

# HAVE YOU SEEN ME?

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The street inclines before them like the first imposing stretch of an amusement park roller coaster.

Stopped on their bicycles, CLAIRE AVERS, 11, and caucasian. Childhood fat comfortably sits on her confident shoulders and MALAIKA JOHNSON, 11, black, somewhat the antithesis of Claire with her slim build and tentative approach.

They judge the possibility of making it up that hill with their bikes and their 6th grade legs.

MALAIKA

I don't know, Claire. It's pretty steep.

CLAIRE

It's the shortest way to get there.

MALAIKA

Can't we go around somewhere?

CLAIRE

Anna's birthday party begins in five minutes. What are we going to say, "Surprise, we're late to your surprise birthday party?"

MALAIKA

Okay, then. I'm ready, I guess.

The two begin to pedal up the street together, their faces ripe with exertion, their breaths following the rhythm of their bicycle cranks.

We follow them up past tall, old clapboard houses on either side that have faded and been ripped of their souls long ago.

Through huffs and puffs---

MALAIKA (CONT'D)

I wasn't even invited.

CLAIRE

She said I could bring someone. You're my best friend. Who else would I take?

Malaika smiles through the struggle. A plastic bag with a box inside dangles from her handle bar.

MALAIKA

I didn't even bring her anything.

Claire motions towards the bag.

CLAIRE

That's from both of us.

They are half way up the hill when there's a sudden rattle from Malaika's bike. Her pedaling stops, Claire follows suit.

They look down, the chain has come off of Malaika's chain ring.

The two get off their bikes.

Near them, a male and female watch from the porch of a 3 story old house.

The GRIMY MALE, 30, kicks some beer cans at his feet.

GRIMY MALE

You girls have an issue there?

He flicks a cigarette away to join a carpet of butts on the porch, gets up, stumbles down some rickety steps and joins the girls.

The girls instinctively take a step back as he approaches.

The Grimy Male takes a look at the bike.

GRIMY MALE (CONT'D)

Somebody's off their chain, huh?

He laughs, takes the bike and effortlessly flips it, causing the plastic bag on the handlebars to hit the ground.

CLAIRE

Hey, be careful. It's a tea set!

Claire removes the bag from the bike.

The Grimy Male turns to the FEMALE, 30, now standing on the porch, watching. Later, we'll know her as Daisy.

GRIMY MALE

Daisy, you need a tea set?

She sneers, tosses him the middle finger, turns and disappears into the house.

GRIMY MALE (CONT'D)

I guess not.

Grimy Male pulls a weight lifting glove from his pocket, sticks it over his right hand to avoid getting grease on it, huddles down, tinkers with the chain, his eyes, though focus with some lasciviousness on Malaika's bare legs.

Malaika adjusts her skirt over her knees.

GRIMY MALE (CONT'D)

Where you two going all pretty like?

Claire puts the plastic bag on her own bike, moves towards Malaika's bike seeking control of the situation.

CLAIRE

It's okay, mister. We'll just walk it.

She grabs the bike, turns it over with some strain.

The Grimy Male touches Malaika's dress at the waist.

GRIMY MALE

You got grease on that pretty dress of yours.

CLAIRE

Malaika you can get on my bike.

Claire turns the bike around to face downhill. Malaika follows suit, now on Claire's bike.

The two face downhill. Malaika looks at her like, now what?

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

We don't stop till we're at the bottom.

Malaika grimaces with anticipation as they push off, the incline and gravity is a force to be reckoned with as the bikes speed dangerously down the street.

Malaika panics.

MALAIKA

Claire!

But, Claire has trouble of her own as the bike without pedal brakes now speeds up.

Malaika watches with horror as Claire reaches the bottom of the hill and an adjoining street.

Traffic rumbles past, dangerously so.

Claire drags her feet to slow her speed, but it's not enough to break the momentum.

A car breaks with a sudden ear-splitting SQUEAL, but too late.

The impact sounds like a punch to a sack of potatoes.

Claire is tossed into the air like a ragdoll, hits the roof of the car and flies off.

The bike skids down the street, pretzeled as a tire bursts with a bang.

Malaika arriving at the bottom of the hill, screams at the sight of her friend on the pavement.

BLACKNESS

And footsteps

MRS. AVERS (O.S)  
Don't be alarmed at her face.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
It's swollen from the cuts and  
bruising.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Malaika stands at a closed door, her hand grasping the hand of Claire's mother, MRS. AVERS, 35.

Avers pushes the door open and they enter.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

As the two enter, Malaika is stunned at Claire's appearance in a hospital bed.

Her face is black and blue, swollen beyond recognition.

She lets go of Claire's mother's hand and approaches the bed.

MALAIKA  
She doesn't look like her.

MRS. AVERS

She's in a coma. You understand  
what that is?

Malaika can only stare, trying to see her best friend through  
that ravaged flesh.

MALAIKA

She's asleep and doesn't know how  
to wake up.

Malaika moves her hand tentatively towards Claire's bruised  
hand connected to a heart monitor.

MRS. AVERS

It's okay. You can touch her.

Malaika places her hand over Claire's, a tear creasing her  
cheek.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)

I'm going to go downstairs for some  
coffee. I'll leave you alone with  
her.

Malaika nods as Mrs. Avers exits the room.

Malaika immediately withdraws her hand, rushes to a corner of  
the room, buries her head against the wall, shielding herself  
with a hand from the sight of Claire.

BLASHBACK TO

EXT. CITY SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Malaika stands at the end of a high diving board facing us.  
Trepidation crosses her face.

Claire is behind her on the ladder, encouraging her on.

CLAIRE

It's okay to be afraid.

Malaika nods.

Malaika steps closer to the end of a very high diving board  
over the pool.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Everyone is scared the first time  
they jump. But, here's the thing.  
It's not as high as your mind is  
telling you it is.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You'll see that once you're in the pool and look back up to the board. Your brain is seeing two distances at once. The surface of the pool and the bottom of the pool and confused so it overestimates the distance to try to make it so you won't jump into something so uncertain. My dad told me this my first time.

Malaika turns around again.

MALAIKA

What did he tell you to get you to eat your vegetables?

CLAIRE

Malaika, you can do this.

Claire looks down, there are two BOYS behind her on the ladder.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

But, if you don't want to do it. We can all climb back down. Don't let these boys behind me intimidate you to jump.

The boy below her quietly informs her.

BOY

Malaika told us to climb up after you guys and refuse to go back down.

Claire is surprised at this, turns to see Malaika balancing at the end of the board and then, like that, disappears off it.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. CLAIRE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Malaika steps back from the wall, returns to Claire's bedside, places her hand over Claire's.

MALAIKA

Claire, please wake up.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Mrs. Avers sits talking with her husband, a haggard MR. AVERS, 35.

Malaika approaches them.

MALAIKA

Is it okay that I visit her again?

MRS. AVERS

Sure. Anytime. I think somehow she knows we're around her.

MALAIKA

Do you think I could read to her?

MRS. AVERS

Do you want to come over tomorrow after school and pick up some of her favorite books? She's got the whole collection of Harry Potter.

MALAIKA

I know. I'll do that.

MRS. AVERS

Okay.

Mrs. Avers looks to her husband, their eyes share their grief over their daughter's condition.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The windows of the building glow with warmth. Autumn leaves scatter on a lawn lit by street lights.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The windows of the building glow with warmth. Snow falls to collect on the lawn lit by street lights.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

BANG!

A door is pushed open. Mr. And Mrs. Avers race down the hallway.



INT. CLAIRE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Her parents burst into the room. A DOCTOR and NURSE attend to Claire. Her face now healed and back to normal, she sits up in bed, AWAKE! From her coma.

Both parents are in tears, caressing their daughter's arms and hands.

CLAIRE

Dad. Mom.

DOCTOR

All her vital signs are good. It will just take some time to get her muscles back in shape after this long in bed. We'll arrange some physical therapy.

CLAIRE

I don't remember the accident.

MR. AVERS

It's okay, sweets.

MRS. AVERS

Does this mean we can take her home?

DOCTOR

We'll monitor her for a few more days here. But, things are looking good.

MRS. AVERS

You hear that, Claire? Things are looking good.

Claire offers a smile.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Trees blossom with spring now.

Mr. Avers pushes Claire in a wheelchair. Mrs. Avers walks alongside them as they go to their car in a parking lot.

They reach the car. Mr. Avers picks Claire up and gingerly places her in the backseat.

INT. THE AVERS CAR - DAY

While Mr. Avers folds and stores the wheelchair in the trunk, Claire sits alone with her mother.

CLAIRE  
I can't believe I missed so much school.

MRS. AVERS  
You'll catch up.

CLAIRE  
Do you have my cellphone? I want to call Malaika.

MRS. AVERS  
It was damaged in the accident. We'll get you a new one.

CLAIRE  
I don't know her number by heart. I don't know anyone's number by heart.

Mr. Avers climbs in the driver's seat.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Maybe we could go by her house on the way home?

MR. AVERS  
Who is that?

MRS. AVERS  
She's talking about Malaika.

The parents share a look. They know something that Claire doesn't know.

MR. AVERS  
Sweets, let's get you home and situated. I'm sure you've missed your bed. Hard to get you out of it in the mornings as it is.

Claire nods.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
We buckled up back there?

CLAIRE  
Yes.

He starts the car and they pull off.

EXT. THE AVERS HOME - DAY

Their car pulls into the driveway of a well kept ranch home.

The parents get out. Mr. Avers retrieves the wheelchair from the trunk, brings it over to Claire's door.

MR. AVERS

I knew getting a one story ranch  
was a good idea. No stairs to a  
bedroom for you.

Claire motions the wheelchair away.

CLAIRE

They gave me a cane. I'd like to  
try to walk with it.

MRS. AVERS

You sure?

Mrs. Avers hands her a cane.

Claire slips slowly out of the car, puts her weight against the cane.

Mr. Avers offers his support, grabbing her arm.

CLAIRE

I'm okay, dad, I have to exercise.

Claire takes baby steps towards a front door.

Mr. Avers opens a garage door to place the wheelchair inside.

Claire spots the mangled bicycle, she stops in her tracks.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

That's Malaika's bike.

MR. AVERS

I'm sorry honey. The lawyer  
suggested we keep it until  
everything's settled.

MRS. AVERS

You should have covered it up.

Claire stares at it for a moment, then continues stepping gingerly towards the front door.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
I'm making your favorite for dinner  
tonight. Angel food cake with  
strawberries.

CLAIRE  
Thanks, mom.

Claire glances back at the garage again and that sad reminder  
of her accident.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOME - CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Claire stands at her bedroom doorway taking in her bedroom of  
soft colors, stuffed animals, and a dresser mirror covered  
with photographs.

In one corner a shelf with a library of books, mostly Harry  
Potter, all neatly arranged.

Her mother comes up behind her.

CLAIRE  
I was there but you still missed  
me.

MRS. AVERS  
Oh, yes we missed you, so much.

CLAIRE  
Did you wash my bed clothes because  
I couldn't?

MRS. AVERS  
I think I used the right fabric  
softener.

Claire steps over to the bed and falls into it, smells the  
cover.

CLAIRE  
You did.

She crawls out of bed, goes to her dresser. It's framed by  
pictures she's taped there, family, friends, but mostly her  
and Malaika.

She touches one photograph of Malaika at the pool.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Can I get a new phone tomorrow?

MRS. AVERS  
The important thing is you take  
things slowly.

Mrs. Avers steps out of the room.

Claire looks around, pleased to be home again.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Claire's parents sit before empty plates. They look over to Claire at the table. An uneaten plate of angel food cake with strawberries sits before her. She's fast asleep.

MR. AVERS  
It's the medications.

MRS. AVERS  
She didn't even touch it.

MR. AVERS  
I'll carry her to bed.

He gets up, picks Claire up from her chair and carries her off.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOME - CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Avers tucks a sleeping Claire under the covers, gives her a kiss on the cheek.

He joins his wife at the door.

MRS. AVERS  
Don't you think it's better she  
finds out from us than on her own  
from someone?

MR. AVERS  
Just give some time to heal herself  
first.

He switches off the light in Claire's room.

EXT. CITY SHOPPING STREET - DAY

Mrs. Avers car pulls into a parking spot along a row of shops.

INT. CAR - DAY

Claire wiggles in the passenger seat beside her mother in anticipation.

MRS. AVERS

The cellphone place doesn't open for another 15 minutes. I'm going to pick up your prescription at the drug store. You want to wait in the car?

CLAIRE

No. I'll go with you.

MRS. AVERS

Are you sure? You're still a little wobbly.

CLAIRE

I'm okay.

EXT. CITY SHOPPING STREET - DAY

The two exit the car. Claire walks with her cane, follows her mother into a drug store.

INT. DRUG STORE - DAY

Claire follows her mother in.

MRS. AVERS

I'll be in the pharmacy. Pick up anything you might need.

Her mother disappears into the store.

An ELDERLY MAN walking with a cane passes Claire and turns.

ELDERLY MAN

If I had started using a cane at your age, I'd be a lot better at it now.

He gives her a wink making Claire to smile.

Claire's focus on the man makes her bump into someone. She turns.

A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN stares at a bulletin board.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Such a pretty young woman. I truly pray nothing bad has happened to her.

Claire turns to see what the woman is looking at.

It's a MISSING PERSON'S POSTER. A pretty young blond girl of 18 is pictured on the poster along with her last whereabouts and other personal information.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN (CONT'D)

They've got the whole town out looking for her. I'd be out there myself if it wasn't for my arthritis.

The woman walks away. Claire looks again at the poster and continues on.

EXT. CELLPHONE STORE - DAY

A WOMAN tapes up the missing poster for the young girl on the store's window.

INT. CELLPHONE STORE - DAY

Claire and her mother speak with a clerk. Claire holds a new cellphone.

CLERK

Once you log onto your google mail account, your phone contacts should automatically transfer to your new phone.

CLAIRE

Great.

MRS. AVERS

So, this is the one.

CLAIRE

It's kind of expensive. Mom, maybe I should get the other one.

MRS. AVERS

If that's the one you want, you can get that one.

CLAIRE

Okay. This is the one.

EXT. CELLPHONE STORE - DAY

Claire and her mother exit. Claire stops.

CLAIRE  
Mom. Are you spoiling me now  
because I was in a coma? If I had  
slept for a year would I get a  
pony?

Her mother laughs, gives her a hug.

MRS. AVERS  
I just am so glad to have you back,  
that's all.

Over her mother's shoulder, Claire sees the missing poster  
for the pretty blond girl on the window.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Claire and her mother finish up ordering with a SERVER.  
Claire fidgets with her new cellphone.

CLAIRE  
I can't wait till I go back to  
school. I've got to catch up with  
Malaika.

SERVER  
(to Claire's mother)  
Did you want fries or chips with  
that?

Mrs. Avers is fixated on what Claire just said, She reaches  
over and takes Claire's phone from her hand.

MRS. AVERS  
Claire, I need to tell you  
something.

SERVER  
I'm sorry, fries or chips.

MRS. AVERS  
Whatever. Chips.

The server leaves them.

CLAIRE  
Why'd you take my phone?

A male FELLOW STUDENT of Claire's approaches their table.



FELLOW STUDENT

Claire! Hi. Sorry what happened to you. Our class got together and sent you balloons.

Claire looks over to her mother.

MRS. AVERS

They deflated months ago. We were going to save them for you but the hospital staff tossed them out.

Claire turns to her fellow student.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

FELLOW STUDENT

When are you coming back to school?

CLAIRE

Next week if I feel up to it.

MRS. AVERS

Maybe next week. We'll see. Excuse me, I think your mother is waiting for you.

Mrs. Avers motions to where a MOTHER waits by the cafe's door.

FELLOW STUDENT

Okay, well. I'll see you at school.

Claire gives him a smile, turns back to her mother.

CLAIRE

Mom, can I have my phone back?

MRS. AVERS

Like I said, I need to tell you something. It's about Malaika. She came to visit you right after the accident. She suggested that she might read a book to you. We invited her to come the next morning to pick up a Harry Potter if she wanted.

CLAIRE

Then I have to thank her, don't I?

Mrs. Avers fortifies herself to give her the news.

MRS. AVERS  
Honey, she never showed up.

CLAIRE  
Why?

MRS. AVERS  
She went missing.

CLAIRE  
Missing?

MRS. AVERS  
It was a big story for awhile.

CLAIRE  
When was this?

MRS. AVERS  
Several months ago. She's been  
missing all the time you've been in  
a coma.

CLAIRE  
You mean missing like they don't  
know where she is?

MRS. AVERS  
They've looked. They just don't  
know. I tell you all the time not  
to go with a stranger. To be  
careful.

CLAIRE  
Malaika wouldn't go with a  
stranger. She's doubly careful.

MRS. AVERS  
Honey, I know it's hard to hear  
this now. The police are doing  
their best. We'll pray for her.

Mrs. Avers hands Claire her cellphone back. Claire looks at  
it, the weight of it now just a hopeless piece of metal.

Claire looks over at a bulletin board. The missing person's  
flier with the pretty blond girl hangs there.

CLAIRE  
That girl. That isn't Malaika.

MRS. AVERS

She's in a town over. An older girl  
Been missing for a month. They  
think her boyfriend's taken her.

Claire gets up. Goes to the board. She notices something  
underneath the flier of the missing girl.

Another flier, now hidden.

She lifts up the flier. It's faded. Torn at the sides. It's a  
missing flier for Malaika.

Claire rushes from the cafe.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)

Claire!

Mrs. Avers grabs her purse, gives chase to her daughter.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Mrs. Avers rushes from the cafe, looks about.

PEDESTRIANS walk the sidewalks, cross the street. A car horn  
beeps.

MRS. AVERS

Claire!!

Clare's mother panics, takes off in one direction, searching.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)

Claire!

Claire is nowhere to be seen.

She takes out her cellphone, dials. No answer. She dials  
another number.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)

(Over phone)

I told Claire about Malaika. It  
upset her, of course, but she's run  
off.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Avers at a desk speaks with his wife over the phone.

MR. AVERS  
Did she get her new phone yet? Can  
you call her?

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Mrs. Avers continues to walk about, searching for Claire.

MRS. AVERS  
(Over phone)  
I've tried. She's not answering. My  
hunch she's headed to Malaika's  
house. Do we know where she lives?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Avers gets up from his desk, looks out a high window at  
the city below him.

MR. AVERS  
I think I picked Claire up from  
there one time but I don't remember  
exactly. Somewhere on the south  
side.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Mrs. Avers exhales.

MRS. AVERS  
(over phone)  
What kind of parents are we? We  
don't even know the address or  
phone number of our daughter's best  
friend.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Avers sits back at his desk.

MR. AVERS  
(Over phone)  
Just calm down. I'll find out. We  
know her last name it's on the  
missing fliers. Are you in the car?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mrs. Avers puts the key in the door of her car.

MRS. AVERS  
I'm getting in now.

MR. AVERS (O.S)  
Head south. I'll call with the  
address.

MRS. AVERS  
Okay. But, dear god, hurry.

She gets in the car.

INT. THE JOHNSON HOME - DAY

We peruse a wall of family photos including those of Malaika  
as piano music plays in the background.

MRS JOHNSON, 40, black, sits next to a MALE PIANO STUDENT,  
11, practicing a composition.

The student trips up on a passage.

MRS. JOHNSON  
That middle finger is a stubborn  
one. At home do some exercises to  
loosen it up.

The student flexes his middle finger over and over as though  
giving someone the finger.

Mrs. Johnson takes his wrist, flips it over.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
You might want to do it this way.

She smiles. Maybe her first in a long time.

The student reaches for the keys again and begins to play.

A doorbell sounds, drilling into his sonata.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
Put some feeling into that while I  
answer the door. It just reflect  
moonlight on a placid lake. You're  
not flossing your teeth.

Johnson makes her way to a hallway. We see the family  
pictures again on a wall, including those of Malaika.

Johnson stops in her tracks. It's like she's been hit by a  
train.

Emotion swells in her eyes as she grips a coat stand for support. Could it be?

Against the opaque glass of a front door,

A young girl's silhouette.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Malaika?

The bell rings again. Johnson is frozen until the voice reaches her.

CLAIRE (O.S)

Anyone home?

Mrs. Johnson deflates at the voice, but also shakes off her stupidity at believing.

She approaches the door.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DINING ROOM - SOME MOMENTS LATER

A tea cup is placed down onto a saucer.

Piano playing continues in the b.g.

Mrs. Johnson pours hot water into the cup over hot chocolate mix.

Johnson sits down at the table with Claire, nursing a cup of tea herself.

MRS. JOHNSON

(to piano student)

Russel, you can stop now. I'll see you Thursday!

The Student enters, recognizes Claire there.

PIANO STUDENT

Hi Claire.

CLAIRE

Hi Russel.

The Student rushes off, gripping his piano book.

Mrs. Johnson turns to Claire.

MRS. JOHNSON

Drink up before it gets cold.

Claire sips at her hot chocolate.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
As much as he wishes it wasn't so,  
his hands are growing into a  
wrestlers, not a pianist's.

Johnson stares at Claire, wishing it were her daughter there  
with her.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
It if wasn't for the piano  
teaching, I think I'd have gone  
completely mad by now. Not that  
there are moments when I scare  
myself. I had the police call your  
parents as soon as I'd heard you  
had woken up. They need to ask you  
some questions.

CLAIRE  
They didn't tell me.

Johnson's fingers shake, rattling her tea cup. Claire stares  
at the cup like it's jogging some memory.

MRS. JOHNSON  
We know pretty much who all her  
friends are, places she likes to  
go.

She sips her tea.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
Except the day you had your  
accident. She could only talk about  
what happened to you.

CLAIRE  
I can't remember anything about the  
last day I saw her. The doctor said  
maybe things will come back to me.  
Where was the last place anyone saw  
her?

MRS. JOHNSON  
By the school as much as the police  
have told me.

INT. MRS. AVERS' CAR - DAY

Claire's mother drives, her cell rings on the passenger seat  
beside her, she grabs it.

MRS. AVERS  
Yes. Did you get it?

MR. AVERS  
(over phone)  
363 Hillhurst Ave.

Mrs. Avers quickly hangs up, places the cellphone on a dash holder, starts to plug in the address on the phone's GPS.

She's distracted. A horn blares.

She swerves the car to prevent a collision with another car, brakes, exhales.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Johnson places a 3 ring binder notebook thick with pages on the dining table. She sits before it.

CLAIRE  
They saw her at our school?

MRS. JOHNSON  
She was seen after school on the swing set in the school yard. Someone heard a whistle and then they didn't see her anymore.

CLAIRE  
A whistle?

Mrs. Johnson nods, flips through the pages of the binder.

MRS. JOHNSON  
The city cops are understaffed I've been told. But, they say every lead is being followed no matter how long it takes. They even suspected me for a while. Questioned Malaika's father in Chicago. Questioned my piano students to see if I had a temper. When it comes to time signatures, I can be a bully, but I'd never strike Malaika. She would have told you if I had, wouldn't she?

CLAIRE  
She told me you were the best mother ever.



These words tear at Johnson, her face crumbles in emotion. She gets up, rushes out of the room.

Alone now, Claire reaches over the table, drags the notebook to herself.

She opens it.

The first page is a copy of Malaika's birth certificate. She flips the page, several pages of medical records. Then the missing person's flier.

She flips some more pages. Pages after pages of police reports, witness statements, copies of newspaper articles, maps.

There are individual pages of sexual offenders in the city, their photos and stats, copies of checks from donations

Finally, the missing person's flier for the young pretty blond girl.

Mrs Johnson has returned, stands over her, blowing her nose on a Kleenex.

Johnson notices the page with the pretty blond girl flier.

MRS. JOHNSON

I can't really say whether they've missed a stone to turn. They just found a diamond to outshine my baby. Some people even say the young lady looks like Taylor Swift.

The doorbell sounds.

MRS. AVERS (O.S)

Claire! Are you here!!! Mrs. Johnson?!

CLAIRE

Do you have my bike here?

MRS. JOHNSON

It's in the back.

Claire jumps up, rushes towards the back of the house.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Where are you going?!

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Johnson answers the door. Claire's mother stands there flustered.

MRS. AVERS  
Sorry. Is my daughter here?

They both hear a rattle of a bike and turn.

Claire is taking off on her bike through the yard into the street.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Claire!

Mrs. Avers races to her car in a driveway. Johnson follows her.

MRS. JOHNSON  
I need you to take her to talk to  
the police!

Avers ignores her, gets in the car, closes the door.

Johnson bangs on the driver's window.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
Every second counts! Take her to  
the police!

Avers starts the car, puts in in reverse, peels out of the drive way into the street to follow Claire.

Johnson hangs back, frustrated watching her go.

INT. AVERS' CAR - DAY

Claire's mother drives, looking about for any sign of her daughter on the bike.

MRS. AVERS  
Why are you worrying your mother  
like this?

There! She spots Claire turning into an alleyway.

Avers quickly turns the car, heads down the same alleyway.

She spots Claire ahead, increases her speed. Sideswipes a couple garbage cans and continues.

She reaches the end of the alleyway. Claire is seen biking across a lawn towards a school.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Claire's mother gets out of the car, phone to ear.

MRS. AVERS  
She's come to her school. I'll get  
her.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Claire has dropped her bike, walks against a fence. There's only one way into the school, climb over the fence.

She struggles over it, drops to the other side with a exclamation of pain.

She takes an open hallway.

CLAIRE  
Malaika!--- Malaika!

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Claire's calls echo through the empty school reaching Mrs. Avers.

She rushes in the direction of the calls, but finds herself blocked by a high locked fence.

MRS. AVERS  
Claire!

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Claire rushes down open hallways past classroom doors and windows.

CLAIRE  
Malaika!

She stops.

Paint handprints of students are taped on windows of one classroom.

She stares at them. Is something triggering in her mind?

A hand touches her shoulder. Claire startles.

A BLACK MAN stands behind her. He holds a printer ink cartridge.

BLACK MAN  
School grounds are closed young  
lady.

CLAIRE  
Did you see her last?

BLACK MAN  
Who?

BLACK MAN (CONT'D)  
Malaika.

The Black Man unlocks the door of the classroom, enters.  
Claire follows him inside.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The Black Man flicks on the lights.

BLACK MAN  
I told the police everything I saw.

The man starts to replace a cartridge in a desk printer.  
Claire walks over to a desk, sits in it.

CLAIRE  
She loves this desk. Her crush on  
one side. Her best friend on the  
other.

BLACK MAN  
I wouldn't want my son to have his  
head filled with the darkness in  
this world.

CLAIRE  
I wasn't there for her when she  
needed me.

BLACK MAN  
But evil lurks ready for its  
chance, or creates it.

CLAIRE  
Why can't they find her?

BLACK MAN  
Because they stopped looking?

CLAIRE  
Why would they stop looking?

BLACK MAN  
Look around town. Watch the news.  
Whose face is everywhere? Not some  
black girl from the wrong side of  
the tracks.

Claire's mother rushes in.

MRS. AVERS  
Here you are.

She looks over at the black man, wiping his hands on a rag.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
What are you doing alone with my  
daughter in this classroom?

He finishes up wiping his hands.

BLACK MAN  
Educating her?

CLAIRE  
Mom, this is Mr. Tribble, my  
teacher.

Mrs. Avers looks confused.

BLACK MAN  
She didn't tell you I was black,  
huh? Possibly for her it didn't  
matter?

Mrs. Avers grabs Claire's arm, leads her out of the class.

MRS. AVERS  
Let's go.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Claire sits in the car. Mrs. Avers puts the bicycle in the  
trunk, closes the lid as much as it will close.

Her mother gets into the car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Claire sits stoically as her mother gets in.

CLAIRE  
Can you take me now to the police  
station?

MRS. AVERS  
We're going home.

CLAIRE  
They need to ask me questions about  
Malaika.

Mrs. Avers lifts her arm, shows Claire a long reddish  
scratch.

MRS. AVERS  
You see what I did to my arm  
getting over that fence to get you?  
I need to put something on it.

CLAIRE  
Mom. Please.

MRS. AVERS  
We'll go in the morning.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Johnson plays the piano. A soft elegy reflecting a  
mourning soul.

EXT. THE AVERS HOME - NIGHT

Light glows from one window of their home.

INT. THE AVERS HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Avers nurses Mrs. Avers's scratched arm over a sink,  
applying some ointment.

MR. AVERS  
Looking better.

A muffled scream from Claire from her bedroom somewhere in  
the house.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
I'll go.

He leaves the bathroom.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Her father comes in.

MR. AVERS  
Claire.

CLAIRE  
Turn on the light, dad.

He flicks on the light, goes to her bed where she's sat up, sweat and anxiety on her face.

He sits down next to her.

MR. AVERS  
Did you have another bad dream?

CLAIRE  
Yes.

He gently pulls the hair from her face.

MR. AVERS  
You got yourself all worked up today. Your mind must be racing like a racehorse. You know the doctor said to take it easy. Not to expose yourself to anything that reminded you of your accident until you can process it, all in time. And Malaika. The police are on it. Let's just pray for her?

He straightens up her pillow behind her. She sinks down into it.

CLAIRE  
Do you think Malaika has a pillow tonight?

Mr. Avers finds it difficult to find an answer.

MR. AVERS  
Let's hope everyone has a pillow tonight. Now, let's get back to sleep.

He gives her a kiss, gets up, turns off the bedroom light and leaves his daughter to sleep.

Claire stares into the darkness.

EXT. CITY SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Unlike the diving board scene before the light is muted here.  
Sound echos in bass tones.

Malaika's bare feet inch towards the edge of the high diving board.

She pauses, looks back, smiles.

And then without a thought, disappears off the diving board in a jump.

Claire follows her onto the diving board, pleased her best friend took the plunge.

At the edge, she looks down, expecting to see Malaika surface and exit the pool.

But, there's no sight of her. Not in the water, nor on either four sides of the pool making her way out.

CLAIRE  
Malaika! Where are you?!

Claire jumps off the diving board, quickly hits the water and submerges.

UNDER WATER

A cauldron of bubbles and confusion, disoriented Claire swims towards a faint light on the surface, until,

A LARGE TENTACLE grabs one of her legs and pulls her down.

There seems no end to the depth of the pool now, she's floundering, her lungs at burst level trying to get away from this monstrous pull.

She looks down. A MONSTER brings a screaming Malaika in one of its tentacles to its gaping mouth.

SCREAM!

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claire wakes up with a start, gasps for breath.

The light goes on in her room again.



Claire sits up, reaches her hand out to someone in the room for comfort.

MR. AVERS (O.S)  
Again, baby?

INT. CITY POLICE STATION - DAY

The clatter of computer keyboards, conversations, phones ringing off the hooks.

DONNA ESPRO, 40, NATIVE AMERICAN, works at a computer, nursing a cup of coffee.

A COWORKER calls over to her.

COWORKER  
Donna. It's time!

She finishes a couple more clacks to her keyboard, gets up with her coffee and joins other COWORKERS at a doorway.

A happy married cop couple, the female pregnant, stand at the center of the group's attention.

COWORKER (CONT'D)  
Okay, folks. If the messenger comes in with a pale blue box from Tiffany's we know it's a boy. If it's a pink box from the bake shop with donuts, it's a girl.

DONNA  
You guys, let's not all root for a girl, now.

They wait expectedly while another Coworker comes up to Donna.

COWORKER 2  
There's someone here to talk to you about the missing girl.

He points across the way past a glass divider where Claire sits with her mother.

DONNA  
Tell the woman I'll be with her in a moment.

COWORKER  
It's not the woman. It's the little girl. The Malaika Johnson case.

For a beat Donna meets eyes with Claire.

A burst of applause and shouts of congratulations brings her back to her coworkers.

They crowd around a box of donuts, grabbing at the pastry.

DONNA  
Somebody save me a bearclaw!

INT. POLICE STATION - SEATING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Donna approaches Claire and her mother.

DONNA  
I'm detective Espro. You follow me.

They follow her into a private space.

INT. POLICE STATION - PRIVATE SPACE - DAY

The three take seats around a table.

Mrs. Avers motions for Claire to sit up more straight.

DONNA  
Malaika's mother told me you had  
been released from the hospital.  
Good to see you're okay.

Claire smiles.

She opens up a notebook, writes something down.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
It's Claire, right?

CLAIRE  
Claire Avers.

DONNA  
We've asked Malaika's classmates  
about whether there was anyone she  
had a run in with recently or  
mentioned some situation that felt  
not right. Uncomfortable? Did you  
experience something like that with  
her or did she tell you anything  
along those lines?

CLAIRE  
No. She never did.

DONNA

You were with her the day you had your accident.

CLAIRE

Because they told me I was. They said she was crying when the ambulance came for me.

DONNA

What were you two up to?

CLAIRE

I just remember we were going to a birthday party.

MRS. AVERS

You never told me you two were going to a party.

CLAIRE

Anna LaCosta's. You said her mother was a bitch.

MRS. AVERS

Claire.

CLAIRE

So, I'd thought you'd be mad I went to their house.

MRS. AVERS

This Anna is a classmate?

CLAIRE

Fifth grader.

Claire nods. Donna writes some things down.

DONNA

Did Malaika ever talk about a hiding place?

CLAIRE

No.

A CoWorker knocks on the door and enters.

COWORKER

They've found the boyfriend's car.

Donna collects her notebook, gets up. She takes out a card, hands it to Claire.

DONNA

If there's anything you feel I  
should know, you give me a call,  
okay?

Claire nods and they follow her out of the space.

INT. POLICE STATION HALLWAY - DAY

Donna stands with several cop coworkers discussing something.

Claire calls out at her.

CLAIRE

Are you even looking for her?

Donna turns from the group.

Mrs. Avers pulls at Claire.

MRS. AVERS

Come on, Claire. Let's go.

Claire pulls away from her, calls out Donna again.

CLAIRE

Noone's looking for her, are they?

Donna breaks from the group, comes to Claire.

DONNA

Listen, young lady. You know how  
many native american women like me  
disappear in this country every  
year. Nobody's making a big fuss  
about it.

A coworker touches her arm, encourages her to move away from  
Claire.

DONNA (CONT'D)

On the heirarchy of pain, your  
little white family is way down on  
the scale. Maybe your mama should  
educate you on that.

COWORKER

Come on Espro, let's move.

Donna turns her back to Claire, joins her coworkers as they  
rush off.

Mrs. Avers grabs Claire's hand and leads her out.

INT. THE AVERS HOME - FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

It's quiet until the door opens. Claire and her mother enter, returning from the station.

MRS. AVERS  
I'll make us some lunch.

CLAIRE  
I'm not hungry.

Claire rushes off to her bedroom.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Claire enters holding a missing person's flier for Malaika. She brings it to her dresser.

There taped on the mirror are several photographs of Claire herself, family and friends.

She tapes up the picture on the mirror against some other pictures.

A knock on her door.

MRS. AVERS (O.S)  
Claire, you have to eat something  
to take with your medication.

CLAIRE  
I don't need any more medication.

MRS. AVERS  
Claire, open the door.

Claire stares at Malaika's missing person flier.

CLAIRE  
Why did you have to go missing?

She scratches Malaika's picture with her nails until the paper rips.

There's a big hole now in the paper where Malaika's picture was.

But, now something shows through the hole she's scratched out. Now on a missing person's flier,

HER OWN FACE

A thought crosses her mind.

What if?

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

Traffic buzzes by on the street.

Claire, her back to the Johnson's front door watches it go by. She carries a small backpack.

Finally the door is open. Mrs. Johnson has answered it.

MRS. JOHNSON

Claire.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Johnson serves a glass to lemonade to Claire, sits down with her at the table.

MRS. JOHNSON

I'm thankful you went to talk with the police. Who knows what small bit of information might be truly helpful to them in finding my girl.

Claire turns aside, she doesn't want to tell Mrs. Johnson that she doesn't think the police are adequately looking for her daughter.

CLAIRE

I told them what I know. I wish I could remember more of that last day.

MRS. JOHNSON

You will. Memories come and go like rain. You just need a cloud burst or two.

Claire glances over at a shelf where Mrs. Johnson's binder sits.

CLAIRE

Could I have some more sugar for this?

MRS. JOHNSON

I should know you kids like things really sweet.

She gets up. We follow her to a

## KITCHEN

Mrs. Johnson puts Claire's glass of lemonade down. She reaches into a drawer, pulls out a little packet, sprinkles some powder from the packet into Claire's lemonade.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
(loud enough for Claire to  
hear in the other room)  
I just saw on the news that they've  
found the boyfriend of that white  
girl that's missing. Some barricade  
situation from what I can gather.  
Poor girl, hope they find her and  
real quick.

Mrs. Johnson takes a teaspoon of sugar and stirs it into Claire's tea.

We follow her back into the

## DINING ROOM

To Mrs. Johnson's surprise, Claire is gone.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
Where'd she go? Claire?

There's no answer.

## EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Claire, the backpack on her back bicycles through the streets.

## INT. THE AVERS HOME - DAY

Claire enters with the backpack. Mrs. Avers approaches, wiping her hands on a kitchen towel.

MRS. AVERS  
Where have you been?

CLAIRE  
Just getting some exercise like the  
doctor recommended.

MRS. AVERS  
I don't want you on that bike. At  
least not for awhile until you're  
100%. Where's your helmet?

Claire holds up the backpack.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Your teacher dropped off some  
textbooks for you so you wouldn't  
get behind. I put them on your bed.

Claire rushes off to her room.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Claire enters, quickly locks the door.

She grabs the textbooks off her bed, places them neatly with  
her other books in her Potter library.

She sits on the bed with her backpack.

She takes it out. It's Mrs. Johnson's binder. She opens it to  
read.

EXT. WOODS OUTSIDE OF THE CITY - DAY

A hilly landscape of pines and rocky outcrops.

A weathered small cabin sits among a blanket of pine needles.

It's quiet, secluded. Peaceful even.

A hand for reassurance grazes a gun holster.

Donna, holds back with other cops while a SWAT like group  
converges on the cabin.

They quietly surround the cabin. Two members flank the door.

BANG! They kick the door in and enter.

GUNSHOTS ring out.

Donna flinches.

The gunshots stop. Donna rushes to the cabin as a swat member  
exits on a radio.

SWAT MEMBER  
Suspect down. Get the paramedics  
in.

DONNA  
Any sign of the girl?



He nods no, as Donna enters the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

A rustic space with just a mattress and cans of food. Donna adjusts her eyes to the dim light until she sees another swat member holding the perps rifle. Then she sees the perp himself.

The PERP, 23, sits against the wall, blood leaking from his sleeve.

Donna gets down to his level.

DONNA  
Where is she?

The perp breathes heavily.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
They're coming to help you with  
your arm. They're right down the  
hill.

The perp lets out a labored laugh.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
Just tell me we can find her.

The perp inhales.

PERP  
My arm? You think---?

He cringes with pain, moves his body so Donna can see his back. It's lathered in blood, ripped a part by a bullet that entered his chest. He laughs.

PERP (CONT'D)  
It's worse than you think.

He collapses.

DONNA  
Tell me, where is she?! Tell me!

The young man is dead.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
Tell me where she is!

The swat member pulls her away.

Donna shakes her head in defeat, steps out of the cabin.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CABIN - DAY

Donna exits, rushes off from the cabin, stops.

The trees, everywhere, the empty space between them seems to mock her.

She continues to her car.

INT. THE AVERS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A news broadcast on their TV

Camera footage of the cabin surrounded by police tape.  
Authorities exiting with evidence bags.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O)

Authorities say there is evidence  
the missing girl was there in one  
of the old cabins out in Buckley  
Woods. They are tracking any place  
the boyfriend may have traveled in  
the last couple of days.

Mr. and Mrs. Avers sit on a sofa watching the news.

Claire stands unbeknownst to them behind them spooning some  
ice cream into her mouth.

Again on the TV screen.

A COUPLE are interviewed standing near the entrance to the  
cabin area.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O) (CONT'D)

The missing girl's parents drove  
out to the scene and were  
interviewed by our Stacy Hall.

FATHER

We were hoping that this wouldn't  
end this way. That police would  
have a chance to talk with him.

The Mother of the couple, however isn't so appreciative as  
her husband tries to calm her down.

MOTHER

They didn't have to kill him. He was the only one who knows where she is. Now, we will never find our baby.

She bursts into tears. Her husband comforts her.

A clang breaks everyone's attention to the TV as Claire drops her ice cream spoon to the floor.

Her parents turn around.

CLAIRE

I just dropped my spoon.

She walks away.

EXT. THE AVERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Claire reads Mrs. Johnson's binder in bed.

A knock at the door. Claire quickly hides the binder under the bed.

Her father sits on the bed next to her.

MR. AVERS

You know I rode my granddad's horses when I was a little boy. I was scared of them at first. So tall, so big. But, I figured they knew I was small and if they wanted to squash me, they would have done it long ago. The first time I fell off one, my granddad said you have to get right back on it. Not just to face your fears of falling off again but to show the horse it is worthy of participating in your growth...I'm so proud, you got right back on your bike after your accident. You know how much your mother loves you. She worries about you. That's what a mother does. Just show her you're wearing your helmet, you're being very careful?

Claire nods.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)

Good.

He gives her a good nite kiss.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Good night.

He leaves the room. Claire reaches under the bed for the binder, continues to read.

INT. AVERS HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Mr. Avers finishes up a cup of coffee. Mrs. Avers puts away something in the fridge.

MRS. AVERS  
She needs to get back so it occupies her mind. She's got other friends there at school to take her mind off Malaika.

MR. AVERS  
And you need to get back to work.

MRS. AVERS  
Yes. That, too.

Claire walks into the kitchen, still half asleep in appearance, letting out a yawn.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Good morning, baby.

MR. AVERS  
How did you sleep?

CLAIRE  
Okay.

MR. AVERS  
I'm off. See you tonight.

He gives them both a beck of a kiss and exits.

MRS. AVERS  
Claire, I'll be right back. I need to take these containers back to Becky. Do you know she brought over meals for us the first whole week after your accident. She knew I had no mind to even eat.

CLAIRE

That was nice of her. I'm just going to grab some juice and go back to bed for a while. I'm feeling tired.

MRS. AVERS

Okay, honey.

Mrs. Avers grabs some plastic tupperware containers and exits.

Claire, suddenly jumps into action. Her energy no longer a muted just woke up performance.

She opens a cabinet, takes out some wrapped snack items, granola bars, juice boxes and tosses them on a counter.

She grabs a plastic bag and tosses everything inside.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

She stuffs the bag with food items into her backpack, along with the binder.

She slips on a hoodie and makes her way out of the house.

EXT. THEIR STREET - DAY

Claire comes out of the house, backpack on back. She starts to quickly walk down the street.

Her mother comes out of a neighboring house.

Claire to not be seen ducks into a parked Amazon delivery truck nearby. The DRIVER drops some boxes off to a neighboring house.

Claire's mother continues down the sidewalk to return home.

Claire jumps out of the Amazon truck and hurries off.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Claire's teacher erases the dry erase board while his class works on something.

A whistling sound.

He turns to the class's windows. Squints. Who is that?

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Claire sits on the swing set. She cups her hands in front of her mouth as though she's covering a sneeze while a whistle hidden underneath sounds off.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Some students notice their teacher looking out of the window and rise to follow his gaze.

STUDENT  
That's Claire!

The teacher nods in agreement, puzzled why she is there.

They watch as Claire gets up from the swing set and rushes off out of sight.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Claire grabs her backpack from off the ground and rushes off.

EXT. CITY STREET- BUS STOP - DAY

Claire waits with others, her hoodie over her head. She doesn't want anyone to see her face if possible.

A BUS arrives. Everyone steps on. Claire lowers her head as she pays her fare.

INT. BUS

Claire finds a seat in the back of the bus, lowers her head.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF THE CITY - DAY

Another bus comes to a stop at a quiet bus stop.

Along with a few others, Claire gets off. Her head still lowered.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Claire climbs a hill through the woods.

She stumbles a moment, regains her footing, continues on.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Claire comes upon a small old ramsackle cabin.

She pulls a small hammer from her backpack, pries some wood planks from across the door and tosses them aside.

She enters.

INT. CABIN - DAY

It's dark and dusty. Claire drops her backpack on a table.

She goes to a window. She carefully wipes a spot from dust and looks out.

Down the hill, through some trees, the cabin the police raided in the distance surrounded by yellow police tape.

A patrol car sat outside of it.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The woods whistle with a wind.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Claire sits at the table reading the binder.

She flips through some pages. One page after another of neighborhood sex offenders.

One face after another. Then one we will recognize. That grimy man at the beginning who said he would help Malaika fix her chain.

Claire looks at it like she looks at every face and flips the page.

But, then she flips it back. Something registers with her. That face. But, she can't grasp it entirely. Just that he seems different than the others.

A scratching sound.

Claire gets up to investigate, peeking outside the dusty window.

It's just a bush branch scratching against the window.

INT. AVERS HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Avers, holding a box goes down some steps to a darkened basement door.

She tries the door, it's locked.

She huffs, goes back up the steps.

INT. AVERS HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Avers waters some plants, cellphone to ear.

MRS. AVERS

Honey, the basement door is locked.  
Where's the key?

MR. AVERS

(over phone)

I moved Malaika's bike down there  
from the garage so Claire wouldn't  
see it again and be reminded. She  
was down there the other day  
looking for her skates. The key's  
on my keychain. I'll unlock it for  
you when I get home.

Mrs. Avers gently feels the leaves of one plant.

MRS. AVERS

Her skates? Dear god. It's bad  
enough she's back on her bike.

MR. AVERS

I can get a pizza on the way home.

MRS. AVERS

I'm sure Claire will like that. She  
must be still sleeping. It's good  
for her though. Okay. I'll see you  
later. I'm about ready for my  
afternoon nap.

She hangs up the phone. Waters another plant.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Claire on the floor has fallen asleep. An empty juice box at her side.



INT. AVERS HOME - DAY

Soft music plays on a radio.

Mrs. Avers stirs from sleep on a sofa.

She gets up.

MRS. AVERS  
What time is it?

She checks her watch, makes her way to Claire's bedroom.

She quietly knocks on the door.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Claire?

She opens the door. The bed is empty.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

She notices a note on the bed, picks it up, reads.

MRS. AVERS  
(reading out loud)  
I went to the school to hand in a  
homework assignment. Be back soon.

EXT. AVERS HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Avers, somewhat frantic, stands in front of the house as her husband's car pulls up in the driveway.

Mr. Avers gets out holding a pizza.

MRS. AVERS  
I keep calling her, she's not  
answering.

MR. AVERS  
Did you call the school again?

MRS. AVERS  
Yes. Like I told you before they  
saw her in the school yard and then  
she went off, god knows where.

MR. AVERS  
Did you call Malaika's mother?  
Maybe she went over there again.

MRS. AVERS

I actually drove over there. She's not there.

He hands her the pizza.

MR. AVERS

I'll take a drive around. You stay here and wait for her.

He gets back in the car. His wife watches as he backs up and pulls away.

EXT. CABIN - DUSK

A SHERIFF'S OFFICER walks from his car, pulls out a pack of cigarettes and lights one.

He walks up towards the cabin where Claire is, enjoying the quiet of the woods and his cigarette.

INT. CABIN - DUSK

Claire is still asleep. Her phone vibrates and the light shines on the screen.

EXT. CABIN - DUSK

The Sheriff Officer notices a flash of light in the window of the cabin, squints. What was that?

He takes a puff of his cigarette, draws closer to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DUSK

Claire's phone vibrates again, and lights up. Claire wakes up, she grabs the phone, quickly smothers the light and turns it off.

EXT. CABIN - DUSK

Even closer now, the Sheriff Officer is ready to peer into a window when the setting sun plays shadows across it.

Must have been the sun he surmises and steps back.

He flicks his cigarette butt away and heads back towards his vehicle outside the cabin below.

## INT. AVERS HOME - NIGHT

Claire's parents sit at the dining table. The pizza box unopened before them.

MRS. AVERS

What's the point of having her have a cellphone if she doesn't answer.

MR. AVERS

You didn't even want to let her have a phone to begin with until she was 16--Have a piece of pizza.

MRS. AVERS

Besides the fact it's ice cold now, our daughter is missing if you haven't figured that out.

MR. AVERS

She's not missing.

Mrs. Avers's cellphone rings on the table. She grabs it, answers, listens, puts the phone down.

MRS. AVERS

One of Claire's classmates. She's called every classmate and friend of Claire's she knows. She's not with any of them.

## EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Claire quietly exits the cabin, looks around. Below the other cabin is silent. The Sheriff's car is now gone. Yellow police tape flaps in the wind.

Claire moves to some bushes, squats to pee.

Above her moon tinted clouds race past.

## EXT. AVERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Mrs. Avers raises her hand against her eyes from the glare of a police car's lights as she exits the house.

She joins her husband and a FEMALE COP, handing her a picture.

MRS. AVERS

Here's a picture of Claire. I wrote on the back her height and weight and all that they've asked for. Her number, too, but she's not answering. Perhaps you can track it?

FEMALE COP

I'll get this down to the station.

The couple watches as the COP drives away. Mrs. Avers rushes back into the house.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Avers enters, sits on Claire's bed. Frozen in worry.

Her husband appears at the door.

MR. AVERS

I'm going out again to look for her.

MRS. AVERS

You looked in the basement again?

MR. AVERS

Yes.

MRS. AVERS

Okay.

MR. AVERS

You going to be okay? I can ask my sister to come over and stay with you.

MRS. AVERS

I wouldn't be able to stand one moment of cheerfulness from your sister.

MR. AVERS

I'm going then.

He exits. Mrs. Avers continues to sit frozen.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Claire walks down the hill to the police taped surrounded cabin, her footsteps crunching on the carpet of pine needles.

She takes out a granola bar, munches on it as she curiously pokes around.

She notices a few beer cans among the pine needles. Something registers in her mind she can't quite grasp in totality.

She picks one up, then tosses it.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Avers enters. Mrs. Avers has fallen asleep on Claire's bed, grasping her cellphone.

Mr. Avers takes a comforter, covers her. He exits the room.

INT. AVERS HOUSE - BASEMENT

Mr. Avers makes his way down the steps to the basement.

He fishes a keyring from his pocket, unlocks the door to the basement and enters.

He switches on a light. He moves past some boxes and disappears from our view behind some pillars.

We hear him bawling like a child.

INT. CABIN - MORNING.

Sunlight pushes through the dusty window pane.

Claire stirs awake from the floor.

She gets up, wipes the sleep from her eyes, goes to the clean spot in the window and peers out.

EXT. CABIN - MORNING

The door creaks open, Claire slides out of the cabin, walks over to some bushes to pee.

She finishes, walks back towards the cabin, trips on a root and falls.

A sudden flashback enters her head.

A blaring horn, the squeal of brakes, the crunch of metal on metal.

Claire gasps. She remembers something.

CLAIRE  
The street.

She looks up the hill from the cabin.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
The steep street.

A voice in her head, that grimy male from the beginning.

GRIMY MALE (V.O)  
Somebody's off their chain.

Claire quickly pushes herself up from the ground, rushes back into the cabin.

She grabs the binder, flips frantically through the pages till she finds the one she's looking for.

There. The sex offender page of the same. That grimy male Malaika and her had a run in on the hilly street.

Claire stares at his picture.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Mr. and Mrs. Avers wait in an interview room. Donna enters carrying a stack of fliers. She places them down in front of the couple.

They look at the pile, stung like it was a viper that bite them.

DONNA  
We have some leads due to the Amber Alert. Nothing solid at the moment. They tend to generate a lot of sightings as people are sensitive to particular aspects of the missing. The "white van syndrome". Suddenly there are white vans everywhere.

Mrs. Avers can't but stare at the picture of Claire on the top flier.

MRS. AVERS  
Our daughter's not a white van.

DONNA  
I need to ask you some questions about your family life.

MR. AVERS

She wouldn't run away.

DONNA

Is she angry at either of you?

MRS. AVERS

No. I've been a bit overprotective lately, but we thought we lost her. For god's sake it's only natural.

DONNA

And you, Mr. Avers? Is she angry with you?

MR. AVERS

I work a great deal. I hardly see her.

DONNA

(sarcastically)

I can see how that's an advantage.

MRS. AVERS

Should we think there's a connection between Malaika's disappearance and our daughter?

DONNA

I can't comment on that. The investigation is proceeding on both fronts.

Mrs. Avers's head sinks with defeat at that statement. She looks back up.

MRS. AVERS

I was of the understanding that that was put on the back burner until the missing Ramsey girl was found.

DONNA

You sound like your daughter now. -  
-Listen. I have work to do. I will keep you in the loop on everything we uncover.

MRS. AVERS

Yes. Do that.

The three stand up. Donna offers her hand to Mrs. Avers who doesn't take it. Mr. Avers takes it and shakes.

MR. AVERS

Thank you.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Mr. and Mrs. Avers walk down a hall. Mrs. Avers sees through a glass wall, Mrs. Johnson sitting with a group of people in a room.

Their eyes meet for a moment. Something shared between them, pain, loss, uncertainty. The couple keep walking.

INT. POLICE STATION - ROOM - MORNING

Mrs. Johnson sits with a VICTIMS GROUP.

MRS. JOHNSON

I don't know what got into me. I connected her to my daughter. She brought me comfort in a time where I was losing my head. I almost slipped sleeping powder into her lemonade. I just wanted to cuddle with her. Just for a while, is all.

Mrs. Johnson breaks down into tears. The others gather to comfort her.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Claire, her backpack on her back walks to the edge of the woods. She looks over to a part of the city.

That sad neighborhood she rode bikes up the hill with Malaika.

INT. CITY CAFE - DAY

Mr. Avers pins a flier with Claire's picture over the flier of the missing blond girl onto the cafe's bulletin board.

Mrs. Avers corrects him.

MRS. AVERS

No.

She unpins them all, pins them back, side by side so they are all showing.



EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The sky is a thick gray. The neighborhood reflects the gray in weathered stupor.

Claire stands looking up at the beaten clapboard 3 story house where the grimy man came from to help them with the bike chain.

A stray dog wanders past her.

She notes the porch is empty. There's no car in the driveway. Doesn't seem like anyone is home there.

She looks around making sure nobody has seen her and she takes the narrow driveway, slips through a splintered wooden gate into the house's

BACKYARD

It's overgrown with weeds and vines.

There's a back door up a few loose boards. She goes up and tries it, but it's locked.

Claire notes a window partially open to what looks like a portion of the basement.

She crouches down, pulls the window completely up. She crouches further to take a look inside.

Something places itself across her back, startling her.

It's the stray dog.

CLAIRE

Go. Shoo.

The dog saunters away.

Claire squeezes through the window and disappears inside the house.

INT. HOUSE BASEMENT

It's completely dark. Quiet except for her breath and the creaks of the house.

Claire brings her cellphone up bathing the space in its light. It's full of boxes and junk.

Cobwebs cross her path and she cringes as she pushes them off.

A LOUD BARK echos in the space.

Claire turns to see the dog has returned, barks at her through the basement window.

CLAIRE  
Quiet. Go away.

Claire takes her backpack off, puts it down, rummages through it, grabs a snack bar.

She goes back to the window, tosses it through the window into the yard for the dog.

Claire leaves her backpack on a box, continues.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Malaika? Are you here?

No answer. She continues, flashing her light about until she spots some stairs going up.

She slowly makes her way up them.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The door to the basement eases open a crack.

Claire peers through the crack to see if anyone is there. She can only hear the ticking of an old clock on the wall.

She opens the door and enters this kitchen.

At first glance, it's nothing like she expected. Whereas the exterior of the house is falling apart, this kitchen, although old is well kept, pristine in cleanness.

There are displays of small teasetts on shelves and a larger adult size one over a spotlessly clean stove.

GRIMY MALE (V.O.)  
Daisy, you need a tea set?

Claire notices a note on the refrigerator, draws her finger across it while reading.

CLAIRE  
Feed her at eight, twelve and six.

Claire noticeably tenses.

She makes her way now to a

## LIVING ROOM

It's equally well kept. Just a sofa and TV, some quaint art work on the wall. It's utterly quiet until,

A horn beeps outside.

Claire notices out a window, a car going by beeping at the dog to get out of the street.

Claire now takes a

## HALLWAY

Blank wall. A simple small table with a flower vase and artificial daisy.

Claire peeks through three doors into a bathroom, and closet and a bedroom. All orderly, void of life.

She comes upon some stairs leading to the second floor, looks up.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Malaika, are you here?

She starts up the stairs, each step a creak of wood, another note of dread.

## INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Donna sits at her desk piled high with case files.

Her coworker hands her a sheet.

COWORKER

Dogs have already gone over the woods. Nothing there. We have the following places our dead boyfriend was spotted in the last week including out by the old drive-in. I've got some guys out there now poking around.

DONNA

I've got a question for you. On the Malaika Johnson case.

Donna stamps her finger into a case file paper.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Witnesses reported seeing her in the school yard.

(MORE)

DONNA (CONT'D)

They heard a whistle and she rushed off. Did we ever find out what that whistle was?

COWORKER

A whistle?

DONNA

Yes. A whistle.

COWORKER

What's in the report?

DONNA

No follow up that I can see about a whistle.

Donna holds up another sheet.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Claire Avers. Last seen in the school yard. There was a whistle and she rushed off. I don't know about you, but I don't get too many men whistling at me.

Another Coworker approaches.

COWORKER 2

Donna, there's something you should see up at the cabins.

INT. HOUSE - SECOND STORY LANDING

Claire makes it up the last step and onto the landing.

It's bare except for a small rug hanging on the bannister.

There are three closed doors to rooms.

CLAIRE

Malaika?

She goes to the first door, slowly opens it.

An empty room. Claire quickly closes the door and goes to the next.

She opens the door. A child's bed and dresser. A few old dolls and toys. Noone is there. Claire closes the door.

She opens the last door. This one looks lived in.

There is a nice bedspread on the bed. Some female clothes on a chair.

#### BEDROOM

Claire enters, looks about.

She picks up a hair brush off the dresser, examines it, puts it back.

The sound of a car.

Claire flies to a window, brushes a curtain aside.

A modest sedan pulls into the driveway.

Claire panics, rushes out of the room.

#### LANDING

Claire shudders with the sound of a car door closing.

She notes a narrow staircase leading up. She takes it, pushes open a door at the top of the steps and enters an

#### ATTIC.

A light filters through an attic window. The space is bare except for a curtain across one section.

Claire stands motionless, her ear to the door.

#### INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Keys jiggle into the front door lock. The door opens.

It's a woman, Daisy, the same woman on the porch when Claire and Malaika had their bike issue.

She carries a grocery bag into the

#### KITCHEN

Daisy starts to put her purchased groceries away.

A bottle of red wine slips from her hands and falls.

It shatters on the floor, blood red wine puking out of its neck.

DAISY  
Dammit to hell!!

INT. ATTIC

Daisy's voice reaches Claire. She shudders at the sound.

DAISY  
Oh, Daisy!

KITCHEN

Daisy takes a bunch of towels and mops up the wine from the floor.

INT. BASEMENT

A light turns on. Daisy enters holding the wine soaked towels. She goes to a washer and dryer in a corner.

We can see Claire's backpack on a box right behind her. If she just turned a bit she'd see the backpack there.

She tosses the towels into the washer, adds some soap, flips the dial. Nothing happens.

Daisy kicks the machine, it sprays to life.

Daisy leaves, the light extinguishes. She never saw the backpack.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Donna with other police climb up the hill to the cabin where Claire spent the night.

She enters.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Donna looks at the binder Claire left on the table. A Sheriff's officer stands next to her.

SHERIFF'S OFFICER  
It appears to be everything on the Malaika Johnson case.

DONNA  
It's her mother's. What's it doing here? Did you find anything else?

SHERIFF'S OFFICER  
Some juice boxes.

DONNA

Is this the page you found it open to?

SHERIFF'S OFFICER

No.

He flips some pages, then pokes his finger down on a page.

SHERIFF'S OFFICER (CONT'D)

Him.

Donna rips the page out.

DONNA

We need to find this guy before she does.

SHERIFF'S OFFICER

She?

DONNA

One of our missing girls.

INT. ATTIC

Claire brings her ear away from the door.

She looks over across the attic to the curtain hiding a portion of the attic.

CLAIRE

Malaika. Are you up here?

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Donna sits in her police car. She's on a radio.

RADIO VOICE

David Lee Smith. Address on file,  
3750 Hurst St.

DONNA

That's within 100 yards of a school. Why haven't we got him already on that violation?

RADIO VOICE

Oh. Wait. We have gotten him already.

DONNA  
What do you mean?

RADIO VOICE  
Incarcerated since April. Dennings  
jail.

DONNA  
His exact date of entering.

RADIO VOICE  
The twenty first.

DONNA  
Malaika disappeared in May. Give me  
that address again.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Daisy reenters the kitchen. She spots a towel she forgot to  
put in the wash.

She grabs it, makes her way back to the basement.

INT. BASEMENT

The light goes on again. Daisy enters, goes to the washing  
machine, lifts the lid, tosses the towel in with the others.

She turns. Then she sees it.

Claire's backpack.

She turns, sees the basement window open.

DAISY  
Is someone here?

She steps to a box, grabs a baseball bat.

DAISY (CONT'D)  
I need you to leave.

She steps around boxes and old furniture pieces.

DAISY (CONT'D)  
I won't do anything if you just  
leave.

She doesn't hear anything, see anyone.

She takes the steps up to the kitchen



## KITCHEN

Still holding the bat, she quietly opens a drawer and takes out a carving knife.

She moves to the living room, quickly opens a closet. No one is there.

## INT. ATTIC

Claire moves slowly away from the door towards the curtain.

She stumbles on something, her phone drops.

## LIVING ROOM

Daisy hears Claire's phone hit the floor up in the attic.

She starts moving up to the second floor, bat and knife in hand.

She makes it to the

## SECOND FLOOR LANDING

She notes her bedroom door is open. Not how she left it.

She climbs up the attic steps to the attic door.

She places her ear against it to try to hear anything. She doesn't.

She puts the knife down, opens the door, enters, grasping tighter at the bat.

Her eyes adjust to the darkness. There's that one shaft of light from a window illuminating somewhat the curtain sectioning off a space.

Claire sensing someone is there hides behind a large box. Her eyes wide with fear.

Daisy slides the curtain aside and slips from view.

Claire crawls to another box nearby. She sees silhouettes behind the curtain. Daisy and a figure sitting on a chair.

## DAISY

(behind the curtain)

Someone crashing your tea party?

Claire reacts with resolve. Who is this woman speaking to? Could it be Malaika?

Claire grabs a golf club from a box races behind the curtain.

We see a struggle ensue in silhouette. Screams from both females. The figure on the chair in silhouette remains still.

DAISY (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?!! Stop!

We go behind the curtain now where we see Daisy, her arm muscles straining, restraining Claire on the ground.

Claire strikes back at her. Daisy brings her hand to Claire's neck to force her down. Claire chokes, gasps for breath.

DAISY (CONT'D)

I saved your life!

Claire turns her head, sees the figure that was in silhouette. A large doll sits at a child's table spread out with a tea set.

A figure enters the attic. The two turn.

DONNA

Police!

Donna appears with another officer, guns raised.

Daisy pulls the curtain aside. Claire rises from the floor.

DAISY

She broke into my house.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

There are several cop cars in front. Donna leads Claire to the front seat of her police car. Donna gets behind the wheel.

INT. CAR - DAY

Claire stares straight ahead, silent.

DONNA

Your parents have not accepted the offer to have you checked out at the hospital. They want you home and that's where I'm taking you.

CLAIRE

There's nothing wrong with me. Did you look for Malaika in there?

DONNA

We've checked the house from top to bottom. There is no sign Malaika was ever there. This man that helped you with the bike? He was in jail when Malaika disappeared. The woman is his sister who let him stay there for awhile. She indeed was the one who gave you CPR the day you were hit and possibly saved your life. She heard the crash and as a home nurse, she did what she was trained to do.

Claire remains stoic.

DONNA (CONT'D)

You could have done something really stupid to her or she could have hurt you if she had wanted to. You don't go snooping in people's houses.

Claire responds defeatedly.

CLAIRE

He touched her.

Donna starts the car.

DONNA

He's in prison. There's no way he could have taken her.

CLAIRE

Is Malaika dead?

DONNA

Enough talk. Let's get you home.

Claire stares out the window as they drive off.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Johnson is sitting with the piano student. He plays. She stops him between phrases.

PIANO STUDENT

What?

MRS. JOHNSON

You've been working on those fingers, haven't you?

He nods.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
That was technically exact and  
played with real passion.

PIANO STUDENT  
I want to be a pianist.

MRS. JOHNSON  
That you do.

A cellphone buzzes in the student's pocket. He takes it out,  
checks the screen.

PIANO STUDENT  
Claire has been found. She's okay.

MRS. JOHNSON  
Yes?

He shows her his cellphone screen.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
The lord has answered a prayer.  
He's been known to do that at his  
discretion.

She smiles at him.

MRS. JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
Let me hear that passage again.

He places his fingertips to the keyboard again, begins  
playing.

She seems lost in the music.

EXT. AVERS HOUSE - DAY

Claire's parents wait outside in the driveway as Donna pulls  
up with Claire in the detective car.

Claire gets out of the car. Her parents immediately grab her  
in a relieved embrace.

MRS. AVERS  
Oh my god. There you are.

Claire is stiff in their arms. When they let her go, she  
makes her way quickly into their house.

Donna approaches the parents.

DONNA

She feels a little defeated. Even playing cop can get you that way.

MRS. AVERS

You got one home and we thank you for that.

DONNA

I wouldn't press her to talk about it. Kids get over these things real fast. My sister was murdered when I was six. I took her dolls and her hair brush and I moved on.

Donna gets into her car, drives off. Claire's parents make their way inside.

INT. DONNA'S CAR IN MOTION - DAY

Donna speaks on her bluetooth with someone back at the police station.

DONNA

Have we got anything on that whistle yet in the Malaika Johnson case?

VOICE ON BLUETOOTH

No PE classes at that time. Birds usually quiet that time of day. Besides witnesses described it as a whistle, not bird song. Someone probably whistled from a car. Like you know, I'm here. Get in.

DONNA

To pick her up. Someone she knew. She hears the whistle, rushes to the car.

VOICE ON BLUETOOTH

We cleared the usual suspects.

DONNA

The principal. She was standing outside. She supplied us a list of parents she saw in the parking lot picking up their kids that day that might be helpful witnesses. Have they all been questioned?

VOICE ON BLUETOOTH  
Short handed, you know. And the  
boyfriend abduction case. We marked  
off maybe half off the list.

DONNA  
Jesus. Can you text it to me?

VOICE ON BLUETOOTH  
One moment.

A ping sounds on Donna's cellphone. She checks the message.

Surprised with something she reads.

DONNA  
Your kid's not in school. What are  
you doing there?

She turns the car around, heads back in the direction she  
came.

INT. AVERS HOUSE - DAY

Claire stands quietly before her parents.

CLAIRE  
I'd really like to take a shower,  
is that okay?

MRS. AVERS  
Of course. And I bet you're  
starving for some real food. I'll  
get something together.

Claire starts to leave to take a shower but stops as she  
hears her father.

MR. AVERS (O.S)  
Now who is that now?

Claire and her mother turn. Mr. Avers is looking out the  
window.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
That reporter again. She wants to  
talk to Claire. It's not going to  
happen.

Mr. Avers exits the house. They can see him through the front  
window.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Hey! I asked you before to leave us  
alone!

He lets out a loud WHISTLE.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Hey, don't park there!

That whistle triggers something in Claire.

She quickly heads out of the living room.

MRS. AVERS  
There's clean towels on the shelf!

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Claire enters. She goes to her shelf of books, her neat library collection of Harry Potters.

She pulls one out, then another.

CLAIRE  
They're in the wrong order.

She turns and leaves her room.

INT. KITCHEN

Mrs. Avers has started to cut some vegetables as Claire enters.

Claire can see her father outside speaking with a reporter and a cameraman.

CLAIRE  
Mom, you said Malaika was going to come here to get a book to read to me while I was in a coma. But she never showed up. How was she supposed to get here?

MRS. AVERS  
Honey, she was going to wait for him after school.

CLAIRE  
Him?

MRS. AVERS

Your father. He offered to pick her up after school.

CLAIRE

And he told you she didn't show up? Where were you?

MRS. AVERS

At the hospital where I always was. With you.

A chill runs down Claire's spine. A disturbing thought vibrates throughout her whole body, threatening to consume her.

She looks out the front window. Her father continues to speak with the reporter and cameraman outside.

She moves to the door.

EXT. AVERS HOUSE - DAY

Claire exits the house. Her father sees her coming out.

MR. AVERS

Claire, go back inside.

CLAIRE

No. Let me talk to them.

She comes up to her father, leans into him, grabbing around his waist for support.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I'm happy to be home but there are others who can't say that. If you could like, don't let anyone be forgotten?

We see her hand sneak into her father's pocket and pull out his keyring.

She lets go of him and sprints back into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Claire moves past her mother.

MRS. AVERS

Are you taking a shower?



CLAIRE

I'm missing a Potter book. Is dad  
using it to prop open that door  
that always locks down there again?

MRS. AVERS

Your father has the key.

CLAIRE

I got it.

Claire opens the door to the basement steps and enters.

INT. BASEMENT STEPS

Claire takes the steps down to another door.

She takes out the key ring.

CLAIRE

Which one are you?

She tries one. It doesn't fit. She tries another, getting  
anxious.

INT. KITCHEN

Mr. Avers reenters, joins his wife in the kitchen.

MR. AVERS

I got rid of them for now.

MRS. AVERS

Can you cut that chicken for me?

She motions towards a cutting board and a half chicken. He  
starts on the carving.

MR. AVERS

I was thinking, this might be a  
good time for you and Claire to fly  
down to my mother's place in  
Florida. Get away from things here  
for awhile. We see what it's doing  
to her. I'll stay here. It will be  
a good time to do the painting that  
needs to be done. Get that water  
pipe mended in the basement.

MRS. AVERS

Anything to not have to spend time  
with your mother.

He laughs.

MRS. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Speaking of the basement, Claire's  
down there. I hope you've gotten  
rid of that mangled bike.

MR. AVERS  
She went down?

He pats his pants pocket. Realizes his keys are gone.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
I'll go down and see what she's  
after.

He absentmindedly takes the knife with him.

MRS. AVERS  
You want to leave the knife?

He forces a chuckle, places it down, opens the door to the  
basement steps and disappears.

INT. BASEMENT

Claire has found a key that works, unlocks the door and  
enters.

She flicks on a light. The bulb is at its death door and  
flickers.

She notes Malaika's twisted bicycle in a corner.

She hears a dripping sound and follows it to a smaller space.

Water leaks from a pipe above and drips into a bucket.

There's a narrow door leading to another section. A large  
old mirror leans against the wall opposite the door.

She tries the knob. It's locked.

She examines the keyring again for a key that might fit.

MR. AVERS (O.S)  
Claire?

Claire fumbles with the keys. She tries one. It doesn't work.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Your mother needs you upstairs  
right now.

Claire fumbles with another key. This one seems to fit and yes, the lock frees. Claire turns the knob and enter.

Her father's voice much closer now.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
I see you now. Come on.

SMALLER SECTION OF BASEMENT

Claire quickly closes the door and locks it.

It's totally dark, Claire reaches out for any light switch on the wall but she can't find one.

Suddenly behind her, someone grabs her from behind.

A wheezy hum of consonants from lips to her ears.

Claire screams from the fright.

Outside her father's voice.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Claire, open the door!!

Claire tries to escape the grasp of this horrid bony figure grasping her.

CLAIRE  
Daddy! Help me!

From outside, we hear him pulling at the door at the same time Claire is grasping to turn the lock to open it.

Again, that wheezy hum of horror into her ear.

She finds the switch and turns it, the door flies open.

Claire flies out into the arms of her father.

She gasps for air against his shoulder.

MR. AVERS  
I've got you. You're safe.

Claire opens her eyes. The mirror in front of them tells another story.

Malaika's horribly gaunt and dirty face looms in the image as a shaft of light reaches the small space.

Mr. Avers quickly shuts the door with one hand while holding his daughter, shutting off Malaika into her captivity again.

Claire moves from his arms.

MR. AVERS (CONT'D)  
Give me the keys.

CLAIRE  
Dad. What is this?

MR. AVERS  
I want you to go upstairs to your room. I'll talk to you later.

CLAIRE  
That was her, wasn't it?

MR. AVERS  
Claire. Go to your room.

He pushes her aside. He opens the door to the small space.

CLAIRE  
What have you done with her?

He enters the space, comes out quickly holding Malaika in a blanket.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Where are you taking her?

He rushes with Malaika up the stairs. Claire follows screaming.

INT. KITCHEN

Mr. Avers comes out of the basement holding Malaika in the blanket. Claire follows.

MRS. AVERS  
What is that? Where are you going?

CLAIRE  
Mom! He's got her!!

Claire follows her father out the door. He opens his car door, stuffs Malaika in.

MR. AVERS  
Claire, give me my keys.

CLAIRE  
No!!

He grabs her, takes his keys from her, gets into his car and peels away.

Claire grabs her bike that's nearby, follows as Mrs. Avers comes out of the house.

MRS. AVERS  
Claire!! What is happening?!!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Claire races on her bike. She can see her father's car down the street make a turn.

She comes to the corner and turns to follow.

A RIVER. An old iron bridge crosses it between wooded banks.

Mr. Avers stops his car midway on the bridge.

Claire watches in horror as she cycles.

Mr. Avers takes Malaika from the car, still wrapped in the blanket and carries her to the bridge's edge.

CLAIRE  
No!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Donna drives. She spots the car on the bridge and Claire cycling towards it.

She makes a squealing turn and heads that way.

BRIDGE

Claire pedals as fast as she can but Mr. Avers lifts Malaika over the railing and let's go.

Claire screams as Malaika falls from the bridge into the river.

On the bridge now. She stops, jumps off the bike and grabs the railing. Hesitates, but then she does it.

She jumps as Mr. Avers watches in horror.

He backs up, screaming, to his car.

Donna's car speeds up to his car. She opens the door, gun drawn.

DONNA  
Get on the ground!!

She shouts into a radio.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
I've got a girl in the river,  
Mayson bridge! Rescue needed!

Mr. Avers reaches into his car.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
Hands up where I can see them and  
on the ground now!!!

Avers breaks down, quickly retrieves a pistol from the front seat, brings it to his head and

BLAM!

IN THE RIVER

Claire swims, frantically diving below, then surfacing catching her breath in heaves.

CLAIRE  
Malaika!

She spots the blanket, swims to it.

She grabs at it. It's just the blanket floating along.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
No!

Claire starts to swim in another direction. From behind her we see Malaika pops up from the water like a phantom.

Her voice is weak, but she's finally found it.

MALAIKA  
Claire!

Claire turns at the sound, swims quickly over to her, grabs her, breathless.

CLAIRE  
I've got you. I'll get you out.

She drags Malaika to the river's bank and onto shore.

Maliaka, fragile, spent, lies against the rocks.

A firetruck is seen arriving on the bridge, RESCUE WORKERS jumping off.

Claire can see Donna pointing the girls out to rescuers.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
Hold on Malaika. They'll be coming  
for us soon.

Something catches Claire's eye. She steps away from Malaika towards some brush.

MALAIKA  
Claire.

CLAIRE  
I'm right here.

She steps further into the brush.

There, she stands before a mound of dirt.

A freshly dug grave. Several stones placed on top of it.

Claire stares at it.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
They'll be here soon. Malaika.  
You're safe now.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A snip of news on a TV screen. A view from a helicopter over the river bank.

NEWS NARRATION  
The body found in a recently dugged  
grave on the river bank has been  
confirmed to be that of the missing  
Ramsey girl. Evidence points to the  
boyfriend who was killed earlier  
this week in a police raid to be  
responsible for her death.

The TV is in a hospital room where Claire sits by the bed of a recuperating Maliaka.

Claire reads to Malaika from a Harry Potter book.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Time has passed. Mrs. Johnson's piano student effortlessly plays a triumphal march on the piano.

Nearby seated with a host of FAMILY MEMBERS, Mrs. Johnson looks on with pride.

We are gathered for a sixth grade graduation ceremony.

Students line up and each receives a scroll and a photograph of themselves from the PRINCIPAL.

After receiving the photograph, they go to a wall to place their photograph among those of their fellow graduates in this graduating class.

Claire and Malaika go together, place their photographs side by side, sharing a smile between them.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Claire and Malaika run together with glee.

Free at last from the scourge of elementary school!

Malaika stops, catches her breath. Claire follows.

The two sit on the swing set side by side.

MALAIKA

I have a confession. While you were sleeping? I made a new best friend.

Claire is somewhat hurt by this.

CLAIRE

A new best friend? Who?

MALAIKA

Close your eyes.

Claire closes her eyes.

Malaika takes some nuts from her pocket, tosses them to the ground.

MALAIKA (CONT'D)

You can open your eyes now.

Claire does so, looks down and laughs.



A SQUIRREL bounces across the lawn to them, takes immediately to the nuts.

MALAIKA (CONT'D)  
His name is Nutso.

CLAIRE  
Aw, he's so cute.

A whistle from across the way.

The girls see their mothers motioning them towards the cars to head on home.

The girls get up off the swing set.

MALAIKA  
I'm surprised Nutso's still here.

A beat.

CLAIRE  
Where would he go?

They share a smile,

And we

FADE TO BLACK