

SALEM VILLAGE

by

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SECOND DRAFT

OVER BLACK:

A faint church bell rings in the distance.

Super: **1692**

Then, simply...

Super: **SALEM**

INT. PURITAN HOME - MORNING

CLOSE ON the laces of a Sunday dress being yanked tight. The little girl inside squirms, uncomfortable.

ANNA'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Hold still, child.

The girl's MOTHER, a tired woman older than her years, spins her around for a final inspection.

Her FATHER, a rugged man in an ill-fitting suit, waits impatiently by the door.

As the girl's bonnet is hastily tied, we get a good look at her: a quiet countenance, with doll-like features and deep blue eyes. This is ANNA (9).

Her mother licks her thumb, smudges dirt from Anna's face.

ANNA'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Well, it'll have to do. We're late
enough, aren't we?

Her Father opens the door, and as the church bell rings once more, Anna is pulled out into --

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

-- Salem Village, a scattering of rustic colonial houses honeycombed by winding dirt roads. It's a particularly raw morning, gray clouds casting a bleak shadow over the town.

As they walk, we hear a preacher's sermon:

REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)
*A reading from Psalm Fifty-Eight:
The wicked go astray from the womb,
and err from birth, speaking lies.*

Our family rushes through the eerily empty TOWN SQUARE...

REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)
*The righteous will rejoice when
 they see vengeance done, and will
 bathe in the blood of the wicked.*

A TALL WHITE CHURCH stands before them. They compose themselves as they approach, but surprisingly --

-- they walk right past. We see through the church windows. Not a soul inside.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - GALLOWS HILL - MORNING

On the far edge of town, we finally see our preacher. Stern-faced, speaking with conviction. Open bible in his hands, WOODEN CROSS hanging from his neck.

This is REVEREND PARRIS (50s).

REVEREND PARRIS
 And there shall be divine reward
 for the righteous, who carry out
 God's judgment here on Earth.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: he is standing on a SCAFFOLD, flanked by three accused "WITCHES". This is no sermon... it's a hanging.

A venomous CROWD stands before them. At the rear, Anna and her parents are the last to join. Anna takes in the scene.

Reverend Parris closes his bible. Gives a solemn nod to the edge of the gallows, where a LAWMAN hatefully strings a NOOSE around each woman's neck. Parris continues:

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)
 And now, the Lord's prayer.

Anna's parents pull her to the front of the crowd.

OFF HER EYES, witnessing her village's capacity for evil --

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)
 Our Father, who art in Heaven,
 hallowed be thy name...

The crowd RUMBLES with vitriol: "Witches!" "Heathens!" etc.

The First Witch trembles in tears.

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)
 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.
 On Earth as it is in Heaven.

The Third Witch spots Anna in the crowd. The two lock eyes, and Anna stands frozen.

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)
Lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil...

A burlap hood is placed over the First Witch's head, then onto the Second's.

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)
For the kingdom, the power and the
glory are yours...

The Lawman approaches the Third Witch, who never breaks her stare from Anna. Then, with force, she is hooded as well.

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)
...now and forever. Amen.

With a final nod from Parris, the Lawman pulls a switch.

SNAP! The women drop through to their fate. There's a strange silence among the onlookers.

CLOSE ON: Anna's eyes. Unblinking. Unforgetting.

DISSOLVE TO:

The same eyes, only now they're the somber eyes of a beautiful young woman (mid-20s). This is ANNA, grown up.

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S ROOM - DAY

From the upper room of her modest inn, she stares out the window to the adjacent harbor, lost in thought.

Her rocking chair sways softly.

Super: Fifteen Years Later.

DR. GRIGGS (O.S.)
Anna?

Across the room, rifling through his medical bag, is DR. WILLIAM GRIGGS (60s), a naturally cranky man who softens up in Anna's presence.

He waits for an answer like he's said her name twice already.

ANNA
(snapping out of it)
I'm sorry. What did you say?

DR. GRIGGS
I asked when your husband was
returning?

Anna turns, and we notice that she is visibly PREGNANT.

ANNA
Um. Four months. First week of
March.

DR. GRIGGS
The inn's been rather empty with
him away, hasn't it?

ANNA
Indeed. I've only had one visitor
since Daniel's been gone at sea.
Though I'm expecting a new guest
shortly.

As she moves from the window, she winces in pain.

DR. GRIGGS
(steading her)
Here.

Dr. Griggs produces a SMALL BOTTLE OF ELIXIR.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)
(with a warm tone)
The discomfort is entirely normal.
Drink this if you become unsettled.

ANNA
Thank you, Dr. Griggs.

DR. GRIGGS
(then, approaching a
delicate subject)
As for the dreams... What exactly
do you see?

A beat as Anna searches for the best way to describe them.

ANNA
It's the same every time. A
stranger stands in the shadows of
my bedroom, watching me as I sleep.
I think it's Daniel, but when I say
his name, he doesn't respond.

DR. GRIGGS
And then what?

Anna looks down, a shameful look on her face. There's more to say, but...

ANNA

Nothing. I just... wake up.

DR. GRIGGS

(assuring)

Probably just a matter of nerves.

Dr. Griggs buckles his bag and grabs his coat to leave.

ANNA

May I follow you out? I was actually going to walk to the market if you think I'm still able.

DR. GRIGGS

I think a walk and some fresh air would do you good.

Off her polite smile --

CUT TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - DAY

Outside, Dr. Griggs exits Anna's Inn and heads off into the unseasonably warm winter day. Anna takes in a breath, tightens her cloak, and goes the opposite direction.

As she walks through town, we notice a different Salem than the one we first saw. The winter sun bathes the square in warm light. New houses line clean roads as VILLAGERS bustle about. Sailors work the docks in high spirits. It looks more like the promising port city it once intended to be.

Anna stops a moment to take it all in, her gaze drifting toward the sea, almost longingly, before she continues on.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - HUBBARD HOUSE - SAME TIME

Amid the seeming cheeriness of the town, we see Dr. Griggs walk down an isolated road to a lone house, sitting somewhat grimly on its property.

Dr. Griggs approaches, noticing a pair of WOODEN CROSSES and FLOWERS placed against the front door. Like a gravestone.

BACK TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - TOWN SQUARE - SAME TIME

Anna walks through the town square, past children playing, a blacksmith working his fire, people milling cheerfully.

She stops outside the BAKERY, nodding a familiar hello to the BAKER.

BAKER

Good morning, Goody Downing.
(re: her belly)
How much longer?

ANNA

Any week now, I'm told.

BAKER

Ah, Praise the Lord.

ANNA

Yes. Praise the Lord.

There's a slight unease in her smile. Perhaps the absence of her husband. Perhaps just good old Puritan caution.

BAKER

Here you are...

As the Baker turns to ready her basket for her, Anna notices a MOTHER with a BABY and two children.

The BABY cries loudly as the mother shushes and rocks her gently. Anna looks on like any expecting mother, half adoring, half preparing.

CLOSE ON the baby, crying louder and squirming until the sounds of her cries are replaced by --

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

-- the JARRING SCREAM of a YOUNG WOMAN writhing violently atop a bed in a curtain-darkened room.

(We'll meet her properly soon enough.)

Her face is almost entirely hidden by a mess of hair, but as she winces in pain, we see her teeth, stained with blood.

She BABBLES an indiscernible language. It's frightening.

DR. GRIGGS

Hold her down!

REVEAL Dr. Griggs by her side, accompanied by a frightened CHAMBERMAID (50s) and a SLAVE WOMAN (30s) with cloth wrapped tightly around her face, save for her eyes.

The Young Woman is already restrained at the arms and legs by THICK ROPES, but her violent twisting tests them.

She MOANS once more, arching her back, as if *burning*.
Dr. Griggs readies a DRINK OF MEDICINE for her.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)

Steady...

As the others hold her, he manages to pour the elixir into her mouth, but she SPITS it back, returning to her chilling foreign tongue.

We see her pale face, and her eyes rolling back in her head.

Off this chaos, we move into --

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

-- the main room of the cabin, where the screams are barely muffled. Shades drawn just as tightly.

THREE MEN stand by the fireplace, arguing intently about the situation in the next room.

JUDGE MORROW (60s), a wise man, aged with worry, paces.

JUDGE MORROW

God help her. She's getting worse.

Across from him stands CONSTABLE WALKER (40s), a stout and naturally disagreeable man.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Dr. Griggs has done everything humanly possible.

JUDGE MORROW

It's not enough. I've found someone who can help. A specialist.

CONSTABLE WALKER

A specialist? In curses?
Possessions?

JUDGE MORROW

And other things. Yes.

Finally speaking up is REVEREND PARRIS (now 60s). We recognize him as the preacher from our opening scene. He's only grown more dour with time.

REVEREND PARRIS

What if this truly *is* the Devil's work? A specialist won't save us then.

Morrow looks to the next room. The screaming has subsided now as Dr. Griggs and the Chambermaid hush the Young Woman.

JUDGE MORROW

It's too late. I summoned him two days ago, he's already on his way.

This is news to the others. They share a look, frustrated that he's not consulted them in his decision.

CUT TO:

The WOODEN SPOKES of a carriage wheel, spinning hastily.

EXT. WOODED ROAD / INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

We're traveling with a one-horse carriage, plush and ornate, as it rolls through an isolated wooded road, heading for a town in the distance.

INT. ANNA'S INN - GUEST ROOM - LATER

Anna fluffs the pillows on a bed when she hears a commotion outside. Looking out her window, she notices a small CROWD has gathered, and heads downstairs.

The carriage has arrived.

EXT. ANNA'S INN - DAY

The door opens and out steps a man with well-tailored clothes and a crisp three-point hat. He's handsome, with sharp features and kind eyes that seem to take in everything.

This is DR. ROBERT CURTIN (30s).

*

Anna, as owner of the inn, goes to introduce herself.

ANNA

Good day, sir. I'm Anna Downing.
You must be my new guest.

Curtin removes his hat, charmed.

CURTIN

Ah, so I'm in the right place. Dr. Robert Curtin. Pleased to meet you. I was told to find the inn by the harbor and await instructions from Judge Morrow.

ANNA

Well, here, let me help you with your bag.

CURTIN

(having noticed her pregnant belly)
Oh, please, no, I insist.

From the gathering crowd of curious onlookers, a young boy, THOMAS (9), approaches.

Seeing Curtin up close, wide-eyed, he turns to his FATHER.

THOMAS

What's on his hand, Poppa?

THOMAS'S FATHER

(firm, embarrassed)
Hush, boy.

But Curtin looks to the father, amused.

CURTIN

No, it's quite all right.

He kneels down to Thomas's level, extends his hand. We notice a DISTINCTIVE MARKING on the back of it:

A CIRCULAR TATTOO, resembling a three-pronged coil.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

(to Thomas)
It's from my time spent in Barbados. Do you know of Barbados?

Thomas shakes his head.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

It's an island, far away from here. To the natives, this mark is a sign of honor.

THOMAS

Are you an explorer?

Curtin smiles at the boy's fascination.

CURTIN
I'm not sure I'd call myself that.
But I've been to a lot of places.
(then)
Tell you what...

Curtin opens his UTILITY BAG, produces a small NAUTICAL SPYGLASS.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
Here. So you may explore as well.

He hands the spyglass to Thomas, who runs off, excited.

The Father gives a stern look to Curtin before following.

Before we can dwell on it:

JUDGE MORROW (O.S.)
Doctor Curtin.

Anna turns to see Judge Morrow approaching. Constable Walker and a hesitant Reverend Parris follow behind.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)
Judge William Morrow. So glad you could make it. We can't thank you enough.

CURTIN
(shaking hands)
Happy to be of service.

Judge Morrow looks at the gathering crowd, wishing this were more discreet.

JUDGE MORROW
I trust you had a pleasant journey.

CURTIN
Indeed. It's beautiful up here.
Some of the trees still have their autumn leaves.

JUDGE MORROW
Allow me to introduce Constable Walker, and Reverend Parris.

Nods from the two. Pleasant enough, but skeptical.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)
 And I see you've already met our
 wonderful Anna.

CURTIN
 Yes, she was just welcoming me.

JUDGE MORROW
 (warmly)
 Very good.
 (loud enough for the CROWD
 to hear)
 Dr. Curtin is touring the colonies
 to share medical knowledge from
 London.

He looks around, not used to fabricating cover stories.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)
 (then, quietly, to Curtin)
 Well, then. If you aren't too
 tired, perhaps I could fill you in
 before you get settled.

ANNA
 (excusing herself)
 Your room will be ready by the time
 you return, Doctor.

As Judge Morrow leads Curtin away, Curtin smiles back to
 Anna. The crowd watches them go, intrigued.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER - CONTINUOUS

Alone now, Curtin and Judge Morrow walk along a quiet stretch
 of town. Losing the pleasant formalities, Judge Morrow shifts
 to a more serious tone.

JUDGE MORROW
 You come highly recommended by my
 associates in Boston. School of
 Oxford. Royal Society of London.
 And I understand you quelled the
 Witch Hunt in King's Lynn?

CURTIN
 I offered scientific and medical
 assistance to the law, yes. There
 were certain 'phenomena' occurring.
 (MORE)

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Men and women were blamed for witchcraft. I simply provided an alternative explanation.

JUDGE MORROW

Yes. Well. That's precisely why I requested your visit. And you couldn't have come soon enough. I fear her condition is deteriorating.

CURTIN

The young woman...

JUDGE MORROW

Betty Hubbard. She's under Dr. Griggs' care. Our town physician.

(then)

We've had our share of sicknesses, Doctor, and fevers. But nothing like the one that afflicts poor Betty, bless her soul.

(thinking how to phrase)

As I'm sure you are aware, we have a rather delicate history in Salem.

CURTIN

(understanding)

The Trials...

JUDGE MORROW

Those days are behind us now. Look around: Salem is strong. Our church is strong.

(then)

But I fear if our people find out about Miss Hubbard, they might start blaming something sinister... Or worse, each other.

CURTIN

I understand.

JUDGE MORROW

Dr. Griggs may object, but he's been asked to assist you in any way. God help you find a cure for her. At the very least, a rational explanation.

Curtin nods. There's a sad desperation in Morrow's eyes.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)

But for now, you'd like get to settled, I'm sure...

CURTIN

Actually, if it's all right, may I see Miss Hubbard now?

Curtin is here for a reason. Straight to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUBBARD HOUSE - AFTERNOON

As daylight disappears, Curtin follows Morrow up the walkway of a small grim-looking home, preparing himself for what he's about to see. Thick drapes block the windows.

But as they make their way closer -- they're startled by LOUD BARKING! A PAIR OF HUNTING DOGS, roped at the neck, lunge viciously at them from the next yard.

SNAP! They're reined back by their leashes, and simmer to a low growl. Curtin, unfazed, follows Morrow to the door. After a moment, it opens, and they are greeted by Dr. Griggs.

DR. GRIGGS

(to Judge Morrow, softly)
Come. She's resting now.

Griggs guardedly eyes Curtin as they are let in to --

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - AFTERNOON

-- the main room, a dim, small space with a dying fire.

The two people we saw earlier stand to greet them. The CHAMBERMAID, wearing a worried expression. The SLAVE WOMAN, face wrapped in cloth.

But this time, they are joined by MERCER (30), a hulking tower of a man, strong-jawed with a fierce brow. The archetype of a pious Puritan farmer.

JUDGE MORROW

Dr. Curtin, this is John Mercer, betrothed to Miss Hubbard.

CURTIN

(offering a hand)
Mr. Mercer. Sorry to meet under such circumstance.

Mercer reluctantly shakes Curtin's hand, but says nothing.

JUDGE MORROW
(off the awkward silence)
And this is Doctor Griggs.

Griggs isn't thrilled either, but puts on a nicer face.

DR. GRIGGS
Pleasure.

CURTIN
Likewise. I understand Miss Hubbard has been in your care. What seem to be her symptoms?

MERCER
(jumping in, impatient)
She doesn't need this blasphemy. She needs prayer! This is a *possession*.

DR. GRIGGS
(to Curtin)
This affliction, Doctor, is quite profound. Beyond anything I've witnessed before. Tremors. Fevers. Bleeding from the eyes and ears. Speaking in tongues...

JUDGE MORROW
You can see why this is such a... *delicate* matter for us--

DR. GRIGGS
And violent spells. Frightful fits of aggression. We've managed to restrain her, but before you enter, I should warn you. She did *this* to poor Ebetha.

Griggs gestures the Slave Woman over to them and slowly unwraps the cloth around her face.

As the final layer is pulled away, we're startled by the sight of a hideously mangled face beneath. Clawed flesh, poorly healed. Curtin, however, keeps his composure.

CURTIN
I heed your warning. Respectfully.
(then, ultimately)
Shall we?

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

A door slowly creaks open in a colorless bedroom, brightened by the final throes of sunlight outside.

As Griggs leads Curtin and the group inside, we hear the sound of STEADY BREATHING. Slightly labored.

Reveal: BETTY HUBBARD (mid-20s), the young woman from earlier, lying flat in bed, eyes closed, face pale. Restrained by THICK ROPES.

Curtin approaches calmly. When he turns back, he realizes none of the others will come as close.

Still unfazed, he leans over to inspect her. Her shallow breathing, the only thing breaking the silence.

CURTIN

How long has she been sleeping?

CHAMBERMAID

It's not so much *sleep*, sir...

DR. GRIGGS

She lies still. As if under a spell. Can't seem to hear us, either.

Curtin puts a palm to her forehead, checking for a fever.

He produces a small MAGNIFYING GLASS chained to his coat. The others look at the foreign object suspiciously.

Then, he pulls her eyelids up one at a time to reveal bloodshot eyes underneath. The others watch with trepidation.

CHAMBERMAID

Doctor, I wouldn't...

No use. Curtin leans mere inches away from Betty. He gently tilts her head from side to side, examining further.

The others are forgetting to breathe.

Then, Curtin leans in even closer, slowly peeling her lips and exposing her teeth to find raw, bloody gums. We hold for a tense, dreadful beat, ready for anything... Until finally --

He pockets his magnifying glass, turns to the others.

CURTIN

Those hounds outside. Did she come into contact with them?

DR. GRIGGS
 Couldn't say. Why?

CURTIN
 Is she taking down water?

CHAMBERMAID
 Not easily, no.

CURTIN
 Hm. It's possible she could be
 rabid. Or showing early signs of
 Yellow Fever.

The others trade looks.

DR. GRIGGS
 Rabid?

MERCER
 (offended)
 Sick like some dog?

DR. GRIGGS
 I hope you don't think us fools,
 Dr. Curtin. I've treated rabies.
 That is not what this poor girl is
 suffering from.

CHAMBERMAID (O.S.)
 Come when she's awake.

Dr. Griggs turns. Everyone goes quiet.

CHAMBERMAID (CONT'D)
 (intently)
 You'll see for yourself. Come when
 she's awake.

Curtin studies the serious faces in the room.

EXT. HUBBARD HOUSE - EVENING - LATE

Curtin walks quietly with Judge Morrow, leaving the tension
 in the Hubbard house behind him.

CURTIN
 You say she works on a farm?

JUDGE MORROW
 Mr. Cooke's farm. On the far end of
 town.

CURTIN

I'd like to go there in the morning
if I could. Maybe we could find the
source of her illness.

JUDGE MORROW

Of course.
(then, after a beat)
Thank you, Doctor.

Curtin nods, seeing a sliver of hope in Morrow's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANNA'S INN - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A room glows with firelight on the second floor of the inn.

ANNA (O.S., PRE-LAP)

I gave you the room at the end.

INT. ANNA'S INN - HALLWAY / CURTIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anna walks Curtin through the dim halls of the inn, opening a door to reveal a cozy room with a fire already burning.

ANNA

It has the nicest fireplace, and
it's quiet, with room to work. Hope
it suits you fine.

CURTIN

More than fine. Thank you. It's
truly a lovely inn you have.

ANNA

I try to keep it in order while my
husband is away at sea.

She goes to stoke the fire, straining a bit to bend.

CURTIN

Allow me.

He takes the fire poker.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

You shouldn't strain yourself.
(beat)
How long has he been gone?

*

ANNA

Too long. Long enough not to know
that his little one's on the way.

CURTIN

Well, he'll have quite the
wonderful surprise to come home to.

They share a pleasant silence. Then --

ANNA

Judge Morrow says you traveled here
from London?

CURTIN

Well, my practice is in London, but
I was working just over in Boston
when he summoned me. Have you been?
To London, I mean?

ANNA

Oh. Sadly, it's my husband who gets
the adventure of travel. If it
weren't for his stories, I'm afraid
my world would stop at this inn.
Perhaps one day...

He smiles politely. There's something refreshing about her
innocence.

CURTIN

Well, if it makes you feel better,
know that every traveler dreams of
nothing but home.

Anna studies him for a beat. His clothes. His features.
The mark on his hand. Everything about him, so... intriguing.

ANNA

Right. Well. Goodnight, Doctor.

CURTIN

Good night, Miss Downing.

INT. ANNA'S INN - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Anna closes his door and heads down the hall to her bedroom.
Before entering, we hold as she looks back toward Curtin's
room. Enchanted.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - ESTABLISHING - EARLY MORNING

A cloudy winter morning. Bells ring from the harbor.

INT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

At the light of first dawn, Curtin finishes his notes, closes his ledger. Clearly been working all night.

He rises to leave, grabbing his UTILITY BAG on a chair. We notice an "Oxford" insignia on its side.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

No sooner does Curtin exit the inn than --

EDWARD (O.S.)
Doctor Curtin?

He turns to find an energetic young man, no older than sixteen, rushing to his side. This is EDWARD.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Doctor Curtin, my name is Edward.
I've been sent by Judge Morrow to
assist you.

CURTIN
(not what he expected)
Is that right?

EDWARD
(cheerily confessing)
I volunteered actually. You're
headed to Mr. Cooke's farm, right?
He said you'd need a guide.

He takes off walking. Curtin follows curiously.

CURTIN
Right. Of course. Sorry, I just
didn't expect you to be so--

EDWARD
Young? I'm almost sixteen, sir.
And I've got schooling, too.

CURTIN
I was going to say 'excited.'

EDWARD

But it *is* exciting, sir. A man of proper science coming to our town.
(with a juvenile grin)
Trying to make sense of the great big curse.

CURTIN

Curse?

EDWARD

You're caring for Betty Hubbard, right? They say she's sick. But some people have heard things from what I gather. In the night. Screaming and the like. Say there's a curse coming back on Salem.
(but then)
Rubbish, though, if you asked me.

CURTIN

Why? Don't you believe in curses?

EDWARD

My father would strike me for saying so, but I'm not exactly like everyone else around here. I want to be a man of science. Travel the world. Like you.

As brash as Edward is, Curtin can't help but like him.

They stop a moment, reaching the TOWN SQUARE.

CURTIN

Well then, I'd say I couldn't find a more suitable assistant.

EDWARD

(beaming)
Right, sir.
(then)
Anyway, Mr. Cooke's farm is less than a mile from--

He notices Curtin is distracted, staring off.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Sir?

CURTIN

Who is that?

EDWARD
 (looking around)
 Who, sir?

CURTIN
 That woman over there. She hasn't
 stopped staring at me since we
 reached the square.

Curtin's POV: a stoic young woman with a fierce gaze stares
 back at him from across the square as people mill about.

This is ABIGAIL WILLIAMS (late 20s).

EDWARD
 (dismissive)
 Oh, don't mind her, sir. That's
 just Miss Abigail. '*The Mad Widow*.'
 She lives alone up on the hill.

Abigail's stare never breaks. It's more than unsettling.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 (snapping him out of it)
 Come. She'll do you no harm.

As Curtin is led away, he glances back once more...

She's still watching him.

CUT TO:

EXT. COOKE'S FARM - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A sprawling farm on which AILING LIVESTOCK bleat and moan.

Edward leads Curtin across the farm toward the BARN, where a
 man leans over a WHIMPERING SHEEP DOG.

EDWARD
 Mr. Cooke.

MR. COOKE (50s) stands and takes off his hat. He is a simple
 and tired farmer with a defeated air.

MR. COOKE
 They're dying.
 (looking to the field)
 More and more by the day.
 (then, to Curtin)
 They say you're a specialist.

CURTIN

I believe I can be of service.

Mr. Cooke, like almost everyone else in Salem, sizes Curtin up with that trademark incredulity.

MR. COOKE

Aye. Come, then. There's something I should show you.

He leads them around the barn, where they run into a shy young woman, equally simple but youthful with a rough beauty.

This is SUSANNAH SHELDON (mid-20s).

MR. COOKE (CONT'D)

(to Curtin)

Ah, this is my house girl, Susannah.

(To Susannah)

Susannah, Doctor...

CURTIN

Curtin.

(extending a hand)

Pleased.

Susannah doesn't meet many new people. She's bashfully quiet.

MR. COOKE

Join us, I was just about to show Dr. Curtin the barn.

He nods for the others to follow him, pulling the barn door wide. But Susannah stands still, scared to enter.

MR. COOKE (CONT'D)

(forcefully)

Come now...

Taking a breath, she slowly follows them in.

INT. BARN - DAY

Mr. Cooke leads them past several WORK TABLES and PILES OF GRAIN to the corner of the barn.

MR. COOKE

They come every year around this time. With the harvest. But this year, there are hundreds of them.

CURTIN
 Hundreds of what?

They reach the corner, where Mr. Cooke pulls back a heavy burlap blanket to reveal FOUR LARGE IRON CAGES...

...TEEMING WITH RATS.

They squeal and claw, climbing atop one another. The ones at the bottom, clearly dead.

MR. COOKE
 I burn them every week, but more
 keep coming. Like locusts.

Susannah takes a large step back.

SUSANNAH
 (to Curtin and Edward)
 Sorry. I'm just deathly afraid of
 those... *things*.

EDWARD
 (just as shaken)
 Not too fond of them myself.

Curtin looks to Cooke for an explanation.

MR. COOKE
 Betty's fallen ill. Now the animals
 are getting sick...
 (then)
 They say the plague in Europe was
 caused by rats. Did you see much of
 the Black Death in London, Curtin?

CURTIN
 (staring at the cages)
 More than I'd have liked to.

MR. COOKE
 Might this be what's causing this
 affliction, sir?

Curtin thinks for a beat. Then, standing:

CURTIN
 There's only one way to tell.
 (then, to Cooke)
 I'll need to inspect the dead ones.

Off Cooke's look --

TIME CUT:

CLOSE ON a hand, grabbing a DEAD RAT from a PILE of several others. As we pull back, we find Curtin sitting at a table, his utility bag open, SURGICAL TOOLS laid out.

Curtin slices the rat down the center, quickly inspects it, then tosses it like a peeled potato into a bucket on the floor before grabbing another.

The others look on, stunned.

MR. COOKE

What is that you're doing, Doctor?

CURTIN

(never breaking rhythm)
There's a school of anatomists,
inspired by Da Vinci, who believe
it important to inspect the inside
of the body as well as the outside.

Susannah, pale as a ghost, puts a hand over her mouth.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

(readying another rat)
Sometimes the dead are able to
provide answers for the living.

Curtin pokes the insides of a rat, lifting organs and pushing away flayed skin.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

(slightly disappointed)
Strange.

MR. COOKE

What's strange?

CURTIN

(puzzled)
These rats aren't sick.
(then, showing)
Look here. The lungs. If they'd
been infected, they would be yellow
and swollen.

Mr. Cooke leans closer.

CLOSE-UP: Curtin's hand reaches into the mound of rats when --

SCREEEECH!! A LARGE RAT suddenly jumps from the presumably dead pile! It startles everyone, including Curtin, charging across the table until --

SLAM! Mr. Cooke stabs it to the table with a LARGE KNIFE.

And with that, Susannah is finished.

SUSANNAH

Excuse me.

She rushes off, nearly vomiting. Curtin recovers from the scare quickly. Edward *doesn't*, looking even more queasy.

CURTIN

(rising)

But there must be an explanation.

He paces over to the CAGES, staring at them for a long beat, when something else catches his eye...

CURTIN (CONT'D)

That barley over there.

Cooke turns to the LARGE PILE OF GRAIN along the wall.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Is that what you've been feeding the animals?

MR. COOKE

Aye, sir. And we sell to the baker as well.

Curtin kneels to see that MOLD has formed on the damp pile.

CURTIN

Well, this might be your first problem, Mr. Cooke. Rancid grain can cause many illnesses, including dementia. Illnesses that can spread. I'll have to consult my research, but this could be a factor in Miss Hubbard's sickness.

(then, standing)

Tell me, do you wash your hands before eating meals?

Cooke just stares at him, confused.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

You know, in Europe, the Hebrews have been accused of starting the Black Death, because while everyone around them fell ill and spread their disease, the Hebrews stayed healthy.

(MORE)

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Turns out, it wasn't any curse or black magic, but simply the fact that their tradition made them cleanse their hands before every meal. See, the cleanliness and resistance go hand in hand.

MR. COOKE

Still sounds like a curse to me.

CURTIN

Just science.

(adding)

Try it for yourself. I suspect you'll see a difference. If I'm wrong, you've lost only the dirt on your hands.

Curtin smiles, grabs his bag, and exits. Edward follows, more than impressed.

Off Cooke, confused and suspicious --

EXT. COOKE'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

At far end of the farm, Curtin and Edward pass Susannah again, hanging laundry. Curtin tips his hat.

As they reach the main road, they turn to see THICK BLACK SMOKE rising beyond the barn.

POV: In the distance, Mr. Cooke empties a CAGE OF RATS onto a SMOLDERING FIRE. He looks back for a moment, then slowly drags the cage inside.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: Pages of an old ANATOMY BOOK are thumbed through. GRISLY ILLUSTRATIONS of people with various diseases.

INT. ANNA'S INN - PARLOR - DAY

At the parlor of the inn, Curtin sits at a table, several books splayed out before him. He looks intently for something specific.

Edward reads a similar book nearby, fascinated by the dreadful images. A beat, then:

CURTIN

Discourse on Disease.

EDWARD
Sir?

CURTIN
(tapping his book)
Has a spine like this. Top shelf.

EDWARD
(getting it)
Yes, sir.

Edward scoots from his chair, heads upstairs as Anna enters the parlor, placing FOOD on the table.

ANNA
Can I get you anything else?

CURTIN
I don't have much of an appetite
when I'm doing my work.

She spots a hideous image of a malnourished woman on the page.

ANNA
Nor would I, I suppose.

Curtin flips the page from her view, apologetically. Goes back to reading...

ANNA (CONT'D)
It's about Betty, isn't it?

CURTIN
(coming upon something)
Just a moment.

Anna goes silent as Curtin stops on an image of HUMAN INTESTINES. He studies it a moment, before closing the book.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
I'm afraid we must be on our way,
Miss Downing. I do apologize.
(then, calling out)
Edward?

EXT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

We find Edward in Curtin's Room. He pulls open drawers, checks shelves, searching for something -- even with Curtin's book already under his arm. *Odd...*

Finally, he moves to leave, but something catches his eye on the way out -- Curtin's UTILITY BAG. He starts to rifle through it, sifting through objects we can't see, when --

CURTIN (O.S.)
Looking for something else?

Startled, Edward spins to find Curtin in the doorway.

EDWARD
Dr. Curtin. I was just--

CURTIN
(with a smile)
It's quite all right, Edward.
Curiosity is what sets apart the
brighter minds from the rest, no?

Edward's nerves are immediately put at ease.

EDWARD
Yes, sir. I'm-- I'm sorry, sir.

CURTIN
Don't be. Here.

Curtin steps past Edward, opening the bag wider to reveal dozens of instruments of science. Lenses, scalpels, etc.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
Simply tools of the trade.

EDWARD
It's all just so fascinating.

CURTIN
I'm glad you share my enthusiasm.
Come. Let's put it to work.

Off Curtin, tapping what he found in his book --

EXT. HUBBARD HOUSE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

CURTIN (O.S., PRE-LAP)
Malnutrition. Fevers.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Book in hand, Curtin addresses Judge Morrow and Dr. Griggs, reading from a particular page.

CURTIN

Bleeding from the eyes and gums.
 (handing them the book)
 All signs point to grain fever, an
 infection of the stomach, most
 likely caused by rotted grain.
 Rancid food can be worse than
 poison, especially if it goes
 untreated.

DR. GRIGGS

But if the grain is diseased, why
 is no one else getting sick?

CURTIN

Perhaps it's not the grain alone.

As Griggs is about to object further, Judge Morrow holds up
 his hand, tempering him.

JUDGE MORROW

What should we do, doctor?

CURTIN

Keep her cool. Regulate her diet.
 No grain, nothing from the farm,
 and plenty of water. It will help
 dilute the sickness.

JUDGE MORROW

Yes, doctor.
 (then)
 And she will recover?

In the bedroom nearby, we glimpse Mercer through the doorway,
 sitting at Betty's side while she sleeps.

CURTIN

Time will tell.

Off Mercer, looking at his fiancée, hoping Curtin's right --

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - DAY

Thomas, the boy we met at the town square, playfully runs
 down a SMALL ROAD with his new SPYGLASS. We follow him as he
 skips toward a particular house --

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

-- and into a modest living room, where he's cut off by his
 mother, MARY WALCOTT (30s). She charges in from the kitchen.

MARY
 (angrily)
 Thomas!

Stern and traditional, hair pulled back tight, Mary need not say a word to frighten Thomas. But does anyway.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Where have you been? I've told you
 not to play where I can't see you!
 (spotting the spyglass)
 What is that in your hand?

THOMAS
 Nothing...

MARY
Thomas. Give it to me.

Thomas sheepishly offers the SPYGLASS. She instantly snatches it and snaps it shut.

MARY (CONT'D)
 No son of mine will toy with one of
 the Devil's instruments. The Lord
 sees you, you know.
 (then, watchfully)
 Run along, now. And stay in the
 yard, do you understand?

Thomas puts his head down, shuffles back outside.

Clearly, superstition runs deep in Salem.

INT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - EVENING

Anna enters Curtin's room carrying a tray of tea. He turns from his studies.

ANNA
 Sorry to disturb you. It's cold
 this evening. Thought you'd like a
 cup of warm tea.

CURTIN
 No, you're not disturbing me at
 all. Thank you.

She sets down the tray, pours the kettle with care.

ANNA

Please forgive me if I'm out of turn, Doctor, but, may I ask you a question?

CURTIN

Of course.

ANNA

People are starting to talk about Betty Hubbard. That's why you're here, isn't it? Has something *happened* to her?

(off his look)

Something more than a sickness, I mean...

CURTIN

Did someone tell you that?

ANNA

Well, it is why you're here, isn't it? To find what's wrong with her.

CURTIN

That much is true. And I plan to do so. But rumors of anything else are -- well, they're just that. Rumors.

ANNA

Right. Well, I think it's very kind of you to come here. Helping a poor girl in a small port town like--

She WINCES, feeling a jab of pain from her stomach.

CURTIN

(assisting her)

Are you all right?

ANNA

Sorry, yes, I'm fine. It's just... I've been feeling these aches the past few weeks...

CURTIN

May I?

He gestures to her belly. Off her approval, his hand touches her stomach and he examines her. The feel of a man's touch sends a charge through Anna.

Curtin places his other hand on the small of her back.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Is this okay?

She straightens her back, looking straight ahead.

ANNA

Yes.

Curtin then stands in front of her, and softly places both hands beneath her chin. Nothing more than a lymph-node inspection, but to a Puritan woman...

CURTIN

And this?

She finally looks him in the eye. Nods.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Your heart's beating fast.

She looks down, sheepishly. Curtin finally drops his hands.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Perhaps discomfort from carrying child.

ANNA

Dr. Griggs gave me this for the pain.

From her waist-pocket, she pulls out the bottle of elixir. Curtin studies it, giving it a quick sniff--

CURTIN

(reeling from the scent)

Well, I'd hate to disagree with the good Doctor, but this won't do you any good at all. Here...

He rifles through his luggage, producing a cylindrical GLASS JAR filled with DRIED HERBS.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

An herb, from South America. Too much of it is known to be toxic, but a little bit in your tea, and it relieves about any pain you could have.

*

He carefully crushes a leaf between his fingers and dusts it over the cup of tea.

She hesitantly sips... it's not that bad.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Here. Take it each night, just a bit, like that, and you'll feel better in no time.

He hands her the jar.

ANNA

Thank you, Doctor. I'm grateful you're here.

Curtin nods appreciatively as she exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUBBARD HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Later. It's a cold evening. Betty Hubbard's house, adorned with crosses, looks even more haunting in the dark.

Through one of the bedroom windows, a candle glows.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Chambermaid and Slave Woman, Ebetha, enter the candlelit bedroom to the steady sound of LABORED BREATHING.

They approach the bed to find Betty in a catatonic state, thick ropes hugging her down to the mattress.

Eyes closed, Betty winces and a tear rolls down her cheek. Up close, we realize *it's a drop of blood*.

CHAMBERMAID

Poor angel.

As the Chambermaid prepares a cloth, Ebetha grabs a water dish... but quickly notices:

The sound of the breathing has stopped.

The Chambermaid notices as well. They look to each other. Ebetha is still too afraid to go near.

CHAMBERMAID (CONT'D)

(leaning over her)

Betty?

She nudges Betty gently, growing concerned.

CHAMBERMAID (CONT'D)

Betty, darling?

She leans down, dangerously close, listening for breathing. Betty lies still, growing noticeably pale.

CHAMBERMAID (CONT'D)
 (rising, to Ebetha)
 Get Mr. Mercer. She's not--

Suddenly, Betty SNAPS up in her bed before she's yanked back like a pitbull feeling the grip of its chain.

Ebetha drops the water dish. The Chambermaid SCREAMS --

But with one more thrust, Betty RIPS the ropes from the bedposts and lunges at the Chambermaid.

SMASH! She slams her into the mirror, then to the ground.

CHAMBERMAID (CONT'D)
 Help! Help me!

Pinning the Chambermaid down, Betty leans in and whispers, in a chilling voice:

BETTY
 It's already begun!

BOOM! Mercer bursts in and pulls Betty off. She violently COUGHS UP BLOOD and slumps to her side.

Mercer pulls her in close, desperate to bring her back.

MERCER
 Betty?
 (panicking)
 Betty!

But it's too late. Her bleeding eyes roll back in her head.

She's gone.

The Slave Woman and Chambermaid look on, shocked, as Mercer cradles Betty in his arms, weeping in disbelief.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

The sound of CHURCH BELLS.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

It's a cold, stark morning. Dozens of MOURNERS dressed in black surround the humble coffin of Betty Hubbard.

Among them, several familiar faces: Anna, Griggs, Abigail the Widow, and of course...

Mercer, red-eyed and angry, staring daggers at Curtin, who bows his head in respect while Reverend Parris prays:

REVEREND PARRIS

Where means of grace cease, where
nothing defiles. Where there is no
grief, nor sin, pining sickness or
consuming fears. Where I need no
more to fast or pray or weep or be
tempted. Oh Lord, may I arrive.

Then, off his nod, the crowd disperses. Somber and silent.

Curtin remains behind, staring at the grave of the woman he couldn't save in time.

REVEREND PARRIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Tragic, isn't it?

He looks to find Reverend Parris.

CURTIN

I had just visited her. She was
ill, but never would I have
thought...
(then)
If only I'd had more time with her.

Parris regards him, coldly.

REVEREND PARRIS

Well. You did what you could.

Silence as Curtin looks off to the MOURNERS, gathering outside the church. Curtin watches them for a beat...

CURTIN

I still have yet to see the inside
of your church. Was I mistaken to
believe Miss Hubbard's funeral
would be held within?

REVEREND PARRIS

Empty pageantry. A sinful tradition
of Catholicism. We Puritans live
and die with simplicity and
dignity. We are buried the same
way.

(then)

Dignity is something we need to
hold onto in these times.

Parris starts to walk toward the church. Curtin follows.

CURTIN

(re: church)

May I come visit on a less mournful day?

REVEREND PARRIS

You're as welcome as any in the church, Doctor, but I should let you know now: I was not in agreement with those who summoned you. In fact, I advised against it.

(with a hint of animosity)

Good intentions aside, I believe you foolish to tamper with forces you don't understand.

CURTIN

You believe Miss Hubbard's death unearthly?

REVEREND PARRIS

Well, like most concerns these days, my opinion hardly seems to matter much. Salem may be changing, but my conviction remains. This town has had a curse upon it since the day we settled. And only God himself has the power to lift it.

They stop at the church grounds. Curtin studies him. The embodiment of Old Salem. A man as faithful as he is resolute.

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)

Do you believe yourself more powerful than the Lord, Doctor?

CURTIN

I should hardly think so.

REVEREND PARRIS

Then you're as helpless as the rest of us.

*

Before Curtin can say any more --

MERCER (O.S.)

What did you do to her?

Curtin turns to see MERCER emerging from the crowd, walking toward him with intensity.

CURTIN
 (respectfully)
 I tried to help her. She was very
 ill.

MERCER
 All I know is that you saw her, and
 now she's dead. Simple as that.

CURTIN
 I understand you're upset.

MERCER
 You're not needed here in Salem,
 Doctor. With your blasphemous talk.
 And your cursed trinkets. You're
 not needed, and not welcome.

With this, he leans close, YANKS Curtin's magnifying glass
 from his chain -- and CRUSHES it under his boot.

In the face of Mercer's pure ignorant hatred, all Curtin can
 say is:

CURTIN
 I'm sorry for your loss.

And with that, he walks away. Mercer remains, dominant and
 proud. The crowd takes it all in. As does Anna.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Down the road, Anna catches up to him.

ANNA
 Dr. Curtin.

Curtin looks up, surprised to see her. Before he can speak--

ANNA (CONT'D)
 Back there. That -- that was grief
 talking. You mustn't listen.

CURTIN
 No... he's right.

With nothing more to say, Curtin heads back. Anna watches him
 go.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Mary returns from the funeral to find young Thomas sitting by himself, spared from the day's grief.

But he sees it in his mother.

THOMAS

Are you all right, Mum?

And suddenly, the stern woman we met earlier is gone. She looks at her son, softened by his innocence.

MARY

(kneeling down)

You know all I want is to protect you, right? Protect you from the world. From change.

Thomas stares back, curious, not understanding.

MARY (CONT'D)

But maybe change is good sometimes. After all, it can be quite troublesome going back to old ways.
(then)
Here.

She walks to the mantle to produce the SPYGLASS she confiscated earlier and gives it back to him.

MARY (CONT'D)

(with a warm smile)

Go out and find something beautiful in this world.

Thomas lights up and happily runs off.

CLOSE ON Mary, a good mother and a worried soul. She kneels down and begins to load firewood into the hearth.

INT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - EVENING

At the inn, Curtin packs his belongings by candlelight as dusk sets in outside. A knock at the door interrupts him, and he looks to find Judge Morrow at the threshold.

JUDGE MORROW

May I?

(off Curtin's welcome)

I wanted to talk to you before you left in the morning.

CURTIN
Of course. Please.

JUDGE MORROW
I wish you'd had more time with poor Betty. But as I said before, we need to know what is happening. And how it's happening. And how to stop it if it comes again. Things are getting worse. Not just Betty. The livestock, the dogs. Grain growing rancid. I'm afraid that if you leave, our hopes of finding an answer leave with you.
(beat)
Can I persuade to stay?

Off Curtin, moved by the Judge's plea --

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The dwindling fire from Mary's hearth, slowly dying down.

It's night, and Mary is bundled in a HEAVY CLOAK, placing bread and fruit into A PICNIC BASKET resting on the table.

Her HUSBAND (Thomas's Father) enters.

MARY'S HUSBAND
Mary? What are you doing?

MARY
(tying her hood)
I thought I'd be the one to go tonight.

MARY'S HUSBAND
But, Mary, I'd--

MARY
Your back's not getting any better, and you need it for work. You needn't be trotting through the woods on a horse all night.

MARY'S HUSBAND
But the cold outside. It's unforgiving tonight.

She smiles and gives him a reassuring kiss on the cheek.

MARY

Please, get your rest.

Before he can argue further, she grabs the BASKET and heads --

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

-- outside, where her HORSE is tied to the post. The frigid air instantly hits her, and she pulls her cloak tighter.

Looking at the full moon, she pets her horse gently.

MARY

(to the horse)

Good girl.

With a foot in the stirrup, she pulls herself up and we --

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - EVENING

Inside the church, Reverend Parris lights a few modest candles as he talks patiently to someone off-screen.

REVEREND PARRIS

Remember, no one else knows what you've been tasked with. So, tell me... What have you found?

Reveal EDWARD, sitting in the first pew, hat in hand.

EDWARD

There's nothing, Reverend. Honest.

CONSTABLE WALKER (O.S.)

There's always something.

We realize Walker is standing nearby. Edward looks uneasy.

EDWARD

I swear, nothing is out of sort, sir. He even let me look through his studies.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Everyone has secrets, boy. You're not looking thoroughly enough.

*

EDWARD

(to Parris)

He's... a good man.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)
(adding, with respect)
A smart man.

Parris looks to the intimidated boy, then to Walker.

REVEREND PARRIS
Well. Be careful. The tree of
knowledge serves a bitter fruit.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The sound of hooves CLOPPING. On horseback, Mary makes her way deeper and deeper down a wooded path, so far that we can't see the beginning or end of it.

It's foggy. Cold. Haunting. As she rides, lantern dangling by her side, she hears a FAINT SOUND: *a branch, snapping?*

She stops the horse. Listens.

MARY
(calling out)
Hello?

Nothing. She stares into the thick fog, seeing the tiniest swirls of motion in the distance. Probably imagined.

MARY (CONT'D)
(voice trembling)
Is someone out there?

After a silent standoff, the horse starts up again, slowly wading through the cold fog. A moment, then --

CRACK! CRACK-CRACK! From behind her.

The horse whinnies to a halt as she spins it around and raises her LANTERN.

CLOSE IN ON Mary's face as she stares out, frozen in fear by whatever she sees.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anna stirs in bed, asleep, when suddenly, a slight CREAKING wakes her.

She opens her eyes to find the SILHOUETTE OF A MAN, watching her from the doorway. But it doesn't frighten her in the least.

Instead, she sits up, almost under a spell.

The Man steps closer, still in the shadows, standing at the foot of the bed.

Using the crook of his finger, he pulls the covers toward him, revealing Anna in her nightgown: not pregnant.

We realize we're in Anna's recurring dream.

Wordlessly, the Silhouette climbs onto the bed as Anna *pulls open her nightgown*, revealing herself to him. Her breath trembles. Her chest rises and falls as she feels his touch.

The faceless man kisses her exposed stomach, then chest, then grips her with force as she passionately rises and --

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

GASP! She wakes up, breathing heavily. We don't know if it's a fantasy or the memory of an affair, but it's clear: she feels ashamed of the thoughts.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - MORNING

A new day in Salem. Various people tend to their duties.

Young Thomas plays around the edge of the woods with his spyglass, carefree.

SPYGLASS POV: We see various sights. A crow in the trees, the town in the distance. And then, through the treeline...

A pale dress, flapping on the ground in the cold breeze.

Thomas adjusts the sight to a CLOSER POV: We see a woman, lying face down in the dirt. Thomas lowers the Spyglass, a horrified look on his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Several TOWNSPEOPLE have gathered in the woods. At their center, Curtin leans over MARY'S BODY, inspecting. Edward stands at his side. Mary's Husband is being consoled nearby.

Constable Walker stands with his men, watching with scrutiny. His long black coat flaps loudly in the wind.

CONSTABLE WALKER
So you're a detective now, too,
Curtin?

EDWARD
(since Curtin isn't
answering...)
We have orders from Judge Morrow,
Constable, granting us--

CONSTABLE WALKER
I know my business, boy.

He stares the sheepish Edward back into silence.

With a gentle touch, Curtin presses various parts of Mary's body, *indecently* in the eyes of those watching.

He slowly lifts the leg of her skirt to the audible gasp of the crowd. This is now bordering sacrilege. He drops it back.

CURTIN
What was she doing alone in the
woods at night?

He bends his head to stare into her open eyes.

CONSTABLE WALKER
(after an annoyed moment)
Her sister Rebecca lives in a cabin
across the hollow. Isolated.
(explaining)
Consumption of the lungs. Dreadful
thing. Mary and her husband have
been sliding her meals under the
door each night.

As Curtin listens, he inspects Mary's bleeding fingernails, and the clawed earth around her body.

Then, a WHINNY as Mary's HORSE is dragged into frame by a YOUNG LAWMAN. It struggles, shivering and frightened.

YOUNG LAWMAN
Constable Walker. I found her up
the road. She's in shock, sir. May
have to put her down if she doesn't
calm.

Constable Walker approaches the horse. When he tries to hold its reins, it BUCKS and KICKS violently.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Indeed. Poor girl saw something she didn't like.

He turns to find Curtin still transfixed by Mary's body.

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)

(now impatient)

Well, Curtin? You're here for your opinion, so before this turns into a bigger spectacle than it is, I suggest you give us one--

CURTIN

Her legs are broken.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Well, she did fall from a horse...

CURTIN

No... This was no fall. Look. Here.

Curtin exposes Mary's leg to the thigh, to the murmur of the crowd. He touches her ankle...

CURTIN (CONT'D)

And here... And *here*--

...her shin, her knee, her...

CONSTABLE WALKER

That's enough.

CURTIN

(rising)

Both her legs, broken again and again, all the way up. Almost through the skin. No fall would be so exacting in its injury.

CONSTABLE WALKER

So what are you saying? Someone bludgeoned the poor girl's legs and left her here to freeze to death?

Curtin wishes he had a reasonable explanation, but doesn't.

He looks at Mary's body one more time. Then, to the toppled PICNIC BASKET on the ground.

CURTIN

We should bring the food to her
sister. She deserves to know what
happened.

Off Constable Walker, not exactly enthused...

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP: A hand KNOCKS loudly against a door.

EXT. REBECCA'S CABIN - DAY

A decaying cabin, practically hidden by trees in the deep woods of Old Salem. Constable Walker knocks once more, as Curtin, Edward, and the Young Lawman watch from nearby.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Goody Truman?

(off the silence)

Rebecca, it's Constable Walker. I
come with news.

Still nothing. He now POUNDS on the door, to no avail.

Curtin tries to peer into the side window. It is blocked by thick cloth from inside.

CURTIN

Could be she's unable to speak.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Could be a lot of things, Doctor.
But you of all people should know
what consumption can do to a man.
We don't go in, and she doesn't
come out. It's the only way.

Constable Walker starts to walk away when Curtin steps past.

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)

Dr. Curtin--

Curtin tries the door himself. It budes, but...

CURTIN

It's stuck.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Count it a blessing. Let us go,
before--

Impatient, Curtin puts a handkerchief to his face and --

INT. REBECCA'S CABIN - MAIN ROOM - DAY

-- *WHAM!* From the force of Curtin's shoulder, the door swings wide, flooding the cramped, dim space with much-needed sunlight. Dust hangs, shimmering in the stale air.

Curtin slowly enters, floorboards creaking under his feet.

EXT. REBECCA'S CABIN - SAME TIME

Constable Walker and the Lawman back away to safety. But Edward looks like a puppy compelled to follow its master.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Don't do it, son.

But Edward steels himself, grabs a handkerchief, and enters.

Constable Walker, not about to be made a coward by some school boy, begrudgingly follows Edward inside.

INT. REBECCA'S CABIN - MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Edward joins Curtin, who surveys his surroundings.

Walker slowly lags behind, an abhorrent look on his face.

CURTIN

Rebecca?

Silence. Eerie silence.

They walk through the main room, staring at a life suspended in time: an unused stove, dust-covered furniture. At the back of the cabin, Curtin pushes open a door to reveal --

INT. REBECCA'S CABIN - BEDROOM - DAY

-- the bedroom. With several ragged cloths on the windows, it is almost completely lightless.

Not two steps in, though, Curtin stops. There's a noise.

A slow but steady *pat-pat-pat... something dripping.*

CURTIN

(softer now)

Rebecca?

After a tense beat, he walks to the window, and RIPS the cloth away. As light filters in, Edward leaps back, startled.

EDWARD

Oh, dear mercy...

We follow his gaze upward, where we find:

REBECCA, crudely pinned to the ceiling by a PITCHFORK. Blood runs down the handle and drips to the floor below.

Instantly pale, Edward backs to the doorway, nearly bumping into Walker as he approaches.

CONSTABLE WALKER

(looking up, sickened)

God in Heaven.

Curtin, gathering himself, steps slowly toward her, handkerchief pressed tightly. So close, his feet nearly touch the POOL OF BLOOD on the floorboards.

He looks up, his fingertips reaching for the body when --

SLAM! Her body comes crashing toward us!

Curtin jumps backward. Edward tries to gather himself. And for once, Walker finally looks shaken as well.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

The rumblings of a PACKED TOWN HALL die down as Judge Morrow SLAMS his gavel.

JUDGE MORROW

Silence! Order here!

At the front of the hall, Curtin sits among the ELDERS at a long table, seeing the panic on the townspeople's faces.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)

We are all shocked by the tragedies that befell our friends and neighbors. But we must not fall into hysteria.

(then)

I've asked Dr. Curtin here for his insight. I think it fair to hear what he has to say.

(gesturing)

Dr. Curtin...

Curtin rises to address the crowd. Among them we see all the familiar faces, including Susannah and Abigail.

CURTIN

I understand you are all
frightened. And you've every reason
to be. But we mustn't allow the
deaths of these women to seize our
imagination.

The crowd ERUPTS in confusion and protest.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

(yelling over them)

Strange as these happenings are,
there is a logical explanation for
them. And I will bring it to light,
I assure you.

VILLAGER #1

Logic? You think there's logic to
whatever's doing this?

CURTIN

Or *whoever* is doing this. Yes.

VILLAGER #2

(almost laughing)

Whoever? And what of Betty Hubbard?
Surely no man did that to her!

We catch Mercer, staring down in anger...

CURTIN

Miss Hubbard showed symptoms of
several illnesses--

VILLAGER #3

And Rebecca, in her cabin! 'Would
take ten men to have such strength--

The others rumble LOUDLY in approval, overwhelming Curtin.
Judge Morrow POUNDS his gavel to no effect until --

ANNA (O.S.)

(shouting)

Enough!

A sudden silence as all heads turn to find Anna in the back.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Let him finish. He's trying to help
us.

Curtin gives her an appreciative look. Anna nods. The
others turn back to the front.

CURTIN

All I'm saying is that we'll get nowhere blaming curses, or putting our faith in superstitions.

We see Reverend Parris, looking on with disapproval from the Elders table.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

First, we need to find a connection. These three women. Is there something they had in common?

Everyone in the hall exchanges grim, knowing looks.

Off Curtin, wondering what he's missing --

CUT TO:

A hand retrieves a LARGE, DUSTY BOOK from a high shelf, and we find ourselves --

INT. JUDGE MORROW'S CHAMBERS - DAY

-- in the modest chambers of Judge Morrow. Curtin stands across from him as he places the book on his desk with a strange reverence.

From nearby, Reverend Parris observes in silence.

JUDGE MORROW

These are the documents, in full. Everything related to the trials fifteen years ago. Nineteen men and women were executed, found guilty of witchcraft. More imprisoned. Originally, there were ten accusers. All of them young girls. Mary Walcott, her sister Rebecca, and Miss Betty Hubbard were among them.

Curtin starts to see where this is going...

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)

Fate has not been kind to these girls. Two of the other accusers have already died of accident, years ago. Another, Mercy Lewis, moved to Charlestown and was killed during a tribal attack on the village. Another two fell to illness.

Curtin looks to Reverend Parris, who gazes back stoically.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)
And now, three more.

Parris finally speaks, spelling it out coldly:

REVEREND PARRIS
The girls of the Witch Trials are
dying, one by one.

JUDGE MORROW
There are only two left.

REVEREND PARRIS
Do you believe in curses now, Dr.
Curtin?

Curtin takes this all in.

JUDGE MORROW
(staying on course)
I believe you've met one of the
girls already. Susannah Sheldon.

CURTIN
The girl from Mr. Cooke's farm.

Morrow nods.

JUDGE MORROW
The other, I'm sure you haven't
met. Abigail Williams. Or, as some
have taken to calling her, "The Mad
Widow."

The woman from the square. Curtin remembers...

CURTIN
Yes, I've seen her before.

Curtin soaks in this new information. Then --

CURTIN (CONT'D)
Well, we should begin with the
logical question: who would
benefit?

CONSTABLE WALKER
(defensively)
What are you suggesting?

CURTIN

Constable, surely you have your suspicions. Who stands to gain from the deaths of these women?

He looks directly at Parris, who bristles under his stare.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Well, for one thing, Salem follows old clergy property law, correct? Wouldn't that mean the dowry of Betty Hubbard and the land from Rebecca Truman both go to the church?

REVEREND PARRIS

Be careful, Doctor. These are deep waters you're starting to swim in.

Curtin is exasperated. They're almost suspiciously unhelpful.

CURTIN

Well, the very least we can do is give these two women protection.

(to Judge Morrow)

Can Constable Walker and his men keep vigil over their homes?

REVEREND PARRIS

These girls are beyond protection.

(pointedly, to Curtin)

As I said, Doctor. Forces you don't understand.

Curtin chooses not to argue. Not when lives are at stake.

CURTIN

(to Judge Morrow)

May I borrow these documents?

After a moment, Judge Morrow slides the book toward him.

JUDGE MORROW

Aye. But do treat it with caution. This here is Salem's darkest chapter. Every horrid word of it.

CLOSE ON the BOOK...

SMASH TO:

An IRON LOCK being fastened onto a wooden door. As we pull back, we find ourselves --

EXT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - DAY

-- outside Susannah's Cottage, built on the outskirts of Mr. Cooke's Farm.

Curtin stands with Susannah and Mr. Cooke as a WORKMAN reinforces her door-frame with a SOLID OAK DOOR and several LOCKS. Another begins hammering PLANKS OF WOOD to her windows.

SUSANNAH

Is all of this necessary?

Constable Walker stands nearby, apparently sharing her skepticism. Beside him stands a BURLY GUARD.

CURTIN

I apologize if it seems excessive Miss Sheldon, but you must be protected.

SUSANNAH

Against what? What will locks do? You think a *person* is responsible for these deaths?

CURTIN

We don't know what's responsible. But until we find out, our concern is keeping you as safe as we can.

SUSANNAH

What if I need to leave?

MR. COOKE

Everything you need will be brought to you. It's only temporary, I promise.

Curtin gestures to the BURLY GUARD. Walker speaks up:

CONSTABLE WALKER

(annoyed with Curtin)

Susannah, this is Captain Fulroy. He's been assigned to stand guard through the night.

Susannah turns back, nervous, watching her cottage being turned into a prison. As the worker hammers at the planks,

MATCH CUT TO:

Curtin's hand, gently KNOCKING on a door.

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Curtin stands before a decaying, WEATHER-WORN HOUSE on a gloomy property. It's neighborless save for an OLD STONE WELL near the road. Walker and a GUARD wait behind Curtin. *

We hear shuffling on the other side... but no answer.

CURTIN
(loudly, through the door)
Miss Williams? Abigail? It's Dr.
Curtin. We've seen each other in
town... I need to speak with you.

No answer for a beat, then, the door cracks open, just enough to reveal Abigail's face. She peers out with an untrusting look in her eyes. *

ABIGAIL
I know what you're here to discuss.
But I assure you, there's no use
for it.

CURTIN
(gently)
Miss Williams, a word is all I ask.
We only wish to protect you.

Her fierce eyes look right through Curtin.

ABIGAIL
God will protect me.

With that, she SLAMS the door.

CURTIN
(to Walker, re: Guard)
Have him stand watch all night.

Walker bristles at the command, but ultimately nods to the Guard.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Curtin reads over the SALEM DOCUMENTS at his desk when Anna KNOCKS at the doorway.

CURTIN
(turning)
Anna.

ANNA
May I come in?

CURTIN
(gesturing)
Please.

He closes the infamous book and slides it away. From the look on his face, Anna is a welcome sight at this point.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
I've been meaning to ask if the herbs have been helping?

ANNA
(holding her stomach)
Yes. Remarkably, actually. I feel much better.

But Curtin senses her unease...

CURTIN
And how is everything else?

ANNA
(trying to process)
So many strange things happening.
(not wanting to say it)
It's as if there truly is a curse upon us. And I believe it's taken hold of me as well.

CURTIN
What's troubling you?
(off her reticence)
Whatever it is, you can tell me.

Anna looks into Curtin's kind eyes, apprehensively.

Then, finally mustering the courage --

ANNA
My child... It does not belong to my husband Daniel. He never showed affection to me in that way. The truth is, I've never laid down with him, or *any man*, in my life.

CURTIN
I don't understand.

ANNA
It's true, Doctor. As hard as it is to believe. It's the truth.
(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)
 (then, desperate)
 In a few months, Daniel will
 return, and I'll be shunned. A
 pariah.

Curtin places a comforting hand on her shoulder, but she
 shudders at his touch, still far from feeling reassured.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 (tearfully)
 What will happen to my child?

Curtin studies her a beat, seeing the shame and fear in her
 eyes.

CURTIN
 No harm will come to your child.
 (then)
 I promise.

Off Curtin --

CUT TO:

EXT. COOKE'S FARM - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

It's quiet outside of Mr. Cooke's farm. We can barely make
 out our surroundings under the moonlight --

-- until the glow of a LANTERN illuminates the outside of
Susannah's Cottage.

Through the wet grass, whoever is carrying the lantern is
 stepping closer...

INT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Susannah slips into her nightgown and, sparking a crude flint
 match, lights a SMALL CANDLE by her bed. As she draws back
 the bedsheets --

There's a NOISE from outside. She freezes, startled.

SUSANNAH
 (nervous)
 Hello?

No answer. She steps closer to the door.

SUSANNAH (CONT'D)
 Is someone there...?

Still nothing. Then --

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK! A hand raps on the door. She jumps.

Then, a muffled VOICE from the other side:

VOICE (O.S.)
Susannah. It's me.

We hear heavy BOLTS unlocking, and she opens the door to reveal Mr. Cooke, holding his lantern. The Burly Guard stands beside him.

SUSANNAH
You frightened me.

MR. COOKE
I didn't mean to, child.
(then)
Here. I brought you dinner.

Mr. Cooke hands her a BASKET OF FOOD.

SUSANNAH
(warmly)
Thank you.

The Guard politely tips his hat and makes his way back out to the property.

MR. COOKE
You'll be all right, then? I
promise to come check on you at
first light.

There's a sweetness in the old man we haven't seen before.

SUSANNAH
I'll be fine.

MR. COOKE
Goodnight, then.

Susannah closes the door, bolts the locks, and climbs into bed. Beside her, the small candle continues to burn.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - LATE NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

The Guard sits quietly outside the cottage. Rising, he begins to pace the property, half patrolling, half warming himself.

INT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - SAME TIME

Susannah's candle has melted down further. She lies in bed, fast asleep. The candle flickers once more before dying out. Then, we start to hear something:

Like the rapid patter of nails tapping a desk. Then something else: is that... SQUEAKING?

Through the thinnest bars of moonlight, we're able to make out a shape moving just above Susannah. As it gets closer, we realize what it is:

A RAT, frighteningly large, teetering on the bedpost above her. We can only hope it doesn't crawl down on her...

But it does, landing in her hair. She turns in her sleep.

It puts a foot in her mouth. Finally -- she wakes.

Gathering herself, she sits up in bed, only to realize --

There are RATS everywhere.

They move beneath her blanket. Tangled on the floor. Falling from the rafters...

EXT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - SAME TIME

The Guard, patrolling the grounds, hears Susannah SCREAM from the cabin. He rushes toward the front door.

INT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Susannah throws the covers and stumbles out of bed, scrambling for the door. The rats nip at her heels.

BURLY GUARD (O.S.)
(through the door)
Miss Sheldon, what's wrong?

She yanks at the door -- but the new LOCKS rattle in place. She fumbles with them, desperate to open the door.

SUSANNAH
Help! Help me!

EXT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - SAME TIME

On the other side, the guard pounds and shoulders the door. But it's locked. Strongly reinforced.

BURLY GUARD
Susannah! Unlock the door!

INT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - SAME TIME

But she can't. The rats are biting at her hands, falling from above, climbing from below. She shakes them off, hysterical.

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP... the guard shoulders the door, splitting it but not breaking it.

Desperate, she looks to the CLOSET and races toward it, grabbing her MATCHES, on the way. Stepping over more rats, she yanks the door open and SLAMS herself inside.

INSIDE THE CLOSET:

Susannah sits in complete darkness. Every sound muffled almost to silence, save for her steady panicked breathing.

Then, another sound. The patter of footsteps and a growing hum of tiny *squeaks*.

STRIKE! The glow of a match illuminates the tiny space...

Where a HUNDRED EYES glow green in the match's light.

They tumble from shelves and skitter along the floor, swarming her all at once.

Her SCREAM puts out the flame...

And we hear her get eaten alive.

EXT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - SAME TIME

The Guard pulls at the boarded window planks in vain.

BURLY GUARD
Susannah!

FADE OUT on the guard struggling desperately to get in.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - MORNING

From our view of the harbor, another quiet and peaceful New England morning. But on the streets, Curtin walks briskly, tightening his coat against the cold, Edward by his side.

EDWARD

The others have already been summoned, sir. Mr. Cooke found her this morning...

EXT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - MORNING

They approach Susannah's Cottage on Cooke's farm while various men move about the scene. TWO DEPUTIES empty a LARGE CAGE OF RATS onto a smoking FIRE.

Nearby, Mr. Cooke weeps inconsolably.

Suddenly, Constable Walker cuts Curtin off in his path.

CONSTABLE WALKER

Spare us your theories for the moment, Dr. Curtin.

(re: Mr. Cooke)

Now's not the time.

But Curtin is livid.

CURTIN

What happened?

CONSTABLE WALKER

Well, we're trying to figure that out, aren't we?

Curtin looks to Susannah's Guard, standing nearby. His face, pale with shock.

CURTIN

(approaching Guard)

She was supposed to be guarded every minute. Why wasn't she--

CONSTABLE WALKER

(getting in Curtin's way)

I will not have one of my men's actions called into question, Curtin. It was your *frenzied* security that kept him from saving her life. Sealed her in like a tomb. It's why she couldn't get away from them.

CURTIN

From who?

BURLY GUARD
 (not looking up)
 The rats.

CURTIN
 (looking to Walker)
 What? What happened to her?

CONSTABLE WALKER
 As I said, Doctor. We're looking
 into it.

There's a quiet standoff between the two. Finally --

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)
 Come. See for yourself.

With a self-righteous air, Walker leads Curtin to the
 COTTAGE, where the door has been axed away.

INT. SUSANNAH'S COTTAGE - MORNING

Inside, it's still shadowy from the boarded windows. Walker
 pulls open the closet door, Curtin and Edward look inside.
 Curtin's POV: a bloody SKELETAL FIGURE curled on the closet
 floor. A RAT scurries across.

Constable Walker leans in as they examine the horrific sight.

CONSTABLE WALKER
 She was eaten by them. Alive, from
 the looks of it. Poor thing.
 (adding)
 What an awful way to meet your end.

But Curtin doesn't look up. CLOSE ON the rat, still scurrying
 below. Then, off Curtin, suddenly realizing --

SMASH TO:

INT. JUDGE MORROW'S CHAMBERS - DAY

THUD! Curtin slams the BOOK of Witch Trial documents onto
 Judge Morrow's desk.

Surrounding him: Judge Morrow, Reverend Parris, the rest of
 the Elders, and Constable Walker.

CURTIN
 It's all in here. The deaths, the
 three girls, all accusers. But it
 never made sense. The affliction.
 (MORE)

CURTIN (CONT'D)

The struggle in the woods. The pitchfork. So atrocious, yet strangely specific.

(opening the book)

But then, the rats.

He finds a particular passage...

CURTIN (CONT'D)

February 2nd, 1692. Susannah Sheldon accuses Bridget Bishop of conjuring wild animals to do harm. Birds, snakes... *rats*.

(flipping to another page)

March 13th. Mary Walcott claims that the widowed beggar Margaret Scott confessed to cursing the infirm in the village... *By striking them lame*.

(flipping to another page)

April 6th. Her sister Rebecca accuses Giles Corey of commanding her to sign her soul to the Devil. In her testimony to the court, she says, and I quote: "I would sooner fall on a pitchfork than sign the Devil's Book."

He looks to the Elders, but their reactions are hard to read -- perhaps reluctant to give him the satisfaction of admitting how much sense this makes.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Don't you see? These girls are being punished, *severely, meticulously*. Each in the same manner as they accused others. At the very least, it proves--

REVEREND PARRIS

(sternly)

It proves *nothing*.

All eyes turn to Parris, whose gaze burns into Curtin.

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)

Since the day you've arrived, you've obscured us with your knowledge and derided our faith. But what have you really proven? Only a truth we've all known for fifteen years. That there is a *curse* upon this town, and it's come back again to lay its claim.

His conviction is palpable. The others dare not speak.

CURTIN

You can't be serious. *Someone is deliberately doing this.*

He looks around the room, realizes he's not getting through to them. Then, in a more measured tone --

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Your women are dying. And you know who's next.

(then)

Miss Williams. The Mad Widow. It says here she accused a woman of conjuring fire.

(tapping the page)

Fire, you see? Your warning is right here.

REVEREND PARRIS

We heed your warning. But we put our faith in God.

CURTIN

Miss Williams will need more than your prayers. Unless of course this is exactly what you want.

REVEREND PARRIS

I beg your pardon?

CURTIN

Well, surely the pews of your church will be filled when this town is stirred up to a proper frenzy.

A long, tense beat as Parris seethes. Then --

JUDGE MORROW

(to Constable Walker)

Constable. Make sure you and your men guard Abigail Williams day and night, in shifts. No harm shall come to her while this investigation continues.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Curtin walks through the woods with Abigail, the Mad Widow. She looks tired and noticeably frail.

CURTIN

I want to thank you for finally agreeing to speak with me.

ABIGAIL

I suppose it's no harm at this point.

CURTIN

The Elders have arranged for Constable Walker and his men to protect you.

Abigail stops, guiding his eyes to the ground before them.

ABIGAIL

Look.

They've reached a SMALL GRAVEYARD, overgrown and forgotten.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

This is where they are buried.

Curtin stares at the crude UNMARKED GRAVESTONES.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

The nineteen accused. They were not allowed to lay with the rest of the townspeople.

He listens intently to her rare moment of openness.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

(sober, remembering)

Sarah Wildes. She was hanged, then buried here, alone. Because of me.

Curtin stares back at her, concerned.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Do you know what it means to be marked for your sins? I appreciate your efforts, Doctor, but Salem would be happy to see me go. The Lord as well, I suppose.

CURTIN

You don't look well. Are you ill?

ABIGAIL

I haven't eaten since Betty Hubbard died.

(off his look)

Fasting.

(MORE)

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
 Like Saul in the Good Book.
 (adding)
 You have your methods. I have mine.
 I believe that repentance is the
 only way to salvation.

Far too weary to fight such superstition, Curtin realizes he's not going to reach her.

He looks away, gazing once more at the cross-less graves.

CURTIN
 I find it intriguing that this town
 is named Salem.

She looks to him, curious.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
 The word itself is Greek. The
 Hebrews call it *Shalom*. The Arabs,
Salaam. But in any language, it's
 the same...

He turns, ready to leave.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
 It means peace.

Off Abigail, staring at the graves...

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A light snow settles on the village. At the CHURCH, we watch a large flock of PARISHIONERS as they funnel inside.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Every pew is full beyond capacity. Some even stand in back. Among them, entering quietly, is Curtin.

At the altar, Reverend Parris delivers an impassioned sermon.

REVEREND PARRIS
 O, Lord, give to us in our time of
 dread a deeper repentance. The
 refuge of your wisdom, the comfort
 of your protection.

As he continues, we see a SERIES OF SHOTS:

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

A hammer pounds a nail into a wooden structure. Pull back to reveal a large CYLINDRICAL BARREL on stilts, eight feet off the ground, with a hatch door in its side.

It's a crude puritan WATER TOWER. And it's one of four. Each with a gutter-like chute aimed at Abigail's house.

REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)

*As tragedy befalls us, let us
remember our past. Let us not greet
each other with suspicion, or
divide ourselves with accusations.*

ONLOOKERS stand on the edge of the property, viewing the construction with mistrust.

REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)

*Instead, let us find strength in
each other's protection...*

We see Abigail's yard filled with LAWMEN, bringing water from her well and filling the towers.

REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)

*Let us face the shadow that walks
in darkness, and together, bring
light upon it...*

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Abigail kneels in prayer, when Walker and his Lawmen storm in.

ABIGAIL

Excuse me--!

CONSTABLE WALKER

We'll need all your candles and
flint, Miss Williams. Ordered by
the Judge, for your protection.

QUICK SHOTS of the Lawmen pilfering her drawers, fireplace, stove, grabbing CANDLES, WOOD, and FLINT MATCHES.

ABIGAIL

(protesting in vain)

But...

REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)

*The light of solidarity. The light
of compassion...*

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Outside, with the towers full, a Lawman pulls the hatch to test the water chute. All works properly. He nods.

A final shot of the yard, the four towers, the guards standing by...

Curtin stands by Constable Walker, who oversees it all.

INT. CHURCH - PRESENT

REVEREND PARRIS

The flame lit by the faith in
Almighty God, Who guides us when we
fail to see the path. Amen.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

The congregation echoes the Amen and quietly shuffles out. After a moment, Curtin is the only one who remains.

He approaches Reverend Parris near the altar.

CURTIN

I finally got to visit your church.
That was a lovely sermon.

Parris eyes Curtin for a moment, choosing his words.

REVEREND PARRIS

You think I hold contempt for you.
But I don't. I hold pity.

CURTIN

How so?

REVEREND PARRIS

Because you don't believe in
anything larger than yourself. How
can a man overcome something he
doesn't even believe in?

Curtin looks at him, feeling pity in return. *Another pious man, frightened by what he doesn't know.*

CURTIN

Help me understand. If this were
the Devil... why choose Salem?

REVEREND PARRIS

He's cast his eye on us since the
day we settled.

(MORE)

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)
 Salem is a beacon of devotion. A
 settlement strengthened by God,
 like Damascus and Jerusalem before
 us.

CURTIN
 Well surely, then, in all his
 power, there's a more resounding
 way to make his point.

Parris puts on the patient grin that the wise reserve for the
 young.

REVEREND PARRIS
 People always say they can never
 know God's plan, yet they're always
 so bold as to think they understand
 the intentions of the Devil.
 (then)
 But you'd be a fool not to think
 that the Devil, just like the Lord,
 works in mysterious ways.

Off Curtin, considering this --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANNA'S INN - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Several days have passed. A blanket of snow covers the inn.

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Anna lies on her bed as Dr. Griggs examines her once again.

DR. GRIGGS
 (pressing her stomach)
 Everything seems healthy. Should be
 any day now.

Anna puts on her best smile... but it's not good enough to
 convince Dr. Griggs.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)
 Anna, I've known you since you were
 a child. I can tell when
 something's wrong. What's troubling
 you?

ANNA
 Nothing. It's just--

The truth is on the tip of her tongue. But...

ANNA (CONT'D)

With Daniel gone so long, the burden of carrying this child has been mine alone. I feel like the others look down on me.

DR. GRIGGS

Nonsense, dear girl. Don't confuse concern with pity. And besides, in a few months, your husband will be home, and all these small worries will be far behind you.

He smiles, warmly. Off Anna, far from reassured --

INT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Curtin works at his desk when he hears Dr. Griggs' knocking.

DR. GRIGGS

A moment, Doctor?

CURTIN

(rising)

Dr. Griggs, yes, of course.

DR. GRIGGS

I was checking on Anna only to discover that she'd stopped taking my medication at your behest. *

CURTIN

Well, Doctor, you'd given her --

DR. GRIGGS

I'd given her what was necessary to help her. And you've given her poison instead!

CURTIN

I'm afraid that's where we disagree. My studies have found--

DR. GRIGGS

(growing angry)

Your *studies* don't much matter here, is that clear? This is not some experiment, this is my patient. Someone I care about, whom I've treated since she was born.

(MORE)

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)

So forgive me if I don't want my
medical decisions usurped by some
charlatan when two lives are on the
line.

Curtin thinks it futile to defend his position further.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)

That woman's health is what I care
about, Doctor. Don't you have
enough projects of your own?

Griggs walks out, angry. His medical knowledge may be
lacking, but not his dedication.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S INN - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Later that night, Anna is finishing the last of her chores in
the kitchen. She starts to fold the tablecloth when --

Curtin rounds the corner, heading for the door.

ANNA

Dr. Curtin. You're heading out
late.

CURTIN

I'm going for a walk. It helps me
when I can't sleep.

(then)

You know, if you walk past your
neighbor's farm, there's quite a
lovely view of the harbor.

ANNA

I know it well.

(then, boldly)

Do you mind if I join you?

He senses that she feels trapped inside this house.

CURTIN

Of course not.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANNA'S INN/SALEM VILLAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Outside the inn, Anna carefully closes the door, wraps herself in a heavy cloak, and joins Curtin along a nearby path. Snow falls lightly, smoke rises from chimneys.

After a quiet moment --

ANNA

May I ask you something personal,
doctor?

CURTIN

Of course.

ANNA

You don't believe in God, do you?

He thinks carefully how to answer.

CURTIN

I believe in what I see. I believe
in science, in reason.

(then)

And I believe that's enough.

ANNA

But what about the things reason
cannot answer?

CURTIN

I've yet to come across one.

ANNA

Even in Salem?

That last comments sits with him.

By now, they've reached the end of the path, where a stunning view of the harbor has seemingly crept upon them.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I imagine it's easy for a man of
your background to dismiss all of
it. Curses. Witches. The Devil. You
didn't have to live through the
trials. To experience what we did.

CURTIN

And what was that?

ANNA

Isn't it in those books you read?

CURTIN

What the Elders want me to know,
 sure. But you lived it, correct?
 (truly curious)
 What do you remember?

A beat as Anna looks to the harbor, lost in thought.

ANNA

I was only a child when it
 happened. The rumors spread through
 the town like a wildfire...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SALEM FOREST - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

A densely wooded area. We move through the trees until we see
 a LANTERN'S GLOW in a small clearing ahead.

A DISHEVELED WOMAN walks through with her lantern...

And approaches a SHADOWY FIGURE, dressed entirely in black.

ANNA (V.O.)

The witches, they were accused of
 meeting the Devil in secret, and
 making a pact for powers God never
 gave them...

INT. SHACK - FLASHBACK - DAY

A BOILING POT bubbles as a WEST-INDIAN WOMAN stands over it,
 sprinkling sage into a steaming concoction.

ANNA (V.O.)

Of using unnatural medicines...

INT. PURITAN HOME - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

An OLD WIDOW cradles a BLACK CAT close to her chest as she
 walks through her house. When she reaches her LIVING ROOM --

ANNA (V.O.)

Of manipulating nature...

-- we discover it is filled with DOZENS OF BLACK CATS,
 slinking across the furniture and along the floor.

INT. PURITAN BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

A YOUNG WOMAN plants an OLDER MAN onto his bed. There's a conflicted look in his eyes...

ANNA (V.O.)
Of tempting men from their
marriages.

But he doesn't object when the Young Woman unbuttons her dress and lets it fall to the floor.

INT. CHURCH - FLASHBACK - DAY

REVEREND PARRIS, in his 50s when we first met him, gives a solemn nod to a younger CONSTABLE WALKER and his men.

ANNA (V.O.)
So the Elders rounded up these
women, then more, and more, as
hysteria took over.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - FLASHBACK - DAY

In a series of shots: SEVERAL WOMEN, including those we've just seen, are pulled from their homes by Walker's men.

ANNA (V.O.)
The widows. The unwed. The outcasts
who didn't attend church. The
Elders believed Salem would be
cleansed if these women were gone.

INT. SALEM PRISON - FLASHBACK - DAY

The women are herded together and locked away in JAIL CELLS.

As Constable Walker turns the key and walks away, we CLOSE ON one very distinct-looking woman as she clutches the bars.

She angrily peers out with TWO DIFFERENT-COLORED EYES. One blue, one brown. It's a face we're not likely to forget.

ANNA (V.O.)
And then came the trials.

INT. SALEM COURTHOUSE - FLASHBACK - DAY

The accusers, as LITTLE GIRLS, point and faint in the courtroom.

ANNA (V.O.)
 We were told that if we helped
 convict them, we would be saved.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - GALLOWS HILL - FLASHBACK - DAY

In a series of shots: *SNAP! SNAP! SNAP!* Several of the women we've just seen are dropped from the gallows. An ANGRY MOB looks on, cheering louder and louder.

ANNA (V.O.)
 And Salem would be rid of evil
 forever.

End Flashbacks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - HARBOR - NIGHT

Anna continues staring off at the harbor, lost in her memory.

ANNA
 But we'll never be rid of evil. I
 know that now.

She places a hand over her stomach.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 And my child will be born soon.

Curtin struggles to make sense of what Anna's confiding in him.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 You still don't believe me, do you?
 That I haven't laid down with a
 man. You think anything otherwise
 would be impossible.

CURTIN
 (trying)
 Not impossible. Just... a miracle.

Anna smirks.

ANNA
 Right. A miracle.

She looks off into the harbor again. He looks out with her.

CURTIN

I don't judge you, Anna. In fact, I don't see anyone here who has the right to judge you.

(then)

Come, now. It's cold.

He turns to lead her back to the inn when --

ANNA (O.S.)

There weren't only ten.

CURTIN

(turning back)

I'm sorry?

ANNA

(still looking off)

The girls. The original accusers.

There weren't only ten of them.

(then, turning to him)

There were eleven.

Curtin suddenly realizes what she's saying...

ANNA (CONT'D)

I was nine years old. I gave a private testimony to the judges that my father later paid heavily to have discarded.

(then)

You won't find it in your documents.

CURTIN

(still stunned)

And whom did you accuse?

ANNA

A poor maid who lived alone on the edge of town. She used to frighten us as children.

(then)

I accused her of carrying the Devil's child.

IN A BRIEF CUT: We flash back to our opening scene. At the front of the crowd, YOUNG ANNA stares up at the ACCUSED WITCH at the gallows...

Whom we now reveal is visibly pregnant.

As the two lock eyes, the Lawman forcibly places a hood on the pregnant woman's head, before she plunges through the gallows with a sickening SNAP.

BACK TO THE PRESENT:

ANNA (CONT'D)

(wiping tears)

See, I do believe in God. And I believe in the Devil. And I believe in getting one's just deserves.

Curtin sees her pain, but can't help to ask:

CURTIN

But why now?

ANNA

Why ever? Perhaps the Devil was waiting until we thought we were finally safe.

(then, looking down)

I want to confess, to everyone, but I'm far too afraid. And that makes the shame even worse.

Overwhelmed, Anna's eyes well with tears.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I'm a sinner, Dr. Curtin.

Curtin takes her by the hand and turns her toward him.

CURTIN

We all are.

He wipes a tear from her cheek, leaving his hand there.

They lock eyes for a moment, as if about to fall into a kiss... but Curtin pulls away.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

We should be getting back.

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

At the top of the hill, TWO GUARDS stand watch over Abigail's home. Through a window, pale MOONLIGHT shines in to reveal --

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

-- Abigail, as she enters her bedroom wearing only a ROBE. She approaches a WOODEN CROSS on the wall --

And drops her robe to the floor, revealing her naked body.

But what should be a beautiful figure is instead a scarred and ghastly sight: Badly healed wounds on her back and arms. Ribs, exposed through her starved frame. It's clear she hasn't eaten in weeks.

Somewhat ceremoniously, she kneels before the cross and produces a crude LEATHER SWITCH.

Closing her eyes, she starts reciting The Lord's Prayer...

... punctuated by HARSH LASHES to her own back.

ABIGAIL

Our Father, who art in Heaven--

(CRACK!)

Hallowed be thy name...

(wincing)

Thy Kingdom come...

(CRACK!)

Thy will be done...

As we pull back from this gruesome display, we see an OPEN BIBLE on a table behind her. Its pages softly flutter.

ABIGAIL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(voice trembling)

...on Earth as it is in Heaven.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S INN - LATE NIGHT

It's the dead of night. As quiet as it is outside, every room is hauntingly still...

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

...except Anna's. She tosses in her bed, restless. A long beat, then -- she's wracked with a horrible pain.

She lurches up in bed, wide awake, clutching her stomach. The pain must be excruciating -- *she can barely get out a breath.*

ANNA

Help... Help me...

She kicks the sheets away, desperate to get to her feet -- when the pain hits again, and she collapses to the floor.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 Oh, God...
 (then, calling out)
Doctor-- Doctor Curtin!

We hear his footsteps pounding down the hall.

CURTIN (O.S.)
 Anna?

Dr. Curtin rushes into the room, kneels beside Anna.

ANNA
 Help me, please...

CURTIN
 (feeling her stomach)
 Breathe, Anna. Just breathe.
 (a beat, then)
 This child is coming. Right now.

ANNA
 But, that can't be--

CURTIN
 It is, Anna. Now, I need you to be
 strong for me. Are you ready?

She nods, reluctantly. Curtin positions himself before her.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
 Good. Now... push!

Anna pushes, moaning with unbearable pain. She glances down to notice BLOOD seeping through her dress. She hikes it up.

ANNA
 Oh God! --

CURTIN
 (keeping calm)
 It's okay, Anna. You're okay.
 One more time, *push!*

But as Anna pushes again, we glimpse the skin of her bare stomach: a bony, vertebrate shape stretches and snakes down the center.

Curtin's mouth drops in shock, but Anna is too preoccupied with the pain, blood-stained hand squeezing the bedpost.

A wincing, gut-wrenching SCREAM from Anna until -- She collapses in relief, and we hear the baby's CRIES. *It's over.*

But as she leans forward to look at her child, Curtin stares back in disbelief. Something has gone terribly wrong.

ANNA

What? What is it?

And as Curtin lifts the baby to show her, Anna's eyes go wide in horror.

CLOSE IN ON her piercing SCREAM until --

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

GASP! She jolts awake in her bed. *Only a dream...*

Collecting herself, she quietly rises to notice a dim light flickering from outside. She moves to her window, where she spots a MAN slowly walking toward the inn.

Wrapping herself in a shawl, she enters the --

INT. ANNA'S INN - HALLWAY - NIGHT

-- hallway. She starts to make her way down the stairs... when we hear the FRONT DOOR to the inn open.

Someone is inside.

Growing nervous, she looks back toward Curtin's room, hoping he's still awake -- but his room is dark.

ANNA

(hushed)

Dr. Curtin?

No response. She steels herself, inches closer to the stairs.

A beat, then -- we hear HEAVY FOOTSTEPS creaking on the floorboards below. Anna reels back, cupping her mouth.

Then... she hears them walking up the stairs.

She quickly turns --

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

-- and slips back into her bedroom, softly closing the door behind her before she hides on the other side of the bed.

In the darkness, she listens: the footsteps *THUD-THUD-THUD* down the hall -- finally stopping at her door.

The handle turns. Anna braces herself as the door creaks open, and the soft glow of lantern light invades the darkness. A long, tense beat, then --

DANIEL (O.S.)

Anna?

The fear immediately drops from Anna's face.

ANNA

Daniel?

She rises from behind the bed to see her husband, DANIEL (30s), standing in the doorway. He studies her with tired eyes for a moment... though he's in no hurry to embrace her.

DANIEL

It's been a long time.

She puts a hand over her stomach, almost ashamed.

ANNA

I thought you weren't arriving for months.

DANIEL

Our ship came south from Montauk to avoid a storm. We head out again day after tomorrow. But I heard quite intriguing news from home. And I'm here to see if it's true...

ANNA

Daniel, let me explain --

DANIEL

(growing stern)

Now I realize I haven't been the husband you wanted, Anna, but *this* is how you shame me?

ANNA

Daniel, please --

He inches closer, menacingly.

DANIEL

A child with another man?

(off her silence)

Whose is it?

ANNA
 (shakily)
 You don't understand. It's --
 Things are happening in Salem.

DANIEL
 That much I've gathered...

ANNA
 (crying now)
 Daniel--

DANIEL
Whose?!

ANNA
No one's.

He lunges forward, pinning her against the wall.

DANIEL
 No one's? So you're a whore *and* a
 liar?

ANNA
 (finally asserting
 herself)
 What do you know about me? You
 leave me here all alone like some
 widow. And you'd rather abandon me
 than so much as touch me.

DANIEL
 You want to be touched, do you?

He raises a hand to STRIKE HER, when --

CURTIN (O.S.)
 Enough!

-- he spins to find Curtin standing in the doorway.

DANIEL
 (fuming, staring daggers)
 And who might you be?

CURTIN
 What kind of man strikes a woman
 who's with child?

Daniel laughs proudly, turning to face Curtin properly.

DANIEL
And what happens if I strike you
instead?

CURTIN
I'd be happy to show you.

Curtin isn't the least bit afraid. He steps between Daniel and Anna, never unlocking eyes with his threat.

DANIEL
(re: Anna's stomach)
Protecting your property, are you?

ANNA
Please... He's only a guest...

DANIEL
Of course.

The standoff between the two men is intense. But finally --

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(to Anna)
You've shamed us both.

Daniel slowly walks to the doorway, looking back once more.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I head back out to sea the day
after tomorrow. When I return, I
want you and your filthy sin to be
gone forever.

For the slightest moment, we might feel bad for how much pain and embarrassment he's feeling.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I don't care where.

With that, Daniel exits, leaving Curtin and an overwhelmed Anna standing silent in the glow of the lantern.

He stays by her side as she begins to weep inconsolably.

TIME CUT:

Anna now lies asleep in her bed. Curtin sits nearby, watching her like a protective parent.

CUT TO:

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Various shots of Abigail's house. Most notably, the empty hearth, leaving everything cold and dark.

Abigail sleeps in her moonlit bedroom when a soft COMMOTION stirs her. Two men arguing outside, in the distance.

She sits up. Listens. Two men sound like three now...

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door creaks open as Abigail steps out to see a faint lantern light at the WELL on the edge of her yard.

It's hard to see, but Constable Walker and two of his GUARDS are clearly distracted by something. Wrapped only in a slim coat, Abigail steps onto the snow, curious, when --

CONSTABLE WALKER (O.S.)
Stay back, Miss Williams! Don't
come any closer.

Even more intrigued now, Abigail can't help but approach.

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)
I said back inside with you!

As she walks toward them, she passes two of the WOODEN WATER TOWERS, *creaking* from the strain they bear. She continues.

AT THE WELL:

Walker and his men stand still at the mouth of the stone well, staring at something they don't understand.

STEAM is rising out, clouding the winter air. Then, the echoing sound of water. Boiling.

Walker breaks his concentration to handle Abigail's arrival. But before he can speak, he sees she is mesmerized as well.

ABIGAIL
What is it?

CONSTABLE WALKER
(grabbing her arm)
Miss Williams, I said it's not safe
for you out here--

ABIGAIL
Unhand me! This is my property, you
can't keep me prisoner.

CONSTABLE WALKER
That's precisely what I can do--

GUARD #1
Constable!

His worried tone is enough to stop their quarrel. Walker looks to the young Guard, who simply points to the TOWERS:

Where PLUMES OF STEAM rise, as well.

CONSTABLE WALKER
(to both Guards)
Ring the bells, and get the others.
Now.

The two run dutifully into the darkness, clanging large ALARM BELLS as they head for the main road.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A chain reaction of lookouts begins. A Lawman in the road hears the bells from Abigail's and starts ringing his own...

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

...which we hear in the Town Square, where another Lawman clangs *his* bell. Villagers pour from houses, Edward included.

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

From inside Anna's bedroom, Curtin hears the muffled ALARM BELL. Realizing instantly, he rises from his chair...

BACK TO:

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Constable Walker walks with Abigail to safety, quickly but cautiously, across the snowy yard.

But they stop as they reach TOWERS, rumbling, wood sweating. Walker lifts his lantern for a better look when --

WHOOSH! Glass blows out as the lantern BURSTS INTO FLAMES!

The sleeve of his cloak ignited, Walker drops to the snow.

CONSTABLE WALKER
Miss Walker, run!

Abigail takes off in a panic, but stops to see if Walker's all right. When she sees:

The FLAME from the lantern, snaking atop the snow, moving with a will of its own. A TRAIL OF FIRE in its wake.

ABIGAIL

Dear God...

It begins to crawl toward her. Her eyes go wide.

CONSTABLE WALKER

(extinguishing his sleeve)

Run!

This time, she heeds his advice.

AT THE EDGE OF THE PROPERTY:

A group of VILLAGERS races toward the yard, when from their ranks, hooves clop, and Curtin BURSTS through on horseback.

He races up the hill, his horse leaping the fire.

He passes Walker, glancing to make sure he's okay. When he looks back, Abigail has reached the house.

The trail of fire follows...

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

SLAM! Abigail shoves the door shut, panting for breath in the sudden quiet. Then, almost immediately:

ABIGAIL

(frantic)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name --

Then, as SMOKE begins to curl beneath the doorway, she hears Curtin's voice on the other side:

CURTIN (O.S.)

Abigail! Abigail, can you hear me?!

Backing away slowly, she sees a HOT ORANGE GLOW lining the frame of her door. *It's coming inside...*

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Curtin shoulders the locked door to no avail as flames climb the house. Behind him, Edward and the Villagers arrive to assist.

CURTIN
It won't budge!

The Villagers rush the door as well.

AT THE TOWERS:

A Villager pulls a ROPE to release a flood of water from the Tower's chute door -- but all that comes out is a curl of steam, searing the frigid air. The water has boiled away.

He stares up in disbelief --

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Inside, Abigail turns to face a LARGE CROSS on the opposite wall. Resigned now, she calmly kneels, bows her head...

ABIGAIL
(finishing)
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.
On earth...

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Curtin braces himself for one final push when he looks back:

The end of the fire trail, coming back to life, races straight for the house!

CURTIN
(to Villagers)
Look out!

INT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

ABIGAIL
(finishing)
...as it is in heaven.

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Curtin shoves the other Villagers out of the way of the fire when -- WHOOOSH!!

He and the others are thrown to the ground as Abigail's house is suddenly ENGULFED in flames!

The Villagers shield their faces, but Curtin lies prone on the ground, eyes locked on the roaring flames as they lick the night sky.

A disorienting moment, then...

EDWARD (O.S.)
Dr. Curtin? *Dr. Curtin?!*

He looks up to see Edward kneeling over him.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Are you all right, sir?

But Curtin can't respond. His stare, fixed on the crumbling house. CLOSE ON the reflection of the flames in his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The next day. We look on as Villagers huddle for Abigail's modest funeral. As Reverend Parris says a prayer, a stupefied Curtin catches several looks that say only one thing:

We tried to warn you.

CURTIN (V.O.)
Judge Morrow, despite my greatest effort and most earnest devotion, the events I've witnessed in the village of Salem have left me unable to provide a rational explanation for their cause...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Several Workers shovel and wheelbarrow, clearing the charred remains of Abigail's house.

CURTIN (V.O.)
It is with deep regret that I must resign my position forthwith.

One young man overturns a pile of wreckage to find --

A BIBLE. Covered in soot, but intact. Stopping for a moment, he kneels to pick it up. We CLOSE ON the bible...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - DAY

The WITCH TRIAL BOOK rests on Curtin's desk. Beside it, Curtin dips a PEN into an inkwell and finishes his letter.

CURTIN (V.O.)
Sincerely. Doctor Robert Curtin.

He lights a wax seal and stamps it onto the letter's fold.

Then, sitting at his desk, reflecting on all that's happened, he hears CRYING, down the hall.

He rises, glancing at his packed bags.

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S ROOM - DAY

Anna faces the window, like we first saw her, lost in thought, when Curtin enters.

CURTIN
Anna...

She releases the tears she was holding back. He rushes to console her.

CURTIN (CONT'D)
I know how hard this must be, but
give Daniel time--

ANNA
(almost snapping)
It's not just Daniel. Don't you
see?
(through tears)
I'm so frightened. Abigail is
dead... And now...

*

She can hardly form her words.

CURTIN
Anna, it's over.

ANNA
How can you say that? Look at me.
You saw it with your own eyes. It's
happening. And I'm next.

CURTIN

Please. I'm leaving soon. And I wish you'd come with me. To deliver your child safely. I can protect you.

ANNA

You haven't protected anyone yet. What makes me any different?

Off Curtin, realizing just how painfully true that is --

FOOTSTEPS. They turn to see Edward rushing to the doorway.

EDWARD

(worried)

Dr. Curtin... You've been summoned to the square.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Curtin and Anna approach the town square to find a NOISY CROWD growing LOUDER at their arrival. Standing high above them, acting as ringleader: a SCARRED and embittered Constable Walker.

Dr. Griggs stands in the back, quickly turning to Curtin:

DR. GRIGGS

They won't listen to me. They're becoming a mob.

CONSTABLE WALKER

(spotting Curtin)

Ah, the good doctor arrives! Tell us, Doctor, what say you?

Curtin scans the angry faces, confused.

CURTIN

I don't...

CONSTABLE WALKER

(accusingly)

Why is our livestock still sick?

Curtin suddenly realizes where this is going.

VILLAGER #1

My dogs are frenzied as well!

Before Curtin can respond, MR. COOKE pushes his way through.

MR. COOKE

And my grain. Fallen again to rot!

Curtin sees the fear in their eyes masked as anger. Paranoia reaching a boiling point.

Careful not to react, he glances in the direction of the CHURCH, where REVEREND PARRIS stands, looking on.

CURTIN

Please. If you'll hear me out, I'm
sure we can--

*

CONSTABLE WALKER

It'll do you no good to deny the
curse on this town now, Doctor. I
stood in its way and nearly met my
death.

(then)

But it got what it came for. The
Widow Abigail was the last accuser.
If she's been taken, why are we
still afflicted so?

The crowd SHOUTS and MURMURS in support. Anna looks to Curtin, suffocated by guilt.

CURTIN

I'm sorry if I've failed you. But --

JUDGE MORROW (O.S.)

(calling out)

She was not the last.

Everyone turns to find JUDGE MORROW approaching the scene.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)

(then, pointedly)

She was not the last.

Judge Morrow's friendly countenance has disappeared, and he stares at Anna and Curtin with a newfound disdain.

Whispers run through the crowd.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)

April the 3rd, 1692.

He produces a LARGE HANDWRITTEN DOCUMENT; displays it.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)
 The sworn testimony of the child
 Anna Burgess given to the late
 Judge Hathorne of Salem Village.

Anna cups a hand to her mouth, horrified.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)
 Expunged from public record, but
 recently brought to light. In it,
 she accuses the condemned Constance
 White of carrying the Devil's
 child.

(directs his gaze to Anna)
 And here today she stands before
 us, silent as we suffer.

(then, with potency)
Carrying child. A child not
 conceived by any man.

All turn to Anna -- venom in their eyes.

Protectively, Edward shouts out:

EDWARD
 This can't be true! There must be a
 mistake.

JUDGE MORROW
 It's true.
 (coldly)
 'Twas brought to light by someone
 who knows.

We find DANIEL in the back of the crowd, narrowing his eyes,
 silently satisfied watching Anna's torment.

JUDGE MORROW (CONT'D)
 Well, Miss Downing?

Anna closes her eyes, breathes deeply, and does what she's
 waited an entire lifetime to do:

ANNA
 (calling out)
 It's true.

The crowd starts to quiet.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 All of it. I confess.
 (then)
 And even if I beg your mercy... I
 am still damned.

As she looks out, awaiting her judgment, we see that she is now free. Alleviated from the burden she's carried so long.

But then, a FEMALE VILLAGER screams out with vitriol:

FEMALE VILLAGER
She's carrying the Devil's child!
Hang her!

The crowd ignites.

VILLAGER #1
Take the child!

Curtin moves to protect Anna. She guards her stomach, growing overwhelmed and faint.

The mob, possessed with hatred, closes in until --

DR. GRIGGS
Keep back from her!

-- Griggs thrusts himself between Anna and the crowd, but they push forward.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)
(then, forcefully)
God is watching!

This somehow keeps them at bay for a moment...

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)
And casting out evil does not make
your actions just. We learned our
lesson last time, did we not? This
woman will live. And I shall
personally see her child to term.
We let God judge us now.
(adding)
God alone.

The crowd remains quiet, staring daggers at Griggs, Curtin, and Anna... But lets them go.

As Griggs carries off Anna with care, Curtin looks back to the church one last time.

Reverend Parris meets his gaze. Then, with indifference, simply turns and goes back inside.

CURTIN
(stoically, to the crowd)
I'll be gone in the morning.

And with that, he heads to catch up with Griggs and Anna.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S INN - CURTIN'S ROOM - DUSK

Later. Curtin prepares to leave, placing several items in his bags. Everything he's worked for, defeated.

INT. ANNA'S INN - ANNA'S ROOM - SAME TIME

In her own room, Anna lies in bed, placing a hand on her stomach with a faraway stare... But she forces back tears, this time.

Instead, her eyes drift to the JAR OF HERBS Curtin had left for her. She studies the leaves inside, potent, *toxic*.

She pulls one out...

Then all the rest...

FADE TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

The next day. The morning sun struggles to pierce through gray clouds. In the distance, a BELL from the docks calls sailors to board.

EXT. DOCKS - MORNING

At the docks, several CREWMEN and DOCKWORKERS load a large ship as Daniel approaches with his bags.

CREWMAN
(loading gear)
Underway boys!

Daniel looks back toward the inn one last time. Then boards.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

In the cemetery, blanketed with snow, Curtin stares pensively at the four humble graves of the women who have died.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - MORNING

Later. Curtin walks to the inn to collect his things when --

EDWARD (O.S.)
(softly)
Dr. Curtin.

He looks up to see Edward, removing his hat, a look of grief bringing him nearly to tears.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
It's Anna...

When he steps aside, Curtin sees that a SMALL CROWD has gathered at the entrance of the inn...

Dr. Griggs is somberly loading a CARRIAGE.

Curtin hurries his pace.

EXT. ANNA'S INN - MORNING

Griggs spots Curtin approaching, tries his best to keep him from getting any closer.

DR. GRIGGS
Dr. Curtin, there's nothing we can do now--

CURTIN
What happened?

DR. GRIGGS
(trying to prepare him)
Dr. Curtin, please--

But Curtin pushes past Dr. Griggs, pulling back the carriage's drape to reveal:

Anna. Lying on her back, dead.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)
She passed sometime in the night.

Curtin, for the first time, is truly overwhelmed.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)
This was by her bedside. She took the entire jar.

Griggs produces the EMPTY HERB JAR.

CURTIN

No...

The crowd looks on with indifference -- MERCER among them.

DR. GRIGGS

The child had no chance.
 (then, for all to hear)
 Neither of them had a chance!

He shuts the carriage door.

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)

(to Curtin)
 I'm sorry, Doctor.

But Curtin is speechless. Dumbfounded.

Griggs mounts the horse at the front of the carriage. Looks to the crowd one final time:

DR. GRIGGS (CONT'D)

She doesn't deserve to be buried
 among the likes of you. I'm taking
 her to be properly put to rest.
 (then, gravely)
 Shame on all of you.

He snaps the reins and rides away.

Curtin watches Anna go... then turns back to the crowd.

A long, tense beat as he tempers his rage, staring at their callous faces. Then --

CURTIN

You... All of you did this.

He raises his voice for any passerby to hear.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

Not a curse. Not the Devil. *You*.
 (then)
 I came here to help you. To prevent
 a town from once again becoming
 gripped by its own unreason.
 (scanning the crowd)
 All of you let this happen. And
 you've learned nothing. Sacrificing
 your own in the name of judgment.
 Turning on each other like *dogs*.
 Casting blame for your own sins.
 Your misfortunes. Your *sickness*--

And with that, Mercer LUNGES at Curtin through the crowd, GRIPS him by the throat and SLAMS him to the ground.

EDWARD

No!

Edward charges to defend him, but a Villager restrains him.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(struggling)

Let me go!

(to Mercer)

Unhand him!

But Mercer only squeezes tighter, pinning Curtin with all his force.

MERCER

I think you have it wrong, Doctor.
We don't blame each other.

EDWARD

Stop! He can't breathe!

MERCER

(to Curtin)

How many women have died since your arrival?

Curtin turns red, struggling to breathe. Mercer stares into his eyes, relishing, happy to kill him right here.

MERCER (CONT'D)

How many?

Curtin's eyes pop. His mouth gulps in vain. Then --

CONSTABLE WALKER (O.S.)

Mr. Mercer.

Mercer looks up to see Constable Walker arriving with JUDGE MORROW. But he doesn't loosen his grip on Curtin.

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)

Let him go.

Judge Morrow gives an assertive nod, and after a long beat, Mercer finally releases him.

Curtin COUGHS and rolls on his side, gasping for air.

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)

(to Mercer)

Dr. Curtin here already thinks us
an angry mob.

Curtin, grateful for the mercy, still can't speak...

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)

He came with the expectation of
order. And justice. So that is what
we shall serve him.

(to Curtin)

Dr. Robert Curtin, the court of
Salem Village and the Commonwealth
of the Massachusetts Bay colony
hereby charges you with the high
crimes of blasphemy, conjuring, and
murder.

Curtin rises to his knees, depleted. He looks to Judge
Morrow, who cowardly lowers his head.

Clearly, they've swept him in their fervor.

CURTIN

This is madness. What murder?

CONSTABLE WALKER

The murder of Abigail Williams, --

CURTIN

Impossible! You were there. You
were all there!

CONSTABLE WALKER

(continuing)

The murder of Susannah Sheldon...

EDWARD

No--!

CONSTABLE WALKER

The murder of Rebecca Truman. The
murder of Mary Walcott...

Curtin realizes how powerless he is against their ignorance.

Too weak to fight, he lets Walker finish...

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)

And the murder of Betty Hubbard.

Mercer takes a special satisfaction in this one.

Constable Walker gestures for two Lawmen to hoist Curtin to his feet.

He then approaches him, locking eyes, uncomfortably close.

CURTIN
(weakly)
Please. Think of what you're doing.

CONSTABLE WALKER
We'll try you properly. As you wish. And you'll be hanged.

He nods to the Lawmen, who drag Curtin away...

EDWARD
(struggling)
No, you can't do this!
(calling out)
Sir! *Sir!*

EXT. TOWN CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

As Curtin is marched through the village, doors open and faces emerge in windows, all with malice in their eyes.

Salem has devolved into what it once was.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL - DAY

In a dark stone hallway, Curtin is thrown into a cold iron CELL. He falls to the ground, doesn't even try to stand.

Constable Walker SLAMS the gate and turns the lock.

CONSTABLE WALKER
(walking off)
Sleep well, Doctor.

CLOSE ON Curtin, left alone to his fate.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

We canvass Salem in the dead of night: the empty TOWN SQUARE. Icicles hanging from the cross on the CHURCH. ANNA'S INN, now abandoned. And a view of the MOON through dead tree branches.

The SOUND OF KEYS TURNING A LOCK brings us to --

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

-- Curtin's cell. As the jailhouse door opens, a bar of moonlight illuminates the corridor and a SHADOW approaches.

Curtin slowly rises to find REVEREND PARRIS.

Parris approaches the bars of the cell. Curtin is more than surprised to see him, especially at this hour.

CURTIN

Reverend Parris...

REVEREND PARRIS

You and I have never seen eye to eye, Doctor. And now, the entire town has been persuaded by my conviction. The only person still defending you is that foolish boy Edward, who's always been too loyal, despite my warnings.

(beat)

But he's right.

(off Curtin's surprise)

For years, I've tried my best to guide this village down the moral path. Along the way, I've done things I'm not proud of.

As we feel the burden of his regrets, he lifts his keys and UNLOCKS Curtin's cell.

REVEREND PARRIS (CONT'D)

You've committed no crime. And I ask your forgiveness for what this town has done to you.

CURTIN

But Reverend... my trial... Surely they'll want someone to blame.

REVEREND PARRIS

Then we should blame ourselves. I will not allow us to hang an innocent man. Salem has enough blood on its hands.

(beat, off Curtin's look)

Edward has prepared a carriage. Boston is no further than a night's ride.

There's a kind, unspoken regard between them. Finally:

CURTIN

Thank you for your faith in me. *

Reverend Parris gives a respectful nod as Curtin exits.

EXT. JAIL - NIGHT

Outside the jailhouse, Curtin's carriage awaits. Edward stands, holding the horse's reins, and tips his hat.

CURTIN

It's good to see you, Edward.

EDWARD

(with a reverent nod)

And you, sir.

(then)

Your bags are all stowed. *

CURTIN *

Actually...

He reaches for his UTILITY BAG, hands it to Edward.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

I should hope you can take care of my things from now on. Being my assistant and all.

EDWARD

But sir, --

CURTIN

No. Please... I'm not sure they're much use to me anymore.

Edward studies the bag, then looks to Curtin, confused.

CURTIN (CONT'D)

(forcing a smile)

Goodbye, Edward.

Curtin climbs the carriage, snaps the horse's reins.

Reverend Parris joins Edward's side. Together, they watch as Curtin's carriage disappears into the woods.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

The RINGING BELLS of a DOCKYARD bring us to --

EXT. BOSTON - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

-- the bustling city of BOSTON. Vibrant sounds and colors, cobblestone streets, children laughing and playing.

A far cry from Salem.

We hear the CLATTER of Curtin's carriage as he guides it through the streets. Eventually, he arrives --

EXT. BOSTON STREET - MORNING

-- at a LARGE WHITE HOUSE. He dismounts his carriage and walks to the door, where he is greeted by a familiar face:

DR. GRIGGS. As Curtin approaches, Griggs cracks a warm smile.

DR. GRIGGS

Quite the dangerous plan, Dr. Curtin. For a moment, I thought you decided to stay in Salem.

CURTIN

I suppose I owe a debt to the good Reverend Parris.

(then)

How is she?

Griggs opens the door wider.

DR. GRIGGS

Come see for yourself.

INT. LARGE HOUSE - MORNING

He leads Curtin through the winding hallways to find --

INT. LARGE HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Anna. Alive and well, lying on a bed...

Cradling her NEWBORN BABY. It softly coos in her arms as Anna looks up to Curtin with a smile.

ANNA

Look. A miracle.

Curtin gives a warm smile back.

CURTIN

That's right. A miracle.

(then)

I trust Dr. Griggs has been taking good care of you both.

ANNA

He has.

(then, shifting)

But what about the others? Do they suspect anything?

CURTIN

It's nothing to be concerned about. You're safe now, that's all that matters. They won't find you here.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - MORNING

Harsh and violent YELLS ring out over a CLOSE-UP of two boot-heels being dragged through the dirt.

Pull back to reveal a MOB OF VILLAGERS (nearly everyone in Salem), rabid, irate, pulling Reverend Parris through town.

Constable Walker leads their vengeful march.

CONSTABLE WALKER

(as he marches, to Parris)

You knew better than to set him free, Reverend.

(yelling, to the others)

Find Morrow! And the boy, too.

INT. MORROW'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Inside his quiet cabin, Judge Morrow looks out his window in fear. We hear the groan of the mob getting closer.

CRASH! A brick is hurled through the second window. As he looks to it, the door is kicked open and a wave of villagers shuffles through.

JUDGE MORROW

No! Please, wait--

But like a pack of wolves, they surround and seize him. The sound of the chaos swells until --

EXT. ANNA'S INN - SAME TIME

It's quiet. Outside Anna's inn, the town appears empty. The roar of the mob but a faint sound in the distance.

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - MORNING

Inside, we find Edward peeking out from Curtin's upstairs window, clearly hiding from the maelstrom outside.

He turns, back to the wall, sliding down, safe for now.

Then, after a beat, he hears something outside. Hooves CLOPPING. A carriage arriving.

As he cautiously peeks back out the window, we are taken --

EXT. ANNA'S INN - MORNING

-- back outside, where a CARRIAGE pulls up to the inn's entrance, and a MAN and his DRIVER step down.

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Edward clearly doesn't recognize the man, and while he isn't afraid of him, he *is* afraid of the attention he might draw.

Boom-Boom-Boom. The door, downstairs. Edward stays hidden.

MAN (O.S.)
(muffled, from outside)
Hello? Is anyone around?

EXT. ANNA'S INN - MORNING

Finally, the door opens, and Edward studies the strange visitor: well-dressed, early 50s, a confident air about him.

MAN
Ah. Young man. I was looking for
the owner of the inn. A Miss Anna
Downing?

EDWARD
She's, um. She's gone, sir.

Edward shifts his gaze around, making sure no one's outside.

MAN

Very well. Perhaps you could direct me to Judge William Morrow, then. He might not be expecting me today, but he'll know my purpose. My name is Doctor Robert Curtin.

Edward looks up at the man, confused. *Did he just hear that?*

EDWARD

Say again?

MAN

Dr. Robert Curtin, from London. I was due here weeks ago, but there were complications in my travel. If I could--

*

EDWARD

I'm sorry, sir, there must be some mistake. You say your name is Curtin? Summoned by Judge Morrow? To look after Betty Hubbard?

MAN

(curious)

How do you know that?

Edward starts to go dizzy with a sinking feeling in his gut.

EDWARD

(faintly)

That's... That's not possible.

MAN

Sorry?

(off Edward's silence)

My boy, are you all right?

Edward finally looks back at Curtin -- the real Dr. Curtin -- with a sudden horror in his eyes.

EDWARD

Excuse me, I must--

ANGRY VILLAGER (O.S.)

There he is!

Edward looks up to see an ANGRY VILLAGER near the inn, joined quickly by four others, staring daggers.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

The room in Boston. Anna holds the baby, looks up to Curtin, comfortable, safe. Only now, we know she is anything but.

Everything we knew about Curtin has just changed.

CURTIN

Dr. Griggs? Would you mind giving
us a moment?

Griggs complies. Closes the door behind him. *

Curtin gently touches the baby's head. It squirms peacefully.

ANNA

He likes you.

Curtin smiles.

ANNA (CONT'D)

So what's next? Back to London?

CURTIN

To wherever I'm needed next.

ANNA

Right. Well. Thank you.
(before he can respond)
For everything. Thank you.

Curtin looks down at the coddled baby. Then to Anna.

CURTIN

Of course.
(then)
I'm just happy to have taught you
your lesson.

She dotes on the baby, absently smiling.

ANNA

What lesson is that?

The subtlest sinister grin creeps on Curtin's face as he approaches the foot of the bed.

CURTIN

You've done well, Anna.

Using the crook of his finger, Curtin reaches out and PULLS ANNA'S BLANKET down toward him.

There's something unsettlingly familiar about this...

Suddenly, Anna goes pale, realizing the unthinkable:

In brief cuts, we see flashes of Anna's dream: In her Salem bedroom, the silhouette of the man, pulling the covers in the exact same manner...

...the passionate lovemaking, but this time, the man lifts his face into the candlelight to reveal CURTIN.

ANNA

No... It can't be...

Just then, the door slowly CREAKS open.

Anna turns to see an OLD WOMAN, CLOAKED IN BLACK, with stringy white hair and pale skin, trailed by TWO OTHERS. Their cloaks drag on the floor.

Curtin seems to be expecting them. He hands the blanket to one of the women. Anna looks confused.

The Women move through the room with purpose...

CURTIN

Now it's time to say goodbye.

Without a word, the two women pin Anna down as the Old Woman pulls the baby from her arms.

ANNA

What are you doing!?! *STOP! Let go!*

The baby starts to WAIL as the Old Woman wraps him in the blanket and cradles him.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Don't touch him! *Don't touch him!*

CURTIN

Goodbye, Anna.

The Women release Anna, but when she tries to move from her bed, she's wracked with pain.

ANNA

(to Curtin)

Why?! Dr. Curtin!

But Curtin turns his back on her, and follows the Women out of the room.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Help! Someone, please!

As they leave, the Old Woman turns back to Anna and we finally get a good look at her face:

Pale skin, with stringy black hair, she stares back at Anna with TWO DIFFERENT-COLORED EYES. One blue. One brown.

It's a face we've seen before. The Witch from our flashback.

OLD WOMAN

Thank you, Goody Downing.

And with that, Curtin and the Women leave with Anna's child.

Anna stumbles from her bed, collapsing in pain. She drags herself toward the doorway.

ANNA

No. Oh, God, please...

As Anna SCREAMS, desperate for help, we move out through the house, following the BABY'S WAIL --

INT. LARGE HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - MORNING

-- to the entryway, where DR. GRIGGS lies dead on the ground, eyes open, his neck twisted to a grotesque angle.

EXT. LARGE HOUSE/INT. CARRIAGE - MORNING

Curtin and the Women exit with an eerie calmness, entering a small CARRIAGE that awaits them.

The muffled SCREAMS from inside the house bleed into the noise of the bustling city.

And as we watch the carriage disappear down the road, we HEAR Reverend Parris' warning once more.

REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)

People always say they can never know God's plan...

Then, in a final SERIES OF SHOTS:

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

The Four Angry Villagers drag a struggling Edward through the town square as the MOB curses and spits as he passes by.

EDWARD
 (yelling in vain)
 Please! Stop! This is exactly what
 he wants!

*REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)
 ...but they're always so bold as to
 think they understand the
 intentions of the Devil...*

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

At the outskirts of town, we pan across the overgrown
 GRAVEYARD housing the dead Witches from the trials.

*REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)
 But you'd be a fool not to think
 that the Devil, just like the
 Lord...*

INT. CARRIAGE - MORNING

As the carriage rattles down a small path, we see the Old
 Woman cradling ANNA'S BABY. She pulls back its blanket...

CLOSE ON the baby's tiny foot... And we see it:

The SAME MARK from Curtin's hand. The Mark of the Devil.

*REVEREND PARRIS (V.O.)
 ...works in mysterious ways.*

The sound of CHURCH BELLS swells all around, bringing us --

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - GALLOWS HILL - DAY

-- right back to Gallows Hill in Salem, where the entire
 village stands before a WOODEN SCAFFOLD, identical to our
 opening scene.

Lined on the scaffold stand JUDGE MORROW, REVEREND PARRIS,
 and EDWARD -- each with nooses strung around their necks.

The floorboards creak under Constable Walker's boots as he
 approaches them.

CONSTABLE WALKER
 Any last words, then?

Parris says nothing. Morrow closes his eyes in defeat.
 Edward's eyes dart with desperation.

CONSTABLE WALKER (CONT'D)

Very well.

Constable Walker looks to the hungry crowd, then personally walks over to the lever, ready to pull.

CLOSE ON young THOMAS, the boy from earlier, watching just as Anna did fifteen years ago, through a child's eyes.

SNAP! The three drop through gallows.

As the crowd looks on, satisfied, we realize...

The Devil has finally finished what he started.

Church bells RING a final time and we --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF FILM.