

Plato's Cave

TV pilot

By Ron Green

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EXT. BEWGLEY HALL - COURTYARD - NIGHT

1

A red FERRARI growls up a gravel driveway and comes to a halt in front of BEWGLEY HALL. A Jacobean country manor house converted into a swanky five star hotel.

The tuxedoed and ball gowned occupants alight and head up the steps into-

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

2

The GRAND HALL. Opulently decored with a signature sweeping STAIRCASE centre stage. To the right, an understated RECEPTION DESK with an office behind, to the left, a white GRAND PIANO, played by a handsome pianist. Guests drift from room to room holding CHAMPAGNE flutes. CANAPES are walked around by waiters.

Standing by the entrance, ALFRED STEWART welcomes each guest genially with a warm handshake, each caught by a PHOTOGRAPHER.

Alfred is medium height, slim and trying to hide his nerves. He pulls at his collar.

His GENERAL MANAGER- NICK approaches.

ALFRED

Is the Pol Roger being served correctly?

NICK

Eight degrees.

Conveniently, a waiter passes carrying a silver platter with a silver bucket containing a bottle of champagne. On the base of the bucket, a tiny DIGITAL READ showing "8".

NICK VO

Once that number climbs to nine, they return to the kitchens to refresh.

ALFRED

Are the Salmon's dressed? And the Wellingtons in hand-

NICK

Yes, of course they are. Chef has everything in hand.

ALFRED

How-

NICK

Because I've *just* checked.

Alfred breathes a little. Another influx of guests press his hand. During this;

NICK VO

You know, if we'd outsourced the catering this would have been one less thing for you to worry about.

ALFRED

And I've told you Nick, we *don't* outsource.

NICK

Yes you have, Alfred. But we are set up to cater for, at most, fifty guests. Tonight we're expecting nearly two hundred.

ALFRED

Bewgley Hall's reputation for exceptional cuisine begins tonight. There's no way this hotel will ever "outsource".

Alfred pulls at his collar again. Looks up the staircase.

NICK

I just hope you live to see that reputation.

ALFRED

Are all the rooms open? Ready?

NICK

Bewgley is looking magnificent Mr Stewart. Try and relax.

ALFRED

I'll relax when the hotel critics are happy. Where are they?

Nick looks behind them to a group of important looking people, some with TABLETS being charmed by a nine year old GIRL. This is ELLEN STEWART, Alfred's daughter.

NICK

They're in good hands.

Alfred's nervousness melts at the sight of his daughter. He grabs a champagne flute from a passing tray, downs it, hands the empty to Nick with a wink and makes his way to his blue-chip guests.

ALFRED

I see you've met the Boss.

He high-fives his daughter.

ALFRED CONT

How are you finding the tour?

FEMALE HOTEL CRITIC

Our guide has been most thorough. We haven't been allowed to miss anything. And I must say the tour has been worth the length.

MALE HOTEL CRITIC

A charming hotel. You've paid great attention to getting things right.

ALFRED

We worked very hard to achieve what you see tonight. Didn't we?

ELLEN

It was a team effort.

Surprise leads Alfred to hug Ellen warmly. He couldn't have scripted it better.

ALFRED

I do believe it's time for the champagne tasting! If you'd like to follow our general manager Nick to the gardens everything will be ready for you.

Nick appears at Alfred's shoulder and chaperones the VIP guests away.

ALFRED

What do you think?

ELLEN

I don't like champagne.

ALFRED

The critics, cheeky! Did they mean  
what they said?

Ellen considers. The pianist strikes up a popular tune that  
garners a round of applause.

ELLEN

They talked a lot, just like you  
thought.

ALFRED

And didn't pay too much attention to  
my little spy?!

ELLEN

Uhuh! The kitchen impressed them all.  
The garden parlour and billiard room.  
They loved the bedrooms and the names.  
One lady felt Fennel was very cold.  
Which was just wrong cause I showed  
her the temperature reading on the  
room control panel- twenty degrees.  
She still said she was very cold and  
was shivering. But she didn't even  
understand the hot tub controls so  
she's obviously weird.

They stroll about arm in arm.

ALFRED

Any negative comments?

ELLEN

One man said the hotel was a nightmare  
to find. And the cold woman said she  
found the door handles hard to open.

ELLEN/ALFRED

Weird.

EXT. REAR GARDENS - SAME TIME

3

Behind the house is a PATIO with tables and chairs set for  
the champagne tasting which is going splendidly. Behind, the  
house looks on impassively. All the rooms are lit and most  
show signs of the party. One upper room is in darkness. Light  
flickers from within but of a different, more ethereal kind  
than the other rooms. For a second a silhouette shows in the  
window.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - LATER

4

Ellen is looking at a computer MONITOR showing various CCTV cameras around the hotel while she eats a large piece of CAKE. The party- in full swing- can be heard beyond the DOOR.

One camera looks along the bedroom corridor- all the doors are open to allow the guests to access any room they wish. The doors have the room names painted on;

*Wild Garlic, Fennel, Stinging Nettle, Borage, Marsh Mallow, Dandelions, Ground Elder, Foxglove, Meadowsweet, Elecampane, Cowslip, Golden Thyme.*

Another feed reveals a very busy kitchen.

Another shows the entrance to the house. As each new guest enters, their face is mapped by recognition software and their name is added to a continuously growing PRINTOUT of confirmed attendees.

Ellen is taking a bite of her cake as a swarthy man with long lank silver hair enters the house. He looks right into the camera with a malevolent sneer. The software jumps and glitches. All the screens do likewise- just as he walks in.

She wonders if she pressed something by mistake, then jumps when the printout bursts into life, adding his name.

*Malachi Engels.*

She looks around the other feeds- all normal again. wait- she double takes.

On the bedroom corridor feed all the doors have shut.

Ellen's unattended plate falls from her lap.

ELLEN

Oh no!

The cake is on the floor. She glances back to the screen. The door marked FENNEL opens slowly. She waits for someone to emerge- no-one does.

Another glitch flickers all the cameras.

In the feed from the Grand Hall party guests are having a literal ball. In the middle, staring through the throng right into the camera- seemingly at Ellen is Malachi Engels.

Once again the feed warps and flashes in and out. Malachi deliberately looks up the stairs. Ellen focuses on the bedroom corridor feed- Fennel has shut.

Ellen leans in - Through the grainy feed she can make out lights playing under the door.

INT. BEDROOM CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

5

A slightly boozy couple exit Stinging Nettle.

BOOZY MAN

You don't honestly need to see any more...?

BOOZY LADY

They're all themed. Fennel. It's a herb, isn't it?

She tries the door.

BOOZY MAN

Well it's locked. Someone's in there  
Checking the bedsprings. Now that's a  
good id-

Something bangs hard on the door from the inside. They both jump. He tries the door.

BOOZY MAN CONT.

Hey in there. It's open house! Have  
some respect.

A beat, then another very violent bang- the door bounces against the frame.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

6

A waiter notices drinks on a table bounce slightly. A guest is distracted by the bang.

INT. BEDROOM CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

7

BOOZY MAN CONT.

Jesus!

BOOZY LADY

l-let's go downstairs. I need a  
refill.

As they depart-

BOOZY MAN

Freak.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

8

As the monitor shows the couple walking away from Fennel downstairs, Ellen is on her knees picking up cake.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

9

Alfred spots Malachi Engels through the throng. Walks over.

ALFRED

Malachi. I wasn't expecting you.

MALACHI

I wanted to see what you'd done to the place.

ALFRED

It took a lot of work.

MALACHI

And money.

With a self-satisfied leer he smells a fabulous looking centrepiece flower arrangement on the grand piano and removes an orchid. Alfred is unimpressed, but doesn't rise.

ALFRED

You said you never wanted to set foot here again.

MALACHI

Memories. Ahh...memories are a powerful thing Alfred. My memories of Bewgley are bad. So, so bad.

ALFRED

When I made you an offer you virtually gave me the keys there and then. You couldn't wait to be rid of the place.

MALACHI

Hard cash for little more than a shell? I was very happy to relieve you of your money.

ALFRED

Would you like a drink?



MALACHI

I never lived here you know. I  
*couldn't*.

Wanting the conversation to end, Alfred cocks an ear in question.

MALACHI CONT

I wasn't allowed anywhere near the place. Simply setting foot inside could be - dangerous.

ALFRED

Why?

MALACHI

Oh, you'll find out, soon enough.

Alfred isn't biting. And he's starting to wonder what Malachi is *really* doing back here.

MALACHI CONT

Yes, the money was lovely, thank you very much. But I'm a wealthy man, as you know doubt know. No, it wasn't your money that made me rush to hand you the keys and leave this place forever.

He leans in to Alfred's ear.

MALACHI CONT

I sold to you because I was absolutely *terrified* of the ghost.

The two men face each other. Malachi is ashen, there's no lie in his face.

A scream off to the back of the room breaks the tension. Alfred spins to see a woman being lifted up by her partner onto his shoulders: revelry + booze = silliness.

He returns- Malachi has gone. Ellen stands at the foot of the stairs- looking to the landing, doing a fair impression of one half of the Shining twins.

Alfred makes towards her but is swallowed up by fawning, loose guests.

INT. GRAND HALL - TWO MINUTES EARLIER

10

Wiping crumbs from her dress, Ellen emerges from Alfred's office into the party. It's louder and busier than earlier and many people are getting drunk.

Sticking to the fringes she takes in the heady atmosphere. Some people see her but act as though they haven't- she feels ignored, invisible.

As she wonders she can see her father through the throng talking with the leering man.

Without quite knowing how, she finds herself at the bottom of the grand staircase. Something draws her attention. She kneels down.

On the bottom STEP, scratched into the up-step are two words. They look like

***ruber angels***

She looks to see if anyone else has noticed. Just then a woman screams in delight as her partner lifts her up. Ellen rolls her eyes. She stands and looks up the staircase.

Alfred can be seen trying to get to her but is interrupted by revellers.

He watches her mount the stairs, detached. He's increasingly uncomfortable.

INT. BEDROOM CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

11

Malachi is staring at Fennel's door.

ELLEN

What are you doing?

Malachi spins. He is visibly shaking.

MALACHI

(distracted)

I, I shouldn't have.....I shouldn't have come. This was a mist.....

ELLEN

Are you going to go in?

He gather's himself.

MALACHI

I.....you're Alfred's daughter. Ellen isn't it?

ELLEN

Yes. You're the man who used to own this house. Why didn't you like it?

MALACHI

How do you suppose I didn't like it?

ELLEN

Because it was falling down when Dad bought it off you. He said you'd let it go to ruin.

Malachi comes to his haunches in front of Ellen.

MALACHI

Don't go into Fennel. Don't go into Fennel.

He walks downstairs.

MALACHI

(to himself)

Go to ruin.

Ellen watches him pause by the entrance, he pulls a CIGARETTE from a packet, looks up at her and walks out.

ELLEN

Bonkers.

A couple stumble, laughing out of a bedroom down the corridor. Ellen jumps, rolls her eyes at the absurdity of being spooked. *Her* - spooked?!?

The HAIRS on her neck STAND as she hears the door to fennel right behind her creak open.

She turns. The light is off. Ellen looks both ways along the corridor. Takes a breath- and goes inside.

The door closes firmly behind her.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

12

The house looks impassively on as the party reaches it's zenith. Empty champagne glasses cover every surface. A STILETTO HEEL stabs a dropped PETIT FOUR. A HAND absently

places a drink on a crowded table- it topples over, staining the cloth red.

On the grand piano flower arrangement, a caterpillar eats away.

Alfred wonders through the drunken throng, looking for his daughter. He corners Nick.

ALFRED

Have you seen Ellen?

NICK

She was talking with Malachi Engels last time I saw her. Why on earth would that creep want to come back h-

ALFRED

Where were they?

NICK

Up the stairs.

They both go up and split left and right, checking each bedroom before meeting in the middle, outside Fennel, which is shut. The door won't open.

ALFRED

It's locked! Ellen! Ellen are you in there...?

A rending sound like a wall about to burst from within! The door bangs violently. Alfred stands back.

MALACHI VO

I told her not to go in.

They turn. At the entrance looking up is Malachi Engels.

ALFRED

What did you do?!

MALACHI

I couldn't have you get what I was denied.

ALFRED

What did you DO?!!

The landing-to-entrance shouting match is getting the attention of the party guests. The bustle grinds to a halt.

Nick notices.

MALACHI

I came back. *THAT* was enough..... for  
her.

He looks past Alfred to Fennel. Alfred spins as the door bangs violently again, shaking the surround. A large CHANDELIER above the grand hall swings.

A communal gasp from the throng, now looking up the stairs. Some start to leave- Nick rushes down the stairs.

NICK

No, no, no.

INT. FENNEL - SAME TIME

13

The only light from a full MOON, shadows playing on the walls. It's silent- there's no hint of the party in here.

Ellen is curious rather than scared. There's nothing in here.

Just then she hears cracking. She looks to the WALL on the right of the room, the PLASTER cracks and gives, large chunks falling to the floor. Another louder rending sound and the plaster bursts forward as though the wall behind pushed against it- she covers her face as chunks of debris fly by.

As the dust settles Ellen is on the floor by the left hand wall. She stands, brushing dust off. Her dress is ripped and she has cuts to her legs. Through the clearing dust something is moving. She approaches. The ancient bare brick wall is exposed...and it's breathing in and out, like a lung. The dust in the room moves gently to and fro with the breath.

Fixated on this phenomenon, Ellen realises there's someone behind her. Her hairs stand up again. She's now very scared. She turns very slowly.

Behind her is the silhouette of a female form. It has no definition. The body is a blank dark mass- like a cardboard cut-out. The long hair outline and that of a dress defines it as a woman. It's floating a foot above the ground.

Ellen holds her breath.

The silhouette's fingers splay and her hair stands on end. She rises slowly up to the ceiling.

Ellen screams.

ELLEN  
AAAARRGGGGHHHHHH

In the same instant a deeper wail joins hers- coming from the bare brick. The wall bursts! Bricks fly forward- knocking Ellen in the head- one hits her between her legs - she falls, gathers herself and sees a pair of eyes in the void behind the brickwork.

The trauma is too much; Ellen's eyes lose focus and become fixed.

The door bursts open, Alfred rushes in. The door slams behind him.

ALFRED  
What the- Ellen! Are you OK?

He cradles her- she's still fixed on the wall. He looks- just a dark cavity now. Brick and mortar everywhere.

ALFRED  
What happened Ellen? You-you're hurt-  
you're bleeding! Oh my God.  
Ellen....Ellen...?

He shakes her gently. She is elsewhere. Alfred sobs for his daughter.

INT. BEDROOM CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

14

Holding his stricken daughter in his arms, Alfred leaves Fennel and goes to the top of the staircase to see a frenzy of activity below- vases knocked over, panicked party goers rushing out the door. In the centre of the melee- Nick, bewildered, looking up at him.

INT. A & E - NIGHT

15

In the crowded waiting area, the tuxedoed Alfred cuts an odd figure among drunken teenagers.

A nurse calls from the desk.

NURSE  
Mr Stewart.

ALFRED  
(approaching)  
Yes.

NURSE

Follow me.

He follows her down a corridor. As his PATENT SHOES click on the polished floor we FLASH CUT to

INT. INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - SAME TIME

16

Ellen's blooded torn DRESS being put into an EVIDENCE BAG, then her UNDERWEAR.

INT. OFFICE - SAME TIME

17

She opens the door to a cramped, land-locked office where a DOCTOR and a woman in civies are talking. They pointedly stop as he enters.

DR EMBER

Mr Stewart. I'm Dr Ember. I'm the consultant paediatrician. This is Dr Travis. She's the district appointed forensic psychologist.

ALFRED

.....Psychologist?

DR EMBER

Please take a seat.

ALFRED

Where is my daughter? I want to see her.

The two doctors share a glance.

DR EMBER

Dr Travis needs to ask you some questions.

ALFRED

I want to see my daughter- NOW!

He makes to leave.

DR TRAVIS

Ellen has some cuts. Do you know how she got them?

ALFRED

She...the wall..I, I..

DR TRAVIS

There are abrasions on her labia and vagina. Can you explain these?

ALFRED

Abrasions?! A wall collapsed!

DR EMBER

Her injuries are consistent with a blunt force instrument being thrust at her, Mr Stewart. A collapsing wall is unlikely to cause such an impact.

DR TRAVIS

The scene shows bricks strewn across the entire room. Can you explain how they got there?

ALFRED

You've been there?!

DR TRAVIS

A request was sent for my attendance.

ALFRED

By whom..?

DR TRAVIS

The SIO. Senior investigating officer in charge.

Alfred is falling down the rabbit hole.

ALFRED

Investigate- the *police*? Who called the police?

DR TRAVIS

One of your guests I bel-

ALFRED

It was Engels, wasn't it?!

DR TRAVIS

Mr Stewart-

ALFRED

I WANT TO SEE MY DAUGHTER!!

DR EMBER

You can't see Ellen right now.



ALFRED  
The hell I can't!

DR EMBER  
She's in intensive care.

This checks Alfred.

DR EMBER CONT.  
Ellen is in a catatonic state.

ALFRED  
What?

DR EMBER  
She's experienced a severe traumatic event that has resulted in her shutting-

DR TRAVIS  
I think we should leave things here just now.

ALFRED  
What's happened to her? Tell me!

The door opens and a man in a cheap suit enters. A uniformed officer stands behind. The room is full.

DI AMBLETHORPE  
Mr Stewart, can you come with me please?

Too numb to put up any real resistance, Alfred meekly complies.

ALFRED  
Where, where are we going? No- wait..  
I really need to see my daughter!

DI AMBLETHORPE  
Come with me please.

ALFRED  
Please! Please!!

He's lead away, in tears.

EXT. OUTSIDE A & E - FOLLOWING

18

Alfred is put in the back of a squad car. He looks utterly

spent and bewildered. As the car speeds away, his eyes look hollow.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - SAME TIME

19

Ellen looks straight ahead- at the ceiling. Her gaze is lost, she is gone somewhere no-one can follow.

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL - COURTYARD - NIGHT

20

A soft breeze blows across the courtyard, picking up a dropped neck scarf and toying it like a poltergeist in front of the dark, brooding silent edifice. The blank windows seem to be watching.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

21

The MOON throws shadows across the grand hall. In the dim light we pick up an abandoned STILETTO, the magnificent floral arrangement from atop the grand piano, toppled- the VASE cracked, water pooled amongst the cut flowers. Broken wine and champagne glasses.

Travelling up the stairs we notice all the doors are shut. The bedroom corridor couldn't be more silent, asleep.

But then soft light plays upon the rich carpet outside Fennel. From under the door the light grows, then the door bangs with incredible intensity and violence- repeatedly, becoming louder and more unbearable with every crash until

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

22

Dishevelled, unshaven, Alfred is released to his WIFE, who can barely conceal her disgust at having to be there.

She turns and marches out.

INT. MRS STEWART'S CAR - FOLLOWING

23

MRS STEWART

I thought 'bail' only existed in TV shows.

She leaves this hanging.

MRS STEWART CONT.

Jesus, you stink of stale smoke and booze.

ALFRED

We're going to the Hospital, right?

MRS STEWART

I've been there. All night. You need to change.

ALFRED

I need to see Ellen!

MRS STEWART

Don't damn well tell me what you should do! The looks I got.

ALFRED

What does that mean?

MRS STEWART

Do you know *why* you were detained? What they think you've done?

ALFRED

It's nonsense! They're looking for something that isn't there. I would NEVER-

MRS STEWART

Get the FUCK off the road, asshole!

She smashes the horn.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - LATER

24

Either side of the bed, Ellen's parents are fast asleep. Her Mum, crumpled up with her arms wrapped about her, her Dad, his head resting on the bed while he holds his daughter's hand.

Ellen looks to the ceiling, oblivious as a nurse gently administers drops to her eyes.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - LATER

25

Alfred wakes. His head creased from Ellen's bed covers. His wife sits stiffly, watching him with distaste.

His phone vibrates.

MRS STEWART

It hasn't stopped. Is it the *police*?

Alfred ignores the provocation.

CLOSE UP of his PHONE: several missed calls from Nick.

MRS STEWART  
Where are you going?!

ALFRED  
I need to get to the hotel. I shan't  
be long.

MRS STEWART  
Try not to get arrested.

INT. GRAND HALL - LATER

26

Nick is on the phone at the reception desk. During the call  
Alfred enters.

NICK  
It was a minor issue affecting one  
room only. The rest of the hotel is f-  
Mrs Montgomery, I can assure you-  
There's absolutely no need to- Yes. I  
understand. Thank you. Good bye.

To Alfred-

NICK CONT.  
That was the eighteenth booking  
cancelled this morning.

ALFRED  
Why is the place still a mess?! What  
are the staff doing Nick?!

NICK  
There are no staff!

This brings Alfred up.

NICK CONT.  
What happened?

ALFRED  
It was a misunderstanding. Pamela had  
to pay bail.

NICK  
Sorry..*what??*

ALFRED

The police...you saw them, right?

NICK

Yes. They showed up just after the last guests has deserted. Said they had a report of an altercation involving a minor. You were *arrested?!?!?*

ALFRED

Nick, where are the team?

NICK

A rumour started among the locals, something about...

ALFRED

About what?

NICK

About the house being..haunted.

ALFRED

Jesus!

NICK

With what happened in fennel, Ellen getting injured and the police showing up, not to mention *all* the guests leaving...no-one wanted to come back.

ALFRED

Not Antione? Surely he-

NICK

He rang, said until everyone's safety could be assured he wasn't risking any of his team. They walked out soon after the guests. The kitchens are a mess.

Alfred reaches for his MOBILE.

ALFRED

He can't do this! He's under contract.

NICK

Alfred. Why were you arrested?

ALFRED

Ellen....Ellen. I've been at the hospital all day and night, since I got out of the police station. She's...she's....

He's cracking up.

ALFRED CONT

She has...injuries.

NICK

I saw blood. The masonry falling....?

ALFRED

The police admit there's no evidence of anything...unsavoury, but they don't trust me.

NICK

What?!

ALFRED

They think I...I..

Alfred's mobile rings. He takes the call and heads to his office behind the reception.

ALFRED

Antione. What the fuck are you playing at? No, NO! You get your ENTIRE team back here-

He slams the door. Nick takes a beat, runs his hands through his hair. He realises his breath is literally freezing in front of him.

NICK

What the....

A shadow falls over the lobby. He's drawn to the top of the staircase- it's almost pitch dark up there. He searches the gloom, sees something that registers clinching terror in his face.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

27

Alfred throws his mobile on the desk.

ALFRED

FUCK!!!

He takes a deep breath, notices someone walking out the front door on the CCTV monitor.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

28

Opens the door- Nick isn't there.

ALFRED

Nick. Nick?

He walks to the entrance and -

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL - COURTYARD - SAME TIME

29

-Out into the courtyard. Nick is standing in the middle, looking at the house. His face reflecting utter terror and his HAIR has turned GREY.

ALFRED

Nick. Jesus....Nick are you - what happened?

Nick glances at his boss, mechanically turns and walks away.

Aghast, Alfred looks on as his last staff member leaves him, his mobile rings in his hand, unnoticed.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

30

Alfred and his wife are with Dr Ember outside Ellen's room on the children's ward. Through the window she's propped up in bed, staring at the wall opposite.

DR EMBER

There isn't anything physically wrong with her. Her cuts and abrasions are healing. She's taking fluids and food when given. She's quite healthy.

ALFRED

So, what now?

DR EMBER

She is completely uncommunicative Mr Stewart. I want to run some psycho-analytical evaluation tests on Ellen, to see if we can find a way of reaching her in her current state.

ALFRED

No! She's been through enough. We're

taking her home.

MRS STEWART

We are?!

DR EMBER

Mr Stewart, Ellen is in a very unstable, emotionally vulnerable state, removing her from our care could be damaging to her fragile mind.

MRS STEWART

Exactly. We are NOT taking her home.

ALFRED

The hell we're not!

Alfred storms into Ellen's room, begins collecting her things.

MRS STEWART

Have you taken leave of your senses?

ALFRED

No! I've come to them. She's better with me...with us.

Intended or not, this has the desired effect. She turns and storms out.

Alfred relaxes. Sits by his daughter.

ALFRED

It's going to be OK my darling, we'll get through this together. We make a good team.

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL - COURTYARD - DAY

31

Alfred pulls his CAR up to the hotel entrance. Ellen shotgun, oblivious. Alfred opens the hotel door and, taking her hand, guides her inside.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

32

ALFRED

You remember our wonderful hotel sweetheart? How very pretty we made it together! Now, why don't you sit here a moment while I fetch you a chair?



He sets her on the bottom stair and goes in search of a seat. Ellen becomes aware of her surroundings. She stands and looks about- but still the blank distant expression remains.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - LATER

33

Sleeves rolled up, Alfred is making another difficult call. Ellen eats ice-cream in a bowl.

ALFRED

I can assure you Bewgley Hall will re-open within two weeks. A poorly finished wall, nothing more. The police? Entirely a misunderst- No, wait, your review cannot reflect what happened in one unfortunate evening - in one roo- Please, may I suggest you return- at our expense of course and re-visit the hotel on it's re-opening? You'll let me know? Of course Mr Goodridge, I'll wait for your call, bye for now.

Alfred hangs up the receiver, pinches his eyes.

ALFRED

Jesus, where did I go wrong? Oh sweetie, you're, you're getting it down you.

Ellen has stopped eating with a full spoon to her mouth, looking at him, ice-cream dripping off the spoon into her lap. Alfred gets a tissue and wipes her down. He looks at his lost daughter, is overwhelmed- hugs her in tears.

ALFRED

We'll get through this, don't you ever worry my darling, we'll get through.

GRANDAD VO

Hello...is anyone here?

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

34

Alfred comes out of the office. His PARENTS have arrived. Kindly octogenarians.

The three hug in silence.

GRANDAD

How are you doing?

GRANNY  
Where's Ellen?

ALFRED  
She's..I'm fine Dad, she's through  
here- remember what I told you.

Granny nods and opens the door.

EXT. REAR GARDENS - LATER

35

Granny is walking Ellen around the gardens, hand in hand.  
Alfred and his Dad are sitting on the garden furniture.

GRANDAD  
Walked away?

ALFRED  
It was the damndest thing, He left his  
car, just walked off.

GRANDAD  
And his hair you say- white?

ALFRED  
Like he'd seen a ghost!

GRANDAD  
And he's not been back?

ALFRED  
No-one has. After the incident in  
Fennel, the locals put the wind up the  
kitchen staff- superstitious Frenchman  
- with their rumours about a bloody  
ghost- it spread to the housekeepers  
and, well, that's that. I'm the  
proprietor of a haunted hotel.

GRANDAD  
What are you going to do?

GRANNY  
Where's Angela?

ALFRED  
She's at her Sisters place in Deal, I  
think. Not heard from her since I took  
Ellen out of the hospital.

GRANDAD  
Was that wise?

ALFRED  
What can they do for her Dad? She  
needs....

GRANNY  
Ellen and I are going to go to the  
shops and get some food.

GRANDAD  
Shall I...

ALFRED  
Please go, Dad, I've got to fix this.

They wonder round the house to the front, leaving Alfred alone, forlornly looking over the gardens and countryside beyond. He feels the presence of something he's been trying to deny- the house? Or something else? He turns to the placid house.

ALFRED  
Fuck you! Fuck you!!

INT. ALFRED'S CAR - NIGHT

36

Alfred is tearing along busy streets, honking his horn- stealing glances to Ellen next to him- fitting and frothing at the mouth.

He nearly disappears into the back of a bus- he's right on the edge.

ALFRED  
For fuck's sake MOVE! Ellen- Ellen,  
it's Daddy, stay with me now sweetie.

INT. A & E - FOLLOWING

37

Ellen on a gurney dashing through corridors with staff attending, Alfred following behind.

INT. OFFICE - LATER

38

Dr Ember and Alfred in the claustrophobic office.

DR EMBER  
Well, she's stabilised. What happened?

ALFRED

She was fine at the hotel, her  
grandparents took her for a -

DR EMBER

You took her back to the hotel?!

ALFRED

...Yes.

DR EMBER

My Stewart, given what happened to  
Ellen in that house do you not think  
it was a mistake to take her back  
there?

ALFRED

I didn't, I didn't think....what have  
I done?!

He sinks into a chair.

DR EMBER

Let us run a psychological evaluation  
to establish Ellen's condition. I've  
taken the liberty of referring her to  
a colleague of mine, Joshua Spearing.  
He's a clinical psychologist  
specialising in severe child trauma.  
We works out of the Dorma Institute, a  
private hospital for the care of  
vulnerable people who have experienced  
acute trauma.

Wanting it to stop, Alfred can only nod his agreement.

EXT. DORMA INSTITUTE - DAY

39

Alfred and Angela pull up and alight. The building a suitably  
imposing Victorian edifice.

INT. CHILDREN'S WARD LOUNGE - LATER

40

A large, light busy room with many staff attending to and  
playing with the children, dressed in PJs and nighties. Some  
talk incessantly, some are euphoric, others concentrate  
wholeheartedly on a game, a jigsaw, a book. Ellen is distant-  
she sits in a chair staring out the window into space.

By the door, Dr Spearing talks in hushed tones to the ashen-  
faced Stewarts.

DR SPEARING

What ever it was that triggered the trauma Ellen experienced was so powerful she has shut her mind down in order to cope. The catatonic state you see is the result.

ALFRED

How do you bring her back?

DR SPEARING

I'm not sure we can.

MRS STEWART

What?! That's ridiculous! Of course you can bring her back. She can't stay like *-that*.

DR SPEARING

Mrs Stewart, your daughter has closed herself from the world, necessarily. Can you imagine experiencing something so terrifying that you are unable to speak? Her brain has closed all communicative function down, so as to protect her from recall. She can't remember what happened. And that's for the best. It will take time and a lot of patient work if we are to reach her.

MRS STEWART

How much is this going to cost?

ALFRED

You said for the best. What do you mean Doctor?

DR SPEARING

At least in the short to medium term, it's advisable any and all reminders of what happened at the hotel are kept from Ellen. Any trigger could have a catastrophic effect on her mental stability. We could lose her forever.

MRS STEWART

And you saw fit to take her right back there! I need some air, it stinks in here.

And she walks off.

DR SPEARING

Mr Stewart, Ellen must have no reminders of her trauma. Hide the hotel and anything to do with it from her. This is vital.

Alfred looks longingly across the room at his lost daughter- she might as well be the far side of the world to him now.

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL - COURTYARD - DAY

41

Alfred pulls up at the hotel, dispirited. On opening the door he picks up the post.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - FOLLOWING

42

Throws the bundle of official looking letters on his desk together with a large glass of brandy. plonks himself in his chair- faces off with the letters. Takes a pull and sifts through. Bills and more bills.

A loud bang on the main door. He scans the CCTV feed- two large looking men in black plus a third in a suit.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

43

Alfred opens the door. The suit holds a document at eye level, and at breakneck speed without a pause-

BAILIFF

Mr Alfred Stewart of the Bewgley Hall Hotel, Bewgley Magna, Wiltshire? This is a legal document requiring you to allow access to enforcement agents carrying out their duties to recover goods and chattels unlawfully kept by yourself after non-payment of loans to..... Agenda Finance PLC. If you interfere in any way with the duties of the enforcement agents as outlined in our terms and conditions, we will be within our rights to call the police and have your restrained from so doing. Do you understand?

The tasty looking heavies slide by Alfred. The suit removes the document from his face, hands it to him and walks confidently past.

Alfred notices a large REMOVALS LORRY, it's loading doors opened, expectantly.

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL - COURTYARD - LATER

44

The heavies push the Grand Piano into place at the back of the now full lorry, pull up the shutter and drive off.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

45

The place is bereft, even the reception desk has gone- the phone, now on the floor the only thing left. Alfred is on the lower step of the staircase, the bottle is nearly empty, no sign of his glass.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

46

Alfred is hunched over his desk, fast asleep. RED INK final demands beneath his face. One, in his hand is from the INSURERS. The sub title reads "CLAIM DENIED".

The empty bottle lays on it's side- a small pool of brandy gathered.

The liquid starts to FREEZE, Alfred's breath is visible, a shadow passes across the partially opened door.

Through the gap, on the parquet floor, caught in the moonlight, the reflection of a floating form- hair splayed.

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL - COURTYARD - MORNING.

47

Angela Stewart approaches the main doors holding an envelope. She has no intention of entering, posts the envelope. At her car she turns to the house and shakes her head dismissively.

EXT. REAR GARDENS - LATER

48

A gust of wind flicks the DIVORCE PAPERS from the TABLE onto the floor at Alfred's feet. He doesn't notice. He's staring into nothing.

INT. CHILDREN'S WARD LOUNGE - SAME TIME

49

Ellen staring out of the window.

PRE-LAP:

Alfred's mobile rings.

EXT. REAR GARDENS - SAME TIME

50

Bitter tears running down his face. The unanswered call is from CHILTERN BANK. It's the 4th call from them.

He gets up, walks into the house- leaving the phone ringing.

The house looks on.

INT. CHILDREN'S WARD LOUNGE - SAME TIME

51

Ellen seems agitated, searching for something out of reach with her eyes. Her breathing becomes short.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

52

Alfred slowly mounts the stairs, a length of ROPE in his hands.

He leaves SHOT at the top. We hear rope being tied.

INT. CHILDREN'S WARD LOUNGE - SAME TIME

53

Ellen is almost fitting, two staff trying desperately to calm her. She feels something cataclysmic coming....

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

54

A heave, a snap, a pair of legs swings in and out of view, twitching.

INT. CHILDREN'S WARD LOUNGE - SAME TIME

55

Ellen's eyes open wide- she takes a deep breath and freezes.

INT. CHURCH SERVICE - DAY

56

Ellen sits between her mother and her paternal granny during the service for Alfred. The small ancient church is packed. To the left in a side chapel is a display of brightly coloured pictures and drawings made by local pre-school children. The theme is "PICTURES OF OUR VILLAGE".

Ellen is absently drawn to them, as everyone else looks forward to the VICAR delivering his sermon. One of the pictures holds her attention, although her face shows little:

A simplistic drawing of a woman in a black dress, standing next to a large house. Her hands are splayed and her hair stands on end. Her body and face are filled in with black felt tip.



Ellen shakes.

EXT. GRAVESIDE - FOLLOWING.

57

Ellen is flanked by her grandparents with a kindly hand on each shoulder. Everyone watches Alfred's casket lowered. Ellen stares into space.

On the other side, Angela looks ice cold as her late husband's coffin disappears. She turns to face her daughter. The moment of truth. She can't deal with her. An imploring look at the flanking grandparents, who, though shocked, understand what is happening.

She turns and walks away.

INT. GRANDPARENT'S CAR, DORMA INSTITUTE - DAY

58

Ellen's grandparents hand her to the white-coated psychiatrist at the entrance.

On the passenger SEAT, a tabloid NEWSPAPER. The headline;

*PAEDO HOTEL OWNER HANGS HIMSELF.*

*9 year old DAUGHTER suffers breakdown after 'incident' in hotel bedroom....*

FADE OUT.

EXT. GRANDPARENTS HOME - DAY

59

A car leaves a country lane and sweeps into the driveway of a beautiful country cottage. Dr Spearing alights.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

60

Dr Spearing opens the door.

**CAPTION: FIVE YEARS LATER**

Ellen sits at her DESK, staring ahead. The doctor looks at her DRAWINGS. All the same; deep red eyes from a black background, and a female shape with hair on end and hands splayed. Over and over and over.

DR SPEARING

Your Grandparent's home is beautiful.  
Have you any pictures of it for me to  
see, Ellen? Your Grandma says you like  
to walk in the garden. That's good.

You must like the colours and the smells....?

INT. GRANDPARENT'S KITCHEN - LATER

61

The three sit round a robust solid wood TABLE drinking coffee. A couple of Ellen's tortured drawings between them. It's evident the meeting has been fractious.

DR SPEARING

I said we need time. Time is everything.

GRANNY

But she's the same. There's no improvement.

GRANDAD

Look at the pictures. Every day she draws the same thing.

DR SPEARING

I suggested her moving here when it became clear we weren't reaching her at the institute. Before she left she needed help with her basic functions. She could barely walk unaided. Since she moved here the change in her independence is profound.

GRANDAD

But...five years!

DR SPEARING

We were never able to put a time scale on Ellen's recovery Bill. If you consider where she was- unreachable- utterly closed from the world, to now...it's huge progress.

The grandparents are unconvinced. Spearing changes tack.

DR SPEARING

After I graduated, my first placement was at a last chance saloon. A home for cases no-one else could help- or no-one else wanted. A young man had been in the system for fifteen years - since he was a boy. He talked, was responsive- you could have a stimulating conversation with him. But

he could see though all of us...we weren't real. Not for him. He believed he was in purgatory, for sins committed in a previous existence. And we were part of his torture. There was no way out of his endless cycle of punishment. Each establishment he went to was another level in his personal and deserved hell. We were instruments of the divine sent to elongate his suffering.

GRANNY

The poor man, that's awful.

DR SPEARING

He'd been told a thousand times he wasn't in purgatory and it was all in his head. And of course this wasn't working, he just didn't believe it. It never would have occurred to him that he was a psychiatric patient with mental health issues. He needed to see the truth.

GRANNY

What did you do?

DR SPEARING

I took him camping. We went into the countryside, into hills and by rivers—just the two of us. I didn't need to explain that all the beauty around him couldn't possibly be in purgatory, he soon worked that out. Then, when we returned I pitched our tent one last night right outside the facility. He could see his bedroom. He watched other patients. He was looking into a world he'd only ever seen from the inside.

GRANDAD

Plato's Cave.

Spearing acknowledges.

GRANDAD

You took him out of the cave of his own imagination—

DR SPEARING  
his own reality.

GRANDAD  
And allowed him to see his purgatory  
was a puppet show.

GRANNY  
Do you think Ellen is stuck in the  
bedroom- Fennel- that that's become  
her reality, her Plato's Cave?

DR SPEARING  
There's no doubt about it. Emotionally  
she hasn't moved on from that night-  
she's still tied to what happened to  
her in that room. And we can't learn  
anything about it until we can  
distance her from her memories.

They instinctively focus on the drawings.

GRANDAD  
I've thought long and hard about what  
happened that night. And of what these  
represent. If we spend our time in  
trying to convince Ellen everything is  
in her mind, that's all well and good.

He picks up one of the drawings.

GRANDAD CONT.  
But something *did* happen in Fennel,  
and it had nothing to do with Alfred.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME.

62

Standing right outside the kitchen door, almost with her nose  
touching, Ellen hears everything.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT.

63

Slipping his DRESSING GOWN on over PJs, Grandad tiptoes out  
of the bedroom, closing the door very gently. He glances at  
Ellen's door, then as silently as he can, drops the loft  
LADDER and ascends to-

INT. ATTIC - SAME TIME.

64

The click of a draw-pull and a bare bulb flickers on. Bare  
floor boards, the usual clutter and insulation in the eaves-

nothing unusual. Grandad walks to the end wall, glances behind him.

INT. LANDING - SAME TIME.

65

The attic light goes out.

INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

66

The three are buying drawing books and materials for Ellen. Grandad browses absently. Finds himself in the 'hobbies' section, gardening, cooking, fishing. A couple of obscure books about ghost hunting catch his eye.

Granny calls after him on her way out, he replaces the books. A seed has been planted.

INT. FAMILY CAR - FOLLOWING.

67

GRANNY

What were you so interested in?

GRANDAD

Huh?

GRANNY

In the bookshop. I called but you were too engrossed.

Grandad furtively glances at Ellen in the rear view.

GRANDAD

Oh...fishing, thought I might take it up again.

INT. HIDDEN ROOM - NIGHT

68

Grandad is online ordering books on ghost hunting.

INT. GRANDPARENT'S KITCHEN - DAY

69

Grandad is gearing up to go out.

GRANNY

Where are you off to so early?

GRANDAD

Thought I'd take a drive over to the Manville reservoir. They have a big angling shop.

GRANNY

Manville, that's gotta be two hours drive.

GRANDAD

It's a very good shop. I've checked it out online.

GRANNY

Fishing? What's changed?

GRANDAD

What do you mean?

GRANNY

You hated fishing! Tried it because of your brother and found it dull as dishwater as I recall. When Dougie left you his rods in his will you threw them straight in the bin.

GRANDAD

Perhaps I'm ready to give it another try. I'll be back later.

He hastily leaves.

INT. GRANDPARENT'S CAR - FOLLOWING

70

Getting into his car, Grandad notices Ellen staring at him from her bedroom window.

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL DRIVE - LATER

71

Grandad pulls into the drive. Ahead, rusted gates with a LOCK and CHAIN. Before this, a once proud sign announcing 'Bewgley Hall Hotel'. But it's been daubed with red spray paint..

"Pedo hall".

He gets out. He's upset, but mostly angry. Tries to wipe the spray off to no effect. Then he attempts to pull the sign down- no dice. So he gets back in and slowly drives at the sign till it collapses.

He alights again and looks at the gates. The chain is strong, but the gates are ill fitting and he manages to squeeze between them.

He walks up to the house. Tries the door, rot and neglect making them give easily.

INT. GRAND HALL - SAME TIME

72

The place is silent, but a sense of brooding menace pervades, like he's being watched.

His gaze is drawn to the point where his son took his life. He closes his eyes, allowing the pain to pass over.

In his POCKET he takes some folded PAPER, unfolds - two of Ellen's drawings, one of the red eyes and one of the woman with the splayed fingers and hair on ends.

Grandad looks up at Fennel.

INT. FENNEL - SAME TIME

73

The room is much the same as the night of Ellen's trauma. Rubble everywhere, the bare cavity in the right wall. The four poster, looking incongruous, sags, the window drapes hanging.

Grandad holds the images up. The picture of the deep red eyes against black seems to him to be based on the gaping hole in the wall. He approaches and holds the drawing up to the hole, trying to replicate what his granddaughter saw.

In this moment he senses something behind him. Turns- nothing. For reasons he cannot fathom he holds up the woman's picture in the space where she appeared to Ellen.

Something rings true to these pictures- in this room.

Grandad is deeply affected.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

74

Grandad sits next to Ellen at her desk. The pictures he took unfolded in front.

GRANDAD

These pictures. They mean something very important to you, sweetheart. I understand now. I've been there. To Fennel.

Ellen slowly looks up into her Grandad's face.

GRANDAD CONT.

You...you remember, right? What happened Ellen, sweetheart? What did you see that night?

Ellen's gaze is piercing. But she's not otherwise responding.  
Grandad thinks. Makes a judgment call and gets out his PHONE.

GRANDAD CONT.

I know we're not supposed  
to...but...here, do you remember this  
place Darling?

He shows Ellen a picture of Bewgley Hall. He scrolls to the  
Grand hall- the staircase, the bedroom corridor, then Fennel.

He offers her drawings again.

GRANDAD

Was it....was it a...ghost...?

Only now does he notice Ellen is shaking- her eyes start to  
disappear upwards and her teeth clench.

GRANDAD CONT.

Oh..Oh NO, No no!! Darling please- I'm  
so sorry.

He holds her to him, the tears streaming down his face.  
Granny flies through the door. She takes Ellen in her arms-  
sees the picture of Fennel on the phone.

GRANNY

What have you done?

INT. ELLEN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

75

Hooked up with probes, she's in a coma.

TITLE:

**3 Months Later.**

Other than the constant beep of the monitor, silence.

Ellen opens her eyes wide. Blinks and takes things in.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - FOLLOWING

76

A very busy ward. The nurses station phone going, nurses  
going to and fro. Ellen walks slowly into the melee. A nurse  
passes her, checks herself and backs up- amazed.

NURSE

D-doctor...Doctor!



A young addled doctor arrives.

DOCTOR  
Wh- good heavens.

ELLEN  
I need a drink.

Two jaws drop.

INT. ELLEN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

77

Ellen and her Granny are in easy chairs. Ellen sips a beaker of juice.

ELLEN  
I don't remember anything. Just waking up and feeling very thirsty. Granny, where's-

Dr Spearing enters.

DR SPEARING  
Hello Ellen. I'm Doctor Spearing, I work at the Dorma-

ELLEN  
I know who you are.

DR SPEARING  
You do...?

ELLEN  
I do have ears.

DR SPEARING  
What do you recall, Ellen?

ELLEN  
I'm going to be asked this a lot aren't I? I recall Dad's funeral. Nothing specific, just know I was there.

GRANNY  
Oh darling-

ELLEN  
It's OK Granny, it was what, five years ago? I've dealt with it.

Granny and the doctor are somewhat non-plussed.

ELLEN CONT

I remember the hospital- the  
institute. Your garden, the smell of  
baking.

Granny starts to well up.

DR SPEARING

Do you remember anything earlier?

ELLEN

.....No. No I don't. Where's  
Grandad?

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

78

It's a beautiful sunny day. Ellen and her Granny are standing  
before her Dad's grave, and next to it, her Grandad's.

Ellen tries to feel something, but it's all too remote.

ELLEN

What happened Granny? What happened to  
us?

GRANNY

I don't know Ellen.

Ellen picks some weeds off her Dad's grave.

INT. GRANNY'S CAR- FOLLOWING

79

They are parked by the Church graveyard.

GRANNY

I was angry. Your grandad had showed  
you pictures of...we were told under  
no circumstances to remind you of what  
happened. But he went and took  
pictures, the fool!

ELLEN

He showed them to me?

GRANNY

And you....

They share a packet of sweets.

GRANNY

I was so upset with him. He was full of remorse, but it was too late. I cursed him and told him to get rid of the pictures. That he might have killed you.

ELLEN

But he didn't Granny.

GRANNY

We didn't know that! You could have died! He should never....

They embrace. Through Granny's tears-

GRANNY

He took it really hard. Was mortified. Promised to destroy everything. Then he collapsed. Right in the kitchen. By the time the ambulance arrived.....

Sobs, more hugs. A long pause.

ELLEN

If Grandad knew it was dangerous to show me pictures that might remind me, why did he?

Granny weighs up the question.

GRANNY

Your dear Dad, Alfred. After what happened at the..he was, the police arrested him.

ELLEN

Why?!

GRANNY

They thought..the papers...but there was no evidence.

ELLEN

Of what Granny?

ELLEN

Darling, you had.....injuries

Ellen considers.

ELLEN  
Is that why he killed himself?

GRANNY  
Your Grandad was seething. He was hell  
bent on proving your Dad's innocence.

Ellen looks overwhelmed.

GRANNY  
Oh darling, this is so much for you to  
take in. I'm so sorry.

Ellen offers her a perfunctory smile.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - LATER

80

She's laying on her BED, staring at the ceiling- thinking  
hard.

At her LAPTOP, thinking of the words. Enters-

*"ghost sightings"*

A random selection of grainy images showing 'ghosts' caught  
on camera. Ellen searches each image for an answer that's out  
of reach.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

81

Boisterous thirteen year olds settling in for the start of  
the school day. Nervous and very self conscious, Ellen finds  
a desk, watched by predatory classmates. The FORM TEACHER  
enters.

FORM TEACHER  
Settle down. Morning class.

CLASS IN UNISON  
Morning Sir.

FORM TEACHER  
We have a new student joining us.  
Please make Ellen Stewart welcome.

As if she needs to be made more conspicuous, the entire class  
turns towards her. A sassy looking girl chews GUM with an  
open-mouthed leer, looking her up and down.

FORM TEACHER  
Eyes front. Paul Adams..

ADAMS  
Here Sir.

FORM TEACHER  
Lashana Anderson

ANDERSON  
Here Sir.

Ellen still feels eyes on her and shrinks into her seat.  
Sniggers near by.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - LATER

82

Ellen is looking for her LOCKER. She overhears three students talking behind her.

STUDENT 1  
That's her.

STUDENT 2  
Her Dad did what?

Ellen freezes.

STUDENT 1  
Killed himself. He was a paedo.

STUDENT 3  
Fuck, that's messed up.

With effort, Ellen turns to face them.

STUDENT 1  
What's it like to have a dead paedo  
Dad, newb?

They snigger. With effort, Ellen starts to walk away, as-

STUDENT 2  
Stacey Harris said she was a vegetable  
for like years.

STUDENT 3  
Huh?

STUDENT 2  
Yeah! She couldn't even wipe her own  
bum!

They laugh loud and cruelly.

STUDENT 1  
Bet she wore a nappy!!

Tears in her eyes, Ellen pushes through double doors and out into-

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - SAME TIME

83

A courtyard. She leans against the wall, wiping her eyes. Some STUDENTS pass by, she turns to the wall to hide her tears and finds herself staring at a NOTICE BOARD with posters advertising various school clubs; Chess club, Bowling club, Poetry club...an obscure one, mostly covered by more recent posters catches her eye- Paranormal Society.

*"If you believe you have seen a ghost, or if you think it's total rubbish, we meet to discuss the possibilities every Wednesday, 16.00 in the library"*

INT. GRANDPARENT'S KITCHEN - LATER

84

Ellen comes home via the kitchen door. Granny is baking.

GRANNY  
Darling! How was....

Avoiding eye contact, Ellen rushes through and up the stairs.

Granny feared this.

INT. GRANDPARENT'S LANDING - FOLLOWING

85

Granny cautiously ascends the stairs with a TRAY containing a MUG and BUSCUITS. She goes to knock, thinks better and gently places the tray outside.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

86

School RUCKSACK and BLAZER flung on the floor. But she's not weeping on her bed...Ellen's at her desk typing on her LAPTOP, intense concentration across her face. Over this-

GRANNY VO  
Ellen sweetheart. If you want to be alone, I understand. But if you want to talk, I'm here for you, you know that.

More images of ghosts and increasingly....old haunted houses.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

87

The school-day over, a steady flow of students heading through exits. Ellen approaches the library with some doubt. Pushes the door-

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - SAME TIME

88

A thin library with one long wall of floor to ceiling glass overlooking a playing field, the other side a plain wall, jutting out from which are several tall bookshelves, breaking the space up. The library looks empty. Perhaps relieved she turns when low chatter reaches her.

She walks to the far end. Hidden in a cosy alcove surrounded by book shelves, a table and five chairs. Four of which are filled. The occupants- all spotty boys, stare wide eyed at the vision.

RAY

Eeerrr..does this look like netball practice?

Ellen stares. The other boys are in some kind of heaven. Ray makes to gently chaperone her away..

RAY CONT

Evidently you're fire damaged. Why don't I walk you to the middle of the road, to play..you'd like that wouldn't you?

ELLEN

I've come for the paranormal society meeting.

Ray is suitably brought short. The others noisily push their chairs back- standing to attention at the frankly impossible.

RAY

This is a wind up. Andy Powers put you up to this didn't he?!

ELLEN

I don't know who that-

RAY

Gentleman, relax. This is a weak attempt at Hyperbole. She is an instrument sent to be taken seriously, at our eventual expense.

ELLEN  
You're bonkers.

Sniggers from his acolytes.

RAY  
And you're leaving. This is a private meeting of-

ELLEN  
Ghost enthusiasts. That's why I'm here.

Ellen plonks herself down on the spare chair and smiles at the others.

ELLEN  
That's why we're all here isn't it...to discuss ghost sightings, to see if they are real..?

RAY  
'Real'. Real, Hmmm. Is this where you ask if anyone has actually seen a ghost? Is that what you think we do? Swap ghost stories, waiting for it to get dark and see who pisses their pants first?

ELLEN  
Have you?

This said to the other boys, who look uncertainly to Ray, still standing.

ELLEN  
Well I have.

The boys turn in wonder. Ray is losing his audience.

RAY  
'Have' or 'haven't' is entirely irrelevant. The human psyche and it's attending instruments of information retrieval- eyes, ears, *mind* are incredibly susceptible to suggestion. What you *think* you saw was a product of your subconscious imagination created to either stimulate or supress depending on the circumstances. We've been through this.



ELLEN

I've seen a ghost. Two actually. When I was nine. I went into a catatonic state for five years after. My Dad killed himself and I lost my Grandad too, all because of the ghosts I saw. I don't *think* I saw anything.

With that, Ellen leaves the Library. As she walks away, her anger is replaced by a smug grin.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

89

Ellen at her LAPTOP. She's on the FACEBOOK page for Ray's paranormal society, A playful look on her face- thinking just how to do this...Chuckles as she types-

*Ready to piss your pants then?*

She grabs her phone and sits back.

With a nerd's timing, a 'ping' comes right back.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

90

Ellen makes for the hidden seats. But Ray is in one of the tall book alcoves.

RAY

What is it you want?

ELLEN

Hello Ray.

RAY

Because I swear, if this is a wind up-

ELLEN

Did I sound like I was joking when I told you about my Dad?

RAY

N..no, no of course not.

Ellen walks into the alcove, forcing Ray to back-peddle.

ELLEN

I had a paranormal encounter..that's what you call them right?

RAY

Well-

ELLEN

It changed my entire life. I want to know what happened, why and where.

RAY

Hmm, Have you tried counsel- wait...where? What do you mean?

ELLEN

I don't remember where it happened.

RAY

....Is this part of your catatonia? Was it like amnesia?

Ellen nods.

RAY CONT

But...haven't you asked your Mum?

ELLEN

She's gone, left. I live with my Grandma. Before you ask, she won't tell me. She's frightened of...it's a long story. I have to find out on my own.

RAY

Where do you start?

Ellen's drilled stare answers.

RAY

How can I..what can I..

ELLEN

You wanna see a ghost don't you?

RAY

I want to capture proof of paranormal activity. But-

Ellen smiles and walks to the hidden space. Ray rounds the corner to find her setting up her laptop.

ELLEN

I don't know what part of the country, nothing. My memory was completely

wiped. The psychologist told my grandparents it was my defence against the trauma of what happened that night.

RAY

But you remember some things..?

ELLEN

My Grandad showed me some pictures- they brought me out of my state.

RAY

So it was OK to show you?

ELLEN

And I went into a coma.

RAY

Ahh.

ELLEN

That's why Granny won't help. She's afraid if I go into another coma I won't wake up.

RAY

So is this really a good idea?

ELLEN

I need to find out what happened- and why. Why did I see those ghosts? Why did my father kill himself? Why has my life been turned upside down? Everything I had has gone- I remember nothing from the last five years- or anything leading up to what happened.

This is all too heavy for Ray. Ellen changes tack.

ELLEN CONT

Why ghosts?

RAY

Huh?

ELLEN

Why are you into ghosts?

RAY

I'll be taking my GCSE's early.

Probably my A-levels too. Physics, Maths, Chemistry.

ELLEN

Wow! What are you doing at 'Smooth-brained High'?

RAY

My Mum's a single parent. There's my younger sister too. She couldn't afford to send me to a better school.

ELLEN

Sucks to be you.

RAY

Is what it is. I'm a straight up STEM student.

Off Ellen's look-

RAY

Science, Tech, Engineering and Mathematics. The big four. I'm earmarked for a role in biotechnology or engineering, or...some scientific application.

ELLEN

I bet your Mum's really proud.

RAY

I guess. The thing is, I've got an imagination. That's a very dangerous thing to have in a scientist. I was researching particle physics and microwaves and electro-magnetic fields for my study group. All the year elevens were formulating frictionless train travel, or better imaging equipment for body scanning, or even a super-quick microwave oven. Which sounded pretty neat to be honest, I mean, imagine an entire chicken dinner- veg, roasties, yorkshire, gravy- the works, zapped in ten seconds. Ten seconds!!

ELLEN

And back in the room.

RAY

Sorry. Whereas I was designing advanced tools to stimulate the possible presence of multi-dimensional esoteric entities.

Another blank look.

RAY CONT

Ghosts.

ELLEN

You design ghost hunting kit?

RAY

No, no. I have theories on how to approach capturing proof that MDEE's or 'ghosts' exist.

ELLEN

So you could help me.

RAY

If we knew where your ghosts were.

A pause.

RAY CONT

Are you not in contact with your mum?

Ellen shakes her head.

ELLEN

I remember her. I remember thinking she was more like an older sister to me than my mum. I was the younger sister she hated.

Ray is developing a heartfelt appreciation of the shit-show that has been Ellen's short life.

ELLEN CONT

I know I got on well with my Dad. His name was Alfred and he was fun. We...we made a good team.

The painful memory brings embarrassed moisture to her eyes. Ray turns her laptop to face him.

RAY

So, uhum...can you remember anything

at all about the place you saw the apparitions?

Another blank look from Ellen.

RAY CONT  
Inside or outside..?

ELLEN  
Inside. Definitely inside.

RAY  
Progress! OK...modern building- or old?

ELLEN  
I want to say old, but I'm wondering if that's because I saw a ghost. I mean, you don't see ghosts in new buildings, do you?

RAY  
Cliché.

ELLEN  
Pardon?

RAY  
Ghosts only appear in old creepy houses. Ghosts are sad/angry/lost souls. Ghosts only come out at night! All clichés.

ELLEN  
But ghosts do only come out at night!

During this conversation, Ellen becomes aware of the books around them on the shelves. The section is classical fiction- Bronte, Lawrence, Hardy, Austin. Several of the book covers show romantic depictions of the protagonists often in front of large, stately buildings. This jogs something in her memory.

RAY  
Who says? Is there a binding contract spooks have to sign that limits them to nocturnal scaring?

ELLEN  
Er...

RAY

It's a complete human invention that  
IF there is anything *beyond the grave*  
and I use heeeaaaavy italics here,  
that we can only see them in the dark!

ELLEN

Old.

RAY

I mean we've allowed ourselves to be  
hoodwinked by the convention that we  
are all scared of the dark! It's  
ludicrous when you think about it.

ELLEN

Ray.

RAY

I mean WHY would ghosts only come out  
in the dark? It doesn't make any  
sense!

ELLEN

Ray!

RAY

Huh?

ELLEN

It's a old house. Very old.

RAY

You..you remember?

ELLEN

No, not really. I just...know.

RAY

OK. Very old haunted houses. Was it  
big- like a manor house or stately  
home..or was it like a..cottage or a  
tavern perhaps.

ELLEN

Again I have no clear notion why, but  
I wanna say manor.

Ray types. clicks.

RAY

Ahh.

ELLEN

What?

He turns the screen to her. It reads

" *There are over 3000 manor houses in the UK*".

As the enormity of what lies ahead sinks in, we slowly ZOOM in on Ellen's eyes as

CUT TO BLACK.

Pre-lap of a powerful throaty engine revving as

EXT. BEWGLEY HALL DRIVE - DAY

91

FADE INTO

A gleaming statement MASERATTI comes towards us down a long, over-grown gravel drive, and is brought to a throaty stop.

Out steps a power-dressed thirty year old Ellen, transfixed at something beyond the camera.

She pulls her sunglasses off revealing laser eyes on stalks. She's looking at Bewgley Hall for the first time in twenty one years.

We slowly ZOOM into her eyes as

CUT TO BLACK.