

FOUND FOOTAGE

Written by

Scott Derrickson & C. Robert Cargill

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EXT. HOUSE - DAY

RUN CREDITS OVER GRAINY, POORLY PROCESSED SUPER 8 FOOTAGE.

Scratches and fingerprints on the footage suggest that this print hasn't been professionally handled.

The following scene happens in one, static, unedited shot - the camera is locked off on a tripod, and the only sound is of a running, occasionally stuttering projector; there is no other soundtrack:

A LARGE, LEAFLESS TREE sits ominously in frame. Wooden planks nailed to the side face us, as if it were a ladder leading to an unseen tree house.

FOUR ROPES ascend into the tree and disappear out of frame. Each rope is tied to one of FOUR PEOPLE: two adults and two children - clearly a family.

The four are standing with their HANDS BOUND and BURLAP SACKS OVER THEIR HEADS. There is no slack in the ropes; in fact, they are pulled so tight that the family has to stand on their tiptoes to breathe.

We watch the footage silently for ten, maybe even twenty seconds. In the top right corner of the frame we can see what looks like A HANDSAW BLADE poking in and out, as if it is sawing a branch.

A MASSIVE BRANCH FALLS. Each of the four ropes are tied to it, and are clearly strung over another branch higher in the tree, so ALL FOUR PEOPLE ARE HOISTED IMMEDIATELY INTO THE AIR, their legs thrashing against the sudden strangulation.

The bodies flail, choking to death before they each, one by one, succumb and die. As the fourth and final member of the family expires, we linger for just a second before the SCREEN GOES WHITE with the filler stock from the end of the reel, followed immediately by a CUT TO BLACK.

We hear the sound of film slapping against the projector from a finished reel before the projector spins down and is turned off.

END CREDITS.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON A BOX being slid forward, then two hands grasp it on either side. ELLISON OSWALT, late 30's, wearing glasses, jeans and a T-shirt, carries the box from a LARGE MOVING TRUCK toward the house. The truck is filled with boxes, many of which have found their way to the lawn.

The house is a bit dilapidated and could use some love, but it is by no means a dump.

Tracy, Ellison's early 30's housewife, passes him as he approaches the door.

TRACY

Just one box?

ELLISON

This one's delicate. For my office.

TRACY

Sissy.

Ellison smiles and continues walking into the house. He enters the doorway as TREVOR, 12 years old, rock T-shirt and jeans with white earbuds trailing out of his ears, passes by. We can hear the distorted sound of music played far too loud through headphones. Ellison looks back over his shoulder.

ELLISON

You're gonna go deaf.

Trevor doesn't hear him and keeps walking toward the truck.

As Ellison continues into the house and up the stairs, we begin to get a layout of the house.

He walks into a dark, shadowy room with only one window. There is already a desk in place, and a collection of boxes on the floor, all marked "office".

Ellison takes a breath and surveys the room, imagining what his office will look like when he unpacks.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A DRIVER'S POV from inside a police cruiser: we pull up slowly behind another police cruiser.

Both cruisers are marked *Sheriff's Department*. TWO DEPUTIES are standing in front of their cruiser, one of them holds a copy of *KENTUCKY BLOOD* - Ellison's book.

SHERIFF BURNETT, 50's, graying hair and crisp uniform, gets out of his cruiser. He's a friendly but stern Robert Forster type. He sees the book in his Deputy's hand. The Deputy tries to slowly hide it behind his leg.

SHERIFF

An autograph? You kiddin' me?

DEPUTY
I just thought -

The Sheriff waves him off with quick flit of his hand. As the two Deputies sheepishly get back into their car and drive off, the Sheriff shakes his head.

Tracy steps off of the truck carrying a box, and the Sheriff tips his hat politely.

SHERIFF
Ma'am.

TRACY
Sheriff.

SHERIFF
Your husband around?

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Ellison walks out of the office and passes a bedroom. Inside it sits ASHLEY, 7 years old, flowery sun dress, with a glass of water, a paint brush and watercolor paint palette in front of her. She is painting pictures directly on the wall.

ELLISON
Sweetie?

Ashley continues to paint, not looking up.

ELLISON
Ashley, honey?

Ashley looks up.

ELLISON
What are you doing?

ASHLEY
Painting.

ELLISON
Your mom could really use your help downstairs.

ASHLEY
I know.

ELLISON
Why don't you come downstairs with me and you can paint your room later?

ASHLEY

Because I didn't want to move here.
I shouldn't have to carry boxes.

ELLISON

Honey, we had to move here. And we
all have to carry boxes.

ASHLEY

Uh-uh. You wanted to move here.

ELLISON

No, sweetie, I *had* to move. The new
story I'm writing about is *here*.

ASHLEY

Why can't you just keep writing in
our old house?

ELLISON

I was going to have to write school
textbooks to stay in our old house,
and I can't do that.

AHLEY

Why not?

ELLISON

...I just can't.

ASHLEY

But I miss my school.

ELLISON

You know what? The school here is
pretty great.

ASHLEY

But I want my old one.

ELLISON

I know. Tell you what, if we don't
like it, once I sell this book,
we'll move back, okay? But only if
we don't like it here.

ASHLEY

Really?

ELLISON

Yes, really.

ASHLEY

You promise?

ELLISON
I promise. But you have to promise
that you'll try to like it.

ASHLEY
(smiles)
I promise.

ELLISON
(smiles back)
Now, my little artist, what's the
rule?

ASHLEY
Paint only goes in the bedroom.

ELLISON
Right. And where doesn't it go?

ASHLEY
Anywhere else in the house.

ELLISON
Good. Now, you want to help Daddy
get some boxes for his office?

Ashley nods.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Ellison walks out the front door holding Ashley's hand. Tracy
approaches with a dissatisfied look on her face.

TRACY
Sheriff's here.

ELLISON
Already?

TRACY
Play nice this time.

ELLISON
I'm always nice.

TRACY
I'm not kidding. I'm tired of
driving 5 miles under the speed
limit only to get ticketed anyway.
Be. Nice.

Ellison nods. The Sheriff is standing at the edge of the property, as if he doesn't actually want to step foot near the house. Ellison walks over to him.

ELLISON
Afternoon. Is there a problem here?

SHERIFF
No sir. This is just a friendly visit.

ELLISON
Oh, well, I appreciate that.
(extends a hand)
Ellison Oswald.

SHERIFF
(ignores the handshake)
I know who you are.

Ellison lowers his hand with a sigh, then speaks flatly:

ELLISON
So, you're not a fan.

SHERIFF
No.

ELLISON
What is it that I can do for you, Sheriff?

SHERIFF
Not much I expect. Unless I can convince you to put those boxes back on the truck and leave as soon as you are able.

ELLISON
No. But I've got a few spare copies of KENTUCKY BLOOD up in my office. I could get one for you, if you like.

SHERIFF
No thank you, sir.

ELLISON
Is it the writing?

SHERIFF
It's more of a content issue. You don't seem to care much for our profession.

ELLISON

Not everyone in your profession gets it right.

SHERIFF

I've read your books. Neither do you.

ELLISON

Look, I don't -

SHERIFF

You got it right with KENTUCKY BLOOD. I'll commend you for that. That was a good piece of work. But COLD DENVER MORNING? You got it wrong. And BLOOD DINER?

ELLISON

That wasn't my fault.

SHERIFF

Your bad theory helped a killer go free. You ruined people's lives. This town doesn't need that. Not after what we've been through. We need to heal. We need to forget. We don't want the circus you bring with you.

ELLISON

Sheriff, there's a missing girl involved.

SHERIFF

She ain't missing. She's dead.

ELLISON

Oh, come on -

SHERIFF

If that girl is still alive, it ain't no miracle and we ain't never gonna find her.

ELLISON

So what, you're just gonna let it go? You don't think this town deserves an explanation?

SHERIFF

Something like this? You can never explain something like this.

(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

And if you ever can, odds are you aren't gonna much care for the answer. We've done our job. You'll see that. This is just another waste of your time. Like your last two books.

ELLISON

If there's one thing I've learned writing true crime, it's that when an officer of the law is telling you that you're wasting your time, it's only because he thinks it is a waste of his.

SHERIFF

Clever. You should write that down.

ELLISON

I'm gonna go out on a limb here and assume that your department isn't going to be at my disposal.

SHERIFF

What do you know? Looks like you can still get things right on occasion.

The Sheriff turns to walk away then turns back, pointing around at the property and house.

SHERIFF

Oh, and I find this to be in extremely bad taste.

The Sheriff returns to his car. Tracy walks up holding a box.

TRACY

And what was that all about?

ELLISON

The usual. Wanted an autograph but he forgot his copy at home. He'll come back later.

TRACY

Really? That bad? Why was he pointing at the house?

Ellison hesitates. Tracy's expression goes dark.

TRACY
Ellison. We didn't move in a few
houses down from a crime scene
again, did we?

ELLISON
Tracy -

TRACY
No, just don't say anything. If we
did, I *don't* want to know about it.

ELLISON
No, baby, we didn't.

Tracy narrows her eyes. She's not sure she believes him.

TRACY
You promise?

ELLISON
I promise.

TRACY
(relieved)
Here, make yourself useful.

She hands him a box.

TRACY
Living room.

ELLISON
Alright.

He leans in and kisses her.

ELLISON
It'll be good here. You'll see.

Ellison carries the box into the house. He passes Trevor,
whose earbuds are still blaring.

ELLISON
Dude, turn down the headphones!

Trevor doesn't hear him.

Ellison walks into the house and sets the box down in front
of A LARGE PICTURE WINDOW looking out into the backyard. He
looks out the window: the BACK YARD has seen better days.

In the background, something slowly comes into focus...

It's the LARGE OMINOUS TREE from the opening murder scene.

Ellison has moved into the house where it happened.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

The attic door appears to have been nailed shut from the inside. BANG. BANG. BANG. Someone is slamming into it from beneath. BANG. The rotten wood barring the door breaks and the door flies open. Ellison peeks his head in.

A small amount of light streams in from a tiny window on the other side of the attic.

In the middle of the otherwise empty space is A GREY CARDBOARD BOX WITH A LID. There's no dust on it.

Carrying A MOVING CRATE full of HEAVY BOOKS atop his shoulder, Ellison climbs up into the attic. As he starts to move past the box on the floor, he suddenly FLINCHES -

ELLISON

Oh, Jesus!

On the floor next the grey cardboard box is a BLACK SCORPION.

Ellison warily moves around it, and the tail of the black scorpion rises just a bit; it's definitely alive.

Right next to the scorpion, written on the box with a black magic marker, are the words "HOME MOVIES".

Ellison hesitates a moment, nervous, then he takes the heavy crate of books off his shoulder and holds it with both hands. Stepping forward cautiously, he takes aim, then tosses the entire crate down onto the scorpion.

CRASH! Two of the old floorboards SNAP under the weight of the books. Ellison can't help but let out a little laugh.

ELLISON

Oh shit.

He lifts up the crate of books, checking first to see the crusty wet remains of the SMASHED SCORPION on the bottom. Then Ellison sets the crate of books aside.

Carefully, he removes the lid from the box marked *HOME MOVIES* and looks inside. His eyes go wide.

ELLISON

(whispers, perplexed)
You've gotta be kidding...

Inside the box are 6 REELS OF PROCESSED SUPER 8 FILM, an old, beat up SUPER 8 CAMERA, a SUPER 8 SPLICING BLOCK WITH TAPE, and A PROJECTOR.

The stuff all looks decades old. Each reel of film is labelled with an innocuous sounding name like FAMILY HANGING OUT '08, SLEEPY TIME '93 and CHRISTMAS MORNING '86 - each of which will prove to be darkly deceptive.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison drops the box of movies (sans the lid) onto the floor of his office.

- C/U on A KEY as it's inserted into the outside lock on the door and turned.

- Ellison jiggles the door to make sure it's secure.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Eating takeout, the family is seated around the dinner table in an otherwise unfurnished dining room.

TRACY

Enjoy, kids. We're not likely to be able to eat out much this time.

ASHLEY

Awww.

TREVOR

Why not?

TRACY

You know why.

ASHLEY

I don't.

ELLISON

Because we haven't sold the old house yet.

TRACY

Once it's gone, we'll be able to afford a few extra things.

TREVOR

Well, then sell it already. Lower the price if you have to.

ELLISON

The market's no good. We've lowered it as far as we can before we lose money. Once we're not paying two mortgages, we'll be fine. And once I deliver this book, we'll be on easy street.

TREVOR

Is the story a good one this time?

ELLISON

Yeah, it's good.

TREVOR

Will you take me and show me where it happened?

TRACY

Trevor!

TREVOR

What? I'm old enough to know about this stuff.

TRACY

No, you're not. Even I'm not old enough to know about this stuff. Your father writes about terrible, terrible things that I don't want you knowing anything about.

ELLISON

Don't make it sound like I shouldn't be writing about it.

TRACY

That's not what I meant.

TREVOR

I'm going to hear about it at school anyway. The kids will all hate me again and tell me non-stop about what happened. I might as well hear it from dad.

TRACY

Are you listening to this?

ELLISON

Yeah, I hear it.

TRACY

Let's at least make sure your office stays locked. It's one thing to hear about it and another to see it. I don't want him walking in again - he's twelve years old.

TREVOR

Mom, he knows how old I am.

ELLISON

Alright, enough.
(to the kids)
What's the rule?

TREVOR & ASHLEY

(together)
Never go in dad's office.

TRACY

(to Ellison)
And what's the rule?

ELLISON

Always lock the office.

TRACY

That's right. And I don't want to hear another thing about why we're here - from anybody.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

*

Cool WIND blows through the trees, and fallen leaves tumble across the yard.

*

*

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

*

Tracy is in bed, laying on her side. Her eyes are open and she is staring past the camera. Ellison slips into bed from behind and wraps an arm around her.

TRACY

You didn't brush your teeth.

ELLISON

Not yet.

TRACY
So you're not coming to bed?

ELLISON
I figured I'd set up my office and
get started.

TRACY
How long is it gonna be?

ELLISON
An hour or two, maybe.

TRACY
No, I mean...how long are we here
for this time?

ELLISON
I don't know. Could be a long one.

TRACY
I liked it better when you were
writing fiction.

ELLISON
No one wants my fiction.

TRACY
Maybe you should try again.

ELLISON
You know, Tracy, I can't do this
without you on my side.

TRACY
I'm sorry. I'm on your side. I just
want to see you happy in your work
again. When you're happy, we're all
happy.

ELLISON
I just need another hit. Like
Kentucky.

Tracy starts to say something, then stops herself.

ELLISON
What. Say it.

TRACY
You know I'm behind you on this -

ELLISON

No, you were gonna say something.
It's okay. Just say it.

TRACY

(after a moment)
Kentucky Blood was ten years ago.

ELLISON

Yeah. And?

TRACY

And...what if that was your fifteen
minutes?

ELLISON

Okay. What if it was?

TRACY

If it was, you can't just spend the
rest of your life chasing after it.
If you miss out on these years with
the kids, you won't get them back.

ELLISON

I know. I just want one more
chance, Tracy. I have a feeling
about this one.

TRACY

Okay. Good. But Ellison, I don't
think I can do this again.

ELLISON

You won't have to.

TRACY

I mean it. If there's a next time,
you'll go at it alone. I'll take
Trevor and Ashley and stay at my
sister's. Understood?

ELLISON

(hesitating)
Understood.

TRACY

Now, go kick some ass, honey.

Ellison smiles slightly, kisses Tracy on the cheek, and
crawls out of bed.

A tear forms in the corner of Tracy's eye.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Boxes are strewn about the office, sliced open with their contents exploding onto every available square inch of floor.

Ellison has tacked up a map of the area with CRIME SCENE PHOTOS pinned to it with yarn.

We see A PHOTO OF THE FOUR HANGING BODIES from the opening of the movie, taken from a completely different angle. Next to it is a photo of a smiling family of five: a mom, a dad, a son, a daughter and a second daughter circled in red with a line pointing to the words *WHERE ARE YOU?* scrawled in the same red pen. The circled girl is STEPHANIE, 10 years old, dark hair, sullen look about her.

Removing CRIME SCENE PHOTOS from a folder, Ellison tacks a few up on the map: bodies laid out on the ground - both with and without the sacks over their heads - shots of the tree, the back yard, and the sawed off massive branch.

From a folder of crime scene photos taken from inside the house, Ellison finds a single POLICE PHOTO OF THE ATTIC:

Ellison stares at it, awestruck: The box of films marked *Home Movies* isn't in the police photo at all - it wasn't in the attic right after the murders.

Ellison looks at the box then back at the photo.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison tacks up the police photo of the empty attic.
- With a black marker, he draws a small box on a POST-IT and STICKS it onto the photo, right where he found the box of films.
- Next to the same crime scene photo, he writes: *BOX OF FILMS? HOW DID IT GET THERE?*

Now Ellison pulls reference books and overflowing binders out of a box and stacks them on a shelf.

He stares down at the box of films for a moment, stroking his chin and then scratching his head.

ELLISON

What the hell. Let's do this.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison tacks A SHEET to the wall.
- He sets THE PROJECTOR onto a small table.

- His hand slides THE FILM REEL onto the projector.
- Ellison turns off the lights.
- He flips the switch that turns on the projector.
- The film winds through the projector's metal sprockets.

Ellison is now sitting in his desk chair with a legal pad and a pen, ready to take notes.

And the first Super 8 film begins...

ON SCREEN: We see footage of the family having a good time on a sunny afternoon.

Mom and Dad are barbecuing.

Little Sister is sitting on a blanket in the grass.

Little Brother runs by and the camera swings to follow him.

Little Brother passes the ominous tree and keeps running.

The camera stays fixed on the tree, slowly tracking up it.

The camera moves around to the angle of the tree we see at the beginning of the film.

HARD CUT TO: the same footage we saw during opening credits.

Ellison can't believe what he's watching - we see the REFLECTION of the projected film in his glasses.

The bodies jerk up in the reflection.

Ellison turns pale.

We can see the legs kicking in the reflection.

We watch a bit of the final moments over his shoulder, and the screen GOES TO WHITE.

The film reel SPINS OUT, slapping obnoxiously against the projector.

Ellison reaches over and shuts it off.

Ellison sits in the dark, stunned to silence.

The tree outside CREEKS in the wind, and he startles.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison rummages through the mostly bare cupboards and boxes.
- With a boxcutter, he slices open a box and pulls out a glass.
- He slices open another box and pulls out a whiskey bottle.
- He fills the glass with ice.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Ellison sits back down and pours whiskey into the glass. He shoots back the whiskey and fills the glass again.

Ready now, Ellison restarts the projector, and the same film plays again.

This time we're cutting back and forth between the same film and Ellison's notes:

WHO MADE THE FILM?

WHY RETURN IT TO THE CRIME SCENE?

*

WHERE'S STEPHANIE?

The film ends. Ellison reaches down for the empty film canister. It reads FAMILY HANGING OUT '08.

He puts the film back into the canister, then looks out the window at the tree.

EXT. BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison walks out of his back door, approaching the tree with caution as if it could lash out at any moment. He stops, standing a safe distance away.

Ellison swallows hard, then mutters quietly to himself:

ELLISON
Why would you film it...?

He walks closer to the tree and gazes up into the branches, as if he's looking for clues.

A stiff wind blows. Branches CREAK menacingly.

Ellison shivers and heads back inside.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison closes the back door and begins to walk toward his office, but as he does...

CREAK.

He hears TINY FOOTSTEPS in the house.

Ellison stops.

He holds still for a moment, listening. He glances toward his office: through the office doorway, he can see the projector.

CREAK.

The sound came from a different direction. He turns toward it.

CREAK.

He sees MOVEMENT at the end of the dark hallway, disappearing behind the corner.

Ellison moves forward, creeping slowly down the hallway.

Turning down the adjacent hallway he sees ASHLEY standing at the end.

She rubs her bleary eyes.

ASHLEY

Daddy? I can't find the bathroom.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison stands outside the door to the bathroom. Light streams out from under the door.

We hear a toilet flush. The door opens and Ashley walks out.

ASHLEY

Thank you, Daddy.

Sleepily, she stumbles past him toward her room.

INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison tucks in Ashley and kisses her on the forehead. He looks around the room at a number of new paintings on the wall.

ELLISON

Wow. So many new paintings. You're getting really good at this.

ASHLEY

Thank you. Maybe one day I'll paint something real good, and then I'll be famous like you.

ELLISON

I'm sure you will, princess.
(kisses her forehead)
You go back to sleep now.

ASHLEY

Okay. And Daddy?

ELLISON

Yeah?

ASHLEY

Are you going to write a really good book this time so we can go home?

With the hint of a knowing smile, Ellison nods.

ELLISON

Sweetie, I'm gonna write the best book they've ever read. I promise.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison looks down at the box of films: BARBECUE '79 is on top.*

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison SLIDES the reel into place on the projector.
- He flips the switch, turning the projector on.
- The film threads itself through turning sprockets.

And the second Super 8 film begins...

ON SCREEN: Again, Super 8 footage, every bit as ragged and spotty as before.

*

It's daytime at THE BEACH.

This time it's a different family. Father, mother, and two sons. They are running around on the beach in 70's bathing suits. A picnic.

CUT TO: The beach PARKING LOT AT DUSK.

Done for the day, the family is loading up their car with beach supplies.

CUT TO: Inside A GARAGE AT NIGHT.

The family car is parked in the garage.

There are CHAINS running through the door handles, keeping the doors from being opened.

The family is unconscious inside the car.

The camera moves around the car, getting a good look at everyone inside.

The camera pulls back and is placed atop something for a static shot.

Seconds pass.

A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL is thrown into the back window of the car.

FIRE breaks out inside.

BACK ON ELLISON, SITTING IN HIS OFFICE

He stares stone-faced at the screen. We see the REFLECTION OF FIRE in his glasses.

Ellison absentmindedly raises a now-empty glass to his lips. His hand trembles and the resulting sound of rattling ice pulls him from his reverie - he snaps back to reality and sets down the glass.

The movie ends with the sound of slapping film. Ellison reaches back and turns off the projector.

He stares at the box, mulling it over for a moment. He seems to be arguing silently to himself.

He stands, reaches for the phone, and brings it to his ear. He quickly dials. The line RINGS.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Operator.

ELLISON

King County police.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Is this an emergency?

ELLISON
 (thinks about it)
 ...Yes.

The line rings again.

Then he looks up at the bookshelf at his row of books.

ECU of KENTUCKY BLOOD.

DISPATCH OFFICER (O.S.)
 King County Police Department, how
 may I direct your call?

Ellison hesitates, still looking at the copy of KENTUCKY
 BLOOD on his bookshelf...

DISPATCH OFFICER (O.S.)
 Hello...?

Ellison hangs up the phone. He stares off for a moment, lost
 in thought.

Then he steps up to the POLICE PHOTO tacked to the wall - the
 one of the empty attic with Ellison's POST-IT DRAWING OF THE
 BOX stuck to the surface.

ELLISON
 (mutters)
*You came back and left the box...
 Why...? Because you wanted it found.*

Now Ellison reaches down and grabs the next film: POOL PARTY '70.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison slides the reel on the projector.
- He flips the switch, turning the projector on.
- The film winds through turning sprockets.

And the third Super 8 film begins...

ON SCREEN: DAYTIME IN A BACKYARD.

*A third family lounges by the pool. Mom, dad, and two
 daughters.*

*The daughters are in the pool, hitting a volleyball over a
 net, laughing.*

Mom and dad are drinking lemonade.

The girls get out of the pool.

Everyone is sitting in deck chairs smiling.

JUMP CUT TO NIGHTTIME.

The four deck chairs are lined up in a row on the very edge of the pool. Each family member is now BLINDFOLDED, GAGGED, and TAPED TO THEIR CHAIRS. There is A ROPE tied to the back of each chair, trailing over the pool, wrapping around a tetherball pole and running back over the pool toward the camera. Tied to the bottom of each deck chair is A CINDERBLOCK.

The camera holds for a few seconds, just as it does in the first film.

BACK ON ELLISON: He looks nervous, even afraid, of what he's about to watch. And then...

CREAK.

Ellison hears tiny footsteps in the house again.

ELLISON
Damn it, Ashley.

Ellison SHUTS OFF THE PROJECTOR. He gets up, opens the door, and peers out into the hall.

Nothing.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellison walks down the hall and looks into Ashley's room. She is asleep in bed.

CREAK.

He follows the sound downstairs. Waits.

CREAK. CREAK. CREAK.

Impossibly, Ellison now hears SEVERAL SETS of FOOTSTEPS, each coming from different directions.

He picks one and tracks it to another dark hallway.

HIS POV: The hallway disappears into TOTAL DARKNESS.

Warily, he moves forward into the inky blackness of the hall.

CREAK.

He stops, squinting to see a large unpacked MOVING BOX at the end of the hallway, barely visible in the dark.

Unnerved, Ellison takes another step forward, but the box SHIFTS SLIGHTLY, making Ellison stop again.

Then, to Ellison's horrified astonishment, the top of the box begins to OPEN BY ITSELF.

TWO LITTLE HANDS EMERGE.

We see the silhouette of a SMALL FIGURE slowly RISE UP out of the box, facing away from us.

The Figure then ARCHES BACKWARDS, contorting, to reveal TREVOR - his face now upside down, eyes open but glazed over.

He TILTS HIS HEAD and gives Ellison an EERIE SMILE.

Ellison just stares at his son for a moment, frozen with bafflement and fear...until Trevor's expression turns to one of pure terror and he lets out a blood-curdling SCREAM.

ELLISON

Trevor!

Ellison springs forward, runs down the hall, and grabs Trevor, pulling him out of the box.

Trevor keeps SCREAMING for what seems like an impossibly long time. Ellison shakes him hard.

ELLISON

Wake up, Trevor! Wake up!

Tracy comes running down the stairs.

TRACY

Oh my god, is he okay?

ELLISON

He's having a night terror.

Knowing what to do, Tracy runs to the front door and opens it. Ellison picks up Trevor and immediately follows, bouncing him, trying to wake him up.

Trevor is still screaming.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellison carries his son out into the cold night wind, still bouncing him in his arms.

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*

ELLISON
C'mon Trevor, wake up for me.

Now, finally, the screaming stops.

Trevor wakes up and looks around, groggy and disoriented.

TREVOR
Why are we outside?

ELLISON
It's alright. Just a night terror.
Go on back to sleep, son.

Ellison rests Trevor's head on his shoulder and instantly, Trevor falls back to sleep.

TRACY
I thought these were over.

ELLISON
It's the stress of the move. He
crawled into one of the moving
boxes.

TRACY
(strokes Trevor's face)
Oh, poor baby.

ELLISON
He'll be fine once he's here for a
few days.
(beat)
Tracy, I...

He trails off, staring at his wife.

TRACY
What is it? What's the matter?

ELLISON
I want to tell you something.

TRACY
Okay.

ELLISON
(tortured)
I...I just...I'm sorry.

Now Tracy strokes Ellison's face.

TRACY
It's not your fault.

He stares at her for a moment, wanting so badly to tell her more, but he can't.

TRACY

It's cold. C'mon, let's go inside.

As they turn and head back toward the house, Ellison glances up at the NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE, and in the WINDOW he sees A WOMAN, mid-thirties with frazzled hair, wearing a bathrobe. She's watching them. Having been spotted, she quickly SHUTS the curtains.

Still carrying Trevor, Ellison follows Tracy into the house and closes the door behind him.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Ellison and Trevor are eating breakfast. Trevor is embarrassed and refusing to make eye contact.

TREVOR

I was in a box?

ELLISON

(matter of factly)

You were in a box.

TREVOR

I don't remember any of that.

ELLISON

It's not the strangest place we've found you.

TREVOR

Please don't talk about the dryer.

Tracy enters with a platter of breakfast foods and sets it on the table.

TRACY

Are we talking about the time you found Trevor trying to pee in the dryer?

TREVOR

Oh god Mom, no.

TRACY

I'm sorry, honey. I thought that's what you were talking about.

Tracy gives Ellison a sly wink.

Ashley enters the room and sits at the table. She grabs a piece of toast.

ASHLEY

Did Trevor try to pee in the dryer again?

TREVOR

Mom!

TRACY

Ashley, honey, no. Your brother just had a night terror.

ASHLEY

Is that like a bad dream?

TRACY

Kind of.

ASHLEY

Oh. I think I had one of those.

ELLISON

No, sweetie. A night terror is a special kind of bad dream. We would have known if you had one.

ASHLEY

Oh.

ELLISON

Are you ready for your first day at a new school?

Ashley nods sadly.

ELLISON

Trevor?

TREVOR

I guess.

ELLISON

Great. I'm so happy to see you both so enthusiastic about your new adventure.

(to Tracy)

Are you taking them?

TRACY

Yeah. I've got some errands to run in town.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

I figured I'd spend the morning getting the lay of the land and let you get some work done.

(to the kids)

Eat up, you're running late.

ELLISON

You heard your mother. Grab some road breakfast and skedaddle.

Trevor throws some bacon between two pieces of toast and Ashley does the same, mimicking her brother.

Tracy leans in and gives Ellison a kiss on the cheek.

TRACY

(good-natured)

I left you a fresh pot of coffee. Have a nice morning with your murder victims.

ELLISON

Yes dear.

The family leaves.

Ellison picks up his mug of coffee and heads to the back of the house.

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Ellison wanders out onto the back porch, staring thoughtfully at the tree. He sips his coffee, then hears A WOMAN'S VOICE:

WOMAN'S VOICE

Your boy all right?

Ellison turns and sees the NEIGHBOR WOMAN who watched from her window the night before. She's now standing in her backyard, dressed exactly the same, peering over a hedge at Ellison.

ELLISON

Yes, he's fine. He gets night terrors. Bad sometimes. Had 'em since he was four.

NEIGHBOR WOMAN

I'm Fran.

He raises a friendly but awkward hand to wave.

ELLISON

I'm Ellison.

FRAN

If staring at it gave anyone any answers, the cops would have solved this thing ages ago.

ELLISON

I'm sorry?

FRAN

(points)

The tree. You were staring at it. There are more pictures and videos of that god damned tree than there is any right to be. They should have ripped that thing out of the ground the day they cut those poor people down.

ELLISON

Why didn't they?

FRAN

They were waiting for some hotshot writer to show up and crack the case wide open.

ELLISON

Great, another fan.

FRAN

Me? No. I could give a rat's ass who you are or why you're here. As long as the cops never have to come and zip your family up in body bags, you and I should get along just fine.

Fran laughs awkwardly. Ellison isn't sure how to react.

ELLISON

Would you mind answering a few questions?

Fran looks over her shoulder back into the house.

FRAN

(quietly)

I'll make you a deal. I'll tell you anything you want to know on two conditions. One, my name never shows up in your book. And two, my husband Harold never sees us talking. He liked the Stevensons a lot. Used to play cards with Bill.

(MORE)

FRAN (CONT'D)

And he doesn't much care for the idea that you stand to make money off of their deaths.

ELLISON

Deal.

FRAN

Harold heads off to work at nine. After that, come on over. I'll answer anything you like.

ELLISON

Thank you.

FRAN

Don't thank me yet.

Fran raises her eyebrows as if to suggest he has no idea what he's gotten himself into, then politely walks back toward her house.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ellison flops down in his chair, readying himself for work. He looks over at the projector and his expression darkens - he remembers what he was watching the night before and is now resigned to see how it plays out.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison pulls the shade on the window.
- He flips the switch on the projector.
- The film continues to move through the projector sprockets.

And the third Super 8 film resumes...

ON SCREEN: The four deck chairs are lined up in a row on the very edge of the pool. The family is blindfolded, gagged, and taped to the chairs. There is a rope tied to the back of each chair, trailing over the pool, wrapping around a tetherball pole and running back over the pool toward the camera. Tied to the bottom of each deck chair is a cinderblock.

The camera holds for a few seconds, then a rope is pulled and Dad's deckchair leans back out over the water.

Dad balances for a second.

A quick tug on the rope drops him into the pool. The cinderblock weighs him down and takes him to the bottom.

Another rope is pulled. Mom goes into the pool.

Another rope is pulled. The first sister goes into the pool.

The last rope is pulled. The second sister goes into the pool.

The cameraman moves forward and looks over into the pool.

The family struggles beneath the water, trying to break free of the chairs.

The cameraman puts down the camera for a fixed shot of the pool. The shot holds for a few seconds.

Now A SHADOW moves across the water and we hear something enter the pool from the other side. The camera moves across the water toward the sound, and we see A GHOSTLY FIGURE beneath the water - THE FIGURE IS SUB-HUMAN and distorted by the water that ripples as the drowning family struggles.

Just before the film rolls out, the figure TILTS HIS HEAD and GAZES up eerily at the camera - it looks similar to the head tilt and eerie smile Trevor gave Ellison in the dark hallway. We only see the Figure for a moment.

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*

The figure appears to have no mouth.

*

The film GOES TO WHITE.

Ellison presses STOP on the projector, then hits REVERSE.

The film begins to PLAY BACKWARDS.

IN REVERSE we see the SUBMERGED, SUB-HUMAN GHOSTLY FIGURE, distorted by the water that ripples as the drowning family struggles. The figure tilts his head and seems to make an eerie smiles up at the camera.

Ellison HITS PAUSE on the projector. The film frame FREEZES on the bizarre Figure's twisted smile.

Ellison gets up out of his chair and walks toward the screen, examining the distorted, shadowy image.

ELLISON

(mutters)

Who the hell are you?

He stares for a moment.

The image begins to BURN, the film MELTING.

ELLISON

Oh, shit.

Ellison darts back to the projector and shuts it off, but he's too late.

The film is burned through.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison is in front of his computer with the SUPER 8 SPLICING BLOCK in one hand, while typing into a search engine with the other.

He finds A WEBSITE titled "HOW TO EDIT SUPER 8 FILM". He reads the first few lines:

ELLISON
(reading)
"Super 8 film was first released in 1965 by Eastman Kodak as a new home movie format" - blah, blah, blah...

He scrolls down the webpage until he finds a section describing how to splice Super 8 film.

ELLISON
Here we go...

QUICK CUTS OF ELLISON:

- Trimming the burnt edges of the film.
- Taping up the footage with splicing tape, repairing what he can of it.
- Sliding the repaired film reel onto the projector.
- Setting down A TRIPOD and screwing a VIDEO CAMERA onto it.
- PRESSING RECORD on the video camera.
- Flipping the switch on the projector.

Ellison watches expectantly, waiting to see how much of the film has been damaged.

The now-repaired Super 8 film resumes, and the video camera records the screen...

ON SCREEN: We see THE SUB-HUMAN GHOSTLY FIGURE beneath the water. The Figure tilts his head and...

...the film stutters as Ellison's SPLICE passes through the projector.

ON SCREEN: The Figure's face is no longer visible. The damage was simply too great.

Ellison plugs the video camera into his COMPUTER, then DOWNLOADS the video recording onto his computer desktop.

He CLICKS the new video file, and the VIDEO RECORDING OF THE FOOTAGE STARTS TO PLAY on his computer screen.

He step-frames back and forth, trying to find a clean video frame of the Figure's face, but there isn't one.

Exasperated, Ellison looks down at the stack of six films - so far, he's only watched half of them.

He glances at his watch and frowns, then gets up and quickly leaves his office, locking the door behind him.

INT. FRAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellison is seated at the kitchen table. Fran - dressed exactly as she was before - pours more coffee into his cup.

FRAN

They were such a nice couple. Real beer and barbecue, you know?

ELLISON

What do you mean?

FRAN

I mean back then this neighborhood used to be pretty tight. Ice cream socials and block parties. You know what I mean?

Ellison nods. Fran grabs a PHOTO ALBUM off the counter and sets it down on the table in front of Ellison. As she continues talking, she flips through pages of PHOTOS taken at neighborhood gatherings, pointing to pics that include the Stevenson family members.

FRAN

They used to host more often than not. Beautiful kids. All of them. Even the weird one.

ELLISON

The weird one?

Fran nods as if to say "You know the one I'm talking about."

ELLISON
You mean Stephanie?

FRAN
(nods)
Beautiful girl. Very sweet. But not
like the rest of them.

ELLISON
How so?

FRAN
Well, they were all very outgoing.
The what-you-see-is-what-you-get
type of family. The boy, Brian, he
was quite popular with all the
local girls. The Junior High girls
used to ride their bikes back and
forth in front of the house hoping
he would notice them. Caught him
more than a couple times knuckle
deep in the backyard, if you know
what I mean.

Ellison chokes on his coffee. He wasn't prepared for Fran's
crassness.

FRAN (CONT'D)
And the youngest, Jenny, she was a
darling. Cutest little girl scout
you ever saw. Sang in the All
Saints Episcopal choir too.
Couldn't sing a note, but she had
so much heart that they gave her a
solo every now and again because
she was too precious not to. How
old are yours, by the way?

ELLISON
My kids? Well, Trevor is twelve and
Ashley is seven.

FRAN
And what does your wife do?

ELLISON
(half-joking)
Stays out of my way, mostly.

FRAN
What is that supposed to mean?

ELLISON

We're both stay at home types. She runs the house while I write.

FRAN

You can't do both?

ELLISON

Me? No. Once I get writing the rest of the world fades away and there's only the mystery and the book I'm writing about it.

FRAN

That's got to be hard on her.

ELLISON

She does alright. She's tough. So this girl, Stephanie - you said she was different?

FRAN

Oh, yeah. She was quiet. Shy. No one really paid her any mind. She just sat out on her swing, talking to herself mostly.

ELLISON

What swing?

FRAN

She had an old tire swing out back.

ELLISON

Was the family acting strange before the murder? Did they mention anything peculiar?

FRAN

Nope. One day they were the perfect little family, and the next they're...well. They were gone.

ELLISON

So no enemies? No scandals?

FRAN

I don't think there was a person in town who had a bad word to say about one of them, and I've never known a man to be more in love with his wife than that man was with his.

ELLISON
That sounds *too* perfect.

FRAN
Yeah, well that was the Stevensons
for you.

Ellison stands up.

ELLISON
Thank you for the coffee. If you
think of anything out of the
ordinary, will you let me know?

FRAN
Of course.

ELLISON
One more thing: that tire swing
that Stephanie used to play on -
which part of the yard was it in?

Fran gives Ellison a sad look.

She flips a page in her album and stabs a finger down on A
PHOTO taken from her own backyard. It shows a clear view of
Ellison's back yard back when it belonged to the Stevenson
family:

A TIRE SWING hangs down from the SAME TREE BRANCH from which
the Stevenson family was later hung.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ellison sits at his desk, staring out the adjacent window at
the tree in the back yard.

He reaches into his desk and takes out a black marker, then
begins to draw on the glass. We don't see what he's drawing
at first, then we see it from his POV: it is a tire swing
hanging from the tree.

He leans back in his chair and stares out the window, his
drawing perfectly in place.

ELLISON
(mutters)
Why the tree, and why the rope?

We hear the DOOR SLAMMING and commotion across the house. The
family is home.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Trevor and Ashley carry bookbags, Tracy carries a bag of groceries.

TRACY
Go to your room, Trevor!

TREVOR
Fine!

TRACY
And I don't want to see you until
dinner.

Ellison enters the room. As Trevor tries to stomp past him, Ellison grabs him by the arm. Ashley runs past them both up to her room - she wants no part of this.

ELLISON
Woah. What happened?

TREVOR
Mom is overreacting again.

TRACY
Your son is acting out again.

ELLISON
What'd he do this time?

TREVOR
Oh, so you're automatically taking
her side?

ELLISON
Trevor, what happened?

TREVOR
Dad, I...

ELLISON
Say it. And don't lie to me.

TREVOR
I drew a picture.

TRACY
He drew a picture. With a permanent
marker. On the classroom
whiteboard.

ELLISON
 (disappointed)
 Trevor.

TRACY
 Tell him what you drew.

Trevor looks down at his feet. He can't make eye contact.

ELLISON
 Trevor?

TREVOR
 I drew a tree.

ELLISON
 A tree?

TRACY
 With four people hanging from it.

Ellison reacts with surprise. Tracy glares at him, furious.

TRACY (CONT'D)
 Go to your room. I need to talk to
 your father.

Trevor slinks out.

Tracy steps closer to Ellison and speaks forcefully, but with
 a low voice so the kids won't hear:

TRACY
 His first day of school, Ellison.
 And he's already hearing the grisly
 details of your mystery.

ELLISON
 What did he hear?

TRACY
 Exactly what he drew - that your
 book is about people who were *hung!*
 Jesus, Ellison!

ELLISON
 Is that all he heard?

TRACY
 That's not enough?

ELLISON
 Look. I'm sorry it happened like
this...but it was bound to happen.

TRACY

Really? That's your response? You think that makes it okay?

ELLISON

No, Tracy. It's not okay. Nothing about what happened to that family is okay. But it happened. Sometimes bad things happen to good people, and someone has to write about them. They deserve that much.

TRACY

You're a real man of the people.

Before he can respond, she walks away.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Ellison sips at a glass of whiskey. There is a discarded plate of half-eaten dinner next to him on his desk.

Tracy pokes her head into the office and speaks coldly.

TRACY

I'm putting the kids to bed.

ELLISON

Alright. Kiss them goodnight for me.

TRACY

You getting good work done?

ELLISON

Yeah.

TRACY

Good. Please keep the door closed.

Ellison sighs as Tracy shuts the door.

He looks over at the projector and frowns. Time to watch another film.

He presses record on the video camera to once again record what plays on the screen, then he turns on the projector.

And the fourth Super 8 film begins...

ON SCREEN: WE'RE INSIDE A HOUSE IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

POV home invasion footage. A flashlight attached to the camera casts a CIRCLE OF LIGHT in front of us as the shot moves through the house, from the front door to the stairs.

We slowly move up to the second floor, step by step.

There is a bloody OCCULT SYMBOL scrawled on the wall along the stairs, but the camera doesn't linger over it.

The cameraman walks down a long hallway, pausing at the doorway to a room at the end of the hall.

A hand reaches out and pushes open a door to reveal a bedroom.

A MAN and WIFE are duct taped to the bed, both unconscious.

The camera gets very close. The light doesn't disturb them.

A LARGE CARVING KNIFE slides into frame.

The cameraman traces the blade lightly over the sleeping throat of the man.

The knife takes position to slice.

ON ELLISON as he WINCES.

**NOTE: The violence from here on out is PG-13 suggestive, hinting at extreme violence, but never showing any of it.*

A SPLASH OF BLOOD is reflected in Ellison's glasses. He absently downs the rest of his whiskey.

ON SCREEN: The camera lens has blood on it. The cameraman walks around the bed.

ON ELLISON as his glasses reflect the image of the knife slitting the Woman's throat.

ON SCREEN: The man and woman both thrash around in bed, trying to breathe. They are a blur of movement in the dark.

The cameraman retreats to the other side of the room and lets the camera rest on them for a moment, then the POV moves out of the room and back into the hallway.

Slowly, the cameraman moves down the hallway, stopping at a door with a SEATTLE SEAHAWKS POSTER pinned to it.

The cameraman pushes open the door and steps past A JACKET hanging on a deskchair.

The POV moves patiently toward a small bed where A YOUNG BOY is taped down like his parents, unconscious.

As the camera approaches, the bloody knife once again slides into frame.

ON ELLISON: this is too much, he can't watch. He swivels his chair around to face away from the screen.

ELLISON
(whispers to himself)
Dear Christ.

Still not watching the film, Ellison pours more whiskey into his glass and downs it. He rubs his forehead in distress as the unspeakable horror continues to play out in silent soft-focus on the screen behind him.

Ellison stares off for a moment, lost in dark thought, until the screen GOES TO WHITE and we hear the film ROLL OUT.

Spinning his chair back around, he shuts off the projector.

He takes a deep breath to calm himself. These films are clearly getting to him.

Taking the video camera in hand, Ellison plugs it into the LAPTOP COMPUTER on his DESK, and the recorded footage quickly downloads onto his desktop screen.

He takes a seat and begins sifting through the recorded footage.

Ellison stops on the OCCULT SYMBOL - he FREEZES THE FRAME and examines it, then step-frames back and forth to get the best angle for a screen grab.

QUICK CUTS:

- He CLICKS on "PRINT SCREEN."
- The printer spits out a color image of the occult symbol.
- Ellison tacks the printed image to the wall.

He returns to his desk and resumes watching the recorded POV footage. He sees the SEATTLE SEAHAWKS POSTER on the door, then watches as the POV moves into the young boy's bedroom.

Ellison STOPS the footage. He adjusts the contrast a bit to read the writing on the jacket that hangs on the deskchair.

The jacket says SEATTLE SUPERSONICS.

Ellison picks up the empty film canister and reads the title: SLEEPY TIME '98.

He CLICKS onto an internet SEARCH ENGINE and types in: "1998 SEATTLE FAMILY MURDER."

A slew of hits come up for "THE MILLER FAMILY MURDERS."

He CLICKS A LINK which brings up A VIDEO - old news footage. It is grainy, distorted and clearly ripped from video cassette into MPEG format. A REPORTER stands outside of the crime scene.

REPORTER

New details today in the grisly murders of a local family...

The on-scene reporter's image is replaced with a PHOTO of a pre-teen BOY.

REPORTER (O.S)

Police have released this photo of Christopher Miller, the missing 12-year-old son of William and Penny Miller. The Millers, along with their remaining two children, were found stabbed to death in their home.

BACK ON THE REPORTER at the scene.

REPORTER

Police are asking for any information that might lead to Christopher's return or the apprehension of any suspects involved in this vicious attack.

The video ends and Ellison closes the video window.

He hears a SOFT THUMP. Ellison looks up - the sound came from the attic.

He listens for a moment, waiting to see if it happens again.

Nothing.

Ellison looks back at his computer and scrolls down the page. There are photos of Christopher and the family, and blocks of text about the murder.

Now the power goes out. The computer screen is off, and the house is completely dark.

Ellison waits a beat.

He hears the PITTER-PAT of SMALL FEET RUNNING across the floor above him.

Ellison gets up from his chair and pulls out his CELL PHONE. He FLIPS IT OPEN, using it for light.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellison moves quickly through the hallway, the small light from his cell phone illuminating his way.

He opens Trevor's bedroom door. Trevor is sound asleep.

He quietly closes the door, then moves to Ashley's bedroom and opens the door. Ashley is also sound asleep.

Ellison carefully closes the door and then pads toward his own bedroom. He peers through the open door and sees Tracy asleep in their bed.

Another THUMP from the attic - louder this time. Ellison is clearly spooked now, but he's trying not to panic.

He moves quietly through the house and into the kitchen, where he pulls a KITCHEN KNIFE out from a knife block.

He creeps out of the kitchen, toward the attic ladder.

Silently, he pulls the attic ladder down from the ceiling and presses the phone to his chest, covering the light.

As he carefully climbs the ladder, one of the rungs CREAKS. He winces, trying hard not to make a sound.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

He peaks his head through the entrance and quickly whips out his phone. He spins back and forth, the phone in one hand and the knife in the other, shining the light back and forth, trying to spot the source of the noise.

Nothing.

The room is now filled with labelled PACKING BOXES and FURNITURE from the recent move, but otherwise it appears empty and still.

Then ONE OF THE MOVING BOXES at the far end of the room SHIFTS, just like the box that had Trevor in it earlier.

Ellison hops up into the attic and moves slowly towards it.

The box that shifted is labelled "office paint".

He holds the light overhead and opens it, then leans over the "shifting" box, peeking in.

Nothing.

Ellison starts to leave, but then...

SCRRRITCH.

He hears a soft scraping sound behind him.

He spins around, shining his cell phone light down toward the sound. He sees THE GREY LID FROM THE BOX OF FILMS, resting top-side up on the floor in front of him.

He stares in silence for a moment...and then the lid MOVES.

Ellison steps back, unable to fathom what he just saw. He waits, and it MOVES AGAIN. He swallows hard, then looks around and finds an iron FIREPLACE POKER.

He grabs the poker, then reaches out with it and FLIPS OVER THE LID, revealing A SMALL BLACK RAT SNAKE underneath. Ellison takes a step back. The small snake slithers away from him, disappearing into a tiny crack in the wall.

Ellison breathes a sigh of relief, and then he notices something on the UNDERSIDE OF THE LID.

He picks up the lid and shines his cell phone light onto it. Ellison sees SIX TINY STICK-FIGURE IMAGES, each one drawn with a black magic marker. He leans in close, squinting, but the drawings are so small, they are difficult to see.

Ellison presses RECORD on his cell phone VIDEO APP, and the phone serves as a kind of magnifying glass - the images on the phone display are blown up bigger than the actual drawings on the underside of the lid, making them easier to see.

Staring at his phone display, Ellison studies each image carefully, while recording what he sees:

THE FIRST DRAWING is a picture of the tree with four stick figures hanging from it. Each person is labeled with their name and an arrow pointing to them: MOM, DAD, JENNY and BRIAN. There is a stick figure hiding behind the tree. It is labeled as well: MR. BOOGIE.

THE SECOND DRAWING has a picture of four beds with blood dripping from them. They are labeled MOM, DAD, JAKE and JOHN. There is a figure hiding behind one of the beds. It is also labeled MR. BOOGIE.

Ellison realizes now that each of the six drawings on the lid depict one of the six murders found on the films from the box.

THE THIRD DRAWING has a picture of a swimming pool with stick figures in chairs at the bottom: MOM, DAD, VICKY & AMBER. At the opposite end of the pool, another figure stands at the bottom, labeled MR. BOOGIE.

THE FOURTH DRAWING has a picture of a car on fire with four stick figures flailing their arms out the windows: MOM, DAD, SARAH and RONNY. There is a figure hiding behind the car, labeled MR. BOOGIE.

THE FIFTH DRAWING has five stick figures being buried next to a Christmas tree: MOM, DAD, BOBBY, MILLY and DANICA. A figure peeks out from around the tree labeled: MR. BOOGIE.

THE SIXTH DRAWING has three stick figures on the ground: MOM, DAD and LUKE. There is a lawn mower lowering onto DAD. Behind a nearby tree is another figure, labeled MR. BOOGIE.

Finished, Ellison starts to leave. As he's about to press stop on the video camera app, the floor beneath him CREAKS.

His next step is right atop the BROKEN FLOORBOARDS where the box of films had been hidden.

The floor beneath him COLLAPSES. Ellison tries to grab the side of the hole in the floor as he falls, but it's as if something is pulling him down.

After a short struggle, Ellison tumbles down through the floor/ceiling, and a splintered board SLICES OPEN his arm.

Ellison SLAMS down hard onto the floor below.

His cell phone falls next to him, snapping shut, and we CUT TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house is lit up with every light on. Tracy talks with the DEPUTY as Ellison, somewhat embarrassed, sits at the kitchen table while an EMT tends to his arm.

ELLISON

Really, I'm okay.

EMT

I'd prefer to take you down to the hospital and have this looked at. I think you should get stitches. I can't force you, though.

ELLISON
And I won't go.

EMT
Well, the bleeding has stopped for now. But if it starts again, or if there is any more swelling, call a doctor immediately.

ELLISON
Thank you.

The EMT gets up and exits. The DEPUTY walks over to Ellison.

DEPUTY
So lets see this hole...

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison and the Deputy look up at the hole in the ceiling. The Deputy traces the hole with the light of his flashlight.

DEPUTY
So you say you heard a loud thump and then footsteps in the attic just after the power went out?

ELLISON
Yes.

DEPUTY
But the ladder wasn't down?

ELLISON
No, it wasn't.

DEPUTY
And it isn't possible to close it from within the attic?

ELLISON
No.

DEPUTY
So how could an intruder get up there?

ELLISON
I didn't say anyone was up there. I just said it *sounded* like there was an intruder. I did see a small snake up there though.

DEPUTY
Snakes don't have feet.

ELLISON
No, deputy, they don't.

DEPUTY
I'm guessing you've got squirrels.
There's no way in or out up there
and when the power went out in the
neighborhood, I reckon they got
spooked by the sudden noise of
everything shutting down at once.
You know how they are.

ELLISON
Not really. I'm not a squirrel guy.

DEPUTY
Oh.

ELLISON
I also killed a scorpion up there
when we moved in. I should probably
call an exterminator.

DEPUTY
Scorpions have feet, but you won't
hear them like you would squirrels.

ELLISON
Right. Well, officer. Thank you so
much for the help. If there's
anything I can do.

Ellison puts his hand out as if to politely escort the Deputy
out of his house.

DEPUTY
Actually, there is.

Ellison's face falls a bit, but he tries to keep a fake smile
plastered on his face.

ELLISON
Name it.

DEPUTY
I left my copy of KENTUCKY BLOOD at
the station, and it would mean a
lot to have a signed copy.

ELLISON

(relieved)

Of course. I have spare copies in the office. Let me get you one.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Ellison pulls a box off the shelf and pulls out a copy of KENTUCKY BLOOD. As he reaches for a pen, the Deputy steps into the office.

The Deputy's eyes grow wide in awe. Ellison turns around. He's pissed.

ELLISON

Officer! This is my private office and I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to step outside.

DEPUTY

Wow. This is like one of them FBI profilers offices. You even got a map with yarn connected to pictures and everything.

ELLISON

Deputy...

The Deputy steps forward and begins to speak softly.

DEPUTY

Look. In your books there's that page where you say nice things about the people who helped you out.

ELLISON

The acknowledgments, yeah.

DEPUTY

Well, each book has a line like "I could never have done this without the tireless efforts of deputy so-and-so of the local police department."

ELLISON

Yeah?

The Deputy nervously scuffs his feet a little.

DEPUTY

Well...I could be your Deputy So-and-So. You know, if you don't already have one.

Ellison smiles, even more relieved than before.

ELLISON

Yeah.

(he nods)

Yeah. Yeah. There are a few things you can do for me. This is perfect, actually. You got a notepad?

The Deputy taps his breast pocket and pulls out his notepad.

ELLISON (CONT'D)

Great. I need to get the street address of a crime. 1998. Seattle. A family was stabbed to death. Well, had their throats cut. Ugly affair. Then I need to get any details you can get me on another murder in 1974. A family was burned alive in their own car, parked in their own garage.

DEPUTY

What city?

ELLISON

Probably coastal, but otherwise I have no idea. I only know the year and the method of execution.

The Deputy looks up from his notebook.

DEPUTY

Do you think these cases are related?

ELLISON

(lies)

No. Just research. Can you get the information for me?

DEPUTY

Sure. I can do that. I'll have to wait until the Sheriff is off duty, but I'll get it.

Ellison quickly signs a copy of KENTUCKY BLOOD and hands it too the Deputy.

ELLISON
Well, then, thank you very
much...Deputy So-and-So.

EXT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison stands on his front porch waving as the Deputy drives away. He turns around to walk back into the house and sees Tracy standing in the doorway waiting for him.

TRACY
I'm sorry.

ELLISON
For what?

TRACY
I was upset at Trevor today, and I
took it out on you.

ELLISON
You don't have to be sorry. I know
how hard this move has been for you.

TRACY
I'm trying, Ell, I really am.

ELLISON
I know. I just want you with me.
That's all.

Tracy steps up and puts her arms around him.

TRACY
I've *always* been with you, and I'm
with you now. I just want to know
that you're with *me*.

ELLISON
I am, baby, I am... It's all going
to pay off in time. I promise.

Arm-in-arm, they walk back into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

The house is dark. Everyone but Ellison is already in bed.

Slouched in a chair, drink in hand, he stares glassy-eyed at the TV, watching AN OLD VIDEOTAPED INTERVIEW OF HIMSELF:

ON THE TV: Inside A BROADCAST STUDIO, Ellison sits at a local news desk opposite a good looking ANCHOR.

ANCHOR

KENTUCKY BLOOD is quite graphic. What it is that drives you to spend so much time investigating such grisly subjects?

ELLISON

Fame and money.

Ellison and the anchor both laugh. He brushes the notion aside as if it were funny.

ELLISON

I'm kidding of course - I've honestly never cared about either of those things.

When he speaks, he is a very different Ellison. He is the very model of the cocky, arrogant writer hot off of a hit.

ELLISON

The honest answer is that I'm driven by injustice. The fact that something so awful happened to innocent people, and those responsible for it were never even identified, let alone caught. I knew going into this particular case that I might find something that others had missed - and even if I didn't, I knew that the story of the victims would be told better than it had been told before.

ANCHOR

But you did discover an alarming amount of information that the police had missed.

ELLISON (CONT'D)

You know, there are a lot of good police officers out there. I don't in any way want to disparage what they do. But sometimes politics or ego or even just bad gut feelings get in the way of a good investigation.

ANCHOR

But the police don't always like you meddling or poking around.

ELLISON

Oh, lord no. Nobody likes anyone following behind them, checking their work - especially if they got something wrong. But that's exactly why someone has to do it. In police work, getting it wrong means ruining lives. Good crime writing is about setting things right.

ANCHOR

Which felt better? The day you saw justice done or the day you saw your book top the New York Times best seller list?

ELLISON

(smiles)

The justice. Without question. The day I write a book for the money or fame is the day I put a gun in my mouth.

BACK ON ELLISON WATCHING HIMSELF. He uses the remote to EJECT the VIDEOTAPE, then puts the tape back into it's jacket.

He opens a drawer under the TV that is filled with videotapes, each one marked "KENTUCKY BLOOD INTERVIEW", along with a show-title and a date.

Angrily, he takes the video he just watched and SHOVES it back into its place, then SLAMS the drawer shut.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ellison plugs his CELL PHONE into his COMPUTER and begins downloading video from the previous evening.

He begins framing through the ATTIC CELL PHONE RECORDING of THE DRAWINGS on the underside of the cardboard box lid.

He freeze-frames the POOL PARTY DRAWING.

He then brings up the VIDEO RECORDING of the Super 8 film footage of POOL PARTY '70.

He slowly frames through POOL PARTY '70 footage, stopping on the remaining shadows of MR. BOOGIE.

He leaves the two images of Mr. Boogie - one from the stick figure box drawing, the other from the Super 8 footage - right next to one another for a moment.

He continues watching the attic cell phone video and STOPS on the stick figure drawing of FAMILY HANGING OUT '08.

He cues up the recorded Super 8 footage from FAMILY HANGING OUT '08 and fast forwards through it until he sees A FLASH OF MOVEMENT in the brush behind the tree.

Ellison's eyes go wide, and his perplexed expressions says, *How did I miss that movement before?*

He step-frames back and finds the movement. Ellison ZOOMS IN on the image: we see THE PIXILATED FACE OF MR. BOOGIE with a wide-eyed, Manson-like stare. The features are obscured, but it is clearly the same sub-human, ghostly figure as before.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison clicking "print screen."
- The printer spitting out the image.
- Ellison tacking the printout of Mr. Boogie onto his wall.

Back at his computer, Ellison sifts quickly through more recorded Super 8 footage. He finds distorted images of Mr. Boogie in both BARBECUE '79 and SLEEPY TIME '98. He prints up copies of these two Mr. Boogie appearances, then tacks them both to the wall next to the other.

Ellison steps back and stares at the wall, taking in the new information.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tracy and Ashley are in the kitchen together. Ashley is painting a picture at the kitchen table. Tracy pours fresh coffee beans into a grinder and grinds them.

ASHLEY

Are you making Daddy his coffee?

TRACY

Yes.

ASHLEY

Can I help? I want to bring it to him.

TRACY

Sure, honey, but we have to make it just right - he's very particular about his coffee...

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ashley stands outside Ellison's office with a steaming mug of coffee and knocks on the door.

Ellison opens the door and furrows his brow. He doesn't understand why he's being disturbed.

ASHLEY

I brought you some coffee, Daddy.

ELLISON

Oh, thank you sweetheart!

Ellison smiles and takes the mug just as his cell phone rings. He answers, and we INTERCUT Ellison and the Deputy, who is sitting in his patrol car on his cell phone.

DEPUTY

Hey, Mr. Oswald.

ELLISON

Deputy.

Ellison waves Ashley away and closes the door.

DEPUTY

Sorry to get back to you so late in the day. I couldn't make the call from the office. The Sheriff...

ELLISON

I understand.

DEPUTY

But I got what you asked about. There was a Martinez family that died in their Los Angeles garage in 1979. They were taped to their seats and the car was set on fire. One of their sons, nine years old, was never found.

Ellison begins scribbling down the details.

ELLISON

Do you have an address on that?

DEPUTY

8224 Billington, Los Angeles.

ELLISON

Great. And Seattle?

DEPUTY

The address of the house where the Miller Murders occurred is 2976 Piedmont Way, Seattle.

ELLISON

Excellent. 297...6. Wait, did you say 2976 - as in twenty nine seventy six?

DEPUTY

Yeah. Does that mean something?

ELLISON

(lies)

No, no. Thanks Deputy.

Ellison hangs up. He looks pale.

He reaches over for an ACCORDION FILE on his desk and opens it.

He pulls out HIS OWN HOME TITLE DOCUMENTS, and finds the former address (or house-in-escrow address) for the Stevensons, prior to living where Ellison lives now.

The address is 2976 Piedmont Way, Seattle. The two addresses are the same, so the Stevenson's prior home was the same house where the Miller's were murdered.

ELLISON

(softly, to himself)

Holy shit.

Still on the computer screen is the freaky pic of Mr. Boogie blown-up (zoomed in on). IT MOVES. Not much, just barely. The face becomes slightly more recognizable and seems to look up at Ellison, but Ellison is too busy reading the pages and comparing the addresses to notice. Ellison sets the papers down just as the face of Mr. Boogie returns to its blurry, blown up original position.

As if he senses something, Ellison turns to look at the screen. He clicks off the video of SLEEPY TIME '98, then presses play on the ATTIC CELL PHONE FOOTAGE.

We watch the phone footage from the attic for a few seconds. From the PHONE'S POV, we see Ellison DROP through the floor. There is a blur of something weird as the camera falls.

ELLISON

(mutters)

What the hell was that?

Ellison pauses the video and rewinds, framing backward. There are blurry shadows and then, as he frames back, he sees what *could be* TINY HANDS OF CHILDREN pulling him through the hole in the attic.

He step-frames back further and now the hands aren't there.

He step-frames forward again - there are only a TWO FRAMES with what looks like CHILDREN'S HANDS.

Ellison rubs his eyes and temples. He peers closer, wondering if it's something real or just a trick of the light.

It can't be real.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison slaps his laptop shut.
- He downs a shot of whiskey.
- Leaving his office, Ellison locks the door behind him.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Bathed in pale moonlight and THICK MIST, the house is barely illuminated. *

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

DEAD OF NIGHT. Various shots of the house in dark stillness.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellison has gone to sleep.

SLOW PUSH IN - much like the low angle POV from the SLEEPY TIME '98 film - stopping c/u on Ellison's face.

We hear the SOUND of the projector turning on downstairs.

It takes a moment, but Ellison finally awakens from the sound.

He gets out of bed. We track him slowly through the house.

His office door is open. Light from the film is spilling out into the dark hallway.

Ellison enters his office. He finds the projector on and his laptop computer open and running.

Both projector and computer are playing FAMILY HANGING OUT '08, perfectly synced with one another.

Baffled, Ellison shuts off the projector. Then he taps the spacebar, freezing the image on the laptop. Ellison looks up at the wall - at the printed image of Mr. Boogie with the Manson like stare, semi-hidden in the backyard brush.

He glances out the window and sees A SILHOUETTED FIGURE in the backyard brush, just beyond the tree - TWO EYES barely reflected in the moonlight, staring out from the exact same place we saw Mr. Boogie in the Super 8 film.

A chill runs down Ellison's spine. He BOLTS out the office.

INT. HALLWAY CLOSET - NIGHT

Ellison snatches up A FLASHLIGHT and A BASEBALL BAT.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Ellison steps out of the house and into the misty yard. He shines the flashlight toward the spot behind the tree where Mr. Boogie was in the footage. He sees MOVEMENT in the brush. *

Unnerved, Ellison warily presses on toward the brush.

More movement. He pauses again, afraid.

And now, in a shocking reveal, Ellison's searching flashlight beam finds TREVOR'S FACE in the brush, staring back at him with the same Manson-like psychopath stare that Mr. Boogie had in the Super 8 footage.

Dropping the flashlight and bat, Ellison RUNS to his son.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison, moving quickly, carries Trevor back into his bedroom. Tracy is standing by the door.

TRACY

Oh, no! Is he okay?

ELLISON

He was outside. We need to put an outside lock on his door. This is way worse than before.

TRACY

I'll call the doctor in the morning.

Ellison sets Trevor down in his bed.

ELLISON
Will you stay with him? I left the
back door open.

Tracy nods and sits next to Trevor, stroking his hair.

EXT. BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison walks briskly through the yard toward the flashlight and bat, both of which are still lying in the grass where he left them.

As he picks up the flashlight, he hears a low GROWL.

Ellison looks up and sees a pair of eyes staring out at him from the darkness of the yard.

Moving very slowly, he edges the light toward the glowing eyes. The growl becomes a BARK.

Ellison jumps back, his flashlight now revealing a LARGE BLACK DOG standing patiently in place.

Ellison puts a hand out, as if to say "stay." The dog stands still, continuing its growl.

THE DOG'S POV OF ELLISON: Standing in the brush right behind Ellison are THE SILHOUETTES OF SIX CHILDREN, their faces unrecognizable in the dark. They remain perfectly still as Ellison "negotiates" with the dog.

ELLISON
Woah. Stay. Good dog. I don't want
to hurt you. I just want my bat to
bash your head if you come at me.

The dog continues to growl. Ellison takes a step back toward the child silhouettes.

ELLISON (CONT'D)
I haven't seen you around here
before. Whose doggie are you?

Ellison looks over at the bat as if to figure out how to get at it. Carefully, he takes another step back toward the child silhouettes.

The dog takes a step forward, still growling. Ellison stops.

ELLISON
You know what? Keep it.

And now the dog turns and walks away. Ellison waits a beat, then SPRINTS toward the house.

Behind him, the child silhouettes are gone.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracy is waiting for Ellison as he enters the house. She sees that he looks visibly disturbed.

TRACY
You okay?

ELLISON
(distracted)
I'm fine.

TRACY
Trevor's too old to still be having these - he was supposed to have outgrown them by now.

ELLISON
(still distracted)
Yeah.

TRACY
...Just stop.

ELLISON
What?

TRACY
Drop the book. We can pack up, get out of town and never look back.

ELLISON
Because of some night terrors?

TRACY
No. It's more than that. He's never been this bad. You've never been this bad.

ELLISON
What are you talking about?

TRACY
You've been at this book for less than a week and you're already a mess. You never crack into the whiskey this early. And never this often.

ELLISON

Are you saying I'm a drunk?

TRACY

No. I'm saying there is something you aren't telling me, something that's eating you up, and whatever it is seems to be getting to Trevor as well. Something is different this time.

ELLISON

A lot of things are different this time. How much do you want to know?

TRACY

I want to know why *you're* different.

ELLISON

I'm different because I'm on to something bigger than I've ever been before. You remember how hard things were when I wrote Kentucky?

TRACY

I remember.

ELLISON

This is bigger than Kentucky. This is my MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL. We're talking a mega-hit, honey. Huge. Movie deal, talk show circuit and enough money to get you that house we've always talked about.

TRACY

I don't care about any of that.

ELLISON

Yes, you do. We all care about that. And I've got a real shot at it here.

TRACY

I'm...I just...

ELLISON

You just *what*?

TRACY

I'm just worried about you.

ELLISON
Nothing is wrong.

TRACY
Then why did you come in white as a
ghost.

After a moment, Ellison lets out a little laugh.

ELLISON
I got spooked by a dog.

TRACY
A dog?

ELLISON
Yeah. Big one. Cujo big. Never seen
him before.

TRACY
Did you get rid of him?

ELLISON
(smiles)
Yeah, he's gone.

Ellison takes Tracy by the hand and looks into her eyes,
speaking softly.

ELLISON (CONT'D)
I only need a little more time.
Trust me baby, it's worth it. Every
minute we stay here is a minute
closer to the happy ending we've
always dreamed about. We're almost
there.

Tracy nods, smiling as tears form in her eyes.

TRACY
How much longer?

ELLISON
Not much longer.

TRACY
Okay. I trust you.

ELLISON
Thank you, baby.

They embrace.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ellison sits in his chair, sets up his whiskey and glass beside him, then takes a deep breath. He puts on a stoic, steady face.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison turns off the lights.
- He presses record on the video camera.
- He turns on the projector.
- Film threads through the projector sprockets.

And the fifth Super 8 film begins...

ON SCREEN: AN OPEN FIELD ON CHRISTMAS MORNING.

A FAMILY plays in the snow. Each member of the family is bundled up in bright colored snow gear.

They throw snowballs at one another in an elaborate snowball fight behind snow forts.

They build a snowman and finish it off by placing a carrot as a nose and two pieces of charcoal as eyes.

One of them sleds down a hill while the rest of the family watches.

The film flickers a bit and then CUTS TO:

A STATIC SHOT OF AN OPEN SPACE.

In the open space are FOUR SHALLOW GRAVES dug in the snow.

The film flickers and jump cuts again, only this time the four graves are filled with the unconscious bodies of the family. Stripped of their warm clothing, they're now wrapped up in all the right places with duct tape, unable to move.

The camera angle changes to a CLOSE-UP of the Father's face. A snowball hits him in the cheek. He groggily awakens.

Dad tries to scream, but cannot through the duct tape around his mouth. He writhes and contorts, but cannot move.

The camera angle changes again, this time to Mom. The same scenario repeats itself. Mom gets awoken by a shovel full of snow. She tries to scream and free herself, but she can't.

The camera angle changes again, showing all four family members writhing in their shallow graves. None of them can work their way out of their graves.

The shot lingers, almost painfully so, relishing in their futile attempts to escape.

The camera angle changes again, this time looking over Dad as snow is shoveled in from out of frame. He winces at the cold, but the snow keeps coming.

A shovelful covers his chest and he tries to shake it off. Another shovelful comes in.

He begins wriggling like a caterpillar, trying to shake the snow off of him. The snow keeps coming.

The camera angle changes again, this time looking over mom as snow is shoveled on her as well.

A shovelful of snow falls down on her. Then another, and another. She is crying, begging through the tape for mercy.

A TIME CUT and we see that a MAJOR SNOWSTORM has descended upon the open space. Harsh wind blows thick snow everywhere, creating a near WHITEOUT.

The camera cuts to the family completely buried, with the snow packed down tightly, covering all but their faces.

Then the camera moves over the FROZEN CORPSES of the two Children and Mom, with Dad the only one still breathing.

The camera is down, almost completely on the ground next to Dad's face. Patches of black indicate frost bite on his cheeks and nose. Tiny icicles hang off his ears. He finally succumbs and freezes to death.

The footage rolls out.

Ellison switches off the projector and the video camera. He lets out a deep sigh and it comes out as A BREATH OF STEAM, as if he were sitting in the cold.

He sits back, looking at the air.

He leans forward a bit, breathing deeply out, trying to repeat the visible breath. Nothing happens. He looks uneasy.

Ellison turns around and plugs the video camera into the computer, cueing up the video.

He begins to frame through the video, looking for clues.

He stops the footage in one shot and notes the snowman in the background. There is A FIGURE lurking behind it, barely visible. On the front of the snowman itself is the OCCULT SYMBOL, soaked into the snow with blood.

Ellison enhances the video and presses "print screen," then he hears a knock at the door.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Ellison opens the door to reveal The Deputy standing on the porch, holding a manila envelope filled with papers.

ELLISON

Deputy.

The Deputy respectfully tips his hat and then holds out the envelope.

DEPUTY

Mr. Oswald. These came in this morning. I pulled a few of the pertinent files for you and had them faxed over.

ELLISON

Really? Thanks.

DEPUTY

You mind if I come in?

ELLISON

Please.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Deputy and Ellison sit opposite one another at the dining room table.

DEPUTY

Look, I know what you must think of me. Small town Deputy, star struck by the famous writer. But I'm not some small town boob.

ELLISON

I don't think you're a -

The Deputy raises a hand to stop Ellison.

DEPUTY

I have a degree in criminology and took my share of forensic science courses. I'm here because this is where my family lives. I want to be here. I also know a series of connected murders when I see one.

ELLISON

Deputy -

DEPUTY

We missed something, I get that. But the Sheriff has a hard-on for running you out of town with your tail between your legs, and if I'm going to run interference for you while you get this worked out, I need to be in the loop. At least a little bit.

ELLISON

So you really *want* to help?

DEPUTY

This is my home, Mr. Oswald. What happened here happened to all of us.

Ellison nods and taps the table, clearly torn about whether or not to let the Deputy in on what is going on.

ELLISON

Alright. I'll let you in on the basics.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The Deputy looks around at the walls of the office, trying to take in the vast array of information. He leans in close to one of the pictures of Mr. Boogie and shivers a little.

DEPUTY

Who is this?

ELLISON

I'm not sure yet. That's what I'm hoping to find out.

DEPUTY

What do you think is going on?
Serial murders?

ELLISON

Yeah. Well, maybe. More ritualized than necessarily serial. But really spread out. Not only regionally, but over time. The earliest I can find goes back to the 60's.

DEPUTY

The *nineteen* sixties?

ELLISON

Um, yeah.

DEPUTY

That would put this guy in his, what, seventies?

ELLISON

Or sixties.

DEPUTY

I don't know.

Ellison begins to point to different pieces of evidence on his wall.

ELLISON

Look at the methodology. It changes MO almost every time. Each murder is different, but none of them require the killer to overpower his victims. Here he used a tree branch to do the heavy lifting. In Los Angeles he set the family on fire. Seattle he slit their throats. He drowned one family and left another out in the snow to die of exposure.

DEPUTY

You haven't told me about those yet.

ELLISON

The link between these crimes is tenuous, based only on the fact that the killer murders every member of the family together, except one - a child. And that this symbol often shows up somewhere at the crime scene.

Ellison stabs a printout of the OCCULT SYMBOL with his finger. The Deputy leans in close.

DEPUTY

Well, that looks like something out of the occult. You should call the university - one of my professors up there is an occult crime expert. The state police use him for their weird stuff.

ELLISON

I think this qualifies.

DEPUTY

So exposure and drowning? Where?

ELLISON

That's what I need you to find out.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ellison is using SKYPE on his laptop to video chat with PROFESSOR JONAS, an older, bookish, professor type.

ELLISON

Professor Jonas, thanks for getting back to me so quickly.

PROFESSOR JONAS

Of course. Big fan. I'm really flattered that you e-mailed. And once I saw the photos you sent me, I knew exactly which cases you were studying. To be entirely truthful, I'm hoping for a little quid pro quo here.

ELLISON

Wait, how do you know which cases I'm looking at?

PROFESSOR JONAS

The symbol you sent me wasn't a pentagram. It's not something you see teenagers or Norwegian black metal bands painting on the wall in goat's blood in order to look edgy and piss off the Christians. This is pretty obscure and has only turned up in a couple of places.

ELLISON

I see.

PROFESSOR JONAS

I know that one on the wall is from Seattle in the late 90's. Though to be honest I've never seen a shot taken from the angle you've captured it with. All the photos I've seen were in black and white. And the snowman is from Minnesota about ten years before that.

ELLISON

What can you tell me about it?

PROFESSOR JONAS

It's a symbol associated with the worship of a pagan deity.

ELLISON

A deity?

PROFESSOR JONAS

Yeah. An obscure one too, dating back to Babylonian times. Named Bughuul. *The eater of children.*

ELLISON

Wait, did you say *eater*?

PROFESSOR JONAS

Of children. The crimes you're dealing with all have an element of a missing child, correct?

ELLISON

Yes.

PROFESSOR JONAS

Bughuul eats children. The fragments of stories that survive about this deity all revolve around him needing the souls of human children to survive. Each story involves a different way that he lures or tricks children away from the physical world and traps them in his own netherworld. There, he consumes their souls over time. Any worship of him would involve a blood sacrifice and, probably, the wholesale *eating* of a child.

ELLISON

Wait, are you saying the man who left this symbol *eats children*?

PROFESSOR JONAS

It would fit the stories. Of course the few times this symbol has shown up, none of the crimes have appeared related, so it might be more of a cult initiation into Bughuul worship than the actions of any one man.

*

ELLISON

Huh.

Ellison leans back in his chair and scratches his chin.

PROFESSOR JONAS

There's been another one, hasn't there.

ELLISON

I think so.

PROFESSOR JONAS

Tell me everything you can.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ellison looks down at the box of films. There is only one film left: LAWN WORK '86.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison slides the reel onto the projector.
- He turns on the video camera.
- He flips off the light.
- He switches on the projector.
- Film threads itself through the projector sprockets.

Now the sixth (and final) Super 8 film begins...

ON SCREEN: A LARGE BACK YARD IN DAYLIGHT.

The CAMERA POV TILTS UP from the EXPANSIVE LAWN to the back of a large house. Through the windows, we see A FAMILY going about their day inside the house.

The film stutters and jump cuts: the family is now bound and gagged with duct tape, each laying on their backs in the yard.

The camera moves over to A LAWN MOWER and is fitted to a mount on handle bars, pointed at an angle toward the ground ahead of the mower.

The mower is lifted off its front wheels while the cameraman tries to pull start it.

The mower roars to life and begins to move forward towards the first family member.

Dad looks up in terror as the mower approaches his feet. His eyes go wide.

The mower is pushed down to lift its front wheels, exposing Dad to the blade.

ON ELLISON: He stands and immediately walks out of the office. He's had enough. He isn't even thinking enough to just switch off the projector.

Standing in the hallway for a moment, he bends forward, hands supporting him on his thighs, as if he's about to either faint or vomit.

He steadies himself with a few breaths, then turns and steps back into his office doorway.

Peering at the screen (which we don't see), Ellison winces and lurches back out into the hallway.

Now he just stands there for another moment, waiting...

Finally, Ellison hears the film ROLL OUT, spinning with the familiar slapping sound.

He re-enters the office, switches off the projector and video camera.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison pulls the reels off the projector.
- He boxes up the films.
- He closes up the office and locks the door.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is dark and silent. Everyone is asleep.

The silence is broken with the sound of the projector TURNING ON and RUNNING.

Ellison's eyes shoot open. He sits up in bed and swings his legs over the side, groggily wiping his eyes. He looks over at Tracy, who is still sound asleep.

The familiarity of the sound finally registers to him, and he rushes out of the room.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

The door to his office is open. Inside the projector is running, playing FAMILY HANGING OUT '08.

Approaching from the hallway, Ellison enters the office, then looks behind the door and under the desk to see if anyone is in there.

Dumbfounded, he shuts off the projector and the room goes dark. He stands there a moment, thinking...

Someone has to be in the house - there is no other explanation.

He grabs the baseball bat from behind his office door and creeps out into the hallway.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is eerily quiet - the only sound is the occasional CREAK of Ellison's feet on the floorboards.

Moving carefully down the hallway, each step he takes is now slow and measured. He pads quietly through the living room.

As the camera tracks along with him, we see a GHOST CHILD standing motionless in the shadows along the wall.

The Ghost Child has pale gray skin, with matted, greasy hair. Its eyes are jet black with dark circles underneath, and its clothes are mangled.

Ellison walks right past it.

He continues through the living room and we pass by ANOTHER GHOST CHILD crouching behind the side of the couch.

There is something both innocent and sinister about these Ghost Children. They look physical/corporeal, but their movements are oddly fluid and make no sound at all.

Ellison continues to walk, oblivious to the lurking Ghost Child nearby.

But then, as if sensing something, Ellison stops. He slowly turns toward the Ghost Child, but as he does, the Ghost Child sinks back into the darkness.

Ellison didn't see it. He moves on toward THE KITCHEN.

Ellison enters the kitchen, and behind him we see TWO MORE GHOST CHILDREN slink out from the shadows in the darkest corner in the room.

Again, Ellison does not see them.

He flips on the light and the dark shadows in the room vanish. Ellison scans the room, but the Ghost Children are not there.

He walks past the kitchen table and we see a single Ghost Child hiding beneath it. As the Ghost Child watches Ellison's legs and feet pass by, it giggles silently, as if playing a game. The Ghost Child covers its mouth to stifle the laugh.

Ellison turns off the light and leaves the kitchen.

The Ghost children slink back out from the shadows and slowly follow after him.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ellison enters the main hallway. As he moves down it slowly, we see looming CHILD SILHOUETTES following behind him.

Ellison now hears the sound of a child's feet running and the projector starting up again. He stops. Then, as he turns toward the sound, the silhouettes behind him disperse.

Ellison bolts back toward his office.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

The projector is running again, displaying the film right where it had left off before.

Ellison looks around wildly, then shuts off the projector.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ellison opens Trevor's door and looks in his room. Trevor is sound asleep. Ellison closes the door.

He takes a few quiet steps down the hall and opens Ashley's door...

INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Standing in the doorway, Ellison sees that Ashley is rolled over on her side, back to the door, apparently asleep.

He quietly closes the door, and the camera PUSHES IN on Ashley, and then MOVING AROUND HER, we see that her eyes are wide open and afraid.

Crouching beside her is STEPHANIE, the missing daughter from the Stevenson family - she is one of the Ghost Children.

Stephanie leans in, looking Ashley right in the eyes with a single finger over her mouth.

STEPHANIE
Sssshhhhhhhh.

ON THE WALL behind Stephanie, we see a fresh PAINTING OF THE TREE WITH FOUR HANGING BODIES.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison checks all the locks, doors and windows.
- He locks his office.
- Ellison sits down on the living room couch, baseball bat on his lap.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Same shot we left Ellison with on the couch, bat in his lap. The morning light creeps across the room as the sun rises.

Ellison startles awake. He glances down at the bat in his lap, then looks around, disoriented.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Ellison unlocks his office and checks the projector. There is no film threaded up on it.

He lifts the lid off the grey cardboard box. The films are all there, right where he left them the day before.

EXT. ELLISON'S HOUSE - MORNING

A POLICE CRUISER is parked in front of Ellison's house.

ELLISON (V.O.)
I appreciate you coming by so
early, Deputy.

DEPUTY (V.O.)
No problem at all.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The Deputy sits at the kitchen table. Ellison carries two cups of coffee to the table and sits across from him.

ELLISON
We're beginning to become friends,
right?

The Deputy gets a goofy look on his face, smiling at the idea.

DEPUTY
I suppose. Yeah.

ELLISON
I can trust you, right?

DEPUTY
Absolutely.

ELLISON
So can I ask you something in
earnest, without you reading too
much into it?

The Deputy pauses for a second, hesitating to answer. This feels like a trick question.

DEPUTY
Alright...

ELLISON
Was there anything weird about the
Stevensons? Any complaints from
them about anything...*strange*?

DEPUTY
Not to my knowledge.

ELLISON
 Did any of the investigators notice anything odd or inexplicable about the house? Any weird stories?

DEPUTY
 No. Mr. Oswald... Is there something you want to tell me?

ELLISON
 I...

DEPUTY
 What happened?

Ellison doesn't answer right away.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)
 Clearly something happened and you want to talk about it.

ELLISON
 Yeah.

DEPUTY
 Does your wife know about it?

ELLISON
 No.

DEPUTY
 Why haven't you talked to her?

ELLISON
 It's complicated.

DEPUTY
 What do you mean, *complicated*?

ELLISON
 She doesn't like knowing the details of my work.

DEPUTY
 So, wait...does she even know whose house this is? *Was?*

Ellison narrows his eyes a bit. The Deputy has him pegged.

ELLISON
 No, she doesn't.

The Deputy laughs. Ellison doesn't find this funny.

DEPUTY

Well that's a conversation I
wouldn't want to be around for.

ELLISON

No. Neither would I.

The Deputy regains his composure, realizing the gravity of
the situation.

DEPUTY

So you saw something weird or heard
something spooky in the house?

ELLISON

Yes. Precisely.

DEPUTY

So what happened?

ELLISON

Look, I don't believe in any of
that...stuff.

DEPUTY

By *stuff* you mean the supernatural?
The metaphysical? The *paranormal*?

ELLISON

That's right.

DEPUTY

Of course you don't. If you did,
you never would have moved into a
crime scene. But here we are,
having a conversation.

ELLISON

So nothing of the sort with the
Stevenson's, then?

DEPUTY

No, in the short time they lived
here, the Stevensons never called
the police, never had the police
called on them or reported anything
bizarre that came up in the
investigation.

The Deputy studies Ellison for a moment.

DEPUTY

You know what I think?

ELLISON

What do you think?

DEPUTY

I think you moved yourself into the house of murder victims and immediately set about trying to put yourself in their headspace. I think you've begun discovering things about this case that go to darker places than you were prepared for. And I think that every time I've been in your house, I've seen a whiskey bottle in your office that doesn't appear to be the slightest bit neglected.

ELLISON

Hey -

DEPUTY

Now I'm not saying you have a drinking problem. And I don't think you're making any of this up to get attention. What I think is that you put yourself under too much stress and your mind is trying to process it all at once.

ELLISON

So you don't believe in any of this *stuff*?

DEPUTY

Are you kidding me? I believe in *all* of that *stuff*. There's no way in hell I would spend the night in this place. Are you nuts? Four people were hung by the neck from the tree in your backyard, and that little girl was probably buried god-knows-where after having god-knows-what done to her.

(he leans forward)

But listen to me now, Mr. Oswald. I don't care if you believe in any of that *stuff* or not, sleeping in this house is going to do terrible things to your head.

ELLISON

Did you get a psych degree to go with that Bachelors in Criminology?

DEPUTY

There were a few required course credits.

ELLISON

Total honesty?

DEPUTY

Yeah.

ELLISON

I thought something was in the house last night and I woke up on the couch holding a baseball bat.

DEPUTY

Anything missing or any sign of entry?

ELLISON

No. Everything was exactly where I left it.

DEPUTY

Yeah. If I thought something was in my home at night, that would freak me out a little as well.

(beat)

Total honesty?

ELLISON

Yeah?

DEPUTY

You moved here to do interviews, get a lay of the land, understand the community...

(he shrugs)

Research, right?

ELLISON

Yes.

DEPUTY

All due respect, but since you've gotten here, have you even left the house yet?

Ellison tries to answer, but it suddenly dawns on him what the answer actually is.

ELLISON

No.

DEPUTY

You should. Otherwise, this place
is gonna drive you nuts.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ellison is working at his desk, writing.

TRACY (O.C.)

Ellison!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Tracy and Ashley stand in the hallway. Tracy has her arms folded and is scowling at Ashley. Ashley stands sheepishly in the hall, clearly aware that she is in trouble. On the wall, in fresh paint, is A PAINTING OF A LITTLE GIRL that looks remarkably like Stephanie.

Ellison enters the hallway and sees the painting. He walks up and inspects it.

ELLISON

What the hell is this?

TRACY

Your daughter apparently thought
there wasn't enough room on her
walls for her new painting.

ELLISON

Ashley.

ASHLEY

No! That's not it.

ELLISON

What have we told you? It was a big
deal for us to let you paint your
walls. We gave you only one rule.
What was it?

Ashley looks at the ground. She knows the rule but doesn't want to answer.

ELLISON (CONT'D)

What's the rule, Ashley?

ASHLEY

Paint only goes in my bedroom.

ELLISON

So what made you think you could
paint out here?

ASHLEY

I wanted to paint her picture, but
she didn't want it in my room
because that used to be her
brother's room.

TRACY

What?

ELLISON

Who are you talking about?

ASHLEY

Stephanie.

Ellison's face goes pale.

TRACY

Who is Stephanie?

ASHLEY

She used to live here.

Tracy and Ellison both stare at Ashley, stupified.

ASHLEY

She's the one Daddy is writing his
book about.

Now Tracy looks at Ellison. She's confused, but you can see
the wheels turning in her head. She narrows her eyes.

TRACY

Ashley, go to your room and close
the door.

*

As Ashley turns and goes, Tracy points at Ellison.

TRACY

You. Bedroom. Now.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Tracy and Ellison each stand on opposite sides of the bed in
mid-fight, yelling at one another.

TRACY

What the hell were you thinking?
Did you think I wouldn't find out?

ELLISON

Of course I knew you'd find out *eventually*, but don't blame me for not telling you! I can't tell you, remember?! You never let me tell you! You don't ever want to know!

TRACY

Don't try and pin this on me. I asked you! I asked you if we were living near the house and you said "No!"

ELLISON

You asked if we were living a couple houses down from -

Tracy points an angry finger at Ellison.

TRACY

No. No. Don't you dare. We never should have come here.

ELLISON

Nobody died in the house, Tracy. It's not like we were sleeping where people were *killed*. It's not like they had to wash blood off the walls before they had an open house.

TRACY

Wait, you're saying it *didn't* happen here?

ELLISON

It happened in the backyard.

TRACY

Oh, and that makes such a difference.

ELLISON

Yeah, it does.

TRACY

No, Ellison. It doesn't. You've done some crazy shit in the past, but this definitely takes the cake. My god, what on earth possessed you to move here?

Ellison is silent for a moment. He doesn't want to answer.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Well?

ELLISON

We've never been as broke as we are now. We couldn't afford anything else.

TRACY

That's no excuse.

ELLISON

It is. Baby, we're busted. We've got nothing. This place was on the market for a steal. The monthly payments on it are embarrassing.

TRACY

Gee, I wonder why.

Tracy pauses for a moment.

TRACY (CONT'D)

So what Trevor drew last week - that happened *here*.

ELLISON

Yes.

TRACY

The previous owners of this home were *hung* from the tree in our backyard?

ELLISON

Yes.

TRACY

Oh, that is so sick, Ellison. And you let our little girl play back there?!

ELLISON

Why shouldn't I?

TRACY

Our son is having night terrors and drawing pictures of this crime at school! Our daughter just painting a little dead girl on our wall!

ELLISON

Missing.

TRACY

What?

ELLISON

The little girl. She's technically still -

TRACY

I don't want to hear about technicalities. Do you understand what you've done this time? The kind of jeopardy you've put your children in? Your marriage?

ELLISON

I...yes. Yes, I do.

TRACY

Is there *anything* you won't do for your goddamn book?

Ellison doesn't answer.

TRACY

Apparently not. I guess this is all worth it to you.

ELLISON

What's worth it to me?

TRACY

Putting your family at risk.

ELLISON

Of what? More painting?

TRACY

Don't. Your daughter -

ELLISON

- has a father who is always around, loves her, and encourages her to be who she is. The worst thing about her childhood is that one time she lived in a house where people were killed. She found out about the murders, felt bad about the little girl and painted a picture to express her feelings. It is what she does. It is what she has always done.

TRACY

(after a moment)

So that's it then? That's all you have to say?

ELLISON

What else do you want?

TRACY

How about a home where we feel *safe*, Ellison? How about neighbors that don't hate us, in a town where I can buy groceries without getting strange looks? A place where cops drive by and give a friendly wave instead of a look that says "I've got my eye on you?" How about that? How about a life that doesn't involve our kids drawing and painting the sick details of some horrific tragedy, or working out their deep-seated anxieties by doing bizarre shit in the middle of the night? How about that? Would that be okay?

ELLISON

I can give you that. After this book you can have *all* of that.

TRACY

Yeah. You keep saying that.

ELLISON

And I mean it.

TRACY

(shakes her head)

This book isn't for us. It's for you. Only you.

ELLISON

That's not true.

TRACY

It is true. There are plenty of other ways you can provide for this family.

ELLISON

(explodes)

Doing *what*?! Teaching and editing journalism textbooks?

(MORE)

ELLISON (CONT'D)

Jesus, does it matter at all to you that writing is what gives my life meaning? Don't you understand that these books I write are my legacy?

Tracy looks around the room, exasperated.

TRACY

I've always supported you doing what you love, Ellison. But writing isn't the meaning of your life.

(looks him in the eyes)

You and me, right here - this marriage: That's the meaning of your life. And your legacy? That's Ashley and Trevor. Your kids are your legacy.

That struck Ellison hard. He says nothing as Tracy turns and leaves the room.

INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracy tucks in Ashley.

ASHLEY

Did I get Daddy in trouble?

TRACY

No, sweetie. Your daddy got Daddy in trouble.

ASHLEY

I'm sorry I painted on the wall.

TRACY

I know. You get a good night sleep.

Tracy kisses Ashley goodnight, then turns off the light.

She peeks into ELLISON'S OFFICE. He's not there.

She goes into the LIVING ROOM and finds Ellison asleep in front of the TV, empty whiskey glass in hand.

She shuts off the TV, then stares at her husband for a long moment, her anger giving way to empathy. *

She rubs her fingers through his hair to gently wake him.

TRACY

(softly)

Time for bed, Ell...

Groggy and still half-asleep, Ellison stirs, then gets up from the chair.

TRACY
C'mon, this way...

Taking his arm, Tracy gently guides him toward their bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DEAD OF NIGHT

The clock reads 3:22 a.m.. Ellison and Tracy are fast asleep.

We hear the muffled SOUND of the projector STARTING UP. Ellison sleeps a bit through the sound of it running, but slowly begins to stir. He sits up and collects his bearings. *Where is he, what is that sound?*

He realizes what he's hearing and quickly covers his ears. It does him no good. We still hear it, as if it were inside his own head.

He looks over and sees Tracy asleep in bed next to him. She doesn't stir. He takes his hand off his ears. The sound of the projector is all we hear.

Ellison gets up out of bed and walks to his office. He fumbles with his keys in the dark and quickly unlocks the door, opening it.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

The room is dark. He looks down, searching for the box of films and the projector, but they are missing.

And yet, we still hear the sound of the projector running.

Ellison flips on the light and searches the room. Nothing.

He goes back out into the hallway.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The projector sound is louder now. Ellison begins to follow it, trying to track where it's coming from.

He looks tortured and disoriented, as if he's in some kind of mental fog.

He moves quietly through the dark hallway, each step bringing him closer to the sound.

He stops and looks up at the ceiling. The attic door is open and the ladder is down. The sound is coming from the attic.

Ellison looks lost in fear and confusion.

ELLISON
(mutters softly)
What is happening...?

He steps on the ladder, closes his eyes tight and begins to climb.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

Ellison pokes his head through the attic and opens his eyes.

SIX GHOST CHILDREN sit Indian-style on the floor, staring up at the attic wall. The projector sits between them on the floor. On the wall is a projection of POOL PARTY '70.

The six children all turn in unison and stare at Ellison. Then each brings a single finger to their lips.

GHOST CHILDREN
Sssshhhhhhhhh!

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellison drops off the ladder, falling to the floor below. '

He scoots back against the wall in a sitting position, then looks up at the attic.

ELLISON'S POV: The attic GOES DARK, the film no longer playing. The house is silent.

Ellison is in shock, physically trembling, trying to process the impossibility of what he just saw.

Panic sets in. He quickly begins scooting along the wall, away from the attic.

He hears the CREAK OF FOOTSTEPS above him in the attic.

A moment of silence, and then...

CRASH! Ellison FLINCHES as the BOX OF FILMS FALLS THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE ATTIC FLOOR, landing on the floor right in front of him.

Ellison stares at the box, stunned.

*

And then it hits him - he knows what he has to do. He jumps to his feet and picks up the box.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Ellison squirts lighter fluid onto the box of films, which is already on fire.

He stands over it, staring at the flames. Celluloid snaps as it BURNS, curling up in the flames. We can almost hear TINY SCREAMS OF AGONY as if the films themselves are alive, crying out amidst the popping and whining sounds of incineration.

As Ellison stands staring at the flaming box, Tracy walks up behind him, staring over his shoulder.

TRACY

Honey? What the hell are you doing?

Ellison turns to face her, looking over his shoulder. He has tears in his eyes and he is white as a ghost. He trembles as he speaks.

ELLISON

We have to leave.

Tracy softens the moment she sees the state he is in.

TRACY

What's the matter? What happened?

ELLISON

You were right. We never should have come to this house. I made a mistake. We have to leave. Now.

TRACY

Ell, you're freaking me out here.

ELLISON

Get the kids. Pack the car. We have to leave.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ellison is driving fast. Tracy is sitting next to him with both kids sitting in the back seat, swimming in household items. There is a moment of pained silence.

TRACY

Honey, slow down.

ELLISON
 Let's just get out onto the highway
 and put as much road between us and
 this town as we can, okay?

After a moment, Tracy nods.

TRACY
 Did you remember to get your
 laptop?

ELLISON
 I grabbed everything sensitive from
 the office, yes.

ASHLEY
 Where are we going, Daddy?

ELLISON
 Home, sweetie.

ASHLEY
 Home-home? Like you promised?

ELLISON
 Yes, just like I promised.

Ashley lights up, having gotten what she wanted all along.
 Trevor looks annoyed.

TREVOR
 What about our stuff?

ELLISON
 We'll send movers for it in the
 morning.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Oswalt family car roars past a POLICE CRUISER. The LIGHTS
 of the cruiser whir to life as it surges forward onto the
 highway in pursuit.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ellison checks the mirror and sees the police cruiser
 following him. He gazes at the speedometer.

ELLISON
 Ah, shit.

Ellison slows down and pulls over to the side of the road.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A police officer saunters up along the car and raps on the driver's side window with his knuckle.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ellison rolls down the window. THE SHERIFF leans down and looks into the car.

SHERIFF
Evening, Oswalts.

ELLISON
Sheriff.

SHERIFF
License and registration.

Containing his frustration, Ellison hands them over. As the Sheriff speaks, he writes information down onto A TICKET.

SHERIFF
Driving awfully fast for this time of night, don't you think? Is there something I should know about?

ELLISON
Just that I finally decided to take your advice.

SHERIFF
And which advice would that be?

ELLISON
Leave town. Never look back.

The Sheriff looks at all the scattered household goods thrown haphazardly into the car and notices the kids are still in their pajamas. *

SHERIFF
Now you weren't bullied away or anything, were you?

ELLISON
Sheriff?

SHERIFF
What I mean is that I don't want to be reading in your book that angry townsfolk chased you out of here.
(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

If you've been mistreated, I want to know.

ELLISON

There won't be a book.

SHERIFF

No book?

ELLISON

No, sir.

The Sheriff pauses and thinks things over for a beat.

SHERIFF

Then I don't see any reason why I would need your autograph.

The Sheriff tears the ticket off his pad and then tears it in half for show.

ELLISON

Thank you.

SHERIFF

Just do me one more favor and keep it under sixty until you cross the county line, will you? Until you become someone else's problem?

ELLISON

Yes, sir.

The Sheriff walks away. Tracy stares at Ellison, stricken.

*

TRACY

Did you mean that?

ELLISON

About the book...? Yeah.

TRACY

You promise?

ELLISON

I promise.

Tracy leans over and kisses Ellison. Then she sits back, resting her head against the back of her seat. She lets out a deep sigh of relief.

ELLISON (CONT'D)

Let's go home.

INT. MULLBERRY HOUSE - DAY

On this overcast day, the Mullberry house is buzzing with activity. Movers are carrying things into the house.

INT. MULBERRY HOUSE BEDROOM - DAY

Trevor is unpacking clothes and toys.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tracy is with Ashley, putting away dishes, pots, and pans.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Ellison is hovering over the movers, nervous and edgy.

MOVER

Where do you want this desk?

ELLISON

In my office. This way.

As he leads the movers through the house, Ellison's cell phone rings. He looks at it and sees it is a call from the Deputy. He ignores the call.

Tracy sees Ellison as he passes by the kitchen.

TRACY

Hey Ell, ten bucks says Trevor sleeps through the night.

ELLISON

I won't take that bet.

He smiles weakly, and Tracy smiles back.

EXT. MULBERRY HOUSE - NIGHT

Distant THUNDER rumbles. At the side of the house AN AXE rests against a small STACK OF FIREWOOD.

Ellison gathers several pieces of the firewood, and hurries back inside as RAIN begins to fall.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Surrounded by unpacked moving boxes, Ellison warms his hands by the fireplace. Then he walks through the house and into...

INT. MULLBERRY HOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Ellison's office is in disarray, stacks of books and boxes all ready to be properly shelved and put away.

Ellison puts crime scene photos into a box, folds it closed then tapes it shut.

He stands still for a moment with his hands on his hips, looking around at the mess and trying to imagine where everything is going to go.

The e-mail on his computer DINGS.

He looks at his computer: The email is from Professor Jonas. The e-mail reads: *Images attached - I'm in my office if you want to discuss.*

Ellison CLICKS the attached images, and on his computer screen, we see THREE SCANNED PHOTOGRAPHS come into view...

Each scanned photo is of OLD, PRE-20TH CENTURY ARTWORK - three pieces of art in bad condition, each one bearing the OCCULT SYMBOL left at the crime scenes.

THE FIRST IMAGE is of AN OLD FRESCO of a family hanging from a tree by their entrails. Each of their intestines is strung up over the branches, leaving them dangling with their backs arched and arms dangling. Beneath them sits a large BLACK DOG, devouring the remains of a child.

THE SECOND IMAGE is of AN OLD ENGRAVING of four people burning at the stake. An enormous, BLACK SCORPION crawls on the body of a child next to them, ready to sting it, a pincer holding its arm.

THE THIRD IMAGE is AN OLD SKETCH of a family drowning - each tied to large stones - with a BLACK SNAKE watching from shore - a large mound in its throat and a small, shoed foot poking out of its mouth.

Ellison stares at the images, disturbed...

Then he CLICKS on his SKYPE PROGRAM and calls Professor Jonas. The professor responds within seconds, and they talk face-to-face via computer:

PROFESSOR JONAS

Mr. Oswalt! Sorry it took so long to get back to you, but there's been so little written on Bughuul that no one has actually bothered to scan any of this material before.

ELLISON

What am I looking at?

PROFESSOR JONAS

An engraving, an old sketch from the dark ages, and fragments of a deteriorating fresco. There just isn't a lot left. Everything else has been destroyed.

ELLISON

Why?

PROFESSOR JONAS

Superstition. Early Christians believed that Bughuul actually lived in the images themselves and that they were gateways into his realm.

ELLISON

Gateways?

PROFESSOR JONAS

Yes. The belief was that he could take possession of those who looked at the images, and cause them to do terrible things. Or in some cases, he could even abduct the viewer into the images themselves.

ELLISON

So what would happen when you destroyed one?

PROFESSOR JONAS

Excuse me? I'm not sure that I follow.

ELLISON

If you were to destroy them, set them on fire, whatever - what would happen?

PROFESSOR JONAS
Literally or do you mean in the
stories?

ELLISON
The stories.

PROFESSOR JONAS
I guess that would close the
gateway. That would be in line with
what the ancient church believed.

ELLISON
So, you're saying that once the
images are destroyed, Bughuul would
no longer have any access to this
world, right?

PROFESSOR JONAS
Mr. Oswalt...what kind of book are
you writing, exactly?

ELLISON
I...I don't know. To be honest, I
don't think there's a book here,
anymore. But I'll let you know.
Thank you very much for your time.

PROFESSOR JONAS
Any time.

Ellison disconnects the call.

He looks around the room at the scattered boxes.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison deletes the recorded VIDEO FOOTAGE of the films from his laptop computer.
- He places all of the remaining crime scene evidence into several storage boxes.
- He tapes up the boxes.

His cell phone rings. He looks at the display screen: It's the Deputy again. And again, Ellison presses IGNORE.

INT. MULLBERRY HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellison has set up a ladder to get into the storage attic. Carrying the taped-up boxes of crime scene material, he climbs the ladder and slides the boxes up into the attic.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

Ellison looks around for a good place to stash the boxes when he turns and sees...

THE GREY CARDBOARD BOX OF FILMS, labelled "HOME MOVIES." It's in the exact same condition as he first found it.

His face falls.

He slowly moves toward the box, examining it. It is without a doubt the same box. It has all the same markings and water spots. He removes the lid and sees THE PROJECTOR and ALL SIX FILMS. It's all there.

He begins to hyperventilate, and in a furious, apoplectic panic, he begins to TEAR THE BOX APART.

He shreds it along the corners and throws the film canisters around, seething with rage. He tosses the box across the room.

Ellison collapses on the ground and looks down at the carnage. He sees something within the slats of a torn piece of the cardboard...

It's A MANILA ENVELOPE. Reaching over, he picks it up and studies it. On the front, in black magic marker, it reads: EXTENDED CUT ENDINGS.

He opens up the envelope and pours out SIX SHORT ENDS - these are the endings to each of the six films.

INT. MULLBERRY OFFICE - NIGHT

Ellison sets down the remains of the box on his desk, then takes a seat in his chair.

Next to his computer is a mug of coffee with a note written on pink paper in crayon tucked under it. It reads: GOOD NIGHT, DADDY. Ellison sips the coffee and goes to work.

He takes one of the film cannisters and UNSPOOLS the film.

Picking up one of the short ends, he begins trying to match the end of the unspooled film. The first short end doesn't match. The second also doesn't match. The third one, however, matches perfectly, fitting together as if they had been snipped apart at that very spot.

Ellison puts the film and the short end on the splicer and tapes them together.

QUICK CUTS:

- Ellison splices the short ends onto the other five films.
 - He splices the films together onto one large reel.
 - He slides the reel onto the projector.
 - Finishing off his coffee, Ellison takes a deep breath, and is about to switch on the projector when his cell phone RINGS.
- Again, it's the deputy. This time Ellison answers.

ELLISON

Do you know what time it is?

DEPUTY

I'm sorry, but I've been trying to call you all day.

ELLISON

What's the problem?

DEPUTY

The problem is that you moved.

ELLISON

How is that a problem?

DEPUTY

I was compiling all of the data that you had me collecting, and once I started putting it together into a nice readable package, I saw the connection. It was obvious.

ELLISON

What was?

DEPUTY

The dates. The addresses. Each family you had me look up had previously lived in the house where one of the earlier murders took place.

ELLISON

Each family? All six of them?

DEPUTY

Yes! When you put them in chronological order, you can actually draw a line from murder to murder to murder.

ELLISON
What the hell?

Ellison goes to the U.S. MAP tacked to the wall.

DEPUTY
We knew that the Stevensons lived
in the Seattle house where the
Millers were killed. But before
that, the Millers lived in the same
house in Portland where the De
Luzio Lawn massacre occurred.

Ellison slides his finger from Seattle to Portland, his
expression confirming the Deputy's words:

DEPUTY
And guess where the De Luzio's
lived before they moved to
Portland?

Now Ellison slides his finger down to Los Angeles.

ELLISON
(with a sick feeling)
Los Angeles. Where the Martinez
family was burned in their garage.

DEPUTY
Exactly. The pattern goes back to
the 1965 Wyoming Christmas Morning
Murders. Listen Mr. Oswald, you just
moved out of the last house in line.
If this guy is still out there, you
not only just sped up his timeline,
you put yourselves in it.

ELLISON
Thanks, Deputy.

Ellison hangs up the phone, looking pale and visibly sweating.

Clutching his stomach as if he's about to be sick, he reaches
over and TURNS ON the projector.

The spliced-together reel of the Super 8 films (each one with
it's new ending added on) now begins...

ON SCREEN: We are watching HANGING OUT '08.

*A LARGE, LEAFLESS TREE sits ominously in frame. Wooden planks
nailed to the side face us, as if it were a ladder leading to
an unseen tree house.*

Ellison FAST FORWARDS through the footage, skipping to the end.

ON SCREEN: In the top right corner of the frame we can see what looks like A HANDSAW BLADE poking in and out, as if it is sawing a branch.

A MASSIVE BRANCH FALLS. Each of the four ropes are tied to it, and are clearly strung over another branch higher in the tree, so ALL FOUR PEOPLE ARE HOISTED IMMEDIATELY INTO THE AIR, their legs thrashing against the sudden strangulation.

The bodies flail, choking to death before they each, one by one, succumb and die.

As the fourth and final member of the family expires, we see a SLIGHT JUMP in the footage - this is THE SPLICE where Ellison added the ending to the old footage.

We are now watching the new spliced-on footage - the new extended cut ending of HANGING OUT '08:

THE HANDSAW is thrown down to the ground and A SMALL FIGURE begins climbing down the tree. First we see legs, then the body - it is A LITTLE GIRL.

The little girl gets to the bottom of the tree and swings once on one of the bodies, like it's a tire swing. Then she moves to the next and swings once on it as well. Then the third. Then the fourth. Once all the bodies are swinging, she dances around and between them, as if she were playing on a playground.

The she stops and looks at the camera.

The little girl is STEPHANIE.

She gets close, tilts her head, gives a creepy little smile and waves at us. The film JUMP-CUTS, and Stephanie VANISHES FROM VIEW. Then the film ends, GOING TO WHITE.

*
*

Ellison stares dumbfounded at the screen.

The projector continues to run and the next film starts to play.

ON SCREEN: We're now watching POOL PARTY '70.

Ellison FAST FORWARDS through the beginning and middle of the film, stopping toward the end...

The DROWNING FAMILY struggles beneath the water, trying to break free of the chairs.

A SHADOW moves across the water and we hear something enter the pool from the other side.

The camera moves across the water toward the sound, and for a moment, we glimpse the SUB-HUMAN FIGURE OF MR. BOOGIE. But before we see his face, the film stutters and the film JUMPS - this is the SPLICE from before where the film was burned by Ellison.

Then we see a SECOND SPLICE, and we're now watching the added-on footage - the new extended cut ending to POOL PARTY '70:

A LITTLE BOY - THE MISSING BOY - runs into frame from off camera and jumps in the pool. The boy looks perfectly normal here in this old footage, but we recognize his face from before: he's one of the Ghost Children.

He swims, splashing around, having the time of his life. He swims up to the edge of the pool, right where Mr. Boogie had been previously. He looks at the camera, tilting his head with an eerie smile. *

Then Something GRABS him from below. His eyes go wide with surprise as the film JUMPS -- and now the boy is GONE. The shot ends and GOES TO WHITE. *

ON ELLISON: He looks even worse than before - he's white as a ghost and sweating profusely.

ELLISON

(a horrified whisper)

It was the missing kids...

ON SCREEN: IN MONTAGE, we now see the EXTENDED CUT ENDINGS OF THE OTHER FOUR FILMS, and we recognize the face of each killer-kid as one of the Ghost Children we've seen before:

LAWN WORK '86. A muck covered lawn mower rolls to a stop and a blood covered YOUNG GIRL - THE MISSING GIRL - runs out in front of it. The film jumps and she is hauling a large clipping bag across the ground. It looks like it is filled with human remains. She stops next to three other perfectly placed, evenly spaced bags. Turning to the camera, she tilts her head and gives an eerie smile. Then she wipes blood off her brow like it was sweat and gives a WHEW. The film jump-cuts, and the girl is GONE. *

SLEEPY TIME '98. The moving camera POV gets set down on a table and THE MISSING LITTLE BOY walks out in front holding a knife. He begins pretending to sword fight as if he were Errol Flynn, then becomes very angry, slicing and stabbing imaginary people. He looks up at the camera with a scary, angry face but then tilts his head and smiles. He waves at the camera as if he'd just been playing around. The film jump-cuts and the knife appears stabbed into the table right next to the camera, dripping with fresh blood. The boy is GONE. *

CHRISTMAS MORNING '65. THE MISSING LITTLE GIRL steps out in front of the camera and lays in the dead center of the four bodies buried in the snow. She's left just enough room to make a snow angel, which she does with a head tilt and an eerie smile. The film jump-cuts and the girl is GONE. *

BARBECUE '79. The car is on fire. THE MISSING LITTLE BOY steps out from behind the camera, making shadow puppets on the wall with the flickering firelight. He turns to the camera with an eerie head tilt and smile. On the wall we see the shadow of Mr. Boogie moving slowly toward him. Then the film jump-cuts and the boy VANISHES from view. *

The last film rolls out, and the MONTAGE ENDS. *

Ellison sits, thunderstruck. We hear the only the sound of film slapping against the projector from the finished reel.

He reaches over and shuts the projector off.

He feels woozy. He tries to stand up, but slumps back immediately in his chair. He tries to stand up again, and struggles to his feet. He can't see straight. This is more than just the shock of the footage - clearly, something is physically wrong with Ellison.

He looks down at the desk and sees the note from Ashley. GOOD NIGHT, DADDY. Ellison clutches his stomach, wincing in pain.

He looks inside the COFFEE MUG - the small amount of coffee left at the bottom is AGLOW with traces of LUMINESCENT POISON.

Ellison DROPS the coffee mug, then slumps back into the chair. He looks up and blearily sees Ashley standing in the doorway.

ASHLEY

I like that you made the movies longer. They're better this way.

Ellison loses consciousness as we FADE TO BLACK.

We hear Ellison moaning, and then we FADE BACK IN ON:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is eerily lit by the dwindling FIRE in the fireplace.

Ellison is waking up, groggy and restrained with duct tape. Bleary-eyed, he looks around and sees the floor covered in plastic tarp with various PAINT BRUSHES lying about. Everything is hazy and out of focus - Ellison is still having trouble adjusting his eyes.

ELLISON'S POV: He sees the blurry image of Tracey and Trevor lying unconscious in the far corner of the room.

Ellison tries to scream, but it is muffled by the duct tape over his mouth. He bounces around trying to free himself, but cannot.

Now ASHLEY steps into view, holding the SUPER 8 CAMERA in one hand, and the AXE from outside in the other.

She leans down to him and WHISPERS:

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Don't worry, Daddy. I'll make you famous again.

She puts the Super 8 camera down next to his face so we see his head and neck in the viewfinder.

Ashley turns the camera on, and we can hear it WHIRRING. Then we hear the sound of Ashley struggling to LIFT THE AXE.

We hear the WHOOSH OF THE SWING, and then the HEAVY THUMP OF THE AXE, and the SCREEN GOES BLACK.

In darkness, we hear a CLAP OF THUNDER and the sound HEAVY RAIN pounding the house from outside. Then we the WHIRRING SOUND of the SUPER 8 CAMERA as it RUNS...

FADE IN ON:

SUPER 8 CAMERA'S VIEWFINDER POV: A VIEW INTO A DARK HALLWAY.

This isn't Super 8 footage, but a live image seen through the camera as it films.

SCRRRITCH. SCRRRITCH. SCRRRITCH. Along with the sound of camera and the thunderstorm, we also hear a SCRAPING SOUND.

Now Ashley, her clothes, skin, and hair stained with BLOOD, steps out of the inky blackness of the hallway. The scraping sound comes from THE BLOODY AXE she's dragging - it leaves a long trail of blood on the wooden floor behind her.

She approaches the camera POV, tilts her head with an eerie smile, then reaches out and PICKS UP the camera.

Now the camera operator, Ashley's POV moves forward, down into the darkness of...

INT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

For a moment, we see nothing but inky darkness. And then...

FLASHES OF LIGHTENING illuminate the hallway: IT IS COVERED IN BLOOD. The floor contains indistinct bits of clothing and bloody carnage, but the real feature here is the MASSIVE BLOOD SPLATTER on the walls and ceiling - it's strangely artful and even beautiful in a way, like a Jackson Pollock painting. One blood spray section on the ceiling forms the familiar OCCULT SYMBOL. In between the sprays are pictures of flowers and trees and unicorns, all painted in the same blood.

The POV SWINGS to the end of the hallway, where the SIX GHOST KIDS ARE STANDING, staring at the camera as if waiting...

THE IMAGE now becomes GRAINY and WASHED OUT, like a projected Super 8 film. The sound of the camera changes to the sound of the projector.

We pull back from the image itself to reveal...

INT. MULBERRY OFFICE - NIGHT

...The image is now playing from the projector in the office.

ON SCREEN we still see the six Ghost Children waiting at the end of the hallway.

Ashley now sits in Ellison's chair, having just watched the film she made. She picks up the box lid and a pen and begins to draw a seventh stick figure representation of the murder in it. MOM. DAD. TREVOR. MR. BOOGIE.

CLOSE ON THE PROJECTOR: Ashley's exposed film stock is DEVELOPING before our eyes, changing into a SUPER 8 FILM PRINT as it threads through the projector's metal sprockets.

Ashley sets down the box lid and gets up from the chair.

ON SCREEN: the eyes of the Ghost Children follow Ashley as she moves across the room.

She approaches the projected film image, stopping right in front of it. *

*ON SCREEN: In unison, the Ghost Children stare down at Ashley and tilt their heads, but this time they don't smile. **

As if following their cue, Ashley stares back at the Ghost Children on screen and does the same -- but as she tilts her head, she reveals the terrifying, mouthless MR. BOOGIE, standing right behind her. *

*ON SCREEN: The Ghost Children quickly disperse, slinking back into the shadows of the bloody hallway. **

Mr. Boogie sweeps Ashley off the ground, and the projected film JUMP-CUTS. IN AN INSTANT, MR. BOOGIE AND ASHLEY VANISH FROM THE OFFICE AND RE-APPEAR IN THE PROJECTED FILM.

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ON SCREEN: A SMILE now literally BREAKS OUT across Mr. Boogie face, spreading into A GIANT SPLIT around his entire head. He opens his mouth impossibly wide, revealing rows of NEEDLE TEETH within. He leans in to devour Ashley, and just before his monstrous jaws clamp down on her head...

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...the film run out and the image GOES TO WHITE.

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We hear the tail end slapping against the projector, and then we FADE BACK IN ON:

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INT. MULBERRY HOUSE ATTIC - NIGHT.

We are MOVING SLOWLY across the attic floor, closing in on...

THE GREY CARDBOARD BOX OF FILMS, once again intact, at rest right back in the same spot.

We RISE UP over the top of the familiar box. Looking down into it, we see that there are now SEVEN FILMS inside.

On top of the previous six film cannisters is A NEW ONE...

...It's label reads HOUSE PAINTING '11.

FADE TO BLACK.