feels good sharing this stuff.

MARY (CONT'D)
It was like one day I was his best friend, the next he won't even talk to us.

DOUG
Aaron too! I swear, it's the hormones. He's practically another species.

MARY
Aaron's a good kid. Trust me. You're lucky.

DOUG
That's not what his teachers say. They had me in to see the principal last week-

MARY
Principal Hastings? He's the worst.

DOUG
(laughing)
Right!?

MARY
That man knows as much about teenagers as- All he cares about is the grades, the ratings-

DOUG
So Stephen went there too?

MARY
Until they expelled him.

DOUG
No! What for?

MARY
The whole thing was totally blown out of proportion. Some kids were messing around in the pool. I guess they were teasing Stephen about something.
(by way of explanation, trying to downplay it)
He was a quiet kid. And you know how cruel boys can be. So they were messing him around and Stephen retaliated. I guess he took it a little too far.
(off Doug's look)
No one got hurt. The kid was fine in the end. But the school claimed Stephen was "violent" and blamed the whole thing on him. It was a total sham. Hastings had been wanting to get rid of him for-

DOUG
Why?

MARY
Like I said. He was shy.

Doug empathizing with her story, waits for her to explain. Mary takes a big sip of wine.

MARY (CONT'D)
I mean, really shy. But his mom had died and- It was hardly surprising-

DOUG
Were you guys close?

MARY
Oh god, we were very close. He was 5 when Richard and I got married and from the start Stephen was even closer to me than his father. He barely spoke to anyone else.

Mary takes another sip of wine as if for courage.

MARY (CONT'D)
...which was kind of the problem. We thought he'd grow out of it but instead he just retreated. He refused to talk to his teachers. Barely acknowledged his father. By the time he was a teenager he barely spoke to me either.

DOUG
I feel like Aaron talks to everyone *but* me. He keeps shutting me out.

But Mary barely hears him. She is looking over at Stephen. She smiles wistfully.

MARY
Every now and then he'd come sit with me on the sofa. When no one else was around. I'd let him draw me. And it was like I had my little boy back. Just for a few minutes.

Doug follows Mary's gaze. He looks at Stephen, in his chair. He realizes how fortunate he is and feels almost guilty.

DOUG
I should let you guys get to bed. It's late.

Mary smiles, grateful for his compassion and his company.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - LATER

Mary, tea in hand, is leaving Stephen's bedroom after putting him to bed. She switches the light out and shuts the door.

She turns to see the dirty plates and glasses in the kitchen. She sighs, too exhausted to face the clean up. Her eyes start to droop and she rubs them, trying to wake up.

She takes a gulp of her tea but it doesn't help. She is overcome with exhaustion and sits down on the sofa.

Her eyelids feel impossibly heavy.

EXT. THE GROUNDS SURROUNDING THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary is outside.

Moonlight reflects off the snow covered ground. Everything seems more pristine, more sparkling and fresh. Snow flakes fall from the sky with picturesque grace. Silence.

Mary stands beneath the fir trees, just as she did the night Tom ran away. The lights are on low in the house nearby and the place looks warm and cosy, like a Christmas card picture.

She hears her own voice calling out into the night air.

MARY
Tom?

Something about the woods seems threatening, frightening. She has that same unsettling feeling of being watched.

She heads towards the house, footsteps crunching in the snow.

Between her own footsteps, she hears another set of steps, quiet at first, getting louder. A child's FOOTSTEPS. RUNNING.

Mary whips her head around. The woods are impenetrably black. She sees nothing but the sound of running gets CLOSER.

Walking turns to running until Mary is going as fast as she can towards the house. The snow is now coming down inexplicably FAST and THICK, blurring her vision.

The footsteps are CLOSING IN.

She pushes full tilt towards the house as panic overtakes her. The PRIMAL FEAR of being chased.

She reaches the porch just in time. Hurling herself inside, she turns to slam the door behind her.

A HAND shoots inside, trying to grab her.

She SLAMS the door onto the hand. SMASHING it between the door and the frame.

Without thinking, she pulls the door open a fraction and SLAMS it again and AGAIN onto the hand of the intruder.

Looking down, she sees that it is the hand of a child: tiny, pale and bloodied, a mess of shattered bone and cartilage.

She stops, horrified, and throws open the door, expecting to find Tom on her doorstep.

Instead she sees Stephen, in his wheelchair, shivering in the cold, half frozen, clutching his bloodied hand to his chest.

Appalled, Mary throws her arms around him, SOBBING. Stephen looks up into her eyes. He opens his mouth to speak and his voice is soft and quiet like a child's.

STEPHEN
Don't leave me mother.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

Mary wakes with a jolt. She is still on the sofa and the clock on the mantelpiece says that it is 3am.

The nightmare has shaken her badly.

She tries to stand and finds her legs weak. She is groggy with sleep and she struggles to focus her eyes properly.

Pulling herself up, she makes her way to Stephen's bedroom door, desperately needing the reassurance of seeing him.

Ever so gently she turns the handle and pushes the door open noiselessly. The warm light from the living area floods into Stephen's room.

Even in her daze she notices immediately that the bed is empty. At the foot of the bed, Stephen sits in his wheelchair, his back to the door.

Mary staggers over, confused that she could have left him like this.

But as she gets closer she realizes that it is not Stephen in the chair.

Almost against her will she reaches out to turn the wheelchair round.

Strapped to the chair, arms and legs bound tightly, is the little boy. His pale face and red eyes glowering up at her in voiceless accusation.

Gripped with terror, Mary opens her mouth to SCREAM.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM, UPSTAIRS - MORNING

Mary wakes up with a cry. The sun is up and her alarm is RINGING loudly, like a mechanical scream.

Mary is confused to find herself in bed and her head throbs.

Finally she takes a deep breath and stands, only now turning off the shrieking alarm clock.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - LATER THAT MORNING

Mary is worn-out as she goes about her morning routine.

She pours oatmeal into a bowl and heads for Stephen's bedroom.

INT. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stephen is in bed with his arms and chest connected to the EMS machine.

Mary enters with his oatmeal and sits down on the side of his bed as usual to give him his pills.

She selects his medication but her hands are shaking and she knocks over the sleeping pills before carefully selecting a different bottle.

Taking his face in her hands, she turns him towards her and catches sight of something on his cheek.

Faint but undeniably there: four neat red scratches, like nail marks.

Trembling, she holds her hand over his face, positioning her fingers over the marks.

The scratch marks are too small, too close together to fit her own hand.

They are a child's claw marks.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Outside the sky is full of portent: dark grey and heavy with rain-laden storm clouds that hang low above the trees.

Mary is alone in the office on the telephone with Dr Wilson, she is very worked up and emotional.

MARY
I told you. Something is happening to us. It’s not just in my head.

INT. DR WILSON’S HOUSE - DAY

Dr Wilson is at home in his tastefully decorated brownstone walk up. He is dressed casually, for the weekend.

DR WILSON
(firmly)
Mary. You need to breathe. Take a deep breath and think about what you’re saying.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARY AND DR WILSON.

MARY
(irrational)
I don’t care. I don’t care how crazy it sounds. It was real. I saw him. I was dreaming but then I woke up. I woke up and he was still there. It’s not fucking sleep paralysis. You have to help us. What does he want with my son?

DR WILSON
Mary, listen to yourself. This isn’t you. You’re talking about the ghost of a boy who may not even be dead. Your stress levels are through the roof and your sleep problems are making it hard for you to distinguish your nightmares from reality.

MARY
For god’s sake, don’t you think I know how this sounds? You have to believe me. Stephen has scratches on his face. I can prove it.

DR WILSON
You’re sleep deprived. You’re confused. You’re struggling to make sense of everything and you’re latching onto irrational explanations. You said yourself that the scratches are barely visible. You could have done it yourself and not even noticed.

Mary collapses, spent.

MARY
I don't know what's worse. Either I'm losing my mind or this is really happening. You have to help me. I feel like I'm losing my grip-

DR WILSON
I'm here to help you, Mary. Everything's going to be okay. I'm going to rush the lab for your blood work and then I think we should get you straight onto an anti-depressant.

Mary drops her head, resigned, wiped out.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
Let's have a proper video session this evening. Say 6pm?

Mary barely acknowledges him but seems to nod.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
I'll speak to you later then, Mary.

Dr Wilson hangs up the phone feeling dissatisfied.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Mary is still sitting at her desk, staring into nothingness. The sound of the door opening causes her to look up.

Lucy enters carrying a box of supplies. The wind has picked up outside and her cheeks are flushed.

LUCY
What are you doing in here?

MARY
(dazed)
What?

LUCY
Hon, what is going on with you? It's Saturday.

Not noticing how bad Mary really looks, Lucy places the box down on the desk and keeps talking.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I've brought you some extra food and water and Mike packed you a few emergency things.

There is a flashlight, a packet of batteries, a few disposable lighters, candles, a small hand axe.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You heard about the kid right?

Mary's stomach sinks.

MARY
He's dead isn't he?

LUCY
No. I thought you would have heard. They went national with the picture and now they're dealing with sightings all over the country. Looks like they found him though. In Florida apparently.

MARY
Are you sure?

LUCY
I told you. He must have hopped a bus south.

MARY
He's alive?

LUCY
Feel better?

Mary lets out a nervous laugh. She can't quite believe it.

MARY
God. I got myself into such a state. You know I thought I saw-

Lucy finally stops moving and looks at Mary. Mary covers her mouth, realizing how crazy it now seems. She's not sure whether to laugh or cry. Lucy waits for her to finish.

MARY (CONT'D)
Nothing. That's great news.

LUCY
Are you SURE you don't want to hunker down with us tonight?

A huge load has been lifted from Mary's shoulders.

MARY
We'll be fine. Everything's going to be okay.

LUCY
You sure you have everything? Blankets? Lanterns? Have you got enough wood?

MARY
We have everything Lucy. Thank you. Really.

Satisfied, Lucy hurries out the door, leaving Mary alone and reeling from the good news.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - AFTERNOON

Mary is prepping the house for the storm. The dining table is covered in provisions. Stephen is sitting in his wheelchair in the middle of the living area as Mary moves around him.

She unloads an extra bushel of firewood beside the stove and throws in a couple of logs. Lifting one heavy enamel cover she holds her hand over the cooking plate, checking that it's still hot.

She turns to look over what is on the table, making a mental checklist.

MARY
(to herself)
Lanterns. Lanterns... Basement.

She turns on her heel and heads toward the basement stairs.

Her brisk pace slows as she descends each stair, and when she finally reaches the door to the basement she opens it with some hesitation.

INT. BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary pushes open the door to the basement and stands on the threshold for a moment as though afraid.

The basement, however, it is not the dark, dingy cellar that her face might suggest. On the contrary, the room is fully furnished like the rest of the house.

Mary takes a deep breath, steeling herself, then steps inside. Richard's belongings have been hurriedly deposited in piles and boxes. Mary has not been in here in some time.

The surfaces are covered in framed photos, many of which we recognise from upstairs before the accident. Now they are propped up haphazardly, hidden from view in an unused room.

On one wall, half a dozen pencil drawings hang loosely on pins, getting tatty. There is another drawing of the house in the snow, a woman and a young boy making a snowman outside. There are several portraits of Mary. All signed "Stephen".

She runs her fingers over the paper. It's hard to look at them now.

Along another wall, fishing tackle, hunting gear, an old shotgun. Richard's work table, still covered in tools.

The WIND blusters angrily around the house. It WHISTLES down the chimney snapping Mary out of her daze.

She heads for a small door in the far wall, only 3 or 4 feet high. The ceiling here is pitched and the door appears to lead to a small extra storage space.

Mary tugs at the handle. It JAMS.

Looking down she sees that the door has been locked with a padlock. She looks at it quizzically, turning it over in her hand as though she isn't sure she remembers it.

Frustrated, she gives the door one more jiggle before turning to head back upstairs.

As she ascends the stairs she suddenly hears a sound.

It's not the wind this time. It's that low THUDDING noise that appears to come from the walls of the house itself.

Mary stops moving and holds her breath, listening.

She cocks her head to one side, not sure whether the sound came from back in the basement or upstairs.

She waits for another beat but hears nothing. She takes a breath, reminding herself that she's not scared anymore.

Turning to go back up, Mary SCREAMS as she walks straight into someone standing on the stairs.

The figure takes her by the shoulders. She looks up and sees that it is Doug.

DOUG
Hey, hey. It's me.

Her relief turns to laughter.

MARY
Jesus Christ. You scared me.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mary and Doug emerge from the basement stairwell.

DOUG
I tried knocking but no one answered. I just wanted to say thank you for last night and make sure you were okay.
(gesturing to the rain clouds outside)
Aaron and I have a suite down at the Holiday Inn. Are you sure you guys don't want to come with us?

Mary smiles shyly. She likes Doug but she's not used to this.

MARY
We're okay. Really. Thank you though. We've weathered worse.

Mary wanders over to a bureau and opens a drawer containing a box full of keys. She begins to rummage through it.

There's a moment of awkward silence.

MARY (CONT'D)
I can't tell you what a relief it is that they found Tom.
(off Doug's confused look)
The runaway kid.

DOUG
No, I know. Florida. Turned out to be a false alarm.

Mary's face pales. Doug notices the impact this has on her.

DOUG (CONT'D)
But hey, I'm sure he's going to turn up...

Doug's voice FADES OUT as Mary's world gets turned upside down again. She watches Doug's mouth open and close.

Her ears RING as the sound comes back.

DOUG (CONT'D)
...probably find him two towns over.

Mary stumbles over to another drawer and starts clumsily looking through it. Doug looks concerned.

DOUG (CONT'D)
You okay?

MARY
(mumbling)
I think you should leave.

DOUG
Are you sure? I hate the idea of leaving you here alone if the power lines go down.

He looks at the provisions Mary has laid out, then at Stephen in his wheelchair. He doesn't feel right about leaving them.

Looking closer, he notices the scratches on Stephen's face. He reaches out to touch his chin.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(jokingly)
What happened here? You two get into a fight or something?

MARY
(snapping)
Don't touch him.

It comes out of nowhere. Doug doesn't understand how things could have changed so suddenly.

DOUG
Mary, I'm sorry. Did I do something-?

Mary is too distracted to even look at him. Her mind is racing.

DOUG (CONT'D)
I didn't mean anything-

Mary picks up the axe from Lucy's emergency supply box and heads back towards the basement.

MARY
You should go before it gets dark.
You can let yourself out.

With that, Mary heads downstairs leaving Doug bewildered and alone with Stephen in the living room.

INT. BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - DUSK

Mary re-enters the basement with a more purposeful look. She heads straight for the locked door and kneels down beside it.

She hears a low resonant THUMP in the walls again. Only this time it sounds like it's coming from upstairs.

After a moment she hears the sound of a DOOR OPENING and CLOSING upstairs.

She turns back to the task in front of her. She lines up the hand axe against the metal arch of the padlock. Then she SWINGS, bringing it down hard on the lock.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - DUSK

In the main living area the sound of Mary's axe working on the padlock is muffled and intermittent. The space is otherwise quiet. Empty.

The sky outside is ominously dark. Cold wet raindrops are just starting to fall on the big glass skylights in the kitchen. As the water hits the glass it FREEZES instantly.

A phone starts RINGING.

INT. BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The metal padlock shows no sign of breaking open.

In her frustration Mary swings wide and the axe sinks into the wood just above the lock. Inspired, Mary starts working to free the lock from the door altogether.

The sound of the phone RINGING upstairs goes unnoticed.

INT. THE DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mary's computer monitor shows DR WILSON trying to connect. The little green phone RINGS loudly.

From deep within the belly of the house comes the steady sound of Mary's AXE.

INT. DR WILSON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Dr Wilson is sitting in his home office in front of a computer, looking agitated.

He has a pile of facsimile papers in front of him, one of which has MCA LabTech and the name PORTMAN, MARY printed neatly above a set of results.

He looks at his screen, waiting for the call to connect then looks at his watch impatiently.

Just as he's about to give up, we see the window on his computer pop open as Mary arrives, cheeks flushed.

INT. THE DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - SAME

The door to the den is open and Stephen can be seen sitting in his wheelchair out in the living area.

Mary, who has just run upstairs, is a little out of breath.

MARY
Dr Wilson. I-

DR WILSON
(interrupting, irritated)
Mary, I just got the results of your blood work. I have to say I'm very disappointed.

MARY
What?

He holds up the faxed pages.

DR WILSON
If you'd told me that you were self-medicating I could have helped you much more quickly. It's no surprise you're having so many problems. With the amount of pills you've been taking it's little wonder.

MARY
What are you talking about?

DR WILSON
Benzodiazepine is not a drug to be taken lightly. Mary, I understand that you're under a lot of pressure right now. I want to be able to help you but I can't do that if you're not being honest with me. Do you know how dangerous this could have been?

MARY
I'm not taking anything.

DR WILSON
Aside from the fact that mixing prescription drugs can be lethal, I can only assume you've been taking medication from Stephen which puts not only your health at risk but also his.

MARY
I don't know what you're talking about. I haven't taken anything.

DR WILSON
Mary, I can't help you unless you're honest with me. If you needed something to help you sleep I could have prescribed something much lighter.

Outside the rain is getting HEAVIER. There is a loud CLAP OF THUNDER. The storm is here. Mary stands up from the desk.

MARY
I'm telling you. You've made a mistake. Those aren't my results.

DR WILSON
Mary-

MARY
I don't have time for this.

She clicks her mouse and the Skype window is minimized.

The glowing green light on the webcam remains lit as Mary walks out the door.

INT. DR WILSON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dr Wilson is irritated, frustrated that Mary has walked out. He can still see the empty den in Mary's house.

He shakes his head as he puts Mary's lab results into a manila folder sitting on his desk.

He looks back at the screen and goes to disconnect the call.

As he does, something on screen catches his eye.

INT. BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - EVENING

Mary is back in the basement, axe in hand, working on removing the lock from the little wooden door.

The sound of the storm upstairs is getting LOUDER. The freezing rain makes a strange CREAKING and CRACKING. It sounds as if the house is being slowly squeezed and choked.

With a final swing, Mary manages to loosen the lock enough that she is able to pull it right off.

INT. DR WILSON'S HOUSE - SAME

Dr Wilson leans in close to the computer. He is looking at something through the open den door in Mary's house.

Something is not right.

The Skype window on Dr Wilson's computer shows an image of the den. Through his computer speakers he can hear the faint sounds of the STORM and the occasional THUD from downstairs.

It is not at first clear what Dr Wilson is looking at.

Then we see what caught his eye.

Stephen's wheelchair is sitting in the middle of the living area, just as it was before, visible through the open door of the den.

What has unsettled Dr Wilson is that now, suddenly, the chair is empty.

Dr Wilson leans close to the screen. What can this mean?

Suddenly a dark figure moves past the doorway.

The shock throws Dr Wilson back in his chair.

INT. BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary, careful to avoid splinters, pulls the lock free.

She opens the door slowly.

Inside it is dark; a tiny, sloped crawl space that can be used as extra storage.

The door is only a few inches open when Mary notices a strange SMELL emanating from inside.

She pulls the door wider.

Just at that moment, the power cuts out with a soft WHIR plunging us into total DARKNESS.

INT. DR WILSON'S OFFICE - SAME

Dr Wilson is absorbing what he has just seen, his mind racing.

DR WILSON
Mary? MARY?

He starts to realize what a mistake he has made.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
STEPHEN?

The Skype window on his screen freezes. An on screen message shows CONNECTION ENDED.

He tries frantically to re-dial her but the call cannot be connected: USER UNAVAILABLE.

Whipping open the manila folder labelled PORTMAN, MARY he quickly finds her home address and phone number. He picks up his telephone and tries dialling her.

Another fail.

He sits for a moment, trying to calculate the severity of the situation.

With only the briefest moment of hesitation he stands up, folder in hand, throws on his coat and grabs his car keys.

INT. BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - SAME

Down in the basement, Mary is stuck in virtual blackness.

MARY
Shit.

In the dark she fumbles for something in her pockets.

The eerie sounds of the rain freezing on the roof and sides of the house is even more pronounced in the inky stillness.

Mary flicks on a small disposable lighter from Lucy's emergency box. It creates a warm pool of light. The small success elicits a brief smile from Mary.

Moving back to the tiny door, Mary pulls it open.

She smells it again. That strange odor.

Just inside the door is what she came here for: a pair of sturdy old hurricane lanterns.

She leans into the crawl space to reach them when she hears a noise behind her, approaching from further down in the claustrophobic crawl space.

She turns, holding her lighter out before her.

From the darkness emerges a terrifying visage she knows all too well: the pale face and red-rimmed eyes of the boy from her nightmares.

In an instant he is almost on top of her: eyes wide, mouth gaping, that alien wailing emanating from within.

Mary stumbles back, trying to get away and out of the small space, her own mouth opening to scream.

Before she can get very far she is knocked unconscious by some unseen force.

DARKNESS engulfs us once again.

INT. BATHROOM, UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

MARY'S POV.

Mary's eyes flutter open. Her vision is hazy at first.

She finds herself in the upstairs bathroom. Like in her dream, it seems warmer, almost glowing. The room is steamy. She can hear water trickling into the already full tub.

But now Mary is in the water. She tries to sit up but finds that she can't.

Her head throbs and she feels woozy. Her eyes drift shut for a moment.

She opens them again.

Stephen is leaning over her, looking down into her eyes.

END POV.

Mary is naked in the bath which is full of hot soapy water. Her hands are bound and strapped to the faucet. Her ankles are bound together and there is duct tape covering her mouth.

Stephen is sitting on Mary's usual stool next to the tub, leaning over her in the same way that she did.

There are candles everywhere. Mary's clothes have been removed and neatly folded in a pile on the counter.

She tries to sit up but Stephen gently pushes her back. Her eyes go wide with panic and confusion as she looks up at her son. Straining against the tape over her mouth.

Stephen smiles and sings a familiar LULLABY ever so softly under his breath. When he speaks, his voice is calm and soft. He takes the tone of a mother talking to a young child: reassuring, gentle.

STEPHEN
Hello mother.

Mary is even more thrown to hear him speak. She struggles beneath his hand, trying to sit up but he holds her more firmly down.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Shhh... shhh... it's okay. There there. Shhhhh now. You're awake.

He picks up the jug that Mary used to wash him and pours hot water over her hair, careful not to splash her eyes.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Now it's my turn to look after you.

He picks up a bottle of shampoo and squeezes some into his palm. Cradling her neck, he begins lathering her hair.

He touches a certain point on the back of her head that makes Mary cringe in pain. He continues more carefully, rubbing the shampoo into her head.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
You have such beautiful hair. It always smells delicious. Like honeysuckle.

He pours the jug of water slowly over her hair, rinsing it.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Doesn't it feel wonderful to be washed? I love it when you bathe me. Your hands are always so soft.

He runs his hand lower over her body and Mary squirms underneath his touch. His movements are at once maternal and sensual.

Mary cannot fathom what is happening. She moans loudly.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
There there now. Shhhhh.

Mary whimpers. She is entirely at Stephen's mercy. He reaches out and starts to lift the tape over her mouth.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Will you be a good girl? If I take this off will you be good? I'd like to talk to you. And you know better than anyone that there's no point in screaming in this house.

Mary nods and Stephen slowly peels off the duct tape.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Hello.

MARY
(voice shaking)
Stephen, what's happening?

STEPHEN
I'm taking care of you silly. Just like you take care of me.

MARY
Am I dreaming?

STEPHEN
(stroking her cheek)
No my love. Not any more.

MARY
How are you doing this? When did you-?

STEPHEN
Wake up?

Mary nods.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
(like a naughty child telling a secret)
I was never really asleep.

Mary literally cannot comprehend what she is hearing. She struggles to get a grip on reality.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Well, I was... For a while.

He carries on washing her as he talks.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
After the accident I woke up in the hospital and you were by my side.

FLASHBACK TO:

MONTAGE {ALL FROM STEPHEN'S POV}

--Stephen's eyes flutter open. He is lying in a hospital bed, a mirror over head. He has freshly stitched cuts on his face and there's a tube going into his mouth to help him breathe.

He turns to see Mary sitting by his bed. Her eyes are red and puffy as though she has been crying for weeks but her face fills with hope and expectancy as she sees his eyes opening.

STEPHEN (V.O.)
You were waiting on my every move. So worried. So full of love. You hadn't looked at me like that since I was a boy. It was so pure. I didn't say anything because I didn't want it to end.

--Some weeks later Stephen sits in hospital. His cuts and bruises have healed, the tubes have gone and he is lying propped up in bed, staring vacantly ahead. Mary is nearby talking to two doctors, looking agitated. A nurse wipes Stephen's mouth.

STEPHEN (V.O.)
And the longer I didn't speak the more worried everyone seemed to be and the more attention you gave me.
(MORE)

STEPHEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Just because I didn’t, everyone assumed that I couldn’t.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Mary is listening to Stephen’s story in horror and disbelief.

MARY
No, Stephen, you couldn’t...

STEPHEN
You all made it so easy.

FLASHBACK TO:

--More time has elapsed. Stephen is in a wheelchair sitting in front of a window. Mary looks frustrated and exhausted, talking to another doctor who shakes his head, baffled.

STEPHEN (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The doctors stood around scratching their heads and all I had to do was... nothing. The more they told you how little we know about the brain, the easier I knew it’d be.

--Now Stephen is at home, in his bedroom. Mary attends to his every need. We see her through his eyes: the tireless nurse, beautiful, leaning over him, touching him, feeding him.

STEPHEN (V.O.) (CONT’D)
These last few months have been so special. I finally had you all to myself again.

BACK TO PRESENT:

MARY
No. It can’t be true. It’s not possible.

STEPHEN
You only saw what you wanted to see.

FLASHBACK TO:

--END STEPHEN’S POV. Mary is feeding Stephen in bed, the oatmeal dribbling down his chin. When she turns, his eyes flick to look at her.

--Stephen, alone in his room, swivels in bed and puts his bare feet on the floor. He is weak but he is able to stand.

STEPHEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You wanted to believe that it was your sweat and tears that were keeping me strong.

--Stephen, still weak but growing stronger, is on the floor beside his bed struggling to do a push up. A light perspiration coats his forehead, just as we saw once before.

STEPHEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You chose not to see because you wanted it too. You had your little boy back, just like you wanted.

--Night. Stephen slips out of his bedroom and pads into the dark kitchen. He opens the fridge. Suddenly, a noise outside. The bathroom door opens upstairs, letting light flood out.

BACK TO PRESENT:

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
(his mood turns)
And then he came along and ruined everything.

MARY
(realizing)
Tom.

STEPHEN
Why did you have to bring him into our house?

FLASHBACK TO:

--It's the night of Tom's attempted break-in. Mary is in the den on the phone to Joan, the door open a crack. We have been here before only now we are seeing things from Tom's POV. Suddenly, he catches sight of Stephen, trying to get back into his bedroom. Their eyes meet.

BACK TO PRESENT:

MARY
What did you do to him?

STEPHEN
I couldn't let him go. He'd seen me. He was going to tell.

MARY
Stephen, what did you do?

STEPHEN
(a flash of anger)
Why are you so concerned about him? You went out looking for him all night. You left me here alone.

MARY
Stephen-

STEPHEN
(not letting her speak)
Always so concerned about your precious patients.
(shouting)
I'm your son.

Just as quickly as Stephen's rage appears, it evaporates.

He stands and walks over to the counter where he picks up a bottle of his own medication: benzodiazepine.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Clearly we won't be able to move on until I've dealt with him. We can't keep him in the basement forever.

MARY
He's still alive?

STEPHEN
(amused)
Aren't you relieved? You're not losing your mind. And he's not haunting you. Yet.

MARY
Stephen, please, we can-

Stephen grabs hold of her face with one hand, forcing her mouth open. In the other hand he holds three sleeping pills.

STEPHEN
I normally put one in your tea before bed but since he arrived you've needed two to go down. Come on be a good girl and swallow.

He pushes the pills into her mouth, holds her nose and rubs her gullet, just she did to him. Eventually she swallows.

Stephen releases her nose and forces her mouth open again, checking under her tongue with his finger for the pills.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Just making sure. That's where I like to hide them from you. There's a good girl. Now you go to sleep and when you wake up he'll be gone and everything can go back to normal. Just you and me. I promise.

He kisses the top of her head and moves to the door, leaving Mary alone and naked in the tub.

I/E. DR WILSON'S CAR - NIGHT

The rain is coming down and the roads are covered in ice as Dr Wilson drives down the freeway struggling not to skid.

His windscreen wipers move at full tilt trying to stop the rain from freezing on the screen.

Beside him on the seat is Mary's case file, containing her address: 28 Delphi Lane. He holds a phone to his ear.

DR WILSON
Hello? No, please. I've been on hold already... Yes, I need you to send someone round to see Mary Portman at 28 Delphi Lane...She's a patient of mine...No she hasn't been in an accident. It's more complicated than that... I think she's being drugged.

His car begins to skid on the ice and he puts both hands on the wheel to right it.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
Well when will they be able to get a car out to her?

INT. BATHROOM, UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Mary, alone in the bathroom, listens to the sound of Stephen's footsteps receding down the stairs.

She knows she won't have long before the pills knock her out.

She tries to free her hands but the ties are too tight. She looks around the bathroom for any means of escape.

There is a nail file sitting on the counter near her clothes. It's sharp but there's no way she'll be able to reach it.

Then her eyes light on the bottle of shampoo Stephen used to wash her.

She leans forward and picks it up in her mouth. Flipping her head back she sucks some of the shampoo into her mouth.

She spits the viscose liquid onto the ties around her wrists and uses it as a lubricant.

With some difficulty she manages to slide first one hand then another out of the restraints. She quickly undoes her feet and in one movement pulls herself out of the tub and over to the toilet.

Kneeling on the floor, naked, she bends her head over the bowl and sticks her fingers down her throat.

Her whole body heaves but nothing comes up.

She reaches back into the tub and takes the bottle of shampoo, knocking it back and swallowing a mouthful.

She tries again with her fingers and this time she vomits into the toilet and is gratified to see the three sleeping pills, still relatively intact.

Drawing on every last ounce of will in her body, she pulls herself up and hurriedly pulls on her jeans and sweater.

She looks towards the closed bathroom door.

I/E. DR WILSON'S CAR - NIGHT

Visibility is dangerously low as Dr Wilson exits the freeway. He is hunched over the wheel, squinting to see through his iced-up windscreen.

INT. UPSTAIRS, THE HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is quiet. Candles have been lit downstairs, casting a low, flickering light.

Mary stands outside the bathroom, listening. There is only silence and the sound of her own heart pounding.

She pads silently down the stairs, her bare feet making no noise as she moves.

She picks up the phone in the kitchen but she knows, almost without checking, that it will be dead.

She moves over to the front door and is about to put on her coat and boots when she hears that strange LOW MOAN coming from deep within the belly of the house.

She turns to look at the stairs going down to the basement. The door is shut.

She looks at the front door. It is tantalizingly close.

She hears the MOAN again. That strange alien sound. Only now she knows it is the cry of a little boy who needs her help.

INT. BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - NIGHT

The basement is lit by two large hurricane lanterns.

Stephen is sitting at the worktable. A toolbox sits beside him, full of tools and compartments of long shiny nails.

The hand axe, a hammer, and a length of wire have been neatly laid out on the table. Stephen picks up each tool in turn, considering their weight in his hand.

A few feet away, the bound wrists of a small boy, tied to a support pillar, the outline of his shoulders just visible.

Behind Stephen, moving in the shadows, Mary silently slips into the basement.

She edges cautiously closer, summoning the courage to speak. It seems as though Stephen has not heard her until:

STEPHEN
You're a slippery one aren't you?

Stephen turns to face her. He smiles warmly. The axe in hand.

MARY
Stephen. It's okay. I'm here to help you.

She talks calmly, as though he's a patient. She's confused and afraid but she thinks she can control the situation.

MARY (CONT'D)
You were in a terrible accident, Stephen. You're not well.

Mary edges closer, careful not to make any sudden movements.

STEPHEN
I didn't think you would want to be here for this. But you're welcome to help.

Stephen turns back to the tools in front of him.

MARY
Stephen, you're not yourself. Put down the axe.

Her eyes flick over to where the boy is tied. Stephen is weighing the axe in his hand, comparing it to the hammer.

Mary looks towards the wall and gingerly takes down a dusty old shotgun. She barely knows how to hold it.

MARY (CONT'D)
It's okay. We're going to get you help. Just put down the axe. No one needs to get hurt.

Mary shakily levels the gun at Stephen, only a few feet away.

STEPHEN
(without turning round)
It's not loaded, you know.

Her hands are trembling but she doesn't lower the gun.

MARY
Stephen, put down the axe. You're not going to hurt this boy.

Stephen turns: the pathetic sight of Mary with the dusty old gun seems to amuse him. He turns back to the hammer. Decided.

STEPHEN
I'm afraid I-

Before she knows what she is doing, Mary brings the butt of the gun down HARD onto Stephen's temple.

He slumps down, collapsing to the floor.

Mary looks down at Stephen's inert body and the drops the gun in horror.

She rushes over to the pillar and immediately starts untying the pale little wrists. Once released, the little boy's body falls sideways to the floor.

Full of trepidation, Mary turns Tom over. The face of her nightmares is before her, but now she sees that the red-rimmed eyes are plaintive and full of pain.

She cradles his limp body in her arms. He is weak but he is alive.

She glances back and sees Stephen still motionless on the floor, only partly illuminated by the hurricane lantern.

TOM'S POV:

SILENCE

Tom looks up at Mary. With the hurricane lanterns behind her, she seems to glow, like an angel. Her eyes well with tears as she helps him to sit up. Her face full of concern and kindness. This is just how Stephen saw her in the hospital.

END POV.

Tom's face is dirty and a nosebleed has left dried, caked blood around his nose and mouth.

Mary shifts, getting ready to scoop him up, but he stops her with a weak gesture of his hand.

She stops, unsure what he wants. His loose wrist moves again and his lips start to move silently.

She leans in towards him, stroking his face, trying to calm him. They are very close.

Suddenly he cries out, his little-used deaf voice loud and unexpected in her ear.

TOM
Behind. You.

From behind, Stephen grabs Mary's hair, yanking her backwards and sending them both sprawling on the floor.

TOM'S POV.

Mary's cries and the sounds of fighting disappear. SILENCE.

Mary is on the floor. She is in pain. Stephen is behind her. She is looking right at us, mouthing a single word.

We can almost feels Tom's physical exhaustion, his inertia.

For a moment everything seems to be in slow motion. Stephen rises up, hammer in hand, and steps towards Tom.

END POV.

The sudden returning sound is deafening. Mary throws herself at Stephen's legs, stopping his progress as she tackles him to the floor.

She is still looking at Tom and now we hear what it is that she is shouting:

MARY
RUN!

As Stephen comes CRASHING down Tom is spurned into action. He leaps up and runs for the door.

Mary and Stephen tussle on the floor. The hammer slips out of his reach.

She is strong from lifting Stephen in and out of that wheelchair and now the adrenaline is pumping through her veins. He is slight for a man his age and the pair seem evenly matched.

Stephen manages to get the upper hand, rolling Mary onto her back and pinning her down with his body, gripping both wrists tightly.

Mary struggles beneath him but is unable to get him off her.

STEPHEN
Why did you do that? You're ruining everything.

Stephen sits up, pinning her beneath him. She squirms but cannot escape. Stephen seems genuinely upset, like a child in the midst of a tantrum, trying to make her understand.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
I'm doing this for us. So that you don't have to send me away.

MARY
What?

STEPHEN
I heard you. Last night. You said you were sending me away. Just like everyone said you should.

MARY
(trying to get a word in)
But-

STEPHEN
(not letting her talk, out of control)
Was he meant to replace me? Is that why you brought him here? Your new-

MARY
Stephen, no, what are you-?

STEPHEN
(crying, spit coming out of his mouth)
Shut up. Shut up.

He covers her mouth with his hand, silencing her.

He takes a breath and starts manically stroking her face, like a clumsy kid trying to settle a puppy. As he talks, his words seem to calm himself down.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
It's okay. It's okay. You don't have to send me away. No one needs to know. If I just- Everything will be perfect again. I can fix it.

He quietens now, still stroking her face, not allowing her to move or talk.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
My father tried to send me away. But I fixed it. I can do it again.

Mary's body goes rigid. Stephen, back in control of himself, looks down at her, explaining.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
He was trying to take me away. Away from this house. Away from you. I did it for us.

Mary's eyes go glassy. Her mind struggles to absorb the meaning of Stephen's words.

FLASHBACK TO:

--STEPHEN'S POV: It is the sunny spring day of the opening. Trees and fields rush by in a blur of green. We are in a car, moving along a freeway. Stephen looks at himself in the side mirror, before turning to see his father, Richard, driving. Richard's mouth moves but we hear nothing.

STEPHEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was a risk. The accident. But it was worth it.

The car is travelling fast down a near empty highway. Stephen takes his eyes off the road and down to the seatbelt buckle at his father's side.

STEPHEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I didn't care if I died. As long as he did.

Stephen reaches out and releases Richard's buckle.

As Richard looks down in confusion, Stephen grabs the wheel and pulls it sharply, sending the car into a wild spin that sends them CRASHING into the barrier.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Pain washes over Mary. Her mouth opens in a silent paroxysm of grief as tears run silently into her hair.

Stephen reaches down and wipes the tears tenderly from her eyes. Mary starts to sob quietly beneath him.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Shhh... Shhh... It's okay.

Stephen lowers his face close to hers. He kisses her tears, wetly, trying to comfort her. Mary's eyes grow cold and hard.

As he leans forward to kiss her again, she suddenly jerks up, kneeing him hard in the groin.

Stephen topples to the ground clutching his crotch and Mary darts up and out of the room.

INT. STAIRS TO THE BASEMENT, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary comes bursting out of the basement and immediately slams the door closed behind her.

Without skipping a beat she grabs a collapsible ironing board propped up nearby and wedges it under the door handle.

I/E. DR WILSON'S CAR - NIGHT

Dr Wilson is still driving but now he is on a smaller local road. There are ice-covered fir trees on either side.

His GPS beeps, indicating that he has reached his destination. He can't see any houses, just ice-covered trees.

Suddenly he spots the wooden sign at the end of Mary's drive: 28 Delphi Lane. He's going too fast to turn on this ice.

Pulling the steering wheel down hard, Dr Wilson sends his car into a dangerous skid.

Out of control on the slick road, Dr Wilson crashes the front of his car into a large tree at the top of the drive.

The house is only 100 yards away.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

Mary moves silently and quickly between the rooms downstairs, looking everywhere for Tom.

MARY
(to herself)
Where are you?

She spots a dirty scuff mark on the wall: a small smudged hand print. She follows it.

Downstairs, the basement door rattles as Stephen tries to open it from the inside.

She spots another scuff mark just outside the linen closet.

She opens the door and sees the usual array of little-worn coats hanging on the rail, folded towels on a shelf above.

It appears to be a dead end, but then she hears a small WHIMPER and looking up she sees the boy curled up into a ball, hiding on the shelf just above head height.

He is partly obscured by towels and Mary can just see a pair of terrified eyes looking down at her.

MARY (CONT'D)
We have to get out of here.

The boy shakes his head, he's too afraid to move.

MARY (CONT'D)
You have to trust me.

Grateful that Tom cannot hear Stephen SLAMMING against the door, Mary tries to keep from flinching with each blow.

MARY (CONT'D)
We have to leave the house NOW.
Come on, it's okay, I've got you.

Tom can see the fear in Mary's eyes. He refuses to move.

As the sound of BANGING gets louder, Mary knows their window to escape is getting smaller.

MARY (CONT'D)
Shit.

Leaving the boy, Mary runs round to the front door, and throws it open. The freezing air rushes in immediately.

She steps into her boots which sit waiting as always by the door and puts on her coat. For a moment we think she is going to leave without Tom.

She steps off the porch, making deep visible footprints as she cracks through the ice-coated snow.

When she's gone a few yards, Mary steps backwards carefully into her own footprints until she is back inside. She whips off her boots and puts them in the sideboard.

Standing inside it looks very much as though someone has run out into the darkness.

Satisfied she rushes back inside leaving the front door wide. The last remnants of warm air have left and the house becomes dangerously cold.

Grabbing a damp dish towel from the kitchen, Mary uses it to clean the dirty hand marks leading to the linen closet.

BAM! Wood splinters. The door downstairs begins to give way.

Mary wipes away the last handprint and with no other choice, she steps inside the closet.

She pulls the slatted door closed and shuts her eyes, praying for the best as she hears the basement door BURST open.

I/E. DR WILSON'S CAR - NIGHT

Dr Wilson comes to in his car and finds himself propped up on an airbag. He is not sure how long he has been unconscious but he quickly regathers his senses and opens the door.

The air outside is bitterly cold and his legs are shaky. He staggers toward the house, trying not to slip on the ice.

Looking up he sees that the front door is wide open.

DR WILSON
(calling out)
Mary? Mary are you there?

Although the rain has almost stopped, the wind drowns out the sound of his voice.

INT. CLOSET, THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary stands pressed against the coats in the confined closet. She tries to still her shaking limbs, listening.

Stephen's FOOTSTEPS can be heard ascending the stairs from the basement.

STEPHEN (O.C.)
(calling out, playful, cruel)
Mother. Mother.

She hears his footsteps move towards the front door.

INT. FRONT HALL, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Stephen stands at the front door looking out at the footprints. His eyes scan the darkness.

He is about to follow the tracks outside when he notices water on the floor. Melted ice.

He follows the drips to the sideboard and slides the door open with his foot.

Mary's boots sit inside, covered in snow and ice.

He smiles and turns back inside. This is a game to him.

Over his shoulder, through the open doorway, Dr Wilson suddenly comes into view, approaching slowly at a distance.

INT. CLOSET, THE HOUSE - SAME

Mary tries to be as silent as possible as Stephen's footsteps can be heard moving through the downstairs living area.

STEPHEN (O.C.)
I know you're still here. I can smell you.

She realizes that he is making his way towards the closet.

STEPHEN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
I'm not going to hurt you, mother.
I just want the boy.

She hears the sound of something dull and heavy being dragged along the wall. It's the hammer.

Mary looks up to check on Tom. His eyes are fixed on the slatted door in front of them.

The air throughout the house is FREEZING now. The boy's warm breath forms little clouds inside the closet.

Mary quickly realizes her own breath is doing the same.

INT. LIVING AREA, DOWNSTAIRS - SAME

Stephen trails his hammer along the central wall like a kid dragging a stick along a fence.

His eyes dart around the darkness, searching.

He squats to look under the dining table. Nothing.

Behind him, we can see the linen closet only a few yards away. A small cloud of warm breath escapes through the slats.

INT. CLOSET, THE HOUSE - SAME

Mary covers her mouth with her hand.

She hears Stephen push the door to the den open with his hammer. He is only a few feet from the closet now.

STEPHEN (O.C.)
He's the only thing stopping us
from being happy.

Mary can hear Stephen right outside the closet. She screws her eyes tight, praying for a miracle.

Suddenly her prayers are answered.

DR WILSON (O.C.)
(faintly, from the
direction of the front
door)
Mary? Mary are you here?

Mary watches through the slats as Stephen suddenly vanishes.

She finally exhales, her breath trembling.

DR WILSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Mary? Is anyone here? It's Dr Wilson.

Mary is desperate to call out to him. She can hear his voice at the front door. But she doesn't know where Stephen is.

I/E. FRONT DOOR, THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Dr Wilson is standing in the open doorway. Slightly out of breath, he holds onto the door frame for support. He peers into the house.

Just out of sight, in the main living area, the flickering candle light is EXTINGUISHED.

Perhaps it was just the wind.

DR WILSON
Mary? Is that you? Stephen?

Dr Wilson steps cautiously into the house. He is surprised by how cold it is and instinctively closes the door behind him.

He steps quietly into the house and round into the kitchen area. He struggles to see in the near darkness.

Fumbling, he pulls out a cell phone and presses a button to illuminate the screen.

It throws a sickly blue light. Extending his arm he uses it to illuminate a yard or so ahead of him.

He sweeps his arm 180 degrees, shedding a small arc of light that reveals nothing. Emptiness.

He sweeps his arm back through 180 degrees.

Suddenly the light reveals Stephen, in his wheelchair, now only a few feet away from him. Dr Wilson jumps in surprise.

Stephen's face is vacant, his beautiful eyes empty.

Dr Wilson recovers from his shock and tries to regain control of the situation.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
Stephen. Where is your mother?

There is no reaction from Stephen who remains static in his wheelchair.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
Stephen I know what you've been doing. There's no need to pretend. I saw you out of the chair. Where is your mother?

Stephen's eyes remain glassy. Then, almost imperceptible at first, Stephen's lips begin to move. A strange whisper escapes them.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
What did you say?

Stephen makes the same quiet mumur. It's not quite audible but it sounds like he's trying to say something.

Dr Wilson leans in closer. His body hangs over Stephen's wheelchair as he gets in close. Stephen's lips are practically touching Dr Wilson's ear.

STEPHEN
(barely a whisper)
You told her to get rid of me.

Dr Wilson's eyes suddenly go wide. There is a soft sickening THUMP: the sound of a kitchen knife being plunged into Dr Wilson's lower abdomen.

For a moment Dr Wilson is frozen, bent over Stephen's chair.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
But she loves me.

Dr Wilson turns to look Stephen in the eye, his expression is one of disbelief.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
And no one is going to keep us apart.

Stephen looks at Dr Wilson and smiles.

INT. CLOSET, THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary stands in the closet listening for any sound of Dr Wilson or Stephen.

BANG! The sound of a hammer striking a nail, somewhere downstairs.

Mary jumps, biting her lip to keep quiet.

Another BANG. That one seemed to be from the kitchen.

Then another, over by the front door.

And another.

As terrified as she is, the banging gives away Stephen's location and Mary knows that this may be their only chance to escape.

She silently motions to Tom to come down and this time he allows her to lower him to the floor in her arms.

Mary carefully pulls an old ski jacket from one of the hangers. Its shoulders have gathered dust and when she wraps it around Tom's tiny frame it hangs loosely.

His feet are bare. Mary scours the floor of the closet and finds an old pair of hiking socks stuffed into a pair of boots that she helps the boy to step into. Her hands shake.

The intermittent banging continues on the far side of the house. Through the slatted closet door she can see the path to the back door only a few yards away. The way is clear.

Mary takes her chance.

She slides open the closet door and motions to Tom to stay back as she takes two silent steps over to the back door. As quietly as she can she turns the lock and pushes.

The door opens an inch. She can smell freedom.

Then the door JAMS.

Mary pushes harder but it won't budge.

She uses her shoulder to silently ram the door. No luck.

She looks out through the tiny open crack and sees what appears to be snow piled up high around the door.

EXT. BACK DOOR OF THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Outside in the bitter cold we see the back door from the outside.

It has been pushed open an inch and the door shudders as Mary pushes against it from the inside.

Slumped against the back door, with his neck wrapped in snow chains, is the frozen body of Doug. His face and body encased in clear hard ice.

The way his body is propped up against the door, he has become a human door stop.

There is no way Mary will be able to get through.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary realizes that her efforts are futile. She also fears that the noise will alert Stephen to their whereabouts.

BANG!

She hears the heart-stopping sound of Stephen's hammer again. He seems to be somewhere near the foot of the stairs.

TOM'S POV:

SILENCE.

Tom's eyes dart about wildly in the dark. It's a relief not to be able to hear Stephen's hammer but it also reminds us how vulnerable Tom is.

Mary reaches out to take his hand, her eyes pleading. He has no choice but to trust her.

He lets her pull him out of the closet and lead him to the central wall. He is in her hands now.

They inch slowly along, backs pressed against the wall.

Suddenly he feels a sharp vibration in the wall. The impact of Stephen's hammer somewhere in the house.

In silence, we see the minute vibration of a picture frame against the wall.

Then a different vibration, coming from somewhere closer. Tom feels it and freezes instantly.

His eyes dart to Mary, she's heard something too.

END POV.

Stephen has stepped onto the balcony right above where Mary and Tom are standing. Looking at each other, they hug themselves in tight against the wall, working as one.

STEPHEN
Mother.

Mary does not move. She closes her eyes. Has he seen her?

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Are you up here? You're going to have to come out sooner or later.

Stephen continues moving up the stairs, HUMMING that same lullaby as he moves along the balcony into one of the bedrooms.

Mary exhales and Tom does the same. They resume the journey.

Rounding the corner Mary and Tom are within sight of the front door. But something has caught Mary's eye.

Around the next corner, the wheels of Stephen's chair, jut out. In the footrest, a pair of black leather shoes.

Mary pauses.

Upstairs, she can clearly hear the sound of Stephen HUMMING and the HAMMERING has resumed in one of the far rooms.

She squats down and gestures to Tom to stay back. He nods in compliance.

MARY
(barely daring to whisper)
Dr Wilson?

She takes a step forward.

MARY (CONT'D)
Dr Wilson is that you?

She rounds the corner and drops to her knees as the wind is knocked out of her.

Sitting in the wheelchair is Dr Wilson: his face is pale and cold with sweat. His jaw is slack, his eyes open and glassy. His clothes are soaked with dark wet blood.

He is only just alive.

Mary, sitting on the floor with a look of abject horror on her face, looks into Dr Wilson's eyes.

Dr Wilson tries to speak. His voice cracks.

DR WILSON
I'm sorry.

Mary, welling up, reaches out to see if she can help him. He waives her off, knowing that it's too late. He is dying.

Over her shoulder something catches Dr Wilson's attention. Tom is peering at him with sad scared eyes.

Mary follows his gaze and then turns back to Dr Wilson.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
(breathless disbelief)
He was here. All along.

Mary nods.

Dr Wilson takes a moment before he speaks again. Every word requires herculean effort but his tone is serious, pragmatic.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
Mary... In Stephen's mind...
(he coughs, struggling)
You must not challenge his delusion.

Mary does not want to listen, she wants to get them out.

DR WILSON (CONT'D)
Get the boy out of sight...You are what he wants...Enter his delusion...

He is unable to continue speaking.

MARY
It's okay. I'm going to get you out of here.

Mary stands and moves to push the wheelchair. As she rises Dr Wilson grabs her wrist.

DR WILSON
(firm, almost angry)
Go. Get the boy out.

Mary sees that Dr Wilson will not make it. She concedes, backing up.

Dr Wilson's head slumps.

Moving back to the front door Mary puts her hand on the handle and pulls. The door does not budge.

Immediately she sees three large heavy duty nails from the tool kit smashed into the door, keeping it firmly in place.

She pulls at one but she can't get a purchase on it. It's useless.

Upstairs, Stephen is in another bedroom, HAMMERING.

Now she understands. He is sealing them in.

STEPHEN
(calling from upstairs)
How long are we going to play this game, Mary?

Mary looks around for another way out.

The ground floor windows are all nailed shut like the door and their square French panes are too small to be worth smashing.

Her eye lights on the large kitchen skylight, directly over the wood-burning stove.

Mary kneels down in front of the boy. She lifts the hood of the jacket over his head.

MARY
(quiet, enunciating with her lips)
Stay here. Do not move. I'm going to get us out of here.

The boy nods. She is in control now.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM, UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Stephen is in Mary's bedroom, hammer and nails in hand.

After nailing the window shut he moves to the closet, whipping it open in the hopes of catching her.

The hunt is irritating and titillating at once. His patience is wearing thin.

INT. KITCHEN, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEPHEN (O.C.)
Where are you hiding him?

Mary has climbed onto the kitchen counter beside the stove. Wielding a heavy skillet she is poised beneath the glass skylight. It is heavy with ice and snow, sloping above her.

She will only get one shot at this. She looks at Tom, cowering by the front door.

Mary grits her teeth and puts everything she has into an enormous upward swing.

CRASH!

In a hail of glass, ice and snow, the skylight SHATTERS, falling to the floor and barely missing Mary who covers her head with her arms and leans back out of the way.

STEPHEN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
(from the stairs, angry)
What are you doing to our house?

Mary's hands are cut and bleeding and she has fragments of ice and glass in her hair. She reaches her arms out to Tom.

He steps over the broken glass. In an instant Mary scoops him up, one hand under each armpit. She's used to heavier.

Stephen is barrelling down the stairs.

Without stopping, Mary hoists Tom over head, lifting him towards the open skylight. He is light and Mary pushes him up and out onto the roof almost instantly.

Stephen, hammer in hand, runs down the last few steps.

EXT. THE ROOF - SAME

TOM'S POV:

The icy rain has stopped and the world outside is very still.

For a brief moment, everything is SILENT.

END POV.

INT. KITCHEN, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stephen is on top of Mary in an instant, pulling her down and trapping her against the counter with both arms.

She does not flinch or struggle against him.

STEPHEN
You've been a bad girl, mother.

His eyes go up to the skylight. The boy has gone and he can see only the dark night sky.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
I'm going to have to punish you.

Mary takes a deep breath, then raises her eyes to meet Stephen's.

MARY
You're right.

Her voice is calm but remorseful, she's playing a role. Entering Stephen's delusion, just as Dr Wilson told her to.

Stephen cocks his head to one side.

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. About before.

STEPHEN
You hurt me and you're ruining everything.

He pushes Mary to one side and puts his hands on the counter as if to get up and go after the boy.

Mary reaches out and places her hand on his shoulder. Her touch is gentle, not reproachful.

MARY
I didn't understand before.

Stephen turns to face her, suspicious.

MARY (CONT'D)
I didn't understand that you were doing this for me. That it was all for me.

She places her hand on his chest.

MARY (CONT'D)
So that we could be together.

Stephen looks at her a moment, trying to weigh up what she's saying.

He doesn't trust her.

He spins her around forcefully and presses her up against the counter using his whole body to pin her in place.

STEPHEN
(angry)
Why are you helping him?

Mary winces as he crushes her but she tries to hide her pain.

MARY
I got rid of him for us. He's gone. Now it's just you and me.

Stephen keeps her in place. His eyes dart back up to the skylight. Mary draws his attention back to her.

MARY (CONT'D)
We don't need him. You were right. This is our house. He shouldn't be here.

Stephen softens slightly, giving her a little room to breathe. He still doesn't quite trust her.

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry... Before... I was confused. I thought I had lost you... But now you're here. How could I ever replace you? My precious boy.

With her back to him, Mary closes her eyes. Uttering these words is impossibly hard. Her voice wavers slightly but Stephen is clearly coming around.

MARY (CONT'D)
From now on, it's just you and me, my love. My precious boy. We can stay here forever. Together.

Stephen lets his head drop to the nook of her neck. This is what he needed to hear.

His arms wrap around her, clutching her tightly. He breathes her in, clinging to her like a child trying to lose himself in the safety of his mother's scent. His desperate need for her is palpable.

Mary allows him to hold her but her pain is evident. Tears roll freely down her cheeks. Not only for herself but for this broken shell that used to be her son.

A fleck of ice drops from her hair onto the stove-top. The heavy enamel lids are down but the heat is still enough to cause the ice to melt and evaporate.

MARY (CONT'D)
We can be together now. There's no one to stop us.

Stephen's body reacts to her soothing words. His head buries deeper into her neck and his hands paw at her body. It's both childlike and sexual.

Slowly, calmly, Mary slides her right hand down to rest on top of his right hand.

MARY (CONT'D)
(soft and soothing)
Shhhh. Shhhh. It's okay.
We're together now. Everything's going to be okay.

Mary tries to regulate her breathing.

Stephen's eyes are closed. He is calm now. Entirely under her spell as his infantile need teeters into desire.

She slides his hand across her belly with one hand, while with the other, she silently raises the heavy enamel cover of the stove-top cooking plate.

MARY (CONT'D)
This is where you belong.

Another tiny piece of ice drops from her hair and onto the now exposed cooking plate. Instantly it SIZZLES and SPITS.

Stephen is too absorbed to hear it.

With a swift decisive move Mary rips his hand from her body and SLAMS it palm down onto the cooking plate.

Stephen screams out like a wounded beast.

Mary grabs for the skillet on the kitchen counter and SWINGS it as hard as she can at Stephen's head.

Stephen manages to dodge the skillet by a whisper.

Whipping his hand off the stove he reacts with lightning speed. Immediately his hands are around her throat, his rage at being duped matched only by his bitter disappointment.

Hot angry tears rolls down his cheeks as he tightens his grip around her neck. Spit falling from his mouth as he grits his teeth.

EXT. THE ROOF - SAME

TOM'S POV.

SILENCE.

Tom has dared to peer down into the kitchen. Beneath him Stephen is strangling Mary, her body bent backwards over the counter.

The violence of their struggle is strangely balletic from this silent aerial perspective.

INT. KITCHEN, THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary's face is turning purple. Unable to breathe, she struggles to stay conscious. Stephen is going to kill her.

Suddenly, without warning, amidst a shower of snow and ice, Tom drops from the skylight, CRASHING on top of Stephen, knocking him off Mary.

Tom ends up on top of an unconscious Stephen on the floor.

Mary gasps for air. Even before she's caught her breath she reaches down to check that Tom is okay.

Relief courses through her and she pulls the little boy into a tight embrace, feeling his head for cuts or scrapes.

She looks him in the face. He is staring down at Stephen with that same hard, cold look that she first saw in her clinic. Those eyes that make him look old beyond his years.

She touches his face, tilting it towards her. This time, that look in his eyes fades and she sees that he is just a little boy once again.

Mary reaches out and takes Tom's hand in her own. She picks up the hammer with the other. She leads him away from Stephen, over to the sideboard where she slips on her boots.

She uses the tail of the hammer to rip out the nails that were holding the front door closed.

The hammer drops and Mary swings the front door wide open.

She and Tom stand in the open doorway breathing in the fresh air of freedom.

Behind them, out of sight, Stephen begins to stir.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The storm has passed and the sky is clear and black. Every branch, every leaf, every surface, has been coated in a thick glassy layer of ice. It's eerily beautiful.

Mary scoops Tom into her arms, like a koala. He resigns himself to her embrace and they step out into the night.

Looking up the drive, Mary spots Dr Wilson's car, propped against a tree. The door hangs open with the light on inside.

The sloped drive is covered in ice and the way is treacherous as Mary sets out towards freedom.

TOM'S POV:

SILENCE.

Tom has his head resting on Mary's shoulder.

He can barely keep his eyes open as the adrenaline leaves his body.

He looks back as the house, and the nightmare, slowly gets further and further away.

END POV.

They are less than half way when Mary stops. She uses her arms to pull Tom away from her chest.

Her clothes are wet and steaming. Tom has pissed himself.

Confused she leans him away from her so she can see his face.

He is frozen in fear. His eyes wide, his mouth gaping, opening and closing but not making any sound.

He is staring back at the house.

Mary turns and sees what Tom sees: Stephen standing in the open door way, his head bleeding, hammer in hand.

He is angry.

STEPHEN
(guttural, loud)
MOTHER.

He steps off the porch towards them, limping slightly.

Mary turns and tries to run.

She is only 60 yards from the car. She clutches Tom to her chest and moves as fast as she can.

She turns her head back towards the house.

Stephen is gaining on her. He has a wild look in his eyes.

Turning back to run, Mary slips, losing her footing.

Mary goes sprawling, landing hard on the ice. Her lip SMASHES on the frozen ground.

Tom is thrown out from under her, skidding to a halt a few yards away.

Mary, dazed, looks back and sees Stephen almost upon them. She scrambles to her feet and tries to grab Tom but he's already up and running into the dark fir woods.

Mary has no other choice but to follow Tom off the drive and into the shelter of the trees.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The ground is steeper here, sloping down towards the cove. But the beneath the dense branches the ground is mostly free of ice and snow.

In front of her, Mary can hear Tom crashing wildly through the trees down the winding path ahead.

Behind her, she catches glimpses of Stephen moving steadily between the trees.

Stephen's eyes scan the darkness for his prey. His breath is ragged. He is hunting them.

He calls out in the darkness, his voice changed, deep with rage. He sounds like a man possessed.

STEPHEN
I did this all for you, you fucking bitch.

Mary stumbles down the winding path. Her heart races.

Suddenly, through a gap in the trees, she catches sight of Tom. He's further down the path about to step onto the jetty.

Unable to see that he's walking into a dead end, and with nowhere else to go, Tom keeps running. Mary is powerless to stop him.

EXT. JETTY - SAME

TOM'S POV:

SILENCE.

The jetty emerges from the tree line and Tom sees that he is trapped.

Before him, the wooden jetty stretches out over the inky waters of high tide.

Looking back, Tom sees Mary arriving at the top of the jetty. She is beckoning to him frantically to come back.

But behind her he sees Stephen, approaching through the trees.

They are cornered.

END POV.

At the top of the stairs, Mary turns to see Stephen closing in, hammer in hand. He looks savage, wild.

A few feet away she spots the old rotten canoe and poking out of it, a short wooden paddle. She grabs it and wields it before her like a weapon.

Stephen slows down, but he does not stop.

Mary has no choice but to follow Tom down the jetty. She walks backwards, keeping her eye on Stephen, gripping tight onto the paddle.

Stephen looks at Mary, then at Tom. He quickly assesses the situation and breaks into a broad grin.

STEPHEN
Where are you going to go now?
You and your precious boy.

At the far end of the jetty, Tom has backed up onto to the floating dock which bobs up and down with the current.

As he steps onto the broken dock, it starts to move under his weight, swinging away from the jetty on its one precarious hinge. Tom cannot get back onto the jetty.

Looking over Mary’s shoulder, Stephen sees the predicament the boy is in and laughs.

Mary glances back and sees the fear and panic in Tom’s eyes.

She is halfway down the wooden jetty. Halfway between Stephen, who stands blocking one end, and Tom who cries out like a cub howling for his mother.

There is no escape.

Tom cries out again. Mary feels it in her gut. She turns and runs down the jetty towards him.

Stephen begins his slow, steady approach. He's going to enjoy this.

When Mary reaches the end of the jetty, she reaches out the paddle to Tom. When he grabs it she uses it to reel him in, pulling the dock back in line with the jetty.

Behind her, Stephen, stalking towards them, calls out to her:

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Do you want to watch him die before I kill you, mother?

Mary considers her options. She looks Tom in the eye.

MARY
Trust me.

This time, Tom looks her in the eye and nods.

She steps forward to join him on the floating dock.

Immediately it sways away again, pivoting around its one remaining hinge.

Stephen is only 60 yards away, coming down the walkway towards them.

With all her might Mary SMASHES the paddle into the hinge: the only thing that is tethering them to land.

It holds tight.

Stephen sees what she is doing.

He lets out an ALMIGHTY ROAR and picks up speed, running as fast as he can.

Mary raises the paddle above her head and SMASHES it once again on the hinge.

This time the rusty hinge gives way and the dock BREAKS FREE like a tiny raft.

Mary uses the paddle to push off and the gap between them and the jetty grows by a few feet.

Stephen sees them floating away. With a WILD CRY he bursts forward, launching himself off the jetty and into the air.

Tom and Mary's raft is only a few feet away, it looks like Stephen might make it.

But with an almighty SPLASH he CRASHES into the icy cold water of the Atlantic.

For a moment he disappears from view entirely.

Silence.

Then his head breaks the surface. As the freezing water drives all breath from his lungs, Stephen GASPS for air. Instead he finds a mouthful of seawater.

Stephen flounders, trying to grab onto the dock but unable to grip its icy sides

He is drowning. His face turning blue.

As he throws himself at the side of the slippery dock, struggling to get a purchase on it, he locks eyes with Mary.

For a moment he is just a little boy again. His eyes are filled with fear and he looks barely older than Tom.

STEPHEN
(pleading)
Mother. Please.

For a split second we wonder if Mary will go to him before Stephen loses his grip and slips down out of view.

Silence.

Tom and Mary scan the water. They cannot see Stephen in the inky blackness.

Silence.

Suddenly the hammer BURSTS out of the water. The claw end hooking firmly into the raft.

Mary clutches hold of Tom, protecting him with her body.

But nothing happens. Only silence.

Seconds pass.

Tentatively she goes to the edge and looks down into the depths.

But it is only the hammer. Stephen is gone.

Mary collapses onto her knees, her body wracked by sobs.

Tom wraps his arms around her as if to keep her warm.

In his arms, Mary’s crying slowly ceases. She turns to look at the little boy and she pulls him close to her chest.

They hold on to one another as the dock bobs gently on the still waters of the cove.

We begin to lift, higher and higher, above the dock, above the woods, above the house.

The moon shines brightly on this frozen world and in the distance we see the faint glimmer of red and blue lights approaching the house.

FADE TO BLACK.