

HEAVEN IN THE HILLS

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EXT. CABIN - FRONT LAWN - EVENING

A modest CABIN framed by mountains. BIRDS swoop through tall, dense trees.

A CAR rattles along the driveway, parks.

Two adults (SARA and DOUG MARSH, 30s) step out. Sara hustles to the back seat. With effort, she extracts...

JENNY MARSH (6). Judging from her freckled, frightened face, Jenny'd rather be anywhere but *here*.

Sara hauls the girl towards the cabin's entrance. A RAGGEDY ANN DOLL dangles from Jenny's tiny fist, bumps Sara's legs.

Doug spots a FIRE-PIT on the lawn. He pulls luggage from the trunk - joins his family on the porch.

DOUG

They've got a fire-pit? The Marsh family's camping out in style!

JENNY

(squirms)

I don't like camp. Let's go home!

Doug unlocks the door and swings rusty hinges open: CREAK.

DOUG

This is our new *summer* home, honey.
Let Dad give you the guided tour!

The family walks into:

INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rustic touches abound. A COUCH takes centerstage. FAMILY PHOTOS decorate its side table. Sara whistles, impressed.

SARA

Fully furnished, too. How'd we get this place so cheap?

DOUG

According to the realtor, the Barackas family just.. up and moved. Some family emergency. So it's ours: free and clear!

Sara lowers Jenny to the floor.

SARA

Jenny, isn't this room heavenly? In a place like this, no-one's sad!

JENNY

(pouts)

It's scary. And we're alone!

Jenny tosses Raggedy Ann and bolts. She wedges herself behind a BOOKCASE. Doug and Sara exchange "here we go again" looks.

DOUG

You want to retrieve your daughter this time, or will I?

INT. CABIN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

An old BABY MONITOR lies abandoned on a dresser.

Jenny burrow in bed under quilts. Sara sits in a ROCKING CHAIR with Raggedy Ann. She reads from a children's book.

SARA

"Then the Baby Birds curled up in their nest for the night. Mommy and Daddy Bird watched over them. Sweet dreams were had by all." Time for you to dream too, Munchkin Marsh...

(whispers)

The big bad wolf scared us all last month. That's why we've picked a different nest. But while we're here: don't fly too far?

Jenny SNORES. Doug clears his throat from the door.

DOUG

(grins)

She's way ahead of you. How's about some alone time - now?

INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Doug and Sara drink beer on the couch. Sara lies across it - barefoot. She holds Raggedy Ann in the air, stares up at red stains on the doll's face.

SARA

Who would have thought: a school shooting, in our town? Our own daughter -

DOUG
Is safe and sound.

He wraps on the coffee table "metaphorically".

DOUG
Thank god, and knock on wood.

SARA
But to see her best friend -

DOUG
Jenny needs to time to adjust. Us,
too.
(grins)
Remember those cliffs off the road?
Wanna go rock climbing tomorrow?

SARA
No thanks, Mr. Mission Impossible.
That drop was 200 feet high!

DOUG
We have to do *something* fun. Here's
one crazy idea which just might
work.

He kisses Sara. Their passion grows. Sara drops Raggedy Ann,
and melts into his embrace.

A DARK SHADOW flits past the couch. Sara glances towards it -

BANG! A PHOTO tumbles off the side table. Glass splinters
across the floor. Annoyed, Doug snatches the picture up.

INSERT: It's a shot of the BARACKAS family. MOM, DAD, TWO
FEMALE TODDLERS... and A BOY. He flips the frame over, reads:

DOUG
"Tommy Barackas" - age 7. Thanks
for ruining the mood, guy!

Sara smiles at the children's photos.

SARA
Aw, Doug - they look sweet. I
wonder which room the girls were
in? That baby monitor I saw...

Suddenly: Jenny LAUGHS from her bedroom.

SARA
She's awake?

DOUG
And sounds happy. *That's* a good sign.

SARA
At 1 AM?

Sara jumps to her feet: cuts her heel on glass.

SARA
Ow!

But the pain doesn't stop her. Sara tiptoes to Jenny's room.

INT. CABIN - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jenny sits on the bed. Wide awake, she stares at the empty rocking chair. And smiles at something... *that's not there.*

JENNY
(to the rocking chair)
My name is Jenny. And you?

She nods at a voice only she can hear.

JENNY
(frowns)
You lived here, too? When? Mommy and Daddy brought me here because some of my friends - had to go away. Kind of like Grandma. You'll play with me? That's nice.

In the doorway: Sara gasps. Doug whispers in her ear.

DOUG
Don't helicopter parent. Dr. Bussbeim says Jenny's got to work out somethings on her own.

Sara nods and backs off.

The rocking chair seems to wobble; Sara frowns. Her bloody foot leaves prints on the floor.

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Doug scrambles eggs at the stove. Like magic, Jenny's come to life. She babbles at Sara across the table.

JENNY

I wanna roast marshmallows tonight!
Can we, Mom?

DOUG

In our new fire pit? Of course!

JENNY

And I wanna garden, too!

SARA

(chuckles)

When did you grow a green thumb?

JENNY

Tommy says joining with nature's
fun!

Doug and Sara stop. Exchange looks.

SARA

Tommy? Who's that, baby?

JENNY

A friend I met yesterday.

SARA

When and where?

JENNY

Last night. In my room!!

DOUG

(beat)

Sounds travel in this cabin. She
must've heard us talking before.

Sara gulps, swallows her concern.

SARA

Gardening *is* meditational. I'll go
find some tools now.

EXT. CABIN - BACKYARD - MORNING

The lawn's choked with weeds. Sara squats with Jenny over
soil. Sara sprinkles seeds in a hole, smooths it with dirt.

JENNY

That's it? We're done already?

SARA

(smiles)

Gardening requires patience, too.
In some ways, it's like being a
parent. The results are worth it.
Here, you try.

Sara pours seeds in Jenny's palm. Enthusiastic, Jenny digs.
Almost instantly, her spade hits... A tiny ROTTED WOODEN BOX.

Sara gasps as Jenny digs it up.

SARA

Sweetie, let Mommy see what that is
first...

Jenny doesn't listen and pries off the lid. Revealing: a
MAGGOTY DEAD BIRD!

Sara slaps it away. The box's contents scatter. Jenny crawls
quickly to her "find".

JENNY

Don't hurt him!

SARA

(gags)

That dirty thing? Don't touch that!

JENNY

He's a bird, like in the book!
Tommy says he used to play with
him... before.

She pets decayed feathers. Sara snatches her hand away.

A PRIMITIVE HEADSTONE catches Sara's eye - in the hole where
Jenny found the box. The hand-carved letters read:

Thomas Barackas. 2012 - 2018. "Little Children, Fly to The
Lord, Leaps of Faith Will Set You Free."

Sara shudders, pulls Jenny back.

INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jenny plays pretend Hide and Seek with Raggedy Ann.

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Sara and Doug sit at a table. The living room visible nearby.

INTERCUT BETWEEN KITCHEN AND LIVING ROOM

The two watch Jenny, concerned.

SARA

Doug, she petted a bird *corpse!*

DOUG

Honey, kids do freaky things.

In the living room: Jenny throws Raggedy Ann in a closet. She spins around, eyes closed. Then runs off to hide.

SARA

She's too young to be exposed to death!

DOUG

Tell that to the psycho who shot her friends to bits...

A childish GIGGLE from the living room. The door to the closet opens - then slams shut! Doug eyes the door.

DOUG

Though if she's hiding in closets, maybe we *should* give Dr. Feel-good a call.

SARA

No! He'll pump her full of anti-depressants. My baby needs love, not drugs!

Sara darts into the living room, and throws open the closet.

SARA

Surprise, Sweetie. I found you!!

The closet's empty. Except for the doll. Jenny's voice floats over Sara's shoulder.

JENNY (O.S.)

Mommy, I was behind the couch!

SARA

Then who ran in there?

Sara eyes the closet. Raggedy Ann's button eyes stare back.

EXT. CABIN - FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

The fire-pit ROARS to life. Doug skewers Marshmallows on pointed sticks. He hands one to a delighted Jenny.

DOUG

Stick this in the fire until it starts to melt. And stay really, really far from the flames, ok? Once it's very melty -

JENNY

Daddy, I need two.

DOUG

Why?

JENNY

Tommy's hungry.

Doug frowns, but complies. He shows Jenny a CHOCOLATE BAR.

DOUG

When they're done, bring 'em back. Chef Dad'll do the rest!

Jenny claps her hands, and skips around the fire. Doug grins at his daughter's newly restored joie de vivre.

DOUG

Who needs drugs when you've got S'mores? That's the happiest I've seen her in months!

Sara leans against his shoulder, relieved.

DOUG

Which means WE can take a break!

He leans in to kiss his wife.

Sara glimpses Jenny's silhouette through the flames.

A SHADOW forms behind the girl. A boy-shaped one: with burning eyes!

The thing approaches Jenny - arms extended, about to push.

SARA

No!

She races around the pit, and finds: her daughter crying, but alone. Sara hugs Jenny, terrified.

SARA
Honey, what happened?

JENNY
(sniffles)
My marshmallows fell in the fire.
Now they're gone!

INT. CABIN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buried in quilts, Jenny sleeps.

On the rocking chair, Raggedy Ann conceals the BABY MONITOR, the gadget invisible behind tangled red hair.

INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sara and Doug huddle on the couch. Sara clutches the baby receiver like the life-boat it is.

SARA
You're sure it works?

DOUG
It's been sitting here for years.
But I replaced the batteries, so -
I guess. I still don't think
playing NSA is a productive use of
vacation time.

SARA
You didn't see what I saw.

DOUG
What you say you saw is insane. Our
daughter's not BBF's with a ghost.

SARA
Better safe than sorry. Jenny's
well-being is our job!

INTERCUT: LIVING ROOM AND JENNY'S BEDROOM

Doug and Sara lean into the speaker.

SARA
I don't hear anything. Do you?

DOUG
No news is good news - right?

Jenny bolts upright in bed. Eyes closed, she's in a trance: Raggedy Ann stares right at her, doesn't blink.

JENNY

(to an unseen friend)

What's it like in heaven, Tommy?
You can't play games, or watch TV?

STRANGE SQUEAKS sputter from the monitor. It *seems* to be language: but the signal can't quite reach.

JENNY

You're lonely? Mom says "in a place like this, you can't be sad".

In the living room: Sara and Doug recoil.

SARA

We have to go check on her!

DOUG

Jenny's just talking in her sleep.
Everything's fine - as long as we know where she is.

In the bedroom: Jenny reaches out to touch an unseen face.

JENNY

Mommy and Daddy made me go to the woods. Your daddy did that and helped you fly? My Daddy just wants to talk to Mommy. And sometimes, he makes me S'Mores.

More HISSES from the monitor.

JENNY

You'll teach me? I'll be there!

A SNARL rips through the speakers. Doug and Sara wince.

Then a rusted window SCREECHES. The couple toss the baby monitor down and dart for Jenny's door.

INT. CABIN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Doug and Sara burst in. The window's open. Jenny's gone!

The Rocking Chair sways back and forth. Raggedy Ann seems to have turned. Now she stares towards the backyard - black button eyes peer into the night.

SARA
We have to check the garden!

EXT. CABIN - BACKYARD - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The parents rip through tall weeds, in search of Jenny.

Doug spots muddy FOOTPRINTS: two different types. One set is barefoot. The other: shaped like small boy's shoes.

He gapes. Sara shrieks nearby.

SARA
Honey, look!

She points towards the front lawn. A scrap of Jenny's ripped white NIGHTGOWN waves from a bush.

SARA
If Jenny's in the forest, she'll
get lost!

DOUG
(growls)
Or worse, she's on the road.
Remember those cliffs I wanted to
climb? We have to look there: now!

EXT. RURAL ROAD AND CLIFF - NIGHT

Doug and Sara race down a winding, narrow road. A speeding CAR shoots by. They stagger back, buffeted by the breeze.

DOUG
(yells after the car)
Slow down, asshole! Kids live here!

SARA
Where's Jenny?

DOUG
If I only knew.

Another car zips by. After it passes, the other side of the road comes into view.

As does: Jenny. She teeters on the edge of a cliff. The wind whips a now smeared nightgown around her tiny form.

Jenny turns to her parents: overjoyed.

JENNY

Mommy, watch: Tommy's gonna teach
me how to fly!

Sara lunges. Doug holds her back.

DOUG

Don't startle her. She'll fall!

SARA

Jenny, come to Mommy!

JENNY

(frowns)

Tommy needs friends in heaven. He
said, flying's quick. After that, I
can come back.

A VAGUE SHADOWY SHAPE appears besides the girl: it *could* be
mist... or a boy.

A tendril of *something* wraps around Jenny's hand and guides
her forward. The girl wobbles over the cliff.

SARA

No!!!!!!

Sara rips free of Doug, and darts across the road. Somewhere
far away, a wolf HOWLS.

The "boy" vaporizes and Jenny JUMPS!

Jenny's nightgown flutters, *almost* like wings. Sara grabs for
it - scores only air.

Just like that: Jenny's gone.

Sara falls to her knees. Dark trees loom over her. She drags
herself to the cliff's edge and whispers:

SARA

Honey, fly back to Mommy now. Like
the birdies in our story. Please?

The wind whispers back at Sara. But Jenny? No reply.

FINAL FADE OUT: