

GRAVEN HILL V1

Written by

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"Man is not what he thinks he is,
he is what he hides."
-André Malraux

"The beauty and mystery of nature
is that, like a tree, it hides all
of its secrets beneath its roots."
-Unknown

We hear the voice of a little girl singing in the darkness.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

(Singing)

Oh sweet dear old Graven Hill, down
my spine stirs a chill, and when
the night falls over the town, in
your unfeeling embrace I will
drown.

FADE IN:

15 YEARS AGO

EXT. THE TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - DAY

The looming and eerily gnarled and twisted tree roots of a massive tree extend into the gray sky. The massive trunk twists around in a spiral into the ground.

The tree dominates the landscape and exists as the only object in the vicinity resting atop a tall hill.

The hill overlooks a bleak and desolate small town which rests far below. The tree overhangs downward as if ruling over the city with a firm grasp.

The dark gloom of the gray skies shroud the sunlight from view. The massive hill towers above the town. This is the mysterious GRAVEN HILL.

We slowly move in towards the intimidating tree. Something about it appears alive and human.

EXT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small shack rests in a field residing near the heart of the small town.

Rust lines the dirty house and the roof is spotted with leaks. This is the house of the young infant Janette Calder.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Clothes, dishes, old family artifacts and objects scatter the house. The floors are lined in dirt and grime.

We move along puddles of water on the floor emerging from the kitchen.

Eventually the water turns red and it becomes obvious that blood has mixed into the water.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

The blood and water on the floor trails into the kitchen and we continue to move across the floor until a ragged boot comes into view.

We continue to move across a male human body wearing dirty and torn clothes. We close in on the man's face. This is the deceased BRENTEN CALDER (43).

He wears a scraggly beard and his eyes are bloodshot and rest wide open. Blood flows from an open wound in his chest. A bloody knife rests nearby.

We continue to move up to his outstretched hand which holds a needle.

We move away from the body and out of the kitchen.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The small hallway lies cluttered with cheap baby toys and shattered picture frames.

We move through the crowded hallway and into a bedroom at the end of the hall.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

A tiny bed rests in the middle of the room. A motionless body lies on it.

We move across the floor and up the bed. A small foot comes into view and we move up the slender body of a younger woman. She wears a dress that is filthy and worn.

We move in to her face. She has beautiful features but her open eyes look out, lifeless and cold. Her skin lies deathly pale. This is JENNIFER CALDER (34), Janette's mother.

An empty open pill container rests near her hand and multiple empty bottles of alcohol line the bed and floor.

We move away from the corpse and back into the filthy hall.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

A small stream of light filters into the dark hallway through the window. A tiny figure steps into the light.

As we move closer we can make out a small baby girl standing in the light.

She wears a tattered dress and has adorable features mirror her late mother Jennifer Calder. This is the innocent infant baby girl JANETTE CALDER (3).

Janette looks down the hall with curiosity then walks out of the light from the hall.

EXT. THE TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The formidable tree stands over the town. It appears to be watching. Always watching.

The tiny figure of Janette Calder emerges at the edge of Graven Hill.

She slowly crawls up the daunting hill until she reaches the top then she slowly climbs to her feet and stands under the wondrous tree in all it's splendor.

The tree stands tall over Janette. She is but a speck under the giant tree.

A strong wind begins to blow. It violently shakes the branches. Janette struggles to stay on her feet.

The wind pounds the tree and the gnarled roots appear to curl over and bend as if being uprooted from the earth.

The branches draw closer to the ground and appear to envelope Janette as if reaching out to grab her for safety and protection against the wind.

Janette remains on her feet in the strong wind and the branches continue to reach for her.

The twisted tree draws close enough to touch Janette.

CUT TO: BLACK.

TITLE SEQUENCE ROLLS.

TREE BRANCHES SPELL OUT THE CREDITS AND A DARK MIST COVERS THE SCREEN AS WE CAN MAKE OUT THE TWISTED TREE STANDING TALL AT THE END OF THE SEQUENCE.

FADE IN:

15 YEARS LATER. PRESENT DAY.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE - DAY

The small town of Trandense lies quiet beneath the tree resting atop the mountainous Graven Hill.

The town square consists of a few smaller buildings including a meager court room, police station, old bar, school house and a run down cinema.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

The modest police station rests near the center of town. We move toward the building.

A young athletic cop pulls up and steps out of his car. This is the curious and morally respectable rookie cop, BILLY BLAKE (26).

He eagerly walks toward the front door and we follow him into the station as he enters the doors.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

We follow Billy through the small station as he greets a few cops such as OFFICER CLANT (34) and OFFICER JAMESON (40) on the way into his office.

BILLY
Morning boys.

CLANT
Billy.

JAMESON
Hey rook.

Billy smirks and heads into...

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy's tiny office is cluttered with papers on a small desk resting near an old computer.

Billy grabs a mug of coffee from a machine on the counter and boots up the computer.

He diligently sets to logging figures from the paperwork lying on his desk.

After a few moments a heavysset officer with a mustache pokes his head in. This is head of the police department CHIEF RANGTON (45).

RANGTON

Blake.

BILLY

Morning chief.

Rangton enters and takes a seat.

RANGTON

How's Trandense treating you?

BILLY

So far so good. No complaints. Cozy little town.

RANGTON

Good, it seems like you are settling in alright.

BILLY

Yes sir. I'm honored to be a part of the force here.

RANGTON

Glad to have you. The reason I come by is there has been a local disturbance and I need you to go check it out. I figure it will be a good first assignment and a way to get your feet wet out in the field. Think you can do that?

BILLY

Of course sir, I'd be glad to check it out.

RANGTON

Good man. Here's the address. Good
luck Blake.

Rangton slides a piece of paper onto the desk and exits the office.

Billy takes the paper and eagerly heads out of the office.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

Billy hustles out of the station and hops into his car. He turns on the ignition and pulls away.

INT. BILLY'S POLICE CAR - DAY

Billy listens to PHOTOGRAPH by Def Leppard on the radio as he drives through town.

He sings along.

BILLY

I'm out of luck, out of love. Got a
photograph, picture of.

Billy continues to drive.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Photograph, I don't want your.
Photograph I don't need your. All
I've got is a photograph, but it's
not enough.

Billy comes to the edge of town and checks his navigation system. He parks the car and kills the ignition.

EXT. STREET AT THE EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

Billy steps out of his car and surveys the barren surroundings.

Rows and rows of trees stretch into the distance and curve around a bend.

Billy curiously scans the premises and walks down the road. He pulls out a walkie-talkie.

BILLY

Chief Rangton. This is officer
Blake.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)
I'm at the address you gave me for
the reported disturbance and I'm
not seeing anything.

Static crackles in the receiver but no voice answers.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Chief?...There's not even any
property here.

Billy cautiously continues to walk down the long line of
trees. Nothing else lies in sight.

The receiver sits in silence. Billy presses his ear to it.

CRACK! A loud spark of static emits from the receiver and
causes Billy to drop it in shock.

CRACK! CRACK! Silence.

Billy picks up the receiver, his hand shaking.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Chief? Are you sure this is the
right address?

Billy slowly moves down the trees. They stand guard at the
side of the road. Billy's curiosity grows to concern.

No person or thing can be seen beyond the line of trees.
Billy continues to walk and rests his hand on his gun
holster.

The trees appear to reach toward the road. Billy rubs his
eyes in disbelief. The trees stand silently still.

Billy continues to walk. A low resonating sound echoes from
down the road.

Billy draws his gun and holds out in front of him at the
ready.

The sky above grows dark and grey. The darkness falls over
the road and shrouds the curve in the road ahead.

Billy looks up to Graven Hill standing tall above town. The
twisted tree on the hill slowly sways in the wind.

Billy keeps moving forward into the hall of darkness cast by
the sky. He can barely make out anything in view.

The odd sound resounds even louder and rings in the darkness.
Billy winces and covers his ears.

He suddenly runs into something in the darkness. He pulls his flashlight out and illuminates the pale dead body of an older woman.

Billy jumps in shock at the discovery.

BILLY (CONT'D)
What the hell!?

Billy throws the light of the flashlight around in the darkness but finds nothing. He grabs the dead body and pulls it out of the darkness into the remaining light on the street.

Billy drags the body into the light. The woman is middle aged and her skin is deathly pale.

There appears to be no bruises or wounds on the body. Billy pulls out his walkie-talkie receiver.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Chief Rangton!? Are you there?

Static emits again from the receiver.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Shit.

Billy looks around and then uneasily focuses on the tree atop Graven Hill again. It appears to be staring at him, watching him.

He stands up and sprints back down the road to his car.

We move down and focus on the cold and icy features of the dead woman lying on the street. Her eyes lay lifeless facing Graven Hill.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - DAY

We slowly move up the mountainous hill. Dead grass lines the ground.

We continue moving up the hill until the base of the twisted tree comes into view.

The massive mangled trunk of the tree rises before us. We continue moving up the trunk until we face the branches.

They curl over menacingly.

EXT. STREET AT THE EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

The dead body of the woman lies on the ground in the same spot.

Billy's car speeds up and quickly stops near the body. Billy rushes out of his car and opens the trunk.

He picks up the body and places it in his trunk. In his panic he looks around and then slams the trunk shut. He shoots one more glance at Graven Hill before he speeds off.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

Billy's car races up to the station and stops with a screech. Billy rushes out of his car and into the station.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

Billy rushes into the police station to find it completely deserted. He checks all of the offices to find no one at all.

BILLY
Chief Rangton!?

Billy eventually stops looking and takes a seat on a desk.

BILLY (CONT'D)
What the hell?

Billy stands up and walks back out of the entrance.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

Billy exits the station and finds Chief Rangton standing outside staring straight at the ground.

BILLY
Chief?

Billy approaches the Chief. His eyes are closed and he appears to be mumbling a sort of chant under his breath.

BILLY (CONT'D)
You OK Chief?

Billy grows nervous. Suddenly Chief Rangton's eyes flick open and he whips his head up toward Graven Hill.

Chief Rangton stares at the tree on the hill with a look of complete fear.

RANGTON

Billy.

BILLY

Everything alright Chief?

RANGTON

Couldn't be better. How's your first day on the job?

BILLY

I actually have something to show you.

Billy leads Rangton to his car and opens up the trunk. Rangton looks inside and gasps.

RANGTON

What the hell is this Blake?

BILLY

It was lying on the road at the site you directed me to check out. There was nothing but trees and this. I tried calling your receiver but got nothing but static.

Rangton stares at the body in the trunk.

RANGTON

Get it into the station later tonight. Not a word of this to anyone.

BILLY

Yes absolutely not sir.

Rangton begins to walk back inside seemingly unfazed by the body.

RANGTON

Blake. Don't let this happen again.

BILLY

Understood sir.

RANGTON

Back in your office.

BILLY

Yes sir.

Billy quickly closes the trunk and runs back inside the station.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - DAY

We move through the quaint heart of the town. We pass small buildings and businesses and move into a a small neighborhood on the edge of town.

EXT. TRANDENSE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The tiny huts and homes lay in disarray, lacking an order to their arrangements. We move into the window of a small blue painted home.

INT. MARJORIE NELSON'S HOME - DAY

A large woman stands at the sink washing dishes. This is the nosy MARJORIE NELSON (45).

Her husband HANK NELSON (48) sits at the table eating.

HANK

Marj can I get the mayo?

MARJORIE

Get it yourself.

HANK

Come on now that isn't any way to talk to your hubby.

Marjorie tosses the mayonnaise bottle across the room. Hank catches it and grins, displaying a set of yellow teeth.

Marjorie looks through her window and up at the ominous twisted tree on the hill.

She marks the sign of the cross on her body then looks at Hank with fear. Hank's grin falls.

He knocks on the wooden table. KNOCK KNOCK.

EXT. LAINEY RHINE'S TRAILER - DAY

The sky above sits shrouded in a dark gray. We move down until a metal trailer comes into view.

INT. LAINEY RHINE'S TRAILER - DAY

A pretty young girl sits on a tiny bed. This is the hopeful LAINEY RHINE (19).

Lainey stares out the window, finding more pleasure in her thoughts than in the reality of her situation.

Lainey averts her gaze to the other end of the trailer. Another small bed lies at the end of the trailer.

Her mother, RHEA RHINE (42) stands in a drunken stupor.

RHEA
Lainey. It's evil.

Rhea grabs a salt shaker and chucks it at Lainey.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Toss it over your left shoulder.

LAINY
Why do we do this mom?

RHEA
I said do it!

Lainey grabs the salt shaker and pours a little into her hand.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Good girl. Now toss it.

Lainey reluctantly tosses the handful of salt over left shoulder.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Good girl. Don't let it twist your thoughts.

Rhea swigs the last of the liquor in her glass and then stumbles back toward the bed and falls onto it. Lainey turns back toward the window.

The door of the trailer is suddenly thrown open and her raging drunk of a father JERRY RHINE (43) lumbers in with a bottle of liquor.

Lainey's gaze is trained on the twisted tree. She darts her eyes to her father as he comes in and glares at her.

LAINY
Dad.

Jerry staggers toward her and slurs his words.

JERRY
I told you not to look at that goddamn tree!

Lainey sits frozen in fear on the bed as Jerry draws closer.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - SUNDOWN

The gray sky descends into darkness as the night takes hold of the town.

Shadows from the buildings are thrown onto the street. The largest shadow covers the town. It is the shadow of a massive deformed tree.

INT. MARJORIE NELSON'S HOME - SUNDOWN

Marjorie and Hank stand by the window watching as the shadows fall over their home. They lower their shutters.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Officer Billy Blake exits the station with the rest of the officers including Chief Rangton, Clant and Jameson.

RANGTON

Have a good night boys, a cold beer is calling my name. You'll get the swing of things Blake.

Rangton shoots Billy a look to indicate his task that needs fulfilling.

BILLY

Of course Chief, thank you so much for the job. Won't let you down.

RANGTON

Oh I know you won't. Night Clant, Jameson.

CLANT

Night sir.

JAMESON

Night Chief. Take care of yourself Blake.

BILLY

Will do.

Jameson and Clant head off into the darkness. Rangton gives Billy one last nod then walks into the night.

Billy watches them go and then walks to his car putting latex gloves on. He surveys his surroundings then pops the trunk.

He retches at the sight of the body but puts his arms under the body. He lifts it and carries it with difficulty into the police station.

EXT. OFFICER CLANT'S HOME - SUNDOWN

Officer Clant pulls up to his modest home.

INT. OFFICER CLANT'S HOME - SUNDOWN

Clant enters his home and begins to take off his police uniform. He pours a drink and watches the tree from his back porch. Outside the sky darkens quickly.

INT. OFFICER JAMESON'S HOME - EARLY EVENING

Officer Jameson walks into his house and takes a seat on his couch. He looks outside.

The last rays of daylight fade away revealing the moonlit tree high above.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Billy carries the body into the station and into a back room.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Billy places the woman's body onto the table. He leaves and returns with a body bag.

He places the body into the bag and looks at her lifeless eyes. A sense of pain and regret hit Billy. The grief overcomes him.

Billy cries as he zips up the body bag.

BILLY

What happened to you?

Billy looks around and notices a few file cabinets at the back of the room. In his curiosity he approaches the cabinets and opens them.

A series of old case files in folders rest in the cabinets. Billy sifts through them.

Pictures of victims, mug shots, detailed case reports and files fill the various folders from years ago.

Billy continues to sift through the folders absently when he stumbles upon a picture of the gnarled tree on Graven Hill.

Billy grabs the folder, it is titled JANETTE CALDER. Billy looks through the folder to find pictures of the familiar little girl.

The report contains a missing persons report that documents Janette Calder going missing at the age of three after both of her parents passed away.

The report states "Janette went missing OCTOBER 29, 1998 and has never been seen again around Trandense or anywhere else in the world. It is purported that she has been kidnapped and murdered."

Billy looks at a calendar on the wall. Today's date is October 28th.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Tomorrow is the fifteen year
anniversary of her disappearance.

Billy looks at the picture of the twisted tree.

BILLY (CONT'D)
What are you hiding?

At the bottom of the report the case reads: CASE DISMISSED
NOVEMBER 12, 2003. PROPOSED DEAD.

Billy reads the last line of the file intently and then takes it with him. Billy then carries the body bag out of a back door of the station.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION BACKYARD - NIGHT

Billy places the body in the middle of the field behind the station.

He walks over to the side of the station and grabs a gallon of gasoline and dumps it over the body bag. He then lights a match and throws it over the body bag.

It bursts into flames. The brightly burning flames dip and curl upward. Billy watches the body burn as the flames illuminate his eyes.

He turns his attention to the tree. The gnarled roots appear to be moving. Billy closes his eyes and attempts to shake off the image.

He walks away leaving the flames to devour the corpse.

INT. CHIEF RANGTON'S HOME - NIGHT

Chief Rangton sits at the kitchen table. A bible rests on the table and Rangton recites verses under his breath with his eyes closed.

RANGTON

The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

He looks outside. The twisted tree's branches appear to be curling over as if reaching for something. Rangton closes his eyes again.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

I pray and pray...for goodness.

Rangton opens his eyes.

INT. LAINEY RHINE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

We move through the small trailer to see Jerry and Rhea passed out drunk on the floor.

Lainey lays on her side in bed looking at the bright moonlight.

LAINEY

Take me away. Just like her.

EXT. BILLY'S HOME - NIGHT

Billy pulls up in his car and parks. He wearily gets out and staggers to his front door and enters.

INT. BILLY'S HOME - NIGHT

Billy walks into his house and takes his uniform off. He looks around at the small space.

BILLY

It's a start Billy. Better things
are to come.

Billy pulls out the case file and then grabs a beer from the
fridge and pops off the cap.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You keep telling yourself that.

Billy takes a swig and walks toward his room.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy walks into the room and sits on the bed. He looks up at
a framed certificate on the wall. It's a certificate for
Billy graduating the police training academy in Maryland.

He opens up the file again briefly then closes it. He
finishes his beer and turns off the light.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The town of Trandense is completely dead. No businesses
remain open and no citizens walk the streets. Everything sits
eerily quiet.

FADE OUT.

The sound of a tree branch snaps. A little girl's voice can
be heard in the dark.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

(Singing)

Oh sweet dear old Graven Hill...

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The twisted tree fills the entirety of the bedroom window.
Billy sits up in bed listening to the sound of the soft
singing.

He looks around until eventually the singing subsides.

BILLY

Janette Calder.

He then speaks as if talking to the tree.

BILLY (CONT'D)
What is going on? There's something
about this town, and you.

Billy lays down and looks to the folder. In the background a
branch of the tree rustles.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - SUNRISE

The dark sky turns to morning as the earliest rays cast a
faint orange glow amid the foggy gray of the twilight.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - MORNING

Billy walks into the police station visibly refreshed and
cheerful. He passes by the offices of Clant and Jameson.

BILLY
Top of the morning.

Clant and Jameson look at Billy and simply nod in
recognition.

Billy stops by Chief Rangton's office.

INT. RANGTON'S OFFICE - MORNING

Rangton is on the phone.

RANGTON
I understand that but it better be
done. Understood?...Good. It must
be done immediately.

Rangton sees Billy.

RANGTON (CONT'D)
I'll touch base later tonight.
Goodbye.

Rangton hangs the phone up.

RANGTON (CONT'D)
Blake! What can I do you for?

BILLY
Can I take a seat? I just wanted to
chat briefly.

RANGTON
Of course. What's on your mind?

Billy closes the office door and takes a seat. He slides the case report folder onto the desk.

Rangton eyes Billy but opens the folder and reads through a few of the pages. Rangton appears uneasy.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

BILLY

I found it in the back room in the filing cabinet. Today is the fifteen year anniversary of her disappearance. What happened in Trandense when she disappeared?

RANGTON

You are overstepping your position Blake.

Billy continues his excited speculation.

BILLY

I just noticed sir that the tree is mentioned quite a bit in the report and I was curious about the case and why it was dismissed.

Rangton shifts uncomfortably and places the folder in his desk drawer.

RANGTON

Blake this case isn't of your concern, there's a reason it was dismissed. Now please do your job and attend to your duties for the day, that's number one priority.

Rangton glares at Billy. Billy's face falls in disappointment.

BILLY

Yes sir. And about yesterday. I just wanted to assure you that something like that won't happen again and I will do my utmost to uphold the law and serve the honor of the town and yourself sir. It is my personal mission to do the right thing.

Rangton's face softens and he chuckles.

RANGTON

Well thank you very much for that Blake. I assure you it's not about that. We're glad to have you on the force and yesterday is water under the bridge. Only one thing you should know.

BILLY

What's that sir?

RANGTON

We're not a normal town here in Trandense.

BILLY

What do you mean sir?

Rangton hesitates for a moment.

RANGTON

What I mean is that we appear all and well on the surface, and we may seem like any other small town across the country. But we're a little different.

BILLY

And why is that Chief?

RANGTON

We like our privacy and solace in Trandense and like to keep to ourselves. The people don't like others picking around. The past is sacred to them and should be well left alone, so you should do well to leave it alone. Think you can understand that?

Billy appears puzzled but nods.

BILLY

Yes sir.

RANGTON

Good I'm glad we understand each other. Now go uphold the honor of our town like you said yourself.

BILLY

I will sir.

Billy opens the office door and slowly exits.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy takes a seat at his office and pulls up the internet on his computer.

BILLY

I'm going to figure out what's going on here.

Billy searches JANETTE CALDER into the search bar browser. The search returns a series of entries and Billy clicks the first one.

It contains a series of old newspaper articles about the case.

Various articles are headed with bold titles such as INFANT'S DISAPPEARANCE A MYSTERY and LITTLE GIRL VANISHES. One of the photos is of a scraggly older man.

The photo reads HARRIS SLADE, LEADING MURDER SUSPECT.

Billy quickly skims the articles and then hits print. He grabs the articles and photos from the printer and then tucks them away in his desk.

Chief Rangton enters the doorway a moment later. Billy quickly clears his search history on the computer.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Chief, how can I be of service?

RANGTON

I have a couple that reported another disturbance last night in the middle of the night.

BILLY

Know what it was about?

RANGTON

All they said was that they heard some sort of singing and some yelling and cracking. Probably just some town kids riling up some trouble. But they are nice older couple by the names of Marjorie and Hank Nelson. They live right outside the edge of town square.

Rangton scribbles down an address on a sticky note and places it on the desk.

RANGTON (CONT'D)
Shouldn't be anything serious but
can you humor me and go talk to
them?

BILLY
Of course sir, right away.

RANGTON
Good man. Keep up the good work
Blake, and remember what we
discussed.

BILLY
Yes sir.

Rangton tips his head and leaves the office. Billy
suspiciously watches him go but grabs his receiver and leaves
the office.

EXT. MARJORIE NELSON'S HOME - DAY

Billy pulls up in his police car and parks. He steps outside
and onto the front porch. He knocks twice and waits for a
moment before Marjorie answers the door.

BILLY
Good afternoon Mam, I'm officer
Billy Blake and came to discuss the
disturbance you reported last
night.

Marjorie looks disappointed to see him.

MARJORIE
Oh yes, thank you for coming. Is
the Chief busy?

BILLY
Yes Mam.

MARJORIE
Come on in.

BILLY
Thank you Mam.

Billy follows Marjorie inside.

INT. MARJORIE NELSON'S HOME - DAY

Billy follows Marjorie into the kitchen.

MARJORIE

I've never seen you before are you
new in town?

Billy takes a seat at the kitchen table.

BILLY

Yes that is correct, second day on
the job. Lovely town you got here.

MARJORIE

It ain't much, but we make do.
Coffee?

BILLY

That would be lovely.

Marjorie pours a cup and brings it to the table.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Thank you Mam. Now, let's discuss
that disturbance shall we?

MARJORIE

Of course, let me just grab my
husband.

Marjorie leaves the kitchen. Billy surveys the kitchen. He
looks around and something catches his eye from the window.

The twisted tree remains fixed on the hill but something
seems different about it. Maybe the position, or direction
it's facing.

HANK (O.S.)

Good day to you officer Blake.

Billy turns to meet Hank Nelson entering the kitchen with his
hand outstretched. Billy shakes it.

HANK (CONT'D)

Hank Nelson. Pleased to meet you.
Thanks for coming.

BILLY

My pleasure.

HANK

Was Chief Rangton busy?

BILLY

Yes he had too much on his plate.
Apologies.

Hank, Marjorie and Billy all sit at the table. Billy pulls out a note pad and pen.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Now can you start from the beginning. Tell me exactly what happened. As specific as possible if you can.

Hank and Marjorie look at each other then Hank begins reluctantly.

HANK

Well last night we heard some noises outside our house.

BILLY

What kind of noises?

HANK

Some yelling and crying.

BILLY

Who do you think the voices belonged to?

HANK

Can't say.

BILLY

Has this ever happened before?

HANK

Yeah sure it has.

Billy waits for Hank to elaborate. He doesn't.

BILLY

Did you ever find out what it was before?

Hank and Marjorie look uneasy.

MARJORIE

Not to be rude son but there's no way the Chief can stop by?

Billy looks puzzled.

BILLY

I don't believe so Mam, he sent me here to check it out and I believe I am adequately equipped to do so.

MARJORIE

It's not that it's just...we have to talk to *him*.

BILLY

Well if you tell me everything you know I can file a report and get started on the case. That way we can figure out what's going on here.

HANK

That's quite alright. It's really nothing. We appreciate you stopping by though.

Hank and Marjorie stand clearly indicating that Billy should leave.

BILLY

Are you sure you don't want a report filed or any investigation launched?

MARJORIE

No no, we simply overreacted. Everything is quite alright.

Billy isn't convinced but gives up in frustration.

HANK

Please do tell the Chief to stop by when he has a moment will you?

BILLY

Good day Mr. and Mrs. Nelson.

Billy stands up and leaves. Hank and Marjorie watch him closely.

INT. RANGTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy swiftly enters the office. Rangton sits at his computer.

RANGTON

Blake.

BILLY

Sir, no disrespect but why did you send me to investigate that disturbance?

RANGTON

So you could meet some of the
townsfolk.

BILLY

They wouldn't tell me anything.
They would only talk to you.

RANGTON

Well naturally I am the Chief and
they have known me for quite some
time.

BILLY

It was like they were trying to
hide something.

Rangton shoots Billy a hard glare.

RANGTON

Now remember what we discussed
Blake? I would surely hope that I
don't have to refresh your memory
so soon.

Billy sighs deeply.

BILLY

Chief, I'm not trying to stir up
trouble. I understand the town has
a precious history and I'm not
trying to disturb it, but this case
sir. I think we can get to the
bottom of it. And I think it's
worth investigating.

RANGTON

Blake. Put it to rest. That baby
girl vanished into thin air fifteen
years ago and not one person has
reported seeing her in all those
years. She's gone son, face it.

BILLY

Then her killer needs to be brought
to justice!

RANGTON

I said leave it!

Billy is startled by Rangton's outburst.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

Now if we are going to continue having problems understanding each other, this town might not work out for you. Understand that?

Billy gathers his thoughts.

BILLY

Yes sir.

RANGTON

Now please complete the work I assign you. I was happy to accept you into the force, don't make regret it.

BILLY

Understood sir.

Billy dejectedly leaves the office.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - DAY

The grass sits quiet around the massive hill. The tree can be seen above in the distance.

EXT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - DAY

We are looking at the highest branches of the tree. We move down the malformed trunk all the way to the base.

The ground around the trunk is embedded with the thick roots of the tree extending outward.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - SUNDOWN

The sun promptly drops behind the horizon and transitions into night.

The tree's shadow overlooks the town.

Lainey Rhine and her parents watch the sun drop and quickly begin moving toward their home.

An array of other towns people immediately begin walking away from the town square. As if an evacuation alarm has been activated, everyone flees in a hurry.

EXT. JEANINE DARLING'S HOME - SUNDOWN

A skinny woman and her young boy walk up to their small home. This is the doubtful mother JEANINE DARLING (38) and her inquisitive son CHRISTOPHER DARLING (12).

They eye the sky and enter the house.

INT. JEANINE DARLING'S HOME - SUNDOWN

They walk into the small living room of the house.

JEANINE

Make sure the door is locked honey.

CHRISTOPHER

OK Mom.

Christopher checks the door. Jeanine grabs a soft furry object from the counter. Upon closer inspection it is a rabbit's foot.

She clutches it tightly as she watches the tree. Christopher notices her fear of the tree.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Mom. I know you told me not to ask but what is going on with that tree up there? I always see you watching it like you are scared of it. Every single night.

Jeanine turns around, her face visibly angry.

JEANINE

Go to your room! I told you, it's not your concern. Let Mommy worry about it!

Christopher's eyes display sadness and confusion as he heads to his room.

Jeanine grabs a bottle of liquor and downs a shot in her anxious agitation.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Christopher stands at the window watching the ever present tree.

CHRISTOPHER

What are you?

The tree responds with a rustle of it's leaves.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Billy exits his office to find Chief Rangton, and officers Clant and Jameson standing near the front door conversing.

RANGTON

Hey Blake sure took you long enough. We thought you'd never come out of that office. Good work today.

BILLY

Thank you sir. What say we all hit the local bar and celebrate? Drinks are on me, haven't been yet.

Rangton, Clant and Jameson suddenly appear fearful.

RANGTON

Oh no that's alright I should get back and rest. Long day tomorrow. Thanks though Blake. You have a good night.

Rangton eyes Blake suspiciously before strolling out of the station.

BILLY

That was weird. What do you say boys?

CLANT

Sorry the bed is calling my name too.

JAMESON

No can do tonight, thanks though.

BILLY

Well jeeze, what a bunch of stiffs. Isn't there any night life in Trandense?

Billy chuckles attempting to joke with the officers. Their faces remain solemn.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Alright we'll do it another time.

CLANT

Take care Blake.

JAMESON

Night rook.

BILLY

Night boys. Hey I forgot something,
no need to wait up for me.

Clant and Jameson smirk and stroll out of the exit.

Billy turns back toward the back room and heads toward it.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Billy enters the room to find a thick chain lock crossing
through all of the cabinets.

Billy tugs at the chain and it won't budge.

BILLY

Those bastards.

Billy looks around until his eye settles on a crow bar.

INT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Billy emerges into the main hall holding the crow bar. He
lodges it into the locked door to Rangton's office. Billy
leans against the crow bar and cracks the door open with
immense force.

He flips the light switch on and enters the office. He tries
the office drawer. It doesn't budge. He pries it open with
the crow bar and finds the case report inside.

He grabs it and closes the drawer then flips the lights and
closes and locks the office.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Billy walks through the deserted town square. The moon shines
bright and Billy walks as he reads the case report.

Billy walks through town and notices not a single business
open. The shadow of the tree looms over the town square in
the moonlight.

Blake's car rests up ahead. He walks toward it determined.

INT. LAINEY RHINE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Lainey Rhine lays on her bed staring at the moon from the window.

She closes her eyes and begins to hear a soft singing coming from outside.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)
(Singing)
Down my spine stirs a chill...

She opens her eyes but doesn't appear afraid.

INT. OFFICER CLANT'S HOME - NIGHT

Officer Clant drinks a glass of liquor and holds a metal cross in his hands.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)
(Singing)
...and when the night falls over
the town...

INT. CHIEF RANGTON'S HOME - NIGHT

Rangton lays in bed. A bible rests near his bed and a poster of Jesus adorns the ceiling above. He stares at it intently.

INT. BILLY'S HOME - NIGHT

Billy looks up at the twisted tree in wonder.

EXT. THE TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

We move closer to the mysterious twisted tree that holds so much influence over the town.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)
(Singing)
...in your unfeeling embrace I will
drown.

We move closer until we are practically touching the trunk. The creaking sound of wood shifting emanates in the darkness.

A shrill scream resounds in the air. We may or may not see the trunk of the tree twist ever so slightly in the night.

FADE OUT.

In the darkness is the sound of a whip tearing into flesh followed by a shrill scream.

CUT TO:

INT. LAINEY RHINE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Jerry Rhine holds a belt and whips Lainey's bare back with it. Lainey's scream shatters the air.

Rhea grabs Jerry.

RHEA

Stop it Jerry! You're drunk and seriously hurting her!

Jerry shoves Rhea and she falls to the ground in his drunken rage.

JERRY

I told you not to talk to that damn tree!

LAINEY

I'm sorry papa! Just don't hit me again!

Jerry winds back to deliver another blow when he suddenly stops and clutches his chest in pain. He drops the belt and staggers back.

Lainey looks to the tree. It appears to be staring right at her, watching.

Jerry stumbles back and falls onto his back grunting in agony. He cries out a few times then falls silent. Lainey stands over him as he takes a few last breaths.

Then his eyes go lifeless. Lainey looks down at him with pure hatred. Then she grabs a few items in a rush and dashes out of the trailer.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

Lainey takes off running out of her trailer and continues to run for hundreds of feet toward the town.

She runs through a heavily cluttered forest filled with destroyed trees and dense foliage.

She loses herself in the dark woods.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Lainey eventually makes her way to the empty town square. She looks around for someone, anyone. Nobody is in sight.

Lainey eventually leans up against a building, huddles down and cries.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Christopher lays asleep in bed. A loud thumping startles him awake.

The persistent thumping continues and Christopher stands up and investigates the sound from the window.

Below the window a small wooden swing hanging near the house bumps against the house in the wind. Christopher sighs and reaches out and grabs the rope of the swing.

The thumping ceases momentarily. But the thumping continues even as Christopher holds the swing. He looks out in fear.

The loud thumping appears to be coming from Graven Hill.

INT. JEANINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Christopher enters the dark room quietly. Jeanine sleeps peacefully facing the other direction.

Christopher tip toes around the bed and watches her breathing rhythm. She is illuminated by the moonlight and her features appear younger.

Christopher smiles at her.

CHRISTOPHER

(Whispering)

Sleep tight Mom. I'll be back.
Please don't be mad.

Christopher silently leaves the room.

INT. JEANINE DARLING'S HOME - NIGHT

Christopher grabs his backpack and throws a kitchen knife, some food and the rabbit's foot inside. The thumping from outside continues loudly.

He takes one last look at the house and then opens the door and walks toward the darkness of the night.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

Christopher walks swiftly in the darkness. The thumping grows louder as he moves closer to town.

Christopher enters the dense woods and makes his way with difficulty through the branches and deformed foliage.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Christopher moves closer to the thumping and walks through the street of the town square in search of the origin of the sound.

As he walks through the quaint town square he hears the sound of sobbing.

He goes around the side of the court building to find Lainey crouched on the ground crying loudly.

THUMP!

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The loud thump wakes Billy up with a start. He breathes heavily and glances at the case file folder for Janette Calder.

He grabs it and opens it to be greeted by a photo of the smiling face of the three year old baby girl Janette Calder.

BILLY

Where are you Janette Calder?

Billy closes the folder and gets out of bed. He throws on his police uniform and leaves his room.

INT. BILLY'S HOME - NIGHT

He grabs his gun and holster and slips them under his belt then quickly exits through the front door.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

Billy moves through the woods in determination. The moonlight glimmers faintly through cracks in the trees.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Billy surveys the desolate town in search of answers. He walks from street to street. No person or thing lies in sight.

Behind the court building Christopher smiles at Lainey.

CHRISTOPHER

You live in the trailer, Lainey
right?

LAINY

Unfortunately yes. You're Jeanine's
son?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah, Christopher.

Billy grows closer in the background.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

What in the hell are you doing out
here in the middle of the night?
I've never seen anyone out in the
town this late.

LAINY

I'm running away. I have to escape
this place.

Lainey motions to the tree.

LAINY (CONT'D)

Ever wonder why everyone fears that
tree?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah I have actually. Why do they?

LAINY

I'm not sure, but I think it holds
some sort of hold over everyone.
It's almost as if something
happened there, or it did something
to this town years ago.

CHRISTOPHER

I know what you mean. All of the
adults fear it like it's the devil.

LAINY

We're going to find out what everyone fears Christopher, are you on board?

CHRISTOPHER

Aye aye captain, lead the way.

Billy passes the court building and notices two kids standing near the building in the distance. He quickly approaches them.

The two kids see Billy approaching.

LAINY

Go!

Lainey and Billy begin to run.

BILLY

Stop! It's officer Blake!

The two aren't quick enough and Billy's agile speed allows him to catch them. He grabs both of them by the back of their shirts.

CHRISTOPHER

Let us go!

LAINY

We'll call the police!

BILLY

I am the police. Now please kiddos, relax would you? I'm not going to hurt you.

Lainey and Christopher relax as Billy lets go of their shirts.

LAINY

Who are you?

BILLY

I'm officer Billy Blake, the newest member of the force in town. And you two are?

Christopher surveys Billy to see if he is trustworthy. Billy shows them both his badge at which point Christopher determines they can trust him.

CHRISTOPHER

Christopher Darling.

LAINY

Lainey Rhine.

CHRISTOPHER

What are you doing out here?

BILLY

I would ask you two the same question. I'm working on a case and maybe you two can help me.

LAINY

What if we refuse?

BILLY

Then I take you back to the station and have your parents each come pick you up. I'm guessing they wouldn't be too thrilled to know you are out this late.

Lainey and Christopher look at each other and visibly acknowledge that Billy is right.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Now I'll ask you again, what in the world are you two doing out this late?

CHRISTOPHER

Couldn't sleep.

LAINY

Same.

Billy glares at them both.

CHRISTOPHER

I heard this thumping. I thought it was coming from the tree and couldn't stand it any longer so I went out to investigate it.

LAINY

The tree sings to me. Most nights I feel as if it is talking to me.

BILLY

You hear it too? It sounds like a little girl singing?

LAINY

Yeah, exactly.

BILLY
Maybe you two will be of use. How
old are you two?

LAINY
Nineteen.

CHRISTOPHER
Twelve.

Billy sighs.

BILLY
Better than nothing. Stay close to
me, come on.

Billy motions for them to follow and they move back through
the dark town square. Billy watches the moonlit twisted tree
above.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Where can we find public records of
the town's history?

LAINY
That would be the town hall public
library.

BILLY
Lead the way.

Lainey moves forward and leads Billy and Christopher past a
few buildings and toward the front of the town hall library
building.

LAINY
This is it.

Billy tries the door but it is locked.

BILLY
Stand back.

Billy aims his gun at the lock and fires. Metal clanks
loudly.

Billy tries the door and it opens. Lainey and Christopher
enter and Billy follows inside.

INT. TOWN HALL PUBLIC LIBRARY FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

The town hall library is small but houses two floors and rows
and rows of books.

Lainey, Christopher and Billy split up and begin searching through the dense rows of books lining the shelves.

Billy curiously scans the titles on the first floor and doesn't find a single one that mentions the town of Trandense.

Christopher searches the other side of the first floor with no luck.

INT. TOWN HALL PUBLIC LIBRARY SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Lainey diligently moves through the rows of books and magazines searching for the public records or history.

Eventually she spots a door in the corner with a chained lock on the front. Over the door in red it reads: OFF LIMITS KEEP OUT.

LAINEY

Guys! Come up here, I think I have found something!

Moments later she is joined by Billy and Christopher. She points to the locked door.

LAINEY (CONT'D)

I'll bet you anything what were looking for is behind that door.

BILLY

It has to be, there's no other mention of the town's history anywhere else in the library. What are they trying to hide?

CHRISTOPHER

Let's find out.

Billy, Lainey and Christopher approach the door and Billy fires his gun once again breaking the lock on the front. Billy stands looking at the door not sure whether to grab the knob.

LAINEY

Do it.

Billy grabs the knob and turns it. The door opens to reveal sheer darkness beyond.

Lainey hurries through the door. Billy and Christopher face each other.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Grab as many as you can.

Lainey, Billy and Christopher eagerly grab stack after stack of books and place them on the tables near the ball room floor.

Each of them then sit at a table and open a book and begin to look through it.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The incessant thumping from the tree is louder than before. The grass on the hill shakes with each thump.

The tree lies up above on the edge of the hill and towers over us. The branches slowly begin to curl downward toward the ground.

The trunk twists ever so slightly.

INT. GRAVEN HILL ABANDONED BALL ROOM - NIGHT

We move across the barren old dance floor. It's as if we can still hear the old music and taps of shoes dancing across the floor.

Lainey, Billy and Christopher all sit at the tables turning the pages in the books they hold.

BILLY
Find anything?

LAINY
Not yet.

CHRISTOPHER
Same.

Christopher turns a few pages and then stops on one that catches his eye. A large picture lines the left page and writing fills the right page.

The picture is of the town of Trandense circa 1801 and is an old worn down black and white photo. Christopher skims the writing.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Check this out!

Billy and Lainey rush over and stand next to the table. Christopher points to the pages.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

It says this is the town when it was first founded in 1801.

Billy and Lainey survey the pages.

BILLY

Not much has changed. What does the writing say?

CHRISTOPHER

It says that a group of miners settled the town while exploring further West and searching for gold.

Christopher reads further.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

They named the town after their exploring group. Says they called themselves the Trandensers. They guessed this would be the next big jackpot for gold and decided to build this town. Created a court building, school house, town hall and that's about it.

LAINY

Then more people came?

CHRISTOPHER

The Trandensers went back and brought all of their friends and families and created a community which soon blossomed into the town we know within twenty to thirty years.

Christopher turns the page. A photo of a different ballroom faces them. The ballroom looks new and furnished.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

The ballroom was added as one of the last additions and acted as the gathering place every weekend for massive ceremonies and town meetings. Then after everyone would dance the night away.

BILLY

Did the town have any troubles in it's history?

CHRISTOPHER

None that I've seen thus far.

BILLY

Any mention of that tree up on the hill?

Christopher turns the page and reads on.

CHRISTOPHER

Actually it says here that the tree mysteriously began to start growing in 1910 up on the top of Graven Hill. After ten years the tree had grown in at full height and towered over the town. The people didn't know what to make of it at first but then accepted it as nature's way of keeping watch over the town. Then they welcomed it.

BILLY

Keep going.

Billy turns the page and the massive tree stands tall in a photo. The tree is completely straight in the photo. Not twisted or curled over in any manner.

BILLY (CONT'D)

That's weird. The tree is twisted now.

CHRISTOPHER

Everything was fine in town for years, even after the young kids in the town started messing around up at the tree. Drinking liquor, having sex up there, and carving and defiling the tree. But then the first of a series of disasters happened in 1920.

LAINY

What happened?

CHRISTOPHER

It says here that one night during a town meeting in the old ballroom that a curtain caught fire and the whole place went up in flames. About ten people were seriously injured and five were killed.

(MORE)

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

A new ballroom was constructed three years later and is the one we are sitting in.

BILLY

What else happened?

Christopher scans down the writing on the page.

CHRISTOPHER

The next tragedy occurred in 1930 when a massive illness struck the town. Ten people were killed and another five got seriously ill.

BILLY

What is up with this town?

CHRISTOPHER

Twenty years later in 1950 a young child went missing. It was a little girl named Christine Weathersome and she was only three years old. Nobody knows what happened to her but the last reported sighting of her was on Graven Hill.

LAINY

Then?

CHRISTOPHER

Then the town erupted into a frenzy. People went crazy and didn't know who blame. People lost their minds and claimed the tree was holding the infant inside it. Many blamed the tree and threatened to chop it down.

LAINY

Apparently they didn't succeed. The tree is still there.

Christopher turns the page and looks at a photo of the tree circa 1950. The tree is significantly more deformed and twisted than it was in the earlier picture.

It's as if it began to bend closer to the Earth.

BILLY

What happened to the tree. It looks different than before.

CHRISTOPHER

There's no explanation listed here.

BILLY

What did the town do in 1950?

Christopher skims further down the page.

CHRISTOPHER

According to this record the town organized an angry search mob and went up to the hill to chop down the tree. After that night not a single member of the town was ever heard from again or seen anywhere. It's as if they all just vanished. The town sat silent for years.

BILLY

This keeps getting weirder. This town is hiding some dark secrets.

LAINY

And we're going to uncover them.

Billy, Christopher and Lainey share a glance.

BILLY

So then what happened.

Christopher shows them a photo of the town in 1990. It looks close to the way it is now.

CHRISTOPHER

A whole new group of travelers found the deserted town and decided to make it there home. Once again the population grew and families settled here and by 1998 a whole new refurbished community was established.

Christopher finds a photo of the town from 1998, it has a few new buildings added from 1990.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

A few new buildings were constructed, a small neighborhood was built and Trandense was a living and feeling community again. But that's when tragedy befell the town yet again.

Christopher turns the page and looks into the wide eyes of three year old Janette Calder.

BILLY

I know that face.

Billy rummages around and opens up the case report that displays the same exact photo of the baby girl.

BILLY (CONT'D)

This is Janette Calder isn't it?
She went missing in 1998 and was
never seen from again.

CHRISTOPHER

Exactly. It was common knowledge
that Janette's parents were
incapable of caring for her. They
were the town drunks and drug
addicts and couldn't even stand up
straight.

BILLY

When was the last time she was
seen?

CHRISTOPHER

The night both of her parents died.
Her mother overdosed and the father
stabbed himself in a drug induced
state according to the reports
here. That was the last day she was
seen and one witness reported
seeing her near Graven Hill.

Christopher finds a picture of the tree in 1998. It is completely twisted and gnarled and matches the image of the tree currently atop the hill.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

This is the tree on that day. There
wasn't a tragedy in the town for
forty years starting after 1950,
but that's because it was
completely deserted.

LAINY

Isn't it odd that as soon as that
tree sprouted up, whenever people
inhabited Trandense, there never
passed more than fifteen years
without another tragedy striking
the town.

Realization passes through all three of them.

BILLY

It's all starting to make sense.
It's a cycle. Notice how all of the
this has seemed to repeat itself?
It's been fifteen years since the
last tragedy. This means that the
next one is bound to occur at any
time now. We have to get to the
bottom of this all before it
happens again.

Billy stands up and paces nervously.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Which means tonight. Tonight marks
the fifteen year anniversary of
Janette Calder's disappearance.

Christopher and Lainey look at Billy with a look of horror.

BILLY (CONT'D)

That still doesn't explain how or
why the tree grew on that hill.
Unless someone planted it. But who
would do that and why?

Old 1920's music begins to play from above. It startles
Billy, Lainey and Christopher.

The sound of voices chattering and shoes tapping rhythmically
against the hard wood floor resonate in the enormous
ballroom.

The three of them look over to the floor in terror. A massive
group of towns folk dance on the floor in front of them. They
are dressed in old clothes from the 1920's.

The ghosts carry on their dance as if nothing is happening.
Christopher walks closer and approaches the ballroom.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CHRISTOPHER

Maybe they can help. There's
obviously a reason they are here.

Christopher draws closer to the ballroom and close enough to
touch one of the dancing ghost couples.

Christopher reaches out and touches but his hand wafts
through the couple like thin air.

Suddenly the entire crowd of ghosts on the ballroom floor stop dancing and turn to stare at Christopher. The music overhead stops playing.

A shrill high pitched scream resonates through the room. The ghosts immediately begin rushing toward Christopher.

BILLY

Bring those books let's go!

Billy, Lainey and Christopher each grab books and then dash out of the ballroom. The ghosts follow them closely.

They all three run through the dark corridor then emerge back in the...

INT. TOWN HALL PUBLIC LIBRARY SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Billy slams the door leading to the ball room and runs down toward the stairs followed by Lainey and Christopher.

INT. TOWN HALL PUBLIC LIBRARY - NIGHT

Billy, Christopher and Lainey run through the cluttered book shelves and out of the library and into the night air.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

All three emerge with fear etched on their faces.

BILLY

This town is seriously fucked up.

LAINEY

You're telling me.

She turns to look up at the tree. It shifts ever so slightly in the moonlight.

LAINEY (CONT'D)

I think the tree is trying to speak to us.

BILLY

How come?

LAINEY

I can't explain but I just know. It's holding some secrets of its own. Just like this town.

BILLY
So what next?

CHRISTOPHER
We should pay the old home of
Janette Calder a visit. We might be
able to scavenge some more answers
there.

BILLY
Good idea. Do you know where it is?

CHRISTOPHER
I believe it's on the outskirts of
town. Probably been abandoned for
years.

BILLY
Lead the way.

Christopher walks up ahead and Lainey and Billy follow him
closely as they walk further into the distance.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

The three walk through the woods behind town square. The
woods appear menacing in the darkness that the night brings.

They walk on for a while until Christopher runs up ahead.
Billy and Lainey sprint to catch up with him.

EXT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The abandoned former home of the Calder's has almost
completely rotted.

The paint has peeled away, the lawn is overgrown with weeds
and the windows have been broken and spray painted on.

Christopher, Billy and Lainey walk up to the disheveled lawn.

CHRISTOPHER
This place is a mess.

LAINY
To think that little girl used to
live here.

BILLY
Let's check it out.

Billy approaches the door and tries the knob. It is open and Billy lets himself into the house.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy slowly walks into the dirty and disgusting house. Mold has grown on spots of the carpet and the walls and windows are filthy from neglect.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Billy walks into the kitchen. We see a sudden flash of Brenten Calder laying dead on the floor fifteen years before.

Billy continues to move through the house.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Billy slowly walks through the hall as if he can feel the presence of the young Janette. He stands right where she stood.

He walks through the hall and enters the mother's old bedroom.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

The old bedroom of Jennifer Calder sits eerily quiet, like that of any abandoned home.

The sheets of the bed are dirty. A broken mirror rests on a drawer. Billy looks into the mirror and watches his fractured reflection with unease.

There is another sudden flash as Jennifer Calder now stands in front of the mirror looking at herself. In a drunken rage she throws a bottle at the mirror and shatters it.

Billy shudders as he faces the bed.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE BEDROOM - 15 YEARS AGO - NIGHT

Three year old Janette Calder sits on the bed cheerfully giggling and watching her mother.

Jennifer Calder stands at the open window smoking a cigarette and looking up at the twisted tree.

JENNIFER

What are you thinking Janny?

Jennifer smiles at Janette and turns back to the window. She wraps a tie around her arm and pulls it tightly exposing a vein.

Then she grabs a syringe and punctures the vein. She lets out a sigh of relief as she injects the heroin into her blood stream.

She finishes and tosses the syringe aside and unwraps the tie from her arm.

Jennifer sits on the bed and grabs Janette in her arms and slowly rocks her back and forth.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

You see that tree up there?

Janette giggles and nods. Jennifer continues on, her words beginning to slur as the drug takes effect.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

That's the twisted tree on Graven Hill. It's been there for as long as anyone here can remember. And it holds mysteries baby girl.

Jennifer begins to sweat and she loses some coherence.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

They're all afraid of it. But I think it's watching over us. Protecting us from evil spirits. What do you think?

Janette makes baby sounds in an attempt to form words. Jennifer laughs. She continues to watch the tree and rock Janette as she begins to sing.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

(Singing)

"Oh sweet dear old Graven Hill,
down my spine stirs a chill, and
when the night falls over the town,
in your unfeeling embrace I will
drown." That is a song my
grandmother taught me before she
passed away. She used to lived in
this town years ago. Now it's your
turn.

Janette surprisingly repeats the song back, at first struggling to form the words then beginning to sing more clearly.

JANETTE

(Singing)

"Oh...sweet dear old...Graven Hill,
down my spine stirs a...chill, and
when the night falls over the town,
in your unfeeling embrace...I will
drown."

Jennifer holds Janette close and strokes her thin hair. She begins to silently cry and as she sings her dark mascara runs down the sides of her cheeks.

JENNIFER

I know I've been a bad mother. But
I love you baby girl. I love you.

From the kitchen we hear the sound of a sharp cry of agony. The cry belongs to Brenten Calder.

Jennifer sobs even harder but grabs a bottle of pills lying on the bed. She opens the container and shoves a handful of pills into her mouth and swallows.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

I love you Janny.

A few moments later Jennifer's face grows pale and her eyes grow to nothing but blank stares. She hunches over and falls to the bed.

Janette looks around in confusion. All alone and too young to comprehend what just happened.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE BEDROOM - PRESENT DAY - NIGHT

Billy comes back to the present after experiencing the vivid flashback of that night. He is still reeling from the vision.

BILLY

Oh my god.

Billy leaves the room in a hurry.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy enters the living room to find Christopher and Lainey searching different rooms.

BILLY
I think I've figured it out.

CHRISTOPHER
How?

BILLY
I just had a vision. It was vivid.

LAINY
So?

BILLY
I think the tree was protecting
her.

LAINY
What do you mean?

BILLY
The tree was protecting Janette
Calder for all those years. I think
she could still be up there. Inside
the tree!

CHRISTOPHER
Billy I think you're losing it.

BILLY
You have to trust me. I just have a
feeling she's up there.

Lainey and Christopher look at each other then nod. Billy dashes out of the house and Lainey and Christopher follow.

INT. MARJORIE NELSON'S HOME - NIGHT

Marjorie turns on her kitchen light and walks in. She fills a glass of water from the sink and drinks.

Outside of her window she looks out. In the distance she can make out the shapes of Billy, Christopher and Lainey walking through the forest.

She eyes them suspiciously then grabs the home phone and dials a number.

INT. CHIEF RANGTON'S HOME - NIGHT

The home phone rings in the living room. After a few rings the Chief sleepily drags himself into the room and picks up the phone.

RANGTON
This is Chief Rangton.

RANGTON (CONT'D)
(He listens)
I completely understand Mrs.
Nelson. I'll get right on it. Buh
bye.

Chief Rangton hangs up and walks back into his room. We move across the room and right up against the living room window.

The bright moonlight glare casts the tree as a silhouette in the night. The branches shake angrily.

We move away from the window as the Chief emerges wearing his police uniform. He straps his gun on and leaves the house.

INT. LAINEY RHINE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Jerry Rhine lies dead on the floor. Rhea slowly awakes from her drunken slumber and notices Jerry.

RHEA
Wake up Jerry, we didn't even make
the bed.

She shakes him and he doesn't budge.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Come on now Jerry don't mess
around, some of that liquor's got
to have left your system by now.

Rhea grows worried when she notices Jerry not responding.

RHEA (CONT'D)
This ain't funny Jerry. Wake up.

She slaps him and then feels his non existent pulse.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Oh shit! Jerry what the hell
happened?

Rhea begins to weep still halfway drunk.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Lainey! Get over here!

There is no response.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Lainey! Goddamnit I said get over
here! Your father's dead!

Still nothing but silence responds. Rhea gets up in frustration and heads into Lainey's room. Lainey is not in bed and nowhere to be found.

RHEA (CONT'D)
You little bitch!

Rhea grabs their cheap phone and makes a call. There is the sound of a loud THUMP!

INT. JEANINE DARLING'S HOME - NIGHT

THUMP! The slam of the bark of a tree echoes loudly.

Thump. Thump. THUMP!

After the third thump Jeanine walks in groggily.

JEANINE
What in God's name? Christopher is
that you!?

No response. Jeanine walks into Christopher's room.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jeanine walks into the dark room. THUMP!

She sits on the bed and feels around but Christopher is not there.

JEANINE
Christopher?

Jeanine checks the closet and under the bed but there is no sign of Christopher.

She looks out at the tree in anger and fear.

JEANINE (CONT'D)
You.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

Chief Rangton walks through the woods and talks on his phone.

RANGTON
I'm working on it. The whole town
will be notified. Rest assured Mam
we will find them I promise.

Rangton hangs up then grabs his police receiver and talks
into it.

RANGTON (CONT'D)
Clant. Jameson. You two there?

A few moments of silence then voices emerge on the receiver.

CLANT (O.S.)
Yes Chief.

JAMESON (O.S.)
Here Chief.

RANGTON
I need you two down here
immediately. Meet me in the town
square. Seems we have a situation
that needs handling.

CLANT (O.S.)
Yes sir.

JAMESON (O.S.)
Right away sir.

RANGTON
Good.

Chief Rangton continues on in the thick woods.

RANGTON (CONT'D)
Shit.

He keeps walking further.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

Billy, Lainey and Christopher are much deeper into the woods
and trek further on in the dark mashes before them.

Graven Hill lies further up ahead in the distance.

BILLY
We're almost there.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Chief Rangton walks toward the town square from the nearby woods.

He walks into the heart of town square to find a massive group of townspeople standing there.

They stand angrily facing the tree. A few of the townspeople hold axes and other sharp weapons. Hank Nelson steps forward.

HANK

You know what needs to be done.
It's been far too long now.

JEANINE

It's haunted us ever since we
settled here. Let's put an end to
it.

Chief Rangton surveys the crowd and then turns and leads the crowd forward.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

Billy, Lainey and Christopher walk up to the edge of the woods. Graven Hill lies just up ahead.

All three of them watch the massive hill with fear evident in their eyes.

Billy continues to lead the way and they slowly make their way out of the dense foliage of the woods. The tall hill towers above them.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Billy, Lainey and Christopher begin the long climb toward the mountainous top.

They slowly climb up the grassy slope. The climb proves to be difficult from their slow progress.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

The angry mob of townspeople march forward with determination. Chief Rangton leads the town forward. A look of uncertainty rests in his eyes.

The crowd enters the tangled web of trees woven by the woods. The townspeople force their way through the trees and thick branches before them.

MARJORIE
Move faster Chief!

RANGTON
Shut up! We'll be there soon
enough!

Rangton looks visibly shaken but turns forward and marches on into the woods.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Billy, Christopher and Lainey continue to climb. They all breath hard and move slower than before.

The thump of the tree begins again. Thump!

The wind picks up and begins to howl. Lainey slips and falls onto the ground. As if the hill has grown steeper, she clutches onto the grass in desperation.

LAINAY
I'm not sure how much longer I can
go.

Billy turns around and grabs her hand.

BILLY
Come on! We're almost at the tree!

The wind picks up and drowns out almost all audible sound. Billy pulls Lainey to her feet with difficulty.

The three continue to trek on amidst the violent wind. The edge of the twisted tree looms up ahead just over the edge of the hill.

THUMP!

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE WOODS - NIGHT

The mob of townspeople moves on at an alarmingly fast rate. The woods don't appear to slow them down at all.

THUMP!

Chief Rangton looks up to the tree up ahead as the cracking sound resounds loudly. The violent wind hits the forest with force.

A few of the townspeople are blown off their feet. Rangton looks terrified at this point. He yells to be heard over the raging wind.

RANGTON
Keep moving!

Chief Rangton lowers his shoulder and drives forward against the wind. Eventually Rangton disappears up ahead as he moves quickly.

THUMP!

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The raging wind is paralyzing. Christopher, Lainey and Billy are blown to the ground and clutch the grass.

They climb over the last edge of the hill and emerge on a flat grassy knoll.

The mystifying twisted tree rises before them, impressive in all of its glory and size. The furious wind blows the gnarled branches of the tree forcefully.

The large branches reach forward and down as if swiping at an insect on the ground. The branches overhang and draw closer to the ground.

Thump. THUMP!

As if in a trance the three brave souls walk forward toward the tree. It appears that the tree is calling them, beckoning them ever closer.

Heavy rain begins to fall from the sky and adds to the ongoing storm. The wind howls angrily.

Billy, Lainey and Christopher begin to get drenched in the downpour. They continue to walk closer and closer to the ominous tree.

Chief Rangton emerges on the hill unseen by Billy, Lainey or Christopher. He slowly creeps around the back of the tree and disappears behind the trunk as the three continue to stare up at the branches.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The angry mob struggles out of the woods as the storm has hit it's climax. The rain and wind assault the mob.

The townspeople struggle to ascend the hill.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

As the three draw closer to the tree, the branches slowly draw closer. Low singing can be heard. The female voice sounds older.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
(Singing)
Oh sweet dear old Graven Hill...

INT. POLICE ACADEMY HALL - DAY

A massive hall of the academy is filled with officers. A graduating ceremony is being held.

A stage lies at the front with a podium and microphone in the center of it. The head of police in charge of the academy, WILLIAM CRAMER (55) steps up to the microphone.

WILLIAM
Gentleman and now officers,
congratulations on making it
through the academy.

He holds for a round of applause.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Courage, morality, honor. The
academy is built upon those
principles and as officers of the
law, it is now your job to uphold
the law with the utmost honor, to
serve your country and to wear that
badge on your uniform. Wearing that
badge means you will enforce the
law, but also that you will live
your life with honesty, kindness
and compassion, morality and honor.
It means that you will strive to do
the right thing regardless of the
situation. You will prevail and
create a safe world for us all.

Billy wears his uniform and sits in the large crowd of graduates. He listens to the speech.

He appears determined, focused and inspired to step foot into the world with his badge and uniform.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Good luck to you all.

William finishes his speech and the hall erupts into applause.

Billy claps and yells in excitement.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Billy suddenly snaps out of his trance and looks at the tree with horror. He realizes what is happening. He hears William's voice in his head.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Wearing that badge means you will enforce the law, but also that you will live your life with honesty, kindness and compassion, morality and honor.

THUMP!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
(Singing)
...Down my spine stirs a chill...

Billy looks at the badge on his uniform. He then grabs Christopher who is still in his trance. He covers his eyes and ears to drown out the singing.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
It means that you will strive to do the right thing regardless of the situation. You will prevail and create a safe world for us all.

Billy turns Christopher around and looks into his eyes. He appears to have broken the trance as well.

BILLY
You OK?

CHRISTOPHER
Yes.

Lainey continues to walk toward the tree. Billy and Christopher look on in horror.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (Singing)
 ...And when the night falls over
 the town...

BILLY
 Lainey! Stop!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (Singing)
 ...in your unfeeling embrace I will
 drown.

Lainey draws closer to the tree.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The storm rages on. The townspeople begin to fall behind but
 a select few press in the treacherous conditions.

THUMP!

A few townspeople approach the edge of the hill.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Lainey continues to walk forward closer to the tree.

BILLY
 Stop!

Lainey draws close enough to the tree trunk to touch it. The
 extending branches curl closer and closer until they are just
 a foot above Lainey's head.

She looks up into the tree without an ounce of fear.

THUMP! Right from inside the tree comes the hollow sound.

CHRISTOPHER
 Lainey!

Billy turns to the tree. The branches wrap around Lainey's
 body and grab her tightly.

THUMP!

The vicious storm is blinding in all of its fury. The twisted
 tree grabs Lainey and pulls her into the trunk.

BILLY
 The tree is alive!

Billy and Christopher dash toward the tree as quickly as possible but are too late. Lainey disappears somewhere in the trunk of the tree. The rain makes it virtually impossible to see here anymore.

As Billy and Christopher approach the trunk of the twisted tree it shoots its branches outward knocking both men violently off their feet.

A few more of the townspeople emerge on the grassy knoll holding weapons.

THUMP!

The tree's trunk twists again angrily and reaches down closer toward Billy. He dives and barely avoids the branch. He pops back to his feet, grabs an axe and gets close enough to drive the axe into the base of the tree.

The tree reacts as if it feels pain. Billy rears back and drives the axe into the trunk again taking a chunk of wood away with it.

The tree recoils and then swings one of its gnarled branches close enough to hit Billy viciously. Billy is knocked off of his feet and hits the ground.

His face and arms are bloodied from the blow.

Billy still lies on the ground but looks up toward the dark sky as the rain drenches his body. The dark clouds shift about gradually.

Billy slowly sits back up and looks to the tree.

THUMP!

Billy looks to Christopher who watches the action unfolding with horror. Billy shouts over the violent storm.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I have to go in!

CHRISTOPHER

What!?

BILLY

I have to go inside that tree!

Christopher slowly accepts this reality and nods. Billy stands to his feet and looks at the tree then runs toward it as fast as he can.

As Billy draws closer to the tree the tree takes notice and turns itself to face him. Just as a branch is about to take Billy off his feet he hits the ground in a baseball slide and draws his gun and fires off a shot.

The shot hits a branch of the tree. The tree twists to the side and Billy manages to reach the base of the trunk. Billy fires another shot into the trunk.

The trunk twists in agony exposing a hole in the base of the trunk. Billy quickly dives into it and barely fits through it. He disappears into the tree.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Billy falls hard into a dark and cramped space. Small slivers of moonlight stream down from the top of the tree. The inside of the tree quivers as if it is alive.

Billy stands up and slowly walks into a large open space that is the center of the tree. It's deserted and the floor and walls are completely covered in the bark that makes up the tree.

The loud thumping that has continued to emanate from the tree rings out from somewhere below the floor. THUMP! THUMP!

Billy looks down in confusion. He scans the wood under him in search of an answer. The persistent thumping continues from below.

A tiny cracked hole in the floor lies in the edge of the wide open space. Billy notices it and walks over to it and examines it.

Then with an instinctual sense Billy drives his foot against the hole. With a loud crack a small piece of wood chips off. Billy continues to kick the opening until the hole gradually widens.

After furiously kicking the hole it opens wide enough for Billy to fit through. A loud roar emits from up above deep into the tree.

Billy drops into the hole.

INT. DARK PASSAGE - NIGHT

Billy falls blindly in the dark and hits hard ground in pitch black.

Screams resonate around him in a terrifying manner.

BILLY

Hello?

The only light comes from up above through the opening in the floor.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hello!?

VOICE (O.S.)

Billy?

BILLY

Yes! Lainey?

Lainey appears out of the darkness. She is dirty and wet and looks scared.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What's going on?

Lainey seems to be disoriented.

LAINEY

The tree is alive.

BILLY

I know. Did it hurt you?

LAINEY

I don't think so.

BILLY

Janette Calder has to be down here somewhere. Stay close to me we are going to find her.

Billy disappears into the darkness followed by Lainey.

We can hear the sound of moving in the darkness. A loud thump echoes just up ahead.

JANETTE (O.S.)

(Singing)

Oh sweet dear old Graven Hill...

A tiny speck of light emerges out of the dark. It appears to be a small keyhole in the wall. Billy looks into the keyhole.

Through the keyhole he sees a dimly lit space that resembles a room. A small wooden square that appears to be a bed rests in the corner. Someone is in the room and bangs against the wall.

A girl sings in the room as she hits the wall.

JANETTE (CONT'D)

(Singing)

down my spine stirs a chill, and
when the night falls over the town,
in your unfeeling embrace I will
drown.

Upon closer inspection Billy makes the figure out to be a girl appearing to be in her early twenties.

The girl is dirty and her hair and clothes are tangled messes. Her face is obscured by her mess of hair. She pounds every so often against the bark on the wall with her fist. THUMP!

The girl's appearance resembles a savage. Billy is startled to find her inside but also at her physical appearance.

BILLY

Lainey, I think that's Janette
Calder. She's been trapped inside
the tree all these years.

LAINNEY

We have to get her out.

Billy surveys the key hole and searches for another way in.

He turns back from the keyhole and knocks on the wall around the keyhole. He tries to get the girl's attention but she remains frozen against the wall inside the room.

BILLY

Damn it!

LAINNEY

We'll have to get in.

BILLY

Something has to unlock this key
hole. It looks like a door of some
sort. We probably just need to find
the key.

Billy looks once more at the ravenous girl in the room leaning against the wall.

Then he turns away from the key hole and begins moving through the darkness around the dark passageway.

A loud creaking and grinding sound resounds throughout the tree.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Do you hear that?

LAINY
Yeah. What do you think it is?

The sound continues.

BILLY
No idea.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

A group of townspeople stand atop the grassy knoll and face the tree. Christopher is among the crowd and fearfully watches the tree beginning to twist and turn violently.

A few of the townspeople wield their weapons and hack away at the bark of the twisted tree's trunk.

The tree shifts and emits noises resembling screams as the townspeople carve away chunks of bark from the base of the massive tree.

The tree swings its branches and knocks a few of the townspeople violently off their feet. A few more of the angry townspeople continue to swing their weapons.

As the tree twists its trunk to defend itself it exposes the small opening in the side of it. Christopher notices the hole and sprints toward it.

He dives and manages to squeeze through the hole right before the tree twists and it closes once again.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Christopher finds himself in the dark and cramped space of the tree. He walks through the darkness until he finds himself in the wide open space.

He walks around and finds a wooden makeshift staircase on the side of the wall. He slowly ascends the staircase and quickly finds himself at the very top of the inside of the tree.

A small key hangs from a branch at the very top of the tree. Christopher looks at it in confusion before he is suddenly jolted forward.

Christopher hears the awful creaking sound of wood. He looks around to find the walls of the tree slowly cracking.

Christopher books down the staircase and then runs toward the hole in the wall to escape and accidentally falls into the open hole that Billy kicked open.

INT. DARK PASSAGE - NIGHT

Christopher falls down the dark passage yelling the entire way down.

He hits the ground hard and looks around. After a moment of getting to his feet he begins to hear the faint sound of voices just up ahead.

He walks toward the voices and begins to make them out. The walls continue to slowly fall apart while the creaking and cracking signal that the tree is converging in on itself.

Up ahead the voices begin to sound familiar. Christopher approaches the dark figures.

CHRISTOPHER

Billy, Lainey?

BILLY

Christopher?

CHRISTOPHER

Yeah. What the hell is going on?

BILLY

Janette Calder is in that room just behind the wall. She's been here for fifteen years.

LAINY

We're looking for a key to get into that room in there to get her out.

CHRISTOPHER

I saw a key.

BILLY

Where!?

CHRISTOPHER

Up there. It's hanging from the very top of the tree.

LAINY

The tree is keeping her here.

BILLY

Let's go!

As the tree continues to fall apart Billy, Lainey and Christopher run through the passage until the hole is just above them.

CHRISTOPHER

Give me a boost.

Billy locks his hands and Christopher puts his foot on his hands. Billy lifts his leg up as he grasps the top of the hole and pull himself up and through it.

Lainey follows next and then Christopher reaches down and grabs Billy's hand and pulls him up and into the hole.

The walls press ever closer.

Lainey, Billy and Christopher rush to the staircase and run up it in a frenzy. They make it to the top and spot the key hanging from the branch.

As pieces of the tree begin to fall, the tree caves in on itself and the branch raises higher and higher away from reach.

Christopher stands up and reaches out but the branch has risen too far.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

I have to jump.

BILLY

You won't reach it. Let me do it.

CHRISTOPHER

No I can get it.

Billy shakes his head in frustration but remains silent. The branch raises a little bit higher.

LAINY

Go!

Christopher takes a few steps back then runs and jumps as high as he can to catch the branch. He soars through the air, high above the base of the ground of the tree.

SNAP! The sound of a branch breaking echoes inside the tree. The closing walls have snapped a branch up above. But not the one with the key.

Christopher's hand barely catches the branch and he holds on with difficulty as the branch continues to rise. Christopher pulls himself higher with difficulty.

He approaches the key and swipes at it with a free hand and misses. He slides down the tree a few feet and almost falls off.

Billy and Lainey watch below in suspense. Christopher pulls himself up and again and makes another swipe at the key. He grabs it this time and slides down the tree a few feet.

The branch keeps raising up and Christopher grows closer to the very top of the tree.

BILLY

Let go!

Christopher swings his body a few times and then lets go right as the branch hits the top of the tree and snaps.

Christopher free falls until he barely lands on the edge of the staircase. Billy grabs him before he topples off the edge.

Billy, Lainey and Christopher all face each other with intense relief and then dash down the stairway. The Stairway starts to become crushed.

They all make it to the bottom just as the staircase crumbles. The three jump down into the hole.

INT. DARK PASSAGE - NIGHT

All three dash across the passageway and head for the room. Billy takes the key and runs up to the key hole.

He places the key into the hole which fits perfectly. He turns the key and a patch of the wooden wall swings inward to access the hidden room.

Billy runs into the room. The girl slightly turns her head.

BILLY

Janette!

The girl doesn't look over. Billy grabs her arm. She violently shoves Billy off and turns to face him.

Beneath the tangled hair is the dirty and ravaged face of a young teenage girl. There are hints at a beauty but it is concealed under the dirt and grime.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Janette?

The girl looks at Billy but can't form the words to reply.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Can you speak?

The girl shakes her head no.

BILLY (CONT'D)
How long have you been down here?

She looks confused.

This is the missing infant all these years later, JANETTE CALDER (18). She sits in silence and besides the song has an inability to speak.

CHRISTOPHER
We have to take her.

Billy, Lainey and Christopher all grab Janette and drag her forcefully out of the room toward the exit. She fights them but can't resist all three.

As they make their way through the dark Billy comes to a realization.

BILLY
Rangton...

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Billy motions to Christopher as they emerge from the darkness.

BILLY
Take her outside. I'll be out soon.

LAINAY
Where are you going?

BILLY
Just go.

Billy lets go of Janette and watches Lainey and Christopher take Janette toward the exit of the tree.

Billy ascends the staircase and approaches the small side door that rests against the wooden wall at the top. Billy moves the door and enters.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Billy slowly enters the control room to find Chief Rangton feverishly operating the controls of the tree.

Billy approaches still in disbelief. Chief Rangton finally spots him and turns to face Billy.

RANGTON

Welcome Blake. I could tell right away you were a bright one.

BILLY

Why?

RANGTON

Have you ever been in such a position of power?

Billy doesn't answer.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

The feeling is otherworldly.

The Chief suddenly leaves the controls and charges at Billy. He takes Billy by surprise and takes him to the ground.

Billy hits the ground hard and yells in pain. They continue to wrestle for control. Parts of the tree begin to crumble in the control room.

Billy finally throws Rangton off of him and forcefully delivers a few blows to his face. Rangton lays weak and bloody with no retaliation.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

How does it feel?

BILLY

Chief?

RANGTON

Does it feel great?

The inside of the tree below can be heard crumbling in on itself close to completely collapsing.

BILLY

Does what feel great?

RANGTON

Being in a position of power.

BILLY

Shut up.

Billy pops him hard one more time. The he brings Rangton to his feet and supports him as Rangton struggles to walk. They make their way out of the control room.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Billy and Rangton eventually make their way down the staircase and then approach the exit opening as the tree continues to crumble.

Billy drags Rangton toward the hole and then pulls him up to the next level. Rangton struggles but Billy pulls him up through it.

Billy slips through and drags a barely-conscious Rangton through it.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Rangton and Billy emerge on the second level and approach the exit as the tree is just about to completely collapse. Billy squeezes through the small opening.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Billy manages to just escape and drags Rangton through the hole just as the hole collapses and the trees branches begin to fall quickly.

Billy and Rangton quickly move away from the tree and join Lainey, Janette and Christopher down the grassy knoll.

They all watch as the branches fall from the top of the tree until they are all gone.

The twisted trunk twists and twists until the trunk completely collapses and falls in a heap of wood and branches.

Nothing remains of the tree but the pile. The group rests on the grass in shock and disbelief.

Billy looks to everyone in the group and breathes heavily in relief.

He quickly looks to Chief Rangton and grabs him menacingly.

BILLY

You. What are you hiding?

Chief Rangton appears calm, as if he has already accepted the consequences.

RANGTON

Why didn't you leave me in there?

BILLY

Because you are going to tell me
what the fuck is wrong with this
town!

RANGTON

It doesn't matter now.

Billy holds Rangton tightly and brings him close to his face.

BILLY

What is going on here?

Rangton motions to the fallen tree.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What is it?

RANGTON

The tree watches over the town. It
rules over it.

BILLY

How so?

RANGTON

Someone always controlled it.

Billy continues to process this.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

Someone had to make the tree do
those things all those years.

Billy stumbles back in shock. He shakes his head in confusion
and looks back at the tree lying in ruins on the ground.

Rangton laughs.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

Shocking isn't it?

Rangton looks over to the tree.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

See the tree has been here since
the early 1900's, well before we
got here...

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - 1910 - NIGHT

Graven Hill stands empty, the tree is nowhere to be seen. The town below it resembles only a fraction of how we recognize it at present day. Only a few buildings line the streets.

A small group of men walk across the hill and face the town below. One of these is the old MAYOR (38).

MAYOR

We'll build it right here, to watch over the town. All of you will camp out on this hill until it has been completed, no one will return to town. And word of this project will be spoken of to no one. Understood?

The other men nod.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Good. Now get to work.

The men immediately set to work laying down supplies and pieces of wood.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL/TOWN OF TRANDDENSE - DAY/NIGHT

BEGIN MONTAGE

Multiple days and nights pass as we watch from the top of Graven Hill.

Multiple men continue to slave away constructing a massive tree.

The men live in tents and cook food in between working.

Paint, wood, paper and other supplies line the hill.

As the tree continues to "grow" taller, it appears to be growing from the town below.

Townspeople start to notice the tree and watch it with curiosity and wonder.

The Mayor keeps an ever watchful eye over the town and the tree's progress this entire time.

END MONTAGE

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - 1920 - NIGHT

The Mayor stands atop Graven Hill looking down at his town. A small group of men attend to the last details of the tree.

By this point the massive tree stands tall and the hanging branches stand out eerily in the night. One last piece of wood is painted to match the base of the trunk and sealed into the tree.

As the tree stands completed the Mayor looks at the tree, greed and hunger in his eyes. He approaches the tree and touches it.

MAYOR

It's beautiful.

The mayor continues to survey the tree.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

And it's complete with all of the arrangements we discussed?

TOWNSMAN

Of course sir.

MAYOR

Great work men.

The Mayor turns to his town then suddenly turns on his heel, draws a revolver and shoots dead each and every one of the men.

The Mayor looks at the tree and walks toward it. He slowly turns the trunk to reveal an opening and he enters it.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The Mayor enters the large and hollow open space of the tree. He ascends the staircase against the wall and climbs to the top of the tree.

There is a small cockpit room that the Mayor walks into at the very top of the stairs off to the side.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

In the room is a series of practical and old fashioned levers, pulleys and a small wooden wheel.

The Mayor tests the levers and pulleys and pulls them back and forth and from side to side.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The twisted tree's branches slowly move and curl over as if reaching out. The tree moves as if alive from being controlled inside by the Mayor.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The Mayor continues to operate the tree making its branches move. The Mayor moves to the wooden wheel and slowly turns it.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A small group of townspeople watches the tree up above. As the tree's branches move as if alive. They watch on in fear as the trunk of the tree begins to twist and creak as it does so.

People begin screaming and fleeing in fear.

The twisted tree suddenly untwists and sits completely straight again. It remains still in the night air as townspeople run to their homes.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The mayor lets go of the wooden wheel and admires the work of the tree.

INT. GRAVEN HILL BALL ROOM - NIGHT

The Mayor stands in the middle of the ballroom. A group of the townspeople slowly drift into the room.

MAYOR

Yes come on in.

The last of the townspeople stagger in.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I called a town meeting to discuss a few important things.

TOWNSWOMAN

We're not staying in this town. Not with that tree here.

MAYOR

I'll address that shortly if you will but just listen to what I have to say.

A silence washes over the room.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

As I'm sure you have all noticed, that tree atop Graven Hill now watches over us. I'm here to tell you not to leave, and not to fear, but to respect it. I know just as much about the tree and where it came from as all of you. But I do know that it must be here for a purpose, and I have a divine sense of intuition that it isn't here to harm any of us or the town as a whole.

The Mayor strides gracefully across the ballroom as he speaks.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I'm asking you not to leave. We work and exist as the town of Trandense because we are all here. Some things lie out of our control in life but it is up to us as the people of this town to make this the best town we possibly can as a collective. In order to do that we have to make the most of the present situation and in so doing, to stay in town. Weary and alert we must be, but afraid and spiteful we must not. I'm depending on you all to uphold the honor of the town and to retain the virtue within it. Can I trust that the honor will be upheld by all?

The speech has an effect on the crowd and they all nod and say yes among themselves.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

That's what I like to hear! Now who's ready for the shin dig of the century?

The townspeople cheer and eagerly chatter to each other.

The Mayor strolls over to the edge of the ballroom and pulls a red curtain aside to reveal an arrangement of musicians complete with some string instruments and percussion players.

They erupt into song on cue and the beautiful symphonic swirls fill the massive ballroom.

The townspeople disperse on the ballroom and begin to merrily dance.

The Mayor quickly and stealthily slips behind the red curtain unseen.

The townspeople continue to dance on the ballroom without the slightest notion of anything wrong. The people dance in a cohesive rhythm.

The red curtain suddenly bursts into flames and causes a panic among the people in the ballroom. Many rush toward the exit to find the door locked.

The fire spreads further and begins to consume the ballroom and everyone inside it amidst the screams.

INT. THE MAYOR'S HOME - NIGHT

The mayor sits over a desk and writes in a journal with a quill and jar of ink. He dips the quill into the ink and continues to write.

MAYOR (V.O.)

November 12, 1920. They all believe it. I have them fooled. Some rhetoric was all it took to get the job done. The tree is but just a device with which to control this town and every simple mind in it. Now that the town is ignorant and gullible I have utmost rule and plan to exercise it. A new ballroom will come in time. Some deaths occurred at the ball room tonight, but alas a few bodies must hit the floor in order to take control and make them see. Divine power...it is mine.

The Mayor stands up and walks over to the window. He surveys his town with a look of hunger. Then he looks up at the tree.

MAYOR

But now I must leave. The tree is waiting.

The Mayor dons dark clothes and walks out of the room.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - 1930 - NIGHT

The massive tree upon Graven Hill moves slightly in the night and the trunk slightly twists around.

The Mayor emerges from inside the tree a moment later. His face is deathly pale and he looks immensely sick as he coughs violently while sneaks away from the tree.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A small group of townspeople stands in the town square before the mayor. He coughs and struggles to speak as he addresses the crowd.

MAYOR

As you know-

(Coughs)

An illness is prevalent in town.

And has struck many.

He bursts into a coughing fit but continues.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Our friends and family are dying.

We must be alert and aware.

The mayor breaks into a sweat and slowly walks away as he violently coughs.

INT. THE MAYOR'S HOME - NIGHT

The mayor looks horrible in his afflicted state. He sits at his desk and struggles to write. His letters look messy and jumbled on the page.

MAYOR (V.O.)

October 29, 1930. It's come to this. I fear that this legacy I have created will fall and simply be strewn away like dust in the wind. The sickness struck fast and with a vengeance. Am I perhaps repenting for my sins?

The Mayor hits another coughing fit and appears even weaker than before and white as a sheet.

MAYOR (V.O.)

I will hide the journal in hopes that it will end up in the right hands. The last night on Earth I undergo and the end draws near. The morning slowly approaches and brings death with it.

The Mayor writes the last sentence and weakly grabs the journal and opens a floorboard in the corner of the room. Inside is a small compartment where he places the journal.

He closes the floorboard and crawls into his bed. His deathly pallor glows in the moonlight. He looks once more at the tree.

MAYOR

Goodbye.

The Mayor closes his eyes for the last time.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - 1940 - NIGHT

A storm rages in the night. We slowly move in to a large wooden sign at the outskirts of town. As we get closer we can make out the words.

In large black carved letters reads WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF TRANDENSE.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE - NIGHT

We move through the town and the homes and buildings of Trandense. Not a single person lies in sight and it quickly becomes clear that the town is completely deserted.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

From the tree the eerily empty town lies below. Completely silent.

The tree shakes in the violent storm. The trunk gets closer and closer until darkness consumes everything.

FADE IN:

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - 1950 - DAY

The tall tree dominates the hill. A group of four men walk up the hill and approach the tree. They stand before it and face it.

Three of the men are new townspeople, RANDY (28), KEVIN (30), and CLYDE (40). The fourth is elaborately dressed and is the new mayor, JOSEPH RANGTON (42).

MAYOR RANGTON
Glorious isn't it? It's like it
rules the town.

Mayor Rangton touches the tree's trunk in admiration.

MAYOR RANGTON (CONT'D)
It's spectacular. It is almost as
if it is alive.

Mayor Rangton faces the town like a King facing his empire.

MAYOR RANGTON (CONT'D)
This town has exciting things in
store. This town will flourish.
Trandense will lie in splendor.
Trandense will thrive.

The tree looms with grandeur.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

We slowly move in to the large wooden sign at the outskirts of town. The letters look worn but still read WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF TRANDENSE.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Groups of people haul piles of possessions and items toward their houses as the new community moves in to the previously abandoned town.

Many of the new townspeople look up at the mysterious tree on the top of Graven Hill with curiosity.

INT. MAYOR RANGTON'S HOME - DAY

We move through a familiar house. We start to recognize it as the former house of the last mayor of the town.

Mayor Rangton surveys the home, still settling into the newly acquired space. He walks through the house and grabs a suit and tie resting on a chair.

INT. GRAVEN HILL BALL ROOM - NIGHT

The entirety of the townspeople congregate in the ballroom chattering eagerly. Mayor Rangton walks in donning a sharp suit.

He tips his head at the crowd and then assumes the front of the ballroom to face the crowd.

MAYOR RANGTON

My father used to tell me to cherish the ordinary. I believe he meant that too often in life we take the little things, the "thank you's" the "I love you's" and the hugs and smiles, for granted. Life is comprised of these subtle moments that add up to what becomes our legacy on this earth. We must cherish every ordinary moment no matter how small it may be. I'm glad you all followed me into this new venture. I think this change of location is fitting for us all and I am pleased to now have you all live in the town of Trandense. I hope to inspire a community that can thrive on happiness and appreciate the little things. As the people of the town of Trandense, let's leave a legacy.

Mayor Rangton finishes his speech as the ballroom erupts into monstrous applause.

After the applause dies down the Mayor faces the back corner where a band waits.

MAYOR RANGTON (CONT'D)

In honor of our new town let's celebrate!

The band begins to play 1950's rock and roll music. The townspeople immediately begin to start dancing to the music.

As if in a hypnotic trance the townspeople move in rhythm to the music. The music echoes through the ballroom and the people move, prisoner to the music.

We move through the ballroom and across the dance floor and up onto the stage. The band loses themselves in playing the music. As a collective the town moves in rhythm.

Mayor Rangton stands to the side intently watching the activity.

INT. MAYOR RANGTON'S HOME - NIGHT

We move through the house into the mayor's kitchen. Mayor Rangton pours a drink of liquor and takes a swig then we follow him into his bedroom.

The small bedroom is oddly familiar. Mayor Rangton sips his drink as he stands at the window and looks out.

The quaint homes and town square are visible from the window. Mayor Rangton smiles as he looks at his town. He looks up at the tree on Graven Hill. He looks at it with wonder.

Mayor Rangton downs the rest of his drink and then walks around the side of the bed. He stumbles on the floorboards and falls hard onto the floor.

MAYOR RANGTON

Shit.

A hollow sound resounds as he hits the ground. He rubs his shoulder in pain. In front of him a floorboard has slid off to the side.

There is a small opening under it. Mayor Rangton slides the floorboard off and looks down into a small compartment. He reaches down into it and pulls out a dusty journal.

He flips through a few pages and we recognize it as the former Mayor's personal journal.

Mayor Rangton gets to his feet and excitedly places it on his desk and begins to read the first page. We hear the old mayor's voice.

MAYOR (V.O.)

August 25, 1910. This quaint town of Trandense. What a peaceful and isolated place. The connection to the people is sublime. This is the kind of place where great things can be accomplished. Together we can all exist in harmony.

(MORE)

MAYOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I feel that great things are in store for this town and it is my duty to serve the people and the town and make Trandense rise to its true glory.

Mayor Rangton flips through the pages of the diary to the middle and reads another entry.

MAYOR (V.O.)

April 20, 1925. This control I possess is exhilarating. The people constantly live in a state of fear and it controls them like puppets. They really believe it is alive. I never knew that holding so much power could feel so fulfilling. They do whatever I tell them to do. To think that I used to believe we were all of equal footing. They eat out of the palm of my hand.

Mayor Rangton reads the entry with a troubled expression on his face and turns toward the end of the journal and reads a few more entries.

MAYOR (V.O.)

March 9, 1928. Every time I climb into that tree I get a rush unlike anything else. Holding the controls and making the tree come alive is empowering to the highest degree. I feel closest to my calling and divine rule. Overlooking the town and holding them all in the grasp of terror, knowing they are all mine.

Mayor Rangton leads the very last entry.

MAYOR (V.O.)

October 29, 1930. The last night on Earth I undergo and the end draws near. The morning slowly approaches and brings death with it.

Mayor Rangton closes the journal and walks over to the window. He looks out and up at the twisted tree on Graven Hill.

He studies the tree, knowing its secret. He watches it as he thinks and then quickly gets dressed and leaves his room.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The tree lies in waiting as Mayor Rangton emerges on the grassy knoll and slowly approaches the tree.

He walks up to the trunk and surveys it with curiosity. He spots a small hole in the side of the trunk. He peers into it and then touches it.

Mayor Rangton grab the trunk and tries to move it. To his surprise the trunk shifts slightly opening the hole to the tree. Mayor Rangton slowly enters the tree.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The wide open space of the hollow tree is familiar. Mayor Rangton slowly wades through the darkness into the middle of the open space still in disbelief.

He surveys the mysterious space then notices the staircase ascending toward the top of the tree.

He slowly climbs it and sees the side door to the control room and enters.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton walks into the room full of contraptions and appliances. He curiously investigates the pulleys and levers dispersed about the room.

In his curiosity he grabs the pulleys and tugs them back and forth.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The branches of the tree move back and forth as if they behave with a mind of their own.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A few of the townspeople make their way home. From the town square the branches of the tree move and a few people stop to take notice.

The tree continues to move and the townspeople look on in horror at the tree. Many people scatter and rush toward their homes.

One of the women, GINA DENANT (40), stands rooted to the spot, paralyzed in her terror.

GINA
The tree is alive.

The tree continues to move and she finally snaps out of it and rushes home.

INT. GINA'S HOME - NIGHT

We move through Gina's home as she rushes through the door. We move into the kitchen and up toward the window.

In the window the tree can be seen atop the hill reaching down toward the city.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton controls the tree with an exhilarated look on his face not evident before. Eventually he stops controlling the tree and greedily looks at the controls.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton steps out from inside the tree and looks down at the town below. A few people can be seen fleeing the streets.

Mayor Rangton watches this with satisfaction then lustily glances up at the tree again. He begins walking down the hill as we move toward the trunk of the tree.

INT. MAYOR RANGTON'S HOME - DAY

Mayor Rangton sits over a journal furiously writing away.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Mayor Rangton eagerly walks through town with a smile on his face.

On his way toward the court house he passes by a young mother, CINDY WEATHERSOME (28). She holds her young baby girl, CHRISTINE WEATHERSOME (3) in her arms.

CINDY
Good afternoon Mayor.

Mayor Rangton tips his top hat.

MAYOR RANGTON
 Afternoon Ms. Weathersome. How are
 we on this lovely day?

CINDY
 Splendid thank you.

Mayor Rangton lightly pokes young Christine.

MAYOR RANGTON
 And how are we little Christine?

Christine giggles and wraps her tiny hand around the Mayor's
 finger.

MAYOR RANGTON (CONT'D)
 So cute.

CINDY
 Mayor? Can I ask you something?

MAYOR RANGTON
 Of course. Ask away.

CINDY
 That tree up there...

MAYOR RANGTON
 Yes?

CINDY
 Well, me and a few of the other
 townspeople are a little unsure
 about it.

MAYOR RANGTON
 How so?

Cindy hesitates.

CINDY
 We are afraid of it and what it is.

MAYOR RANGTON
 Because?

CINDY
 We think it is dangerous.

MAYOR RANGTON
 Well let me assure you it will not
 harm us in any way.

(MORE)

MAYOR RANGTON (CONT'D)

It's a tree up on a hill and it
can't harm any of us down in town.
I promise you that.

CINDY

It's branches were moving.

MAYOR RANGTON

The wind currents are strong Ms.
Weathersome, they easily could have
moved the branches.

Cindy's look of concern remains on her face.

MAYOR RANGTON (CONT'D)

Will you promise me you will give
the town a chance. Will you do that
for me? I'll ensure your safety and
that of everyone else in this town.

CINDY

Thank you Mayor.

Mayor Rangton dips his head.

MAYOR RANGTON

Good day to you lovely ladies.

CINDY

Goodbye Mayor.

He walks away cheerfully. Cindy watches him go in awe and
then looks up at the tree.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE - DAY/NIGHT

The day quickly passes and as noon passes the sun makes its
quick descent from sunset to nightfall.

INT. MAYOR RANGTON'S HOME - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton stands in his room. He holds an old 1950's
video camera switches it on.

We now see everything through the lens of the old black and
white film grain of the antique camera as Rangton looks
around the room.

Mayor Rangton shuts the camera off. He grabs a black cloak on
his way out of the room.

INT. CINDY WEATHERSOME'S HOME - NIGHT

The dark home of the Weathersomes lies dark and empty.

INT. CHRISTINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Innocent Christine lies asleep in a tiny crib in the center of the quaint room.

As if a voice has spoken to her she opens her eyes. She sits up. Christine looks toward the window and then begins climbing out of the crib.

She manages to climb over the top and lower herself to the floor. As if urged forward she slowly walks on her small legs out into the hall.

INT. CINDY WEATHERSOME'S HOME - NIGHT

Christine walks down the hall. The front door hangs wide open. Christine walks through it out into the night.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The tiny figure of Christine emerges near the top of the tall hill. She crawls on all fours onto the grassy knoll and heads toward the tree.

The tree slowly moves up ahead. As she draws closer the tree appears to take notice of her and moves its branches closer. Reaching toward her.

Christine slowly gets to her feet and walks closer as if being beckoned to the tree. She draws closer and closer.

Eventually she stands right beside the massive tree. The branches lower toward the ground and reach down until they completely cover the small figure of Christine in the dark night.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT - OLD VIDEO CAMERA FOOTAGE

We see everything through the distorted and grainy image from the film of an old vintage 1950's video camera. The clicking sound of the film recording can be heard.

The old camera moves up the hill and sees the large tree come into view. The camera shakily moves in hand held fashion toward the tree until the tree towers overhead.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - MORNING

The branches of the twisted tree hang outward in the morning sun.

INT. MAYOR RANGTON'S HOME - MORNING

Mayor Rangton sits at his journal writing a few last words. He sits back and reads his finished entry.

MAYOR RANGTON (V.O.)
October 30th, 1950. Trandense rests completely in my control. The tree is the perfect instrument to manipulate them all. Paralyzed with fear, there is nothing the people can do now. The little girl is in my possession. This will be a testament to my rule. This power feel so right.

INT. CINDY WEATHERSOME'S HOME - MORNING

We slowly move down the hallway of the home. The shrill scream of Cindy Weathersome rings from Christine's room.

We move down the hall and into the door of Christine's room.

INT. CHRISTINE'S ROOM - MORNING

Cindy shrieks in a panic as she looks at Christine's empty crib. Tears rim her eyes.

INT. GRAVEN HILL BALL ROOM - MORNING

Cindy storms into the ball room. She finds Mayor Rangton standing alone in the middle of the ball room surveying the floor. His video camera rests on a piano in the corner.

Cindy is hysterical and yells across the room. Her voice echoes in the cavernous ball room.

CINDY
Where the fuck is my daughter!?

Mayor Rangton slowly turns to face her and steps forward as he addresses her with a calm demeanor.

MAYOR RANGTON

Lovely morning. Resplendent isn't it? What a glorious ball room. Nice to see you Ms. Weathersome.

CINDY

Where is she? Where is my daughter!?

MAYOR RANGTON

I'm sorry mam.

CINDY

It was the tree wasn't it!? You know where she is!

Cindy breaks into a crying fit.

MAYOR RANGTON

Ms. Weathersome I think you are starting to lose it. I suggest you rest, you're sounding ill.

CINDY

You motherfucker! Tell me!

Cindy charges at Mayor Rangton who calmly sidesteps and forcefully grabs Cindy and holds her close to him. He whispers in her ear.

MAYOR RANGTON

I have unlimited power now. It is a beautiful morning filled with sunshine. You will not rain on my parade.

Mayor Rangton quickly snaps Cindy's neck. Her body goes limp as she crumples to the floor. Mayor Rangton dances across the floor and grabs the camera and peers into it.

WE LOOK THROUGH THE LENS OF THE OLD VIDEO CAMERA:

We move across the ball room floor and look down over Cindy's dead body.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A group of townspeople gather in the middle of the town square.

Mayor Rangton walks forward and addresses the crowd. His face is red and he fakes tears.

MAYOR RANGTON

I am so sorry to stand before you all today and tell you this news. Cindy and Christine Weathersome have departed us. They were both found early in the morning outside of town by an explorer. It appears Cindy took her daughter's life then took her own. To grieve the loss of our very own townspeople we must come together as a community and embrace one another and mourn our tragic loss. I am deeply affected but know we can get through this. The town of Trandense must always remain strong.

The fallen faces of the townspeople reveal the bleak turn of events. Many look up the tree with hatred, fear or a combination of both.

After a moment of silence the townspeople disperse. Mayor Rangton remains until all have left. He looks up at the tree with satisfaction.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton quickly hurries across the hill in his dark cloak. He holds his video camera and eagerly approaches the tree trunk.

He is about to enter the trunk of the tree when he hears a series of voice just over the hill. Suddenly a group of the townspeople emerge over the top of the hill.

They hold weapons and furiously march forward. Mayor Rangton quickly slips into the tree right before he is spotted by the mob.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton runs up the stairs inside the tree.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton frantically enters the control room and places the camera on a side ledge facing himself. He looks into it and wildly smiles.

Mayor Rangton then grabs the pulleys and controls.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The angry mob charges toward the tree. A few townspeople raise their shovels, rakes, and axes.

A few of the men take swings at the tree connecting with the fake base. A few large chunks come off of the tree.

Suddenly the large branches swing down and knock the men forcefully off of their feet.

A few more townspeople throw themselves toward the tree with their weapons. The tree violently pelts them and leaves them bloody on the grass.

People continue to get hit by the tree. The majority of the townspeople at this point are lying on the grass badly battered.

The people continue to surge and the tree knocks most of the people down but while it twists the opening in the trunk reveals itself.

One of the remaining men DANIEL FORTEN (26), notices the opening and quickly slips through it.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

Daniel charges through the tree holding his rake. He looks around in confusion at what to make of the ominous tree. He spots the staircase and dashes up the steps.

He hits the stop of the staircase and spots the door to the control room. He slowly pushes the door open.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Mayor Rangton furiously controls the tree using the instruments at his disposal. In a frenzy he pulls the pulleys left and right and struggles to control the tree.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Mayor Rangton?

Daniel walks toward the Mayor in shock and confusion.

Mayor Rangton turns his head around and glares at Daniel. The lust for power fills his eyes.

MAYOR RANGTON
You little bastard.

Mayor Rangton abandons the controls in desperation and grabs a revolver resting near the controls. He fires a shot that narrowly misses Daniel who ducks.

Daniel quickly charges at Mayor Rangton and tackles him to the ground. We slowly pull out of the control room as Mayor Rangton and Daniel struggle for power.

The sound of the rake hitting the floor can be heard along with a few gunshots.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The tree lies still on the hill. The wind blows, rustling the branches. We slowly circle the branches extending into the night sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - 1990 - MORNING

We circle the branches of the tree in the morning sun. Slowly we descend down the trunk and face the hill.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - MORNING

We follow behind a man wearing a pack as he edges through a dense forest and emerges into a large clearing. Up ahead rests a familiar sign.

The man continues to walk forward until the sign gets closer and the town of Trandense unveils itself to us. The large sign guards the town.

We move in to the large sign and then circle to face the mysterious man. The face is that of a younger police CHIEF RANGTON (30), before he has become the chief of police.

He looks at the town with wonder and then enters past the sign.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

Chief Rangton moves through the deserted town. It is completely abandoned and not a soul can be seen in the town.

He continues to walk through the city until he stops and notices the massive ominous tree resting atop Graven Hill.

INT. MAYOR RANGTON'S FORMER HOME - DAY

Chief Rangton moves through the former home of the late Mayor Rangton. He takes in the decrepit house. Mold has grown on the walls and the grime brought with time coats the house.

He enters the old bedroom. Cobwebs and dirt cover the room. Chief Rangton looks around and steps on a loose floorboard. The board comes loose.

Chief Rangton bends down and slides it to the side. Inside is the compartment. Chief Rangton takes out the dusty journal and a photo of the old Mayor Rangton.

RANGTON

Grandpa.

He looks at the photo with affection then quickly pulls out an old mobile phone and dials a number.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

Zane! I think we've found it. This small abandoned town has just the right feel we are looking for. Bring everyone.

He strokes the photo of his grandfather.

RANGTON (CONT'D)

I'll arrange it and I'll be back in two days. Then we can pack up and settle in Trandense.

(He listens)

OK. Bye.

Chief Rangton hangs up and then places the journal on the rotted wooden desk and opens it to read.

MAYOR (V.O.)

August 25, 1910. This quaint town of Trandense. What a peaceful and isolated place.

He flips to another entry.

MAYOR (V.O.)

March 9, 1928. Every time I climb into that tree I get a rush unlike anything else.

(MORE)

MAYOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Holding the controls and making the
tree come alive is empowering to
the highest degree.

Chief Rangton's face reveals confusion. He keeps reading
until he finds his grandfather's later entries.

MAYOR RANGTON (V.O.)
October 30th, 1950. Trandense rests
completely in my control. The tree
is the perfect instrument to
manipulate them all. This power
feels so right.

Chief Rangton closes the journal, horrified at what he has
just read from his grandfather. He looks out of the window up
at the tree.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - SUNSET

Chief Rangton climbs the steep hill with his pack and comes
to the top of the hill.

He takes in the sight of the massive tree amidst the setting
sun. He takes a few steps and hears a CRUNCH as he steps on
something.

He looks down and finds that he has just stepped on an old
human skull. A series of human bones line the hill. He
immediately looks at the tree with fear.

He walks closer to the tree and notices an old video camera
lying in the grass facing the tree. Bones lie near the
camera.

Chief Rangton picks it up and examines it. The night begins
to take hold.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

All of the human bones appear to have been cleared from the
hill.

Chief Rangton sits in front of a small bonfire that he has
made. He eats from a small can of food that he brought. He
appears nervous and tense.

He lays down and watches the tree through the coursing
flames. The branches sway.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - MORNING

The morning sunlight streams through the branches of the tree.

EXT. TOWN OF CHESTERFIELD - MORNING

The nearest town is a small town with a few buildings arranged in a line.

Chief Rangton walks into a film shop.

INT. FILM SHOP - MORNING

Chief Rangton enters and greets a CLERK (23) working at the counter.

CLERK

Hello how may I help you sir?

RANGTON

I'd like to view what's in this camera.

Chief Rangton produces the old video camera and hands it to the clerk.

CLERK

Man this thing must be from the 50's.

RANGTON

Can you do it?

CLERK

Sure thing. You're in luck, we can develop the film and then arrange it for you to watch digitally.

RANGTON

Perfect.

INT. EDITING ROOM - LATER - DAY

The Clerk walks into a room followed by Chief Rangton filled with multiple computers. The clerk leads him to a computer and sits next to him.

CLERK

We got it all ready for you to watch.

RANGTON

If you wouldn't mind, I'd prefer to watch it alone.

CLERK

Of course sir. We'll be out front when you're done.

RANGTON

Thank you.

The clerk reluctantly leaves. Chief Rangton takes a deep breath then clicks to start the clips.

The clips start playing. We are now looking through the lens of the old video camera belonging to Mayor Rangton.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - 1950 - OLD FOOTAGE - NIGHT

Specks from the film grain are evident in the footage.

The camera shakily moves up the hill and emerges on the knoll. We continue to move closer to the tall tree until we are right in front of it.

Mayor Rangton's touches the trunk of the tree and then forcefully slides it to the side. It moves and reveals the opening.

The camera moves and fits through the hole as everything goes dark.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - OLD FOOTAGE - NIGHT

The camera moves into the dim space of the tree. There is a cut in the footage.

The footage resumes with the camera shakily moving up the staircase and entering the side control room.

INT. TREE CONTROL ROOM - OLD FOOTAGE - NIGHT

The camera moves into the control room and examines all of the instruments then is placed on a wooden ledge and turned around.

The camera faces Mayor Rangton as he steps back and grabs the controls and then pulls the controls with a crazed look in his eye. The film cuts again.

When it resumes Daniel creeps into the tree control room holding his rake. He continues to move closer before Mayor Rangton spots him and leaves the controls.

The camera continues to roll from the ledge. Rangton grabs his revolver as Daniel charges at him and takes him off his feet. The two viciously struggle for power.

After a moment of struggling a gunshot fires. Both men appear to be fine and a moment later Daniel gains control and grabs the rake and holds it above his head.

MAYOR RANGTON

Don't do it son. You don't understand having this kind of power.

DANIEL

Yes I do.

Daniel swings the rake down. From the camera we see the blade come down and hear the sickening sound as the rake connects with Mayor Rangton. He is silenced for good.

Daniel tiredly gets to his feet and walks over to pick up the camera. We can see a deep gunshot wound in Daniel's side as he lifts the camera up.

The camera turns and faces the control room as it shakily moves toward the exit.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - OLD FOOTAGE - NIGHT

The camera continues to jerk as it moves down the stairs and into the heart of the tree. We continue to move and slip through the narrow opening into the night.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - OLD FOOTAGE - NIGHT

As the camera emerges from the tree it tilts down and Daniel's feet step around dead bodies lining the hill. After clearing the bodies the camera looks up to the sky.

Suddenly the camera falls and violently shakes as it hits the ground. The camera lies in the grass and faces the tree. Daniel's lifeless hand falls near the edge of the camera's frame.

In the silent night it appears that the tree moves. The camera footage cuts signaling its end.

INT. EDITING ROOM - 1990 - DAY

Chief Rangton stares at the blank screen, a horrified expression on his face after viewing the footage.

Soon the look of horror progresses into a look of power and lust.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - A FEW DAYS LATER - DAY

The large sign at the edge of Trandense stands tall. Multiple groups of new incoming townspeople pass by the sign with their belongings.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

Chief Rangton stands in front of the police station watching the townspeople move in.

RANGTON
Welcome to Trandense!

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - 1998 - DAY

Eight years later the town size of Trandense has increased and more buildings line the square.

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE POLICE STATION - DAY

Chief Rangton now (38) looks older and dons his familiar police uniform. He stands outside of the station watching over the town.

He takes a few steps and looks up at the twisted tree on the hill. It has come to resemble more of a gnarled and twisted shape than before.

On the way he runs into resident Jennifer Calder pushing her baby girl Janette Calder in a stroller. Jennifer has dark circles under her eyes and looks she has been using drugs.

RANGTON
Afternoon. How are the Calder ladies today?

Jennifer gives Chief Rangton a condescending look.

JENNIFER
Fine.

RANGTON

Lovely daughter you have there.

Jennifer glares at Chief Rangton as he attempts to touch Janette.

JENNIFER

Don't touch her.

Rangton politely smiles.

RANGTON

Of course. Have a good day Mam.

Jennifer pushes the stroller away. Rangton's smile fades to a cold stare as they walk away.

EXT. TRANDENSE TOWN SQUARE - DAY/NIGHT

The day quickly turns to night as the moon quickly rises, replacing the sun on the horizon and elevating high into the night sky.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

A dark hooded figure walks across the grassy knoll toward the tree. The figure stops before the trunk and looks down to the town below.

Hidden within the hood is the face of Chief Rangton.

RANGTON

Come Janette.

Chief Rangton turns the trunk and enters the opening of the ominous twisted tree.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We move through the quiet house.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Janette's father Brenten Calder stands in the kitchen. He holds a drink and downs it in a quick chug. He then grabs a needle and injects it into a vein in his arm.

Brenten grabs a kitchen knife and points it toward his chest.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer Calder sits before her mirror. She is crying and her mascara has run down her face. We slowly pull in to her face as she sings softly.

JENNIFER

(Singing)

Oh sweet dear old Graven Hill, down
my spine stirs a chill...

Jennifer grabs a pill bottle from the night stand. Multiple bottles of alcohol line the stand and floor.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

(Singing)

...and when the night falls over
the town, in your unfeeling embrace
I will drown.

She looks over toward Janette's room.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

I love you Janny.

Jennifer opens the bottle and tosses the entire bottle of pills down her throat and swallows them.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The branches of the twisted tree slowly reach for the town.

INT. JANETTE CALDER'S HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

A small stream of moon light filters into the dark hallway through the window. A tiny figure steps into the light.

The baby girl Janette Calder (3) looks down the hall with curiosity then walks out of the light from the hall. An occurrence we have seen before.

EXT. THE TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The formidable tree stands over the town. It appears to be watching. Always watching.

The tiny figure of Janette Calder emerges at the edge of Graven Hill.

The branches draw closer to the ground and appear to envelope Janette as if reaching out to grab her for safety and protection against the wind.

The twisted tree draws close enough to touch Janette and the branches envelope her small figure.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - PRESENT DAY - NIGHT

Billy, Lainey, Chief Rangton, Janette and scattered townspeople remain on the hill looking to where the large twisted tree once stood.

Rangton has just finished the recount of the town's disturbing past.

BILLY

This town is sick. We're leaving
it. Everyone here.

Billy looks to Janette.

BILLY (CONT'D)

And we are getting you good care.
I'm so sorry Janette.

Billy roughly pulls Rangton to his feet and begins to lead him across the grass toward the edge of the hill.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Come on.

Christopher, Lainey, Janette and the remaining townspeople follow Billy to the edge of the hill and then down the steep slope.

Once everyone crosses the edge off the hill, Billy stops and takes one last disgusted glance at where the tree once stood.

Then he pushes Chief Rangton forward and they disappear behind the edge of Graven Hill.

INT. BILLY'S HOME - THE NEXT DAY - DAY

Billy paces through his home. He appears relaxed and comfortable and leans down on his counter to write something with a pen.

He quickly writes a few sentences and then looks up and smiles.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Billy enters his room. As he walks by his desk he tosses something onto it.

Billy looks out of his window into the town and then sits on his bed.

We move from the bed toward his desk. As the desk draws closer it can be discerned that the object on the desk is an open journal.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - TEN YEARS LATER - DAY

The sign of Trandense still lies in place ten years later.

The day quickly turns to...

EXT. TOWN OF TRANDENSE - DUSK

The dusk takes hold of the small town as night quickly approaches.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - DUSK

Billy sits at his desk writing. He smiles then stands up and looks out the window before he puts on some dark clothes, grabs a video camera and briskly leaves his room.

We pull in to the desk and toward the open journal resting on the desk. At the top of one of the pages is an entry titled: OCTOBER 30, 2023.

We hear Billy's voice reciting the entry.

BILLY (V.O.)
October 30, 2023. As the night
shrouds the town, a new Trandense
has arisen.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - DUSK

A large tree rests atop the massive Graven Hill. It's trunk appears to be twisted.

BILLY (V.O.)
It's been rebuilt. The cycle
continues its perpetual spiral of
fear and has stirred obedience into
the people.

The looming and eerily gnarled and twisted tree roots of a massive tree extend into the dark gray sky. The massive trunk twists around in a spiral into the ground.

The tree dominates the landscape and exists as the only object in the vicinity resting atop the tall hill.

BILLY (V.O.)

My puppets carry out my bidding and lie in the ignorance of any ordinary person. My calling is to rule and unlimited power has become mine. The instrument of control is back in full force.

The hill overlooks the bleak and desolate small town which rests far below. The tree overhangs downward as if ruling over the city with a firm grasp.

The dusk quickly turns into...

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

The dusk transitions into night and the tree still lies before the town in its splendor.

EXT. GRAVEN HILL - VIDEO CAMERA FOOTAGE - NIGHT

We look through the lens of a modern day video camera. It shakily ascends the hill and climbs to the top of the knoll.

BILLY (V.O.)

My will shall be done and my destiny beckons me to hold this control. My power reigns over them all.

The camera continues to walk toward the tree and looks up at its massive branches above.

A hand touches a small button hidden on the trunk of the tree and a small opening slides open. The camera lowers and enters into the opening.

INT. TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - VIDEO CAMERA FOOTAGE - NIGHT

The camera shakily moves through a newly reconstructed modern interior of the tree. A staircase still resides on the side of the wall.

The camera begins to ascend the staircase.

BILLY (V.O.)
They tremble in fear before the
magnificent tree and follow
blindly.

The camera spots a side doorway and a hand presses another
button. The door slides open and we enter.

INT. NEW TREE CONTROL ROOM - VIDEO CAMERA FOOTAGE - NIGHT

The camera enters a newly designed control room with a few
modern controls and buttons.

The pulleys still lie at the heart of the controls.

BILLY (V.O.)
In my fingers they lie and will
eventually all be crushed.

The camera is placed upon a nearby ledge and faces the
controls. After a moment Billy steps into the frame of the
camera and grabs the pulleys.

He looks into the camera with a malicious evil grin.

EXT. THE TWISTED TREE OF GRAVEN HILL - NIGHT

We slowly pull in toward the twisted trunk as the branches
extend outward and sway overhead.

BILLY (V.O.)
Who is my next victim?

The tree reaches for us.

FADE OUT.