

(HAUNTED MEMORIES)

by

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FADE IN:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - DAY

The door CREAKS open, revealing ELIAS MONTGOMERY, a tall figure with dark, unkempt hair shadowing haunted blue eyes. He steps into the dimly lit foyer of an old house, DUST swirling in the sunbeams piercing through cracked windows.

ELIAS
(under his breath)
What have I gotten myself into?

Elias moves with purpose yet hesitantly, as if each step forward is a battle against unseen forces. His eyes scan the room, pausing at peeling wallpaper and faded portraits on the walls.

He approaches a GRAND STAIRCASE, running his hand along the banister, fingers tracing grooves worn by time.

A PHOTOGRAPH catches his attention. It's of ALICE and WILLIAM HAWTHORNE, the former occupants. Alice's bright green eyes seem to dance with life, her auburn hair framing her smiling face. Beside her, William stands with a thoughtful gaze behind glasses, a gentle smile gracing his lips.

ELIAS
(to the photograph)
You were happy here once...

A gust of wind WHISTLES through broken windows, flipping pages of a discarded journal on a nearby table. Elias picks up the journal, thumbing through handwritten entries as a chill runs down his spine.

VOICES whisper through the room, though they're likely just drafts playing tricks on him. Still, he can't shake the feeling of being WATCHED.

Elias finds a pressed FLOWER between the pages, its petals brittle but color still clinging to life. Alice's touch, perhaps?

ELIAS
(speaking to the
room)
Alice, William... what happened
here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sets the journal down, only for the flower to drift to the floor. As he bends to retrieve it, a SHADOW passes over him, fleeting and untraceable.

Elias straightens, eyes narrowing, searching corners where darkness pools.

ELIAS
I'm not afraid of you.

His voice is steady but there's an undercurrent of doubt, a challenge to the house and its secrets.

He continues exploring, finding more MEMENTOS—a music box that plays a haunting MELODY, a gardening apron delicately embroidered, a pair of spectacles resting on a dusty shelf.

With each discovery, the sense of TRAGEDY grows thicker, almost tangible. The weight of untold stories presses against Elias's chest.

ELIAS
(whispering)
What do you want me to see?

The air grows colder as Elias looks out a window overlooking an overgrown GARDEN, wild and untamed, much like the feelings stirring in his heart—regret, sorrow, a desperate need for redemption.

FADE OUT.

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Elias stands in the center of a dimly lit room, surrounded by old newspapers that litter the floor like fallen leaves in autumn. His hands are trembling as he unfolds yet another yellowing piece of newsprint.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

The headline screams tragedy: "LOCAL COUPLE BRUTALLY MURDERED IN HOME," accompanied by grainy photos of Alice and William Hawthorne, smiling in happier times.

BACK TO SCENE

Elias scans the article, his eyes flitting over the grim details. His breath catches with each word, a silent soundtrack to the horror unfolding before him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(to himself)
How could such a thing happen
here?

He leans closer, studying Alice and William's faces. The room feels colder now, as if a shadow has crept over the sun outside. Elias rubs his arms for warmth but finds none.

A WHISPER seems to emanate from the walls, almost imperceptible.

WHISPER (V.O.)
Elias...

Elias's head snaps up, searching for the source. He finds nothing but silence and the soft creak of the house settling—or perhaps speaking.

ELIAS
Who's there?

No response. He shakes his head, attributing the voice to his rattled nerves. Elias turns back to the articles, piecing together the lives cut short within these very walls.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH OF ALICE AND WILLIAM

Alice's lively green eyes seem to peer into his soul, her smile now haunting. Beside her, William's gentle expression carries an unspoken sadness that resonates with Elias.

BACK TO SCENE

ELIAS
(voice breaking)
I'm so sorry, Alice... William...

As he whispers their names, a GUST OF WIND sweeps through the room, rustling papers and chilling his skin. Elias shivers, hugging himself tightly.

He glances down at the article again, his eyes catching on a detail—a mention of a secret garden that Alice cherished. His heart clenches at the thought of it lying forgotten and overgrown outside.

A sense of guilt wells up inside him, inexplicable and overwhelming. Elias grips the newspaper tighter, knuckles whitening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(angrily)
Why do I feel like this? What have
I done to deserve—

His voice trails off, choked by emotion. For a moment, he feels a kinship with the dead, a bond forged by shared sorrow and regret.

Elias looks around the study, suddenly feeling like an intruder in a mausoleum of memories. The whisper returns, softer this time, carried on the air like a secret meant only for him.

WHISPER (V.O.)
Help us...

Elias spins around, but again, he's met with emptiness. His haunted blue eyes search the shadows, seeking answers.

ELIAS
(determined)
I will find out who did this to
you. I promise.

With newfound resolve, Elias folds the newspaper and tucks it under his arm. He moves towards the door, pausing to look back at the room that now feels like a sacred space.

ELIAS
(quietly)
Rest for now... I'll take it from
here.

He exits the room, leaving the whispers behind, but taking with him the heavy burden of the past and the mysteries it holds.

FADE OUT.

INT. LOCAL LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

Elias pushes through the heavy wooden doors, his figure a dark silhouette against the waning light outside. His eyes, a sharp blue, scan the quiet sanctuary of knowledge before him. He moves with purpose, his tall frame casting long shadows on the rows of bookshelves.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

Elias stands before an aged microfilm reader, its screen flickering to life as he loads a reel with precision. The hum of the machine breaks the silence like a foreboding whisper.

ELIAS
(mutters to himself)
Let's see what secrets you're
hiding...

His fingers dance over the controls, fast-forwarding through history until he finds the date that marks the grim chapter of Alice and William's demise. Black-and-white images blur and stabilize, revealing the stark headlines.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

"Local Couple Found Murdered in Home - Mystery Surrounds Tragic Event"

BACK TO SCENE

Elias leans in closer, devouring every word, each detail painting a clearer picture of the tragedy. He scribbles notes on a pad beside him, his handwriting jagged with urgency.

ELIAS
(whispers)
Alice, William... what happened to
you?

The library's air grows colder, the atmosphere heavier as if responding to Elias's investigation. A faint sound catches his attention—a distant echo of papers rustling elsewhere.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES - MOMENTS LATER

Elias flips through another roll of microfilm, his gaze intense. An article about Alice's involvement in the local garden club appears, accompanied by a photograph of her, radiant and alive.

ELIAS
(to the photo)
You loved life so much...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, the microfilm reader FLICKERS erratically, casting strobe-like shadows across Elias's face. He frowns, tapping the machine, but it only grows more chaotic.

ELIAS
(frustrated)
Dammit, not now!

He slams his fist against the side of the reader, and in an instant, the machine stills. But something has changed—the air feels charged, electric. Elias senses he is no longer alone.

ANGLE ON ELIAS'S FACE

Tension etches deep lines across his brow as he senses an unseen presence. His breath quickens, fogging in the chill that envelops him.

ELIAS
(tense)
Who's there? Show yourself!

The silence answers him, thick and unyielding. Elias's heart pounds, a drumbeat in his chest echoing the fear that tightens its grip around him.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

Elias takes a deep breath, steadying his nerves. He returns to the microfilm, his resolve hardened. Article after article unfolds before him, revealing whispers of a community shocked, theories spun from thin air, and the heartache left in the wake of unsolved violence.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER EXCERPT

"Authorities Baffled - No Suspects in Horrific Double Homicide"

BACK TO SCENE

A SHADOW seems to pass behind Elias, but he doesn't turn. Instead, he speaks to the empty room, his voice low and resolute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(determined)
I will uncover the truth. Whatever
it takes.

He rewinds the reel, searching for another clue, unaware of the weight of the past that clings to him like a second skin. The library's dim light casts ghostly patterns on the walls, and for a moment, Elias could swear they move, alive with the secrets of a tale yet unfinished.

FADE OUT.

INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

Elias pushes open the door to the office, a bell CHIMING overhead. The room is lined with posters of picturesque homes basking in the sunlight, a stark contrast to the somber man who enters. He pauses for a moment, scanning the room before his eyes settle on a woman sitting behind a polished mahogany desk.

ANGLE ON EVELYN CHAMBERS

She looks up from her paperwork, her keen eyes instantly locking onto Elias. A practiced smile curls at the edges of her lips as she stands to greet him.

EVELYN
Mr. Montgomery, what a surprise.
What brings you back here?

Elias steps forward, his every movement measured.

ELIAS
I need to talk to you about the
house. The Hawthornes' house.

Evelyn's expression shifts, a flicker of something unreadable crossing her features.

EVELYN
Please, have a seat.

She gestures towards a pair of chairs in front of her desk. Elias complies, the leather creaking under his weight. Evelyn returns to her seat, folding her hands neatly on the desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVELYN (CONT'D)
What is it that you'd like to know?

ELIAS
(leaning forward)
Everything. I want to know everything about Alice and William Hawthorne.

Evelyn studies him for a moment, then nods.

EVELYN
They were a young couple, full of life and dreams for the future. It was heartbreaking, what happened to them...

Her voice trails off, and she casts her gaze downward.

ELIAS
(intently)
And what did happen, exactly?

Evelyn sighs, her professional façade giving way to a hint of sorrow.

EVELYN
It was brutal. Unspeakable, really. They were found murdered in their own home—your home—about a year ago.

Elias's fist clenches involuntarily, but he keeps his face composed.

ELIAS
Do they have any family? Anyone who would want to harm them?

Evelyn shakes her head slowly.

EVELYN
Not that anyone could tell. They were well-liked in the community. No enemies to speak of. But there were rumors...

Elias leans in closer, his eyes searching hers.

ELIAS
Rumors?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVELYN

(hesitant)

There were whispers about the house being... troubled. Some say it's cursed, that it brings misfortune to its inhabitants.

Elias's brow furrows, processing this new information.

ELIAS

Cursed?

EVELYN

Just local superstition, I'm sure. But after what happened to the Hawthornes... People talk.

Elias absorbs her words, a storm brewing in his haunted blue eyes.

ELIAS

(resolute)

I don't believe in curses. There has to be more to it than just bad luck.

Evelyn nods, acknowledging his determination.

EVELYN

Perhaps you're right. If you're looking for answers, Mr. Montgomery, I admire your resolve. Just be careful. Some doors, once opened, can never be closed again.

The air in the room seems to grow heavier, the silence between them laden with unspoken warnings.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

(a gentle admonition)

Be wary of the past, Elias. It has a way of clinging to the present.

Elias rises from his chair, his figure casting a long shadow across the floor.

ELIAS

Thank you, Ms. Chambers. I'll take heed of your advice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He turns to leave, his footsteps echoing in the quiet office. Evelyn watches him go, a mix of concern and curiosity etched into her features.

CUT TO:

EXT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Elias exits the building, stepping out into the daylight. He pauses, taking a deep breath as if bracing himself against an unseen adversary. With a determined set to his jaw, he begins to walk down the street, the weight of his quest settling heavily upon his shoulders.

FADE OUT.

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Elias stands in the center of the living room, the house's eerie silence enveloping him like a shroud. He runs his fingers across an old photograph frame on the mantelpiece, dust motes swirling in the dim light.

Suddenly, a SOFT THUD upstairs breaks the stillness. Elias snaps to attention, his haunted blue eyes narrowing as he scans the ceiling above.

ELIAS
(murmuring to
himself)
What now?

He ascends the creaking staircase, each step deliberate and cautious. The air grows colder with each passing moment, a chill that seems to seep into his bones.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hallway is suffused with shadows, the only illumination coming from the moonlight spilling through a cracked window. Elias moves forward, his breath visible in the frigid air.

A PICTURE FRAME suddenly falls off the wall with a CRASH, glass shattering on the wooden floor. Elias flinches, but doesn't retreat.

ELIAS
(under his breath)
That's not just bad luck...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He kneels, picking up a photograph from the debris: Alice and William Hawthorne, smiling, forever frozen in time. Elias's grip tightens around the picture, his expression a mix of pain and resolve.

A WHISPERING sound begins to fill the space, growing louder, a cacophony of indistinct voices. Elias turns in circles, trying to locate the source.

ELIAS
(raising his voice)
Who's there? What do you want?

No answer comes, only the echo of his own voice against the walls. Then, as quickly as it began, the whispering stops, leaving a heavy silence in its wake.

INT. ALICE AND WILLIAM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elias cautiously enters the bedroom, the atmosphere thick with the remnants of lives once lived. A MUSIC BOX on the dresser inexplicably begins to play, a haunting melody that pierces the quiet.

ELIAS
(fascinated,
disturbed)
Alice? William?

He approaches the music box, watching it wind down until the music dies away. A drawer in the dresser CREAKS open by itself, revealing a cluster of mementos and letters tied with ribbon.

Elias hesitates before reaching out, his hand trembling slightly as he touches the ribbon. As if compelled by a force beyond his control, he unties it and starts to sift through the contents.

The room temperature drops further, BREATH visibly puffing from Elias's mouth. He pulls his coat tighter around him, his resolve hardening.

ELIAS
(determined)
I'll find out what happened here.
I owe you both that much.

A LOUD BANG echoes from downstairs, startling Elias. He stuffs the letters into his pocket and rushes out of the room.

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

As Elias descends the stairs two at a time, a SHADOWY FIGURE passes by the bottom of the staircase. Elias catches only a glimpse before it vanishes.

ELIAS
(stopping,
breathless)
I'm not imagining this...

He reaches the base of the stairs, scanning the darkened rooms. His eyes are wide, aware that the house holds more secrets than he anticipated.

EXT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Standing outside, Elias looks back at the ominous structure, its windows like darkened eyes staring back at him. He clenches his fists, steeling himself for the challenges ahead.

ELIAS
(to himself)
I will uncover the truth... no
matter what it takes.

He turns away from the house, the weight of his quest even heavier upon him. But Elias Montgomery is not a man to shy away from the darkness, and this night has only deepened his thirst for answers.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. VILLAGE HARDWARE STORE - DAY

A bell CHIMES as the door swings open, and ELIAS MONTGOMERY steps into the cramped, dusty interior of the local hardware store. His haunted blue eyes scan the aisles before settling on a burly figure rummaging through a bin of nails.

ELIAS
(approaching
cautiously)
Tobias Harding?

The man straightens up, his stocky frame casting a shadow over Elias. He turns, revealing a face weathered by years of labor, his blonde hair tousled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOBIAS
(eyes narrowing)
That's me. And you are?

ELIAS
Elias Montgomery. I recently
bought the Hawthorne place.

A flicker of recognition crosses Tobias's face, followed
by a guarded expression.

TOBIAS
Ah, the old Hawthorne house. What
can I do for you, Mr. Montgomery?

ELIAS
I need some help. Strange things
have been happening since I moved
in. I was hoping you might shed
some light on the house... and its
past occupants.

TOBIAS
(skeptical)
Strange things?

ELIAS
Things moving on their own, sounds
with no source. The air is thick
with something unspoken. You
worked for the Hawthornes. Did
they ever mention anything...
unusual?

Tobias sets down a nail, wiping his hands on his jeans.
He hesitates, then seems to make a decision.

TOBIAS
(reluctant)
Alice mentioned feeling uneasy at
times. Cold drafts, missing items.
William thought it was just the
wind and her forgetfulness.

ELIAS
(intense)
It's not just the wind. I can feel
them—Alice and William. It's like
they're still there, trying to
tell me something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOBIAS

(raising an eyebrow)
You want to know about the
Hawthornes? Fine. But if we're
digging up the past, we do it my
way—carefully and with respect.
They were good people.

ELIAS

(nodding)
Agreed. I just want answers,
Tobias. And maybe... redemption.

TOBIAS

(softening slightly)
Alright, Montgomery. After work,
I'll come by. But prepare
yourself. That house holds more
than just memories.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - DUSK

The setting sun casts long shadows across the decaying
facade of the Hawthorne house as Tobias's truck pulls up.
Elias stands waiting, a silhouette against the fading
light.

TOBIAS

(climbing out)
So, where do we start?

ELIAS

There's a room upstairs. It's
where it all seems to center.

They enter the house together, the door CREAKING shut
behind them.

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - UPSTAIRS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dim, lit only by the dying sunlight filtering
through dirty windows. Tobias examines the walls, his
hands tracing over old scars in the wood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOBIAS

(pondering)

They planned to renovate this place. Start fresh. Never got the chance...

ELIAS

(urgent)

They left clues, Tobias. We just need to find them.

A LOUD THUD from the hallway causes both men to freeze. They exchange a glance before Elias steels himself and moves toward the sound.

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Elias and Tobias emerge into the hallway. A picture frame lies broken on the floor, its glass shattered. Elias bends down, picking up the photograph—it's Alice and William, arms around each other, smiling.

TOBIAS

(shaken)

That picture was secure when I last came here... before the murders.

ELIAS

(holding the photo)

They're reaching out, through the veil. There's so much sorrow here.

TOBIAS

(determined)

Let's find what they want us to see.

Together, they begin a meticulous search, moving through the house's shadowed corners, driven by the urgency of the unseen.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

A sliver of moonlight casts ghostly shadows in the neglected corridor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias's eyes, reflecting a fierce resolve, scan the walls. Tobias follows closely, his breaths audible in the hush.

ELIAS
(whispering)
Do you feel that?

Tobias nods, eyes wide as he senses the shift in the air—a chill that sinks into their bones.

TOBIAS
Like we're not alone...

Elias moves to a wall panel, running his fingers along the edges. His movements are precise, deliberate. He presses against the wood; it gives way with a soft click.

A hidden latch releases, and the panel swings open silently on well-oiled hinges, revealing darkness within.

ELIAS
(into the void)
Alice? William?

No answer but the echo of his own voice.

TOBIAS
(flicking on a
flashlight)
After you.

INT. HIDDEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The beam from Tobias's flashlight cuts through the blackness, illuminating a small, dust-choked space. Elias steps inside, his tall frame nearly filling the doorway.

The room is a time capsule: a vanity with brushes and combs, a faded dress hanging limply from a hook, shelves lined with gardening books, and an easel with a half-finished painting.

TOBIAS
(awestruck)
It's like she just stepped out...

Elias approaches the vanity, eyes drawn to a leather-bound diary nestled among the trinkets. He hesitates before picking it up, a reverence in his touch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS

(softly)

Her words... Maybe they hold the answers.

He opens the diary to a random page, Tobias peering over his shoulder. The words penned in Alice's graceful hand reveal a life intertwined with love and apprehension.

ALICE (V.O.)

"William's melodies fill the house, a balm for my restless heart. Yet, I fear the shadows that linger at our door..."

Elias turns the page, the narrative unfolding with each entry—the joy of shared dreams, the specter of a lurking dread.

TOBIAS

(murmuring)

They were happy here... once.

ELIAS

(voice breaking)

And I took it all away.

The guilt washes over him anew, the haunting blue of his eyes darkening with the weight of remembrance.

TOBIAS

(handing him a photograph)

Look, it's them... in the garden.

The photograph captures Alice, radiant with auburn hair and green eyes aglow, beside William, whose warm smile fails to reach his thoughtful gaze behind glasses.

ELIAS

(clutching the photo)

This was their sanctuary.

A beat passes. The silence of the room enfolds them—a mausoleum of memories held captive by time.

TOBIAS

(resolute)

We have to piece it together, Elias. For them.

Elias nods, closing the diary with care. He looks up, resolve hardening in his haunted eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIAS
(determined)
We will. It starts with her story.
Her truth.

Together, they stand surrounded by the remnants of a life cut tragically short, bound by a quest that tethers the living to the silent pleas of the dead.

FADE OUT.

INT. LOCAL LIBRARY - DAY

Elias, somber and resolute, stands before a microfilm reader, the dim light reflecting off his haunted eyes. He scrolls through old newspaper articles, each headline a whisper from the past.

INSERT: A grainy black and white photo of Alice and William, smiling, frozen in happier times under the headline "Local Couple Found Murdered in Home."

Elias clenches his jaw, the image seared into his conscience.

ELIAS
(muttering to
himself)
What happened to you?

He prints out the article, the printer's hum a lonely counterpoint to the silence around him.

EXT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Elias approaches a neighboring house. His knock is firm but hesitant. The door creaks open, revealing an ELDERLY NEIGHBOR, her eyes wary yet curious.

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
Yes?

ELIAS
I'm Elias Montgomery. I just moved
into the Hawthornes' place.

The neighbor's demeanor softens, a flicker of sadness crossing her face.

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
Oh, dear. Come in, come in.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

They sit across from each other, Elias attentive, the woman nursing a cup of tea.

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
Alice was such a sweet girl. And William... he had a way with music. Could make a piano sing like an angel.

ELIAS
Did you ever notice anything... unusual? Before it happened?

The neighbor hesitates, glancing towards the window that peers into the Hawthorne property.

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
Well, there were arguments. Loud ones. We all thought it was just the stress of their work. They seemed so in love...

Elias absorbs her words, his mind racing with possibilities.

ELIAS
What kind of arguments?

ELDERLY NEIGHBOR
(shrugging)
Normal couple things, I suppose. But once, I saw Alice. She was in the garden, crying. When I asked her about it the next day, she just smiled and said everything was fine.

Elias nods, jotting down notes in a worn journal.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOCAL PUB - EVENING

Elias sits with the BARTENDER, a middle-aged man with a gruff exterior but kind eyes.

BARTENDER
Yeah, they used to come in here together. Good people. Shame what happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS

Did they ever mention any
problems? Any enemies?

The bartender wipes a glass, contemplating.

BARTENDER

Not enemies, no. But Alice, she
was worried 'bout something. Kept
it close, though. William tried to
keep her spirits up.

Elias leans in, eager for every scrap of information.

ELIAS

Worried about what?

BARTENDER

(sighing)

Don't know. She mentioned getting
strange phone calls now and then.
Hang-ups mostly. Spooked her
something good.

Elias's expression darkens, the pieces of a grim puzzle
assembling in his thoughts.

FADE OUT.

INT. NEGLECTED HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Elias stands in the dimly lit parlor, surrounded by the
fragmented remnants of Alice and William's life together.
Dust motes dance in the moonlight that seeps through the
cracked windowpane, casting long shadows over his gaunt
face. He is sifting through a box of mementos when his
hand freezes on a yellowed envelope.

ELIAS

(whispering)

What's this?

He carefully opens the envelope, pulling out a folded
sheet of stationery. His eyes scan the handwriting, and
his breath catches in his throat. The letter is addressed
to him - Elias Montgomery.

INSERT: The letter, with elegant cursive writing that
reads, "Elias, I know what you've done."

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CONTINUED:

Elias's hand trembles as he turns the paper over, revealing a confession written in his own distinct scrawl. A flood of memories crashes over him like a tidal wave, each one more horrifying than the last.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - VARIOUS

- A heated argument between Elias and William, their faces contorted in rage.
- Alice's tear-streaked face as she begs Elias to stop.
- The flash of a blade, the spatter of blood, the dull thud of bodies hitting the floor.

BACK TO PRESENT

ELIAS
(to himself)
No... It can't be.

Elias stumbles backward, his back hitting the wall. He slides down to the floor, clutching the letter to his chest.

ELIAS
(voice cracking)
I killed them...

The weight of his revelation crushes him, and he sobs uncontrollably, his body wracked with guilt.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEGLECTED HAWTHORNE HOUSE - MORNING

Tobias arrives at the house, his tools clanking in his sturdy toolbox. He notices Elias's car parked askew and frowns.

TOBIAS
(callously)
Elias, what in the world?

INT. NEGLECTED HAWTHORNE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tobias steps into the parlor, finding Elias still slumped against the wall, the incriminating letter clutched in his hands.

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CONTINUED:

TOBIAS
(concerned)
Elias? What happened here?

Elias looks up, his eyes hollow, his face pale.

ELIAS
(barely audible)
Tobias... I remember.

TOBIAS
Remember what? You're not making
any sense.

Elias gathers the shredded remains of his composure and
hands Tobias the letter, his hand shaking.

TOBIAS
(reading aloud)
"Forgive me for what I must do..."
Elias, what is this?

ELIAS
It was me, Tobias. The one who
took their lives. It wasn't some
intruder, it wasn't an accident.
It was me.

Tobias stares at Elias, disbelief etching his features
into a mask of confusion and shock. He drops the letter
as if it's been seared by fire.

TOBIAS
(recoiling)
That can't be. You're not a
killer, Elias. This is some sick
joke.

Elias shakes his head, tears streaming down his face.

ELIAS
(frantic)
No joke! These hands... they did
it. My mind hid it away, locked it
deep inside, but it was me all
along!

TOBIAS
(struggling)
But why? Why would you do
something like that?

Elias buries his face in his hands, the darkness within
him spilling out in choked gasps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIAS
(suffocating)
I don't know! I can't remember
why!

Tobias paces the room, his mind racing to reconcile the Elias he knew with the monstrous truth laid bare before him.

TOBIAS
(fighting anger)
I've got to turn you in, Elias.
You understand that, right?

Elias nods, resignation setting in.

ELIAS
(whispers)
I know. Do what you must.

Tobias looks at Elias, torn between duty and compassion for the man he thought he knew. As silence fills the space between them, both men are engulfed by the enormity of the betrayal.

FADE OUT.

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - DAY

Elias, his face a mask of grief and resolve, stands in the center of the dilapidated living room. Dust motes dance in the shafts of light piercing through the boarded windows. He surveys the wreckage around him: peeling wallpaper, a collapsed armchair, a faded rug. He clenches his jaw, the decision etched into the hard lines of his face.

ELIAS
(to himself)
I owe them this much. This house
will be reborn.

He pulls the heavy drapes aside, letting sunlight flood the room. The stark light reveals the true extent of neglect, but also the ghostly beauty of what once was. Elias walks to the mantle where a black and white photograph of Alice and William sits among the cobwebs.

CLOSE ON
PHOTOGRAPH:

Alice and William stand arm in arm, their smiles frozen in time, unaware of the tragedy that awaits them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias reaches out, fingers trembling as they brush the glass.

ELIAS
(whispering)
For you, Alice. For you, William.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Elias exits the house, determination propelling his stride. He heads to the shed at the back of the property. Inside, tools hang from rusty hooks on the wall. He selects a hammer with a worn handle, its weight familiar in his grip.

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

With forceful swings, Elias tears down the boards covering the window. Each plank falls with a thud, stirring up clouds of dust until light streams unobstructed into the room.

ELIAS
(breathing heavily)
Let there be light again.

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Elias stands in the once warm kitchen, now cold and abandoned. He opens drawers, finding rusted utensils and forgotten recipes. A pang of guilt hits as he envisions Alice baking in this space.

ELIAS
(softly)
This was your sanctuary, wasn't it, Alice?

He touches the countertop, leaving a clean streak on the dirty surface. Elias's eyes are resolute.

ELIAS
I'll make it right.

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - WILLIAM'S STUDY - LATER

Surrounded by books and scattered papers, Elias finds a record player covered with a cloth. He lifts it, revealing the dusty vinyl beneath. His fingers caress the edges of the records, each one a memory of melodies that filled the air.

ELIAS
(closing his eyes)
William, your music will play here
once more.

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Elias works tirelessly, sweat staining his shirt. He plasters walls, sands floors, and paints ceilings. Each stroke is an act of penance, each nail hammered a step towards redemption.

ELIAS
(to himself)
Every inch restored, every corner
cleansed.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elias stands on a ladder, his hands steady as he applies a fresh coat of paint to the ceiling. The room is filled with the sound of his rhythmic strokes, a stark contrast to the silence that envelops the house.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON Elias's face, beads of perspiration trickling down his forehead. He's focused, almost in a trance, when a faint giggling echoes through the room. He pauses, paintbrush in mid-air.

ELIAS
(whispering)
Alice?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The temperature drops suddenly, his breath visible in the air. A soft hum begins to resonate, a familiar lullaby that spirals around him like an ethereal caress.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON the far corner of the room where the shadows deepen unnaturally. Two figures slowly emerge: ALICE, her bright eyes piercing through the dimness, and WILLIAM, standing protectively beside her.

ELIAS
(stammering)
What do you want from me?

Alice steps forward, her lips moving silently. Her expression is one of sorrow mixed with urgency. William remains still, his gaze heavy with an unspoken message.

ELIAS
(frustrated)
I can't understand!

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE-UP on Elias's hand as it trembles, the paintbrush falling to the floor with a clatter. The music box melody grows louder, drowning out his pounding heart.

ELIAS
(yelling)
Speak to me!

The apparitions flicker like old film, their outlines blurring. Alice reaches out, her fingers almost touching Elias before they vanish completely. The melody stops abruptly, plunging the room back into silence.

Elias climbs down the ladder, his movements jerky with fear and confusion. He scans the room, searching for any sign of the couple.

ELIAS
(breathing hard)
This house... What secrets are you
hiding?

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - WILLIAM'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Elias enters, his eyes scanning the bookshelves. He pulls out volumes at random, flipping through pages, searching for answers. A gust of wind blows through the room, sending papers swirling around him.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Look deeper...

Elias whirls around, but no one is there. His gaze falls upon a book left open on the desk. Its pages ruffle as if inviting him to read.

ELIAS

(to himself)

"Look deeper"...

He approaches the desk, his hands hovering over the pages. The words blur before his eyes, coalescing into an image of William, pen in hand, writing fervently.

ELIAS

(awestruck)

You're trying to tell me
something...

CUT TO:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Elias paces, his mind racing. Every so often, he glances over his shoulder, half-expecting to see the couple once more. He stops abruptly, a realization dawning on him.

ELIAS

(muttering)

Their lives, their love, this
house... It's all connected.

He looks around at the walls he's been repairing, the floors he's sanded, each inch infused with history and emotion.

ELIAS

(determined)

I'll uncover the truth. For you,
Alice... for you, William. For us
all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The wind howls outside, rattling the newly installed windows, as if affirming his resolve.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - ALICE'S SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Elias stands in a hidden room, wallpaper peeling like old wounds, dust motes dancing in the beam of his flashlight. A sense of trespassing washes over him, the air thick with secrets and sorrow.

His hand trembles as he reaches for a leather-bound diary resting atop an antique writing desk, its pages yellowed with age.

ELIAS
(whispering)
Alice...

He flips through the diary, each page fluttering like a fragile heart, until his eyes catch on a date, the writing more erratic than the rest.

INSERT - DIARY ENTRY

"Today marks a new beginning, not just for me and William but for the tiny heartbeat that's now part of our world."

BACK TO SCENE

Elias' breath catches, the words reverberating through the silent room. His vision blurs, tears threatening to spill over.

ELIAS
(suffocating whisper)
Oh God... Alice, you were carrying
new life?

A shadow flits past the window, or perhaps it's just the relentless wind. Elias looks up, his haunted blue eyes searching for a sign, any sign.

A faint scent of lavender wafts through the air, Alice's perfume mingling with the mustiness, bridging the gap between the living and the dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(to the empty room)
I never knew... I couldn't have
known...

PAN AROUND ROOM

The room feels alive with memories, every corner
whispering tales of lost happiness. A rocking chair, a
faded throw rug, dried flowers in a vase—all remnants of
a dream shattered too soon.

Elias runs a hand through his unkempt hair, agony etched
into the lines of his face.

ELIAS
(fighting back
emotion)
But I'm here now. And I'll make
this right, somehow.

The silence stretches, oppressive, until a low creak
echoes from the hallway, as if the house itself is
responding to his vow.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Elias steps outside, breathing in the cool night air. He
gazes up at the stars, finding no solace in their distant
glow.

ELIAS
(to the universe)
Forgive me.

The wind whispers through the trees, carrying with it the
echoes of a past that refuses to stay buried.

FADE OUT.

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - ELIAS'S STUDY - NIGHT

A single desk lamp casts a pool of light on the worn
surface where Elias sits, a pile of crumpled papers
before him. His hands tremble as he unfolds one, his eyes
skimming the words scrawled in his own handwriting.

INSERT: A letter, the ink smudged with age, reads, "I
can't escape what I've done."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(muttering to
himself)
No more running...

He pushes the papers away, frustration evident in every move. He rises and paces the room like a caged animal, each step heavy with purpose and pain.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - VARIOUS

- Elias at a bar, downing shots, his face a mask of self-loathing.
- Alice's caring smile, offering comfort where none should be given.
- William's hand extended in friendship, unaware of the darkness within Elias.

BACK TO SCENE

Elias stops pacing, his reflection in the window a ghostly specter. He touches the cold glass, tracing the outlines of his own haunted expression.

ELIAS
(whispering)
Why did you trust me?

The room seems to close in on him, the shadows dancing menacingly as if mocking his torment. Elias turns from the window, his gaze falling on a picture of Alice and William, happiness radiating from their faces.

ELIAS
(to the picture)
You opened your home... your
hearts...

He clutches the frame, his body wracked with sobs that have been pent up for far too long.

ELIAS
(choking on his
words)
I was lost... drowning in my own
misery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat of silence hangs heavy as Elias lowers himself into the chair, defeated. He lets out a shuddering breath, the dam of his emotions finally breaking.

ELIAS
(almost a whisper)
And I dragged you down with me.

He sets the picture back onto the table with a gentleness that belies his inner turmoil.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - ALICE AND WILLIAM'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
(PAST)

Alice and William sit together on the couch, laughing softly over a shared secret. Elias stands in the doorway, unseen, a storm of jealousy and rage brewing in his eyes.

BACK TO SCENE

Elias buries his face in his hands, the weight of his sins crushing him.

ELIAS
(tormented)
I couldn't bear it... your joy was
a reminder...

A shadow shifts across the wall, though no source can be seen. Elias looks up, his breath hitching in his throat.

ELIAS
(pleading with the
darkness)
Tell me how to undo this!

Silence is his only answer, the oppressive stillness of the house suffocating.

ELIAS
(defiantly)
I'll spend my life trying to make
it right!

He stands abruptly, knocking the chair over in a sudden burst of energy. The sound reverberates through the empty house, a testament to his resolve.

ELIAS
(resolute)
I owe you both that much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The wind picks up outside, rattling the windows as if in acknowledgment.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ELIAS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elias sits hunched over a small desk, the dim light from an antique lamp casting deep shadows across his face. A thick layer of dust coats the room, disturbed only by the flurry of his movements as he pores over Alice Hawthorne's diary, her looping handwriting a stark contrast to the starkness around him.

CUT TO:

A page in the diary filled with loving words about William. Elias traces a finger over the words, his touch almost reverent.

ELIAS
(voice breaking)
Alice...

He slams the diary shut, the sound echoing like a gunshot through the silent house. Elias pushes back from the desk, pacing the room like a caged animal.

ELIAS
(agitated)
What do you want from me?

The wind howls outside, rattling the window panes. Elias glances toward the window, his eyes searching the darkness for an answer that doesn't come.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Elias stalks down the hallway, fists clenched at his sides. He stops in front of a mirror, staring at his own reflection with a mix of anger and despair.

ELIAS
(muttering to
himself)
Is this what you see? Is this who
I am now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The reflection wavers, a trick of the light making his features morph momentarily into something unrecognizable. Elias recoils, horror etched on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He finds himself standing before the fireplace, where photos of Alice and William smile down at him from the mantel. Elias reaches out but then retracts his hand, unable to make contact.

ELIAS
(pleadingly)
I can't bring you back. I can't...

His voice trails off as the temperature in the room drops, a chill setting into his bones. Elias wraps his arms around himself, seeking warmth that isn't there.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A single bulb flickers above as Elias sits at the kitchen table, head bowed. He's surrounded by stacks of old newspapers, articles about the murders highlighted in yellow.

ELIAS
(to himself)
Every detail... every word... it's
my penance.

He grabs an article, reading aloud the gruesome details, each word a self-inflicted wound.

ELIAS
(struggling)
"Tragic end for local couple"...

The lights flicker again, creating a strobe effect that gives the impression of movement in the corners of the room. Elias looks up, scanning the shadows.

ELIAS
(defensive)
I'm trying to fix this!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Silence greets him once more, the oppressive stillness settling over him like a shroud.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ALICE'S ART STUDIO - LATER

Canvases are strewn about, half-finished paintings that will never be completed. Elias touches a brushstroke, his fingertips coming away with dried paint, a tangible reminder of the life that once thrived here.

ELIAS
(whispering)
I feel your loss... it's devouring
me.

A PAINTING of a serene landscape suddenly SWAYS against the wall, though no breeze is present. Elias watches, transfixed, as the image seems to mock him with its tranquility.

ELIAS
(angrily)
Stop it! Stop haunting me!

He lashes out, sending the painting crashing to the floor. The canvas rips, a jagged tear across the peaceful scene.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ELIAS'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Elias lies curled on the bed, the first light of dawn casting a soft glow over the room. His eyes are open but unseeing, lost in the depths of his guilt.

ELIAS
(barely audible)
Alice... William...

Tears track down his cheeks, the salt a bitter testament to his sorrow.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Elias grabs his jacket from the weathered coatrack, its wood groaning with age. In the dim light, his face is etched with resolve.

ELIAS
(muttering to
himself)
I can't do this anymore.

He strides towards the front door, but as his hand touches the knob, a chilling GALE rushes through the hallway, extinguishing every candle in its wake.

ELIAS
(frustrated)
No. Not now!

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The windows rattle violently as if protesting Elias's decision. He glances around, the shadows seeming to dance and sneer at his desperation.

ELIAS
(shouting)
Let me leave! I don't deserve your
forgiveness!

A low WHISPER fills the room, indistinct yet insistent. Elias clamps his hands over his ears, collapsing onto an old Victorian sofa.

ELIAS
(pleading)
Please... I can't bear it...

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elias shuffles into the room, his movements heavy. The chandelier above SWINGS ominously, its crystals clinking like mocking laughter.

ELIAS
(to the emptiness)
What do you want from me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His gaze falls upon the dining table where a FAMILY PHOTO of Alice and William stands, their smiles frozen in time. Elias reaches out but hesitates, unable to touch the frame.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ALICE'S ART STUDIO - NIGHT

Surrounded by Alice's abandoned artwork, Elias sinks to the floor amidst the scattered brushes and paint tubes. His breath comes in ragged gasps as he confronts the palpable presence of the couple.

ELIAS
(tearfully)
I'm trying to honor you... to make
things right.

A PAINTING on the easel begins to ROCK back and forth gently. Elias watches, transfixed, as if receiving a silent message from beyond.

ELIAS
(defiantly)
Fine. I'll stay. I'll finish what
I started.

He wipes away tears, steeling himself against the sorrow that threatens to consume him.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - WILLIAM'S STUDY - NIGHT

Elias stands in the center of the room, surrounded by books and mementos of a life once lived. A sense of determination washes over him as he picks up a CARPENTRY BOOK, its pages holding the secrets to restoring the house.

ELIAS
(determined)
For you, Alice. For you, William.
Your home will be reborn.

He runs a hand along the mahogany desk, the wood warm under his touch, as if acknowledging his renewed commitment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elias stands before a CRACKED MIRROR, his haunted gaze reflected back at him in shattered fragments. The silence of the room amplifies the SCREAMING SILENCE from within.

ELIAS
(whispers to himself)
This is where it ends... with me.

He turns away, unable to bear his own fractured image, and finds solace in the shadows that cling to the corners of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

A long corridor stretches out ahead, each step Elias takes echoes like a heartbeat. The house GROANS around him, its very structure a testament to the past that ensnares him.

ELIAS
(stops, breathless)
Why did I come here?

His voice quivers, filled with doubt and fear as he gazes upon the VICTORIAN PORTRAITS staring down from the walls.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elias collapses onto the antique sofa, hands trembling as they rake through his unkempt hair. He catches sight of an old PHOTOGRAPHIC CAMERA on the mantelpiece, its lens pointing accusingly at him.

ELIAS
(sobbing)
No more pictures... no more
memories...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An eerie WHISPER fills the air, though its source remains unseen. Elias's eyes dart around the room, searching for the presence he feels lurking just out of sight.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is bathed in MOONLIGHT streaming through a cracked window. Elias leans against the sink, staring at the rusted faucet as if it holds answers.

Suddenly, the faucet CREAKS and WATER begins to drip, each drop resounding like a judgment. Elias clenches his fists, anger mingling with despair.

ELIAS
(angrily)
I wanted to forget!

He slams his hand down on the counter, pain flaring up his arm, a physical echo of his inner torment.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Descending the CREAKY STAIRCASE into the darkness, Elias's flashlight beam cuts through the thick dust hanging in the air. He stops at a WORKBENCH cluttered with tools and half-finished projects.

An unfinished WOODEN CRIB sits ominously in the corner, its bars casting twisted shadows. Elias's face contorts as he approaches it, his heart heavy with the realization of what could have been.

ELIAS
(chokes out)
A child... a future...

He sinks to his knees, overcome by the weight of his sins. His body shakes as he confronts the full extent of his actions.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ALICE'S ART STUDIO - NIGHT
(CONTINUOUS)

Elias returns to the art studio, now shrouded in darkness. He huddles on the floor, surrounded by the tangible remnants of a life he stole.

ELIAS
(tear-stricken)
I can't escape this... Why can't I
escape this?

A gentle BREEZE stirs the air, and the canvas on the easel FLUTTERS as if in response. Elias raises his head, seeking an answer in the silent dialogue of the dead.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - WILLIAM'S STUDY - NIGHT

Elias stands once more amidst the solemnity of books and memories. His eyes fall on a LEATHER-BOUND JOURNAL, its pages edged with wear.

ELIAS
(pleading)
What do you want from me, William?
What can I do?

The journal lies inert, offering no solace to the man tormented by remorse. Elias's reflection stares back at him from the polished wood, a specter of guilt and regret.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

Elias runs his fingers along the spines of aged books, their titles obscured by layers of dust and the passage of time. He pauses, a sense of unease creeping up his spine as he senses something out of place—a volume protruding slightly more than the others.

With deliberate slowness, he reaches for it, drawing the book from its resting place. A CLICK resonates in the heavy silence, and the bookcase SHUDDERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(under his breath)
What have we here?

He steps back as the bookcase swings open, revealing a darkened recess behind it. His heart thrums in his chest, each beat echoing the trepidation and curiosity warring within him.

CUT TO:

INT. HIDDEN COMPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Elias peers inside, his eyes adjusting to the dimness. Dust particles dance in the shafts of light piercing through the cracks. There, nestled against the wall, is an old STEAMER TRUNK, adorned with travel stickers from a bygone era.

With a mixture of reverence and dread, Elias approaches, creaking open the lid. Inside, he finds a treasure trove of correspondence—letters bound by faded ribbons, their edges worn by loving hands.

He picks up a letter, the elegant script of Alice Hawthorne beckoning him to read.

ALICE (V.O.)
My dearest William...

The words spill across the page, love and longing interwoven in every line. Elias's hands tremble as he absorbs the depth of their connection, the purity of affection that transcends the veil of death.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
My heart, my soul, Alice...

The response from William is just as fervent, a testament to their undying bond. Elias feels like an intruder, trespassing on sacred ground, yet he cannot tear himself away.

ELIAS
(to himself)
I took this from you... I took everything.

The guilt claws at his insides, a monster feeding on the pain of recognition. The letters blur before his eyes as tears threaten to fall.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Elias sits among the scattered letters, their contents laid bare before him. He cradles his head in his hands, the weight of his discovery bearing down on him.

ELIAS
(fighting emotion)
How do I bear this burden? How can
I ever make this right?

He looks around at the silent walls, half-expecting an answer, but there is only the oppressive stillness of the house—a mausoleum to lost love and innocence destroyed.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - DAY

Elias peels back a section of wallpaper, its edges curled and yellowed with age. A hidden crevice in the wall catches his eye—a deliberate cavity obscured by time and neglect.

He reaches in, fingers brushing against an envelope, solitary and sealed. The name "William" is scrawled across the front in a hand Elias recognizes all too well—his own.

ELIAS
(whispers)
What secrets are you hiding?

He hesitates, a mixture of dread and curiosity warring within him. With trembling hands, he tears open the envelope, extracting a single sheet of paper.

The words are few, but they strike with the force of a thunderclap.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Elias, if you are reading this...

Elias's breath catches. His pulse quickens as William's voice echoes in his mind—a phantom recital from beyond the grave.

WILLIAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I know what you've done. And I
forgive you.

A beat of stunned silence hangs in the musty air as Elias processes the impossible message.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Hatred only festers and consumes.
I refuse to let it taint my final
moments.

Elias staggers backward, the letter crumpling in his grasp. He looks around, half-expecting William's specter to materialize before him.

ELIAS
(faltering)
Forgiven? How could you... after
everything?

His voice trails off, lost amidst the creaks and groans of the old house—its walls now heavy with confessions and absolution.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Find peace, Elias. It's not too
late.

Elias slumps down, back against the cold wall. The enormity of William's words washes over him—a cleansing tide amidst the wreckage of his soul.

A glimmer of hope ignites in his chest, faint but stubbornly persistent. Perhaps redemption isn't as unattainable as it seemed.

FADE OUT.

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - DAY

Elias stands amid the ruins of what was once a vibrant home. Dust motes dance in slanted beams of light that pierce through the boarded windows. He rolls up his sleeves, revealing the scars of his past on his forearms—not all of them physical.

He takes a deep breath, the scent of old wood and mildew fills his nostrils, mingling with the newfound hope ignited by William's letter.

ELIAS
(whispering to
himself)
Let's bring some life back into
you.

He strides across the room to a decrepit bookshelf, teeming with forgotten stories and silent memories.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With careful hands, he begins to wipe away the layers of neglect.

CUT TO:

Elias repairing a broken chair. Each stroke of sandpaper is methodical, an act of penance. He pauses, feeling the grain beneath his fingers, imagining William sitting there, lost in a book.

ELIAS
(to the chair)
You'll be good as new. A place of
rest, not just a relic.

The SOUND OF A CREAKING FLOORBOARD echoes through the house. Elias freezes, listening. Silence returns—a silence filled with the whispers of the past.

CUT TO:

Elias standing before a cracked mirror. He examines his reflection—a ghost of the man he once was—then turns away.

He pulls out a can of paint and a brush, ready to cover the scars marring the walls. As he coats the surfaces, each stroke erases a piece of the darkness that clings to the place.

ELIAS
(murmurs)
For Alice and William... and for
peace.

The SOUND OF MUSIC, faint and haunting, drifts through the air. Elias halts, the brush dripping paint onto the drop cloth below. He tilts his head, searching for the source.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
(singing softly)
"Rest now, the long day is
done..."

Elias's eyes water as he lowers the brush, the lullaby resonating with an ache he didn't know he still had.

ELIAS
(almost inaudible)
William...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He gathers himself, shaking off the chill that settled in his bones. There is work to be done—a legacy to uphold.

CUT TO:

Elias patching up a hole in the floor. Even this task is carried out with reverence. Every nail driven home is a step closer to redemption.

ELIAS
(to himself)
I will honor your memory. This
house will stand as a testament to
forgiveness.

The CAMERA PANS OVER Elias's shoulder, showing a glimpse of renovations progressing—one corner at a time.

FADE OUT.

INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Elias, paint-stained and weary, stands in the dimly lit parlor. A chilling WIND HOWLS through the broken windows, the curtains billow like specters in the gloom.

Suddenly, a SOMBRE MELODY seeps from the walls, the ghostly echo of a PIANO. Elias freezes, his pulse quickening. He scans the room, eyes wide with trepidation.

ELIAS
(trembling)
Who's there?

The music crescendos, a plaintive call that wraps around him, binding him to the spot. From the shadows, TWO FIGURES materialize—Alice and William, translucent and ethereal.

ALICE
(voice echoing)
Elias...

WILLIAM
(his tone gentle)
You've come so far...

Elias's breath comes in jagged gulps as he confronts the phantoms before him. His hands shake, the brush falling to the floor with a CLATTER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(voice breaking)
I'm so sorry... I never wanted
this...

Alice drifts closer, her expression one of sorrowful grace. The air around her shimmers with an otherworldly light.

ALICE
(softly)
We know your heart, Elias.

William joins her side, his spectral presence a comforting warmth amidst the cold. He reaches out, though his hand passes through Elias's shoulder like a breeze.

WILLIAM
(forgiving)
Guilt has been your chain. Release
it.

ELIAS
(clutching his chest)
How can I? The pain I caused...

A silence descends, heavy and expectant. Elias drops to his knees, the weight of his remorse grounding him to the earth.

ELIAS
(desperate)
Please, tell me how to make things
right.

Alice kneels down to his level, her gaze piercing the veil between life and death.

ALICE
(whispering)
Live, Elias. Live and remember us
not for our end, but for our love.

Elias lifts his head, tears streaming down his face. He sees in Alice's eyes a reflection of the beauty that once was—and the hope that could be.

WILLIAM
(encouraging)
Your path is one of redemption.
Walk it not in shadow, but in the
light of forgiveness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A wind gusts through the room, sending papers swirling in a vortex of chaos and change. When it stills, the apparitions have vanished.

Elias rises slowly, a newfound resolve steadying his trembling limbs. He looks around at the house, no longer just a structure of wood and stone, but a vessel of atonement.

ELIAS
(determined)
For you, Alice... For you,
William... I will live.

He picks up the fallen brush, his grip firm. With each stroke against the wall, he paints a future—one where the past does not define him but guides him towards healing.

FADE OUT.

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The sun streams through the newly installed windows, casting a warm glow on the polished hardwood floors. Elias stands in the center of the room, his shadow long behind him. The walls, once peeling and discolored, now hold a fresh coat of paint, the color Alice would have chosen—a soft, hopeful blue.

Elias runs his hand over the smooth surface of the mantelpiece, where a vase of freshly cut flowers stands. He breathes in deeply, the scent mingling with the lingering smell of sawdust and paint.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - MONTAGE - VARIOUS

-- Elias working tirelessly through the nights, sanding down banisters.

-- Restoring the intricate crown molding with careful precision.

-- Planting a garden in the style Alice would have loved, full of vibrant blooms.

-- Baking bread in the kitchen, a recipe found in Alice's diary.

BACK TO PRESENT:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias steps to the window, looking out to the garden below, now teeming with life. His face is weathered, but his eyes hold a clarity that wasn't there before.

ELIAS
(to himself)
This is for you... for both of
you.

A breeze stirs the curtains, and for a moment, it's as if he hears Alice's laughter carried on the wind.

SUDDENLY:

A floorboard CREAKS upstairs. Elias freezes, listening intently. The house has been quiet since the apparitions disappeared, yet now that familiar anticipation curls in his gut.

Elias ascends the staircase, each step deliberate, until he reaches the top. The hall is silent, save for the faint whisper of movement behind Alice's old bedroom door.

He pushes it open.

The room is bathed in sunlight, undisturbed. Elias's gaze falls on a small object lying in the center of the wooden floor—a silver locket, one he's never seen before.

He picks it up, thumb running over the delicate engraving: A & W entwined. With trembling fingers, he opens it to find two photos—Alice and William, their smiles frozen in time.

ELIAS
(choked up)
I remember...

A gust of wind sweeps through the room, and the locket slips from his grasp, clattering to the floor.

ELIAS
(startled)
What do you want me to see?

Silence fills the room once more. Elias looks around, seeking an answer that doesn't come. But in that silence, something shifts within him—a release of tension he hadn't realized he'd been holding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIAS

(softly)

I've done what I can to honor your
memory... Can you forgive me?

No voices answer, no spectral figures appear, yet a
warmth envelops him, as comforting as an embrace. It's a
sensation so profound, so full of peace, that tears well
in Elias's eyes.

ELIAS

(relieved)

Thank you.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTORED HOUSE - GARDEN - SUNSET

Elias stands outside, the house looming behind him, its
windows reflecting the fiery hues of twilight. The garden
is a riot of colors, a testament to life continuing,
persisting.

He takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, and whispers to
the fading light.

ELIAS

(quiet conviction)

I'll live. For you, for me, for
all that was lost and found again.

FADE OUT.

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room, once dark and suffocating with secrets, now
breathes with a serene light. Elias stands before Tobias,
his silhouette framed by the gentle glow of the
fireplace. Shadows flicker across his face, mirroring the
play of emotions within.

ELIAS

(voice trembling)

I need to tell you something...
about me, about them.

Tobias's eyes narrow, his body tensing as if bracing for
an impact.

TOBIAS

(suspicious)

What is it? Spit it out, man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias takes a deep breath, his hands clenched at his sides.

ELIAS
I was the one... I killed Alice
and William.

A heavy silence descends. Tobias's expression morphs from confusion to horror, then to a simmering rage.

TOBIAS
(gritty)
How could you?

Elias's eyes drop, his voice barely a whisper.

ELIAS
I don't expect you to understand,
but I lost myself... I couldn't
even remember, until this house...

He gestures to the walls around them, to the life he's breathed back into the structure.

ELIAS
(pleading)
This house, their memory—it
brought me back. And I remember
everything.

Tobias moves forward, fists clenched, but halts as he sees the genuine torment in Elias's eyes.

TOBIAS
(angry, hurt)
You think fixing up some old place
makes up for it?!

Elias shakes his head, tears glistening in the corner of his eyes.

ELIAS
Nothing will. But I'm trying to do
right by them. By you. By this
town.

They stand there, two men grappling with the gravity of confession—anger and grief battling for dominance.

TOBIAS
(reluctant)
You're sick, Elias. You need help.

Elias nods, a broken man seeking solace in truth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIAS

I know. And I am getting help. But first, I want to honor them properly, with everyone here.

Tobias looks away, his chest rising and falling with each labored breath. A long moment passes, tension hanging thick like fog.

TOBIAS

(softening)

If that's what you think they'd want...

ELIAS

(grateful)

It's not just for them. It's for us. So we can all start healing.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTORED HOUSE - BACKYARD - DUSK

A gentle breeze carries whispers of the past as townsfolk gather in the garden. Tobias and Elias stand side by side near a small podium, surrounded by freshly planted flowers and pictures of Alice and William.

Elias steps up, clears his throat, and addresses the somber crowd.

ELIAS

(earnest)

We come together not to forget, but to remember. To celebrate lives taken too soon and to find forgiveness in the face of unfathomable loss.

People nod, eyes wet with unshed tears. Tobias, now calmer, places a supportive hand on Elias's shoulder.

TOBIAS

(firmly)

Alice and William were good people. They deserved better. And today, we honor them.

A wave of murmurs ripples through the crowd, a collective acknowledgment of their shared pain and Tobias's hard-won forgiveness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias unveils a plaque, dedicating the garden to the couple. The setting sun casts a golden hue over the scene, giving the illusion of Alice and William's presence among them.

ELIAS

(softly)

May this be a place of peace. A
sanctuary for their memory, and
ours.

Tobias nods, and together, they step back to join the gathered community in silent reflection, honoring the memory of those lost, and the hope of redemption found.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - ELIAS'S STUDY - MORNING

Sunlight streams through the sheer curtains, casting a soft glow on the freshly painted walls. Elias stands at the center of the room, surrounded by bookshelves filled with literature and artifacts he's collected over the years.

CUT TO:

Elias tracing his fingers over the spines of books, stopping to pull out a dusty tome. He blows off the cover, revealing an old photo album nestled beneath it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: The album opens to reveal photographs of the house in various stages of disrepair, a visual timeline leading up to its current state of grace.

ELIAS

(to himself)

A new chapter begins...

He places the album on the desk and turns towards the window, looking out onto the garden where the memorial took place.

FLASHBACK:

MONTAGE of Elias restoring the house - stripping wallpaper, sanding floors, painting walls - interspersed with images of Alice and William smiling, their laughter echoing in the background.

BACK TO PRESENT:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias takes a deep breath, the weight of his past visibly lifting from his shoulders. He walks to the door but pauses, glancing back at the room that now symbolizes his journey from darkness to light.

ELIAS
(resolute)
This is home.

He exits the study, leaving the door slightly ajar, a symbolic invitation to the future that awaits.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTORED HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Elias steps onto the porch, surveying the property that has been both his crucible and his sanctuary. He sits on the swing, its gentle creak harmonizing with the morning birdsong.

A neighbor, MR. JENKINS, approaches from the sidewalk, tipping his hat.

MR. JENKINS
Morning, Elias! Place looks wonderful.

ELIAS
(nods)
Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. It's been... a process.

MR. JENKINS
Well, the town's grateful for what you've done. Makes us all believe in second chances.

Elias offers a small, genuine smile, the first in a long while.

ELIAS
We all need those, don't we?

MR. JENKINS
Indeed. Take care now.

Mr. Jenkins walks away, leaving Elias alone with his thoughts. The camera slowly pulls back, showing Elias from behind, still on the swing, as he watches the world awaken around him.

FADE OUT.

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

The first light of dawn filters through the windows, casting a warm glow on the newly polished wooden countertops. Elias stands by the stove, the aroma of coffee brewing in the air. He pours himself a cup and leans against the counter, his gaze lost in the steam rising from the mug.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Elias walks down the hallway, fingertips grazing the walls. Each touch seems like a silent conversation with the house itself, an acknowledgment of their shared history.

ELIAS
(whispers)
We've come a long way, haven't we?

He stops before a framed photograph of Alice and William that now hangs amidst other pictures chronicling the house's restoration.

ELIAS
(to the photograph)
Rest easy, you two.

The silence hangs heavy but comforting as if the house itself responds to his presence with a gentle embrace.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - ALICE'S GARDEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sunlight spills over potted plants and herbs lining the windowsill. Elias enters, a sense of reverence in his steps. He touches a blooming rose, its petals vibrant and full of life.

ELIAS
(sighs contentedly)
Alice, your garden lives on.

A breeze stirs, carrying the faintest hint of lullabies and laughter—a distant echo of William's music. Elias closes his eyes, allowing the moment to wash over him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(smiling softly)
And your songs still play, my
friend.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elias sits at the piano, fingers hovering above the keys. He begins to play, notes filling the room with a melody both haunting and hopeful. The music is a bridge between past and present, a tribute to memories and new beginnings.

He stops, head bowed, and whispers to the empty room.

ELIAS
(filled with emotion)
I hope this brings you peace.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS echoes faintly above. Elias looks up sharply, but there's only silence now. His expression is one of understanding rather than fear.

ELIAS
(resolutely)
This is our sanctuary now. All of
us.

He resumes playing, the music swelling in a crescendo that seems to breathe life into the very walls of the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTORED HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Elias walks out into the yard where a small bench rests under an old oak tree. He sits, looking out at the land stretching beyond the garden, a tranquil expanse waiting to be filled with life once more.

ELIAS
(musing to himself)
There's work to be done yet, but
for the first time... it feels
like home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small locket, opening it to reveal a picture of Alice and William. He kisses it gently and places it next to his heart.

FADE OUT.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Elias stands in the midst of a bustling community center, his eyes scanning over the faces around him. He takes a deep breath, steeling himself against the nerves that threaten to unravel his composure.

A WOMAN with kind, weathered features approaches Elias, extending a hand which he takes, shaking it firmly.

WOMAN

Mr. Montgomery, we're so appreciative of you volunteering your time today.

ELIAS

(nods solemnly)

I'm just glad to be here, helping out where I can.

The woman gestures towards a group of VOLUNTEERS setting up chairs for an event.

WOMAN

We're having a support meeting for families dealing with loss. Your... experience with grief might provide some comfort.

Elias looks towards the volunteers, then back at the woman, his expression thoughtful.

ELIAS

(softly)

If my past can serve a purpose, maybe it's to help others find their way through the dark.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - SUPPORT GROUP ROOM - LATER

Elias sits in a circle with a group of PEOPLE, all ages and walks of life, bound by their shared experiences of loss. A middle-aged MAN is sharing his story, his voice faltering.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN
(tearfully)
Every day is a struggle... without
her.

The room falls silent, heavy with empathy. Elias leans forward, his voice gentle but carrying a weight that resonates with everyone present.

ELIAS
(sympathetically)
The pain never truly leaves us...
But somewhere along the line, it
becomes a part of who we are. It
shapes us, molds us into something
new.

The man locks eyes with Elias, a silent understanding passing between them.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(bracingly)
We carry them with us, those we've
lost. In memories, in the lessons
they taught us... in the love that
remains.

A YOUNG WOMAN sitting across from Elias wipes away tears, nodding in agreement.

YOUNG WOMAN
(sniffling)
How do you keep going?

Elias pauses, his gaze drifting to the locket he wears, barely visible beneath his shirt.

ELIAS
(resolute)
One day at a time. We honor them
by living, by reaching out, by
being there for one another.

The woman smiles faintly, a spark of hope flickering in her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - SUNSET

Elias kneels in the soil of a community garden, his hands working methodically to plant new seedlings. The sun casts long shadows, bathing everything in a warm glow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A BOY, no more than ten, watches Elias curiously from the edge of the garden.

BOY
What are you planting?

Elias glances up, a small smile playing on his lips.

ELIAS
Hope.

The boy tilts his head, puzzled.

BOY
How do you plant hope?

Elias pats the ground next to him, inviting the boy to join.

ELIAS
By nurturing life, by believing in tomorrow. Each of these seeds could become something beautiful, given time and care.

The boy nods, slowly understanding, and crouches beside Elias.

BOY
Can I help?

ELIAS
(gratefully)
I'd like that very much.

Together, they work in silence as the sky fades to dusk, the garden a symbol of growth and renewal.

FADE OUT.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALLWAY - EVENING

The walls echo with the muffled sounds of a gathering in the adjacent room. Elias Montgomery walks slowly down the corridor, his hands buried deep in his pockets. His shadow stretches long and thin behind him, mingling with the flickering light from an overhead bulb.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elias enters a room where a small group of locals sits in a circle of folding chairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They turn to look at him as he hesitates at the threshold, their faces a mix of curiosity and warmth. One chair is empty, invitingly set apart for him.

WOMAN IN THE CIRCLE

(nods at the empty
chair)

We saved you a spot, Elias.

Elias nods, almost imperceptibly, and moves towards the circle. He takes his seat, his body language closed off, arms crossed.

MAN IN THE CIRCLE

It's your turn tonight, if you're ready to share.

Elias's eyes lift, meeting the man's gaze. There's a moment of silence before he begins to speak.

ELIAS

(low, halting)

I've spent a lot of time... trying
to fix things that can't be
changed.

His words hang heavy in the air, and the others listen intently, giving him space to continue.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

But I'm starting to understand
that maybe it's not about changing
the past... It's about learning
from it.

A WOMAN with kind eyes leans forward slightly.

KIND-EYED WOMAN

And what have you learned, Elias?

ELIAS

That guilt can consume you whole
if you let it. But finding
forgiveness... that's a different
journey.

A YOUNG MAN shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

YOUNG MAN

Forgiveness? Even for the
unforgivable?

Elias's eyes darken, a storm brewing within them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(voice cracking)
Especially for that. Because
without it, we're just... trapped.
By our own demons.

The group falls silent, contemplating his words. The KIND-EYED WOMAN reaches out, placing her hand over Elias's clenched fists.

KIND-EYED WOMAN
(sincere)
You're not alone in this, Elias.
We all have our demons.

Elias looks around the circle, the faces now familiar, each carrying their own hidden scars. Slowly, his arms unfold, and he places his hands on his knees, palms up – a gesture of openness.

ELIAS
(softly)
Thank you. For listening... and
for helping me see that there
might be light ahead. Even for me.

An unspoken bond forms in the room, as if his words have drawn them closer, knitting their individual struggles into a shared tapestry of hope.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GRIEF COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Elias sits across from MARJORIE, a grief counselor with an empathetic gaze that seems to pierce through his defenses. The office is a sanctuary of calm, decorated with soothing colors and framed certificates of qualification. A soft light filters through sheer curtains, casting gentle shadows across the room.

MARJORIE
(leaning forward)
Elias, tell me about the house...
and how it makes you feel.

ELIAS
(voice barely above a
whisper)
Like I'm standing on the edge of a
cliff. And the ghosts of what I've
done are pushing against my back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Marjorie scribbles something in her notepad, her expression unreadable. She looks up, meeting his eyes with a steady gaze.

MARJORIE

And when you say ghosts, do you mean this literally, or—

ELIAS

(cuts her off)

Both. They haunt me—Alice and William. Their memories, and... the others.

Marjorie nods, encouraging him to continue without judgment.

MARJORIE

It's a heavy burden to carry those memories. But it's also a place where healing can start. You're here, Elias. That's a step.

ELIAS

(fists clenching)

But how do I move past just... steps? When every corner of that house is a reminder?

MARJORIE

By confronting them. Not as reminders of guilt, but as opportunities... for forgiveness.

ELIAS

(bitter laugh)

Forgiveness? I destroyed their lives. How does one forgive that?

MARJORIE

(firmly)

By first forgiving yourself. It's not a switch you flip, Elias. It's a path, winding and treacherous, but possible.

Elias looks away, fighting an internal battle. Marjorie watches him, patient.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

You restored their home, didn't you? That's more than repentance; it's reverence for their memory.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIAS
(gaze returning to
her)
I thought if I could make things
right... maybe then I'd find some
peace.

MARJORIE
Peace comes with acceptance.
Accepting that what's done is
done, and focusing on what you can
control now.

ELIAS
And what's that?

MARJORIE
How you honor their legacy... and
yours.

Elias breathes deeply, each word from Marjorie landing
with the weight of truth.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)
Let's explore this, Elias. Let's
map out this path together.

Elias nods slowly, the storm in his eyes calming to a
drizzle.

ELIAS
(more resolute)
Okay. Let's do that.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD NEGLECTED HOUSE - DUSK

Elias stands before the restored house, its walls no
longer a symbol of decay but of resilience. He touches
the woodwork, tracing the lines as if to absorb its
strength.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
Remember, redemption isn't a
destination, Elias... it's a
journey. And on this journey,
you're not alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias takes a deep breath, letting the words resonate within him, as the house looms silently, its shadows now less menacing, its whispers less chilling.

FADE OUT.

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - ELIAS'S STUDY - NIGHT

Elias sits in the dimly lit study, a sanctuary of mahogany and leather-bound books that smell of age and wisdom. The soft glow of the desk lamp casts long shadows across his face, emphasizing the deep lines etched by years of regret.

He stares at an old photograph of Alice and William Hawthorne, their smiles frozen in time. The silence is thick, punctuated only by the ticking of an antique clock on the mantle.

Elias runs his fingers through his hair, a gesture of frustration and contemplation. He speaks to the room, to the ghosts of his thoughts.

ELIAS
(to himself)
Look at you two... so full of
life. And I...

His voice trails off into the darkness. He leans back in his chair, closing his eyes as he inhales deeply, summoning the courage to confront his past.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - DAY (BEGINNING OF STORY)

A younger Elias stands before the decrepit house, a symbol of his own decay. He looks up at the peeling paint, the broken windows, the untamed garden—each a mirror of his soul's neglect.

FLASHBACK - INT. NEGLECTED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Elias steps inside, dust swirling around him, the air stale with memories not his own. He moves hesitantly, almost reverently, through the remnants of Alice and William's life.

RETURN TO PRESENT:

INT. RESTORED HOUSE - ELIAS'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Elias opens his eyes, the present colliding with the past. He stands up and walks to the window, looking out at the night sky, where stars seem to pierce the darkness with whispers of possibility.

ELIAS
(softly)
I was lost... but this house, your
story... it gave me purpose.

He turns back to the room, his gaze lingering on each restored piece, each corner that once echoed with despair now singing a different tune—one of hope and perseverance.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(murmuring)
I've changed... haven't I?

The question hangs in the air, unanswered. Elias walks to a bookshelf, running his fingers over the spines until he finds Alice's diary. He pulls it out, holding it with a reverence reserved for sacred texts.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(reading aloud to
himself)
"Love is our true destiny. We do
not find the meaning of life by
ourselves alone—we find it with
another."

A tear escapes down his cheek, a silent testament to the transformation within. Elias wipes it away, a small smile playing on his lips.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(almost inaudibly)
Thank you, Alice. Thank you,
William.

He places the diary back on the shelf, a piece of his heart returning to its rightful place among the pages.

Elias returns to his desk, settling into the chair with newfound resolve. He opens a journal, the pages blank and waiting for the words of a man reborn from the ashes of his former self.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(resolutely)
It's time to write a new chapter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he begins to pen his reflections, the room seems to embrace him, the shadows now protectors of his solitude. The house, once filled with horror, now cradles the quiet triumph of one man's journey toward redemption.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. RESTORED VICTORIAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A tempest rages outside, casting intermittent shadows across the room as lightning fractures the sky. Elias sits at an ornate writing desk, the glow from a desk lamp illuminating his intense focus. His hand moves steadily, transcribing thoughts into a journal.

Suddenly, the lights FLICKER and then DIE, plunging the room into darkness. The only light now is the occasional white flash from outside, accompanied by the BOOM of thunder.

Elias remains eerily calm, accustomed to the house's whims.

ELIAS
(to himself)
Not tonight... I've come too far
for this.

He stands, moving purposefully towards the window, peering into the blackness. A figure appears in the garden below—a silhouette illuminated by a lightning strike, gone as quickly as it appeared.

Elias's heart HAMMERS in his chest.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Is this another test?

He dashes to the hallway, retrieving a flashlight from a drawer. He hurries back, shining the beam out the window, but finds nothing but the torrential downpour.

CUT TO:

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Protected by a heavy coat, Elias strides through the muddy ground, flashlight sweeping across the sodden landscape. He spots FOOTPRINTS leading towards the woods, deep imprints that were not there before the storm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(shouting against the
wind)
Who's there? Show yourself!

His voice is SWALLOWED by the storm. No reply.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Elias enters the fringe of the woods, the trees groaning and swaying violently. The flashlight FLICKERS, threatening to leave him blind in the dark embrace of the forest.

ELIAS
(fighting the fear)
I'm not afraid! Not anymore!

The wind HOWLS in response, a gale force that almost knocks him off his feet. He stumbles, catching himself on a gnarled tree trunk.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(suddenly realizing)
You're trying to tell me
something, aren't you?

He fumbles in his pocket, pulling out Alice's DIARY, now protected in a plastic sleeve. Flipping it open to a RANDOM PAGE, he holds the flashlight with his teeth and reads aloud.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(struggling with the
words)
"Sometimes the hardest battles we
fight are the ones that lead us to
our true selves..."

As if on cue, the WIND DIES DOWN, and the rain softens to a drizzle. Elias looks around, the forest now serene, as if it had been waiting for him to uncover this message.

He tucks the diary back into his pocket and turns back towards the house, his determination STEELING with every step. Whatever the challenge, he knows he must face it head-on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS (CONT'D)

(resolute)

This house, these woods, they hold
secrets... but so do I. It's time
to unlock them all.

He strides out of the woods, leaving the whispers of the
past behind, ready for whatever comes next.

FADE OUT.

INT. RENOVATED HAWTHORNE HOUSE - NIGHT

The moonlight casts long, eerie shadows through the newly
installed windows of the Hawthorne house. Elias stands in
the center of the living room, his eyes scanning the
walls where Alice and William's photographs now hang with
care.

Suddenly, a LOUD CRASH echoes from upstairs, followed by
the sound of SCRAPING. Elias' heart races, his breaths
coming out in short bursts. He clutches the flashlight
tightly, its beam trembling as he moves towards the
staircase.

ELIAS

(under his breath)

Face your fears, Elias. You owe
them that much.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Elias ascends the stairs, each step creaking under his
weight. The air grows colder as he approaches the source
of the noise—a door at the end of the hallway, slightly
ajar.

A SHADOW flits across the gap. Elias freezes, his pulse
pounding in his ears. He steels himself and pushes the
door open.

ELIAS

(shouting into the
dark)

I'm not hiding anymore!

The room is silent. He steps inside, sweeping the
flashlight around. It catches on something metallic—a
NAIL sticking out of the floorboards, precisely where the
scraping sound originated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias kneels down, examining the nail. A realization dawns on him. This isn't a threat; it's a sign.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(puzzling it out)
Alice, William... is this what you
want me to see?

He grips the nail and pulls. Beneath it, a folded piece of PARCHMENT. Elias unfolds it with trembling hands, revealing a DRAWING—a detailed sketch of the house surrounded by an array of protective symbols.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Protection. They wanted to protect
this place...

His gaze falls upon a specific symbol, a CIRCLE entwined with a TRIANGLE. He recognizes it from Alice's diary—her symbol for hope.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(sudden clarity)
Hope... That's what I'm fighting
for.

He stands up, imbued with new strength. Elias places the drawing on the wall beside the photos, completing the gallery of memories.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(aloud, to the
spirits)
Alice, William... I remember
everything now. And I won't let
fear rule me any longer.

He closes his eyes, taking a deep breath. When he opens them, the room feels different—warmer. The atmosphere of the whole house has subtly shifted.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(facing the empty
space)
This house was your sanctuary.
Now, it's mine too. We share this
legacy.

Elias hears a gentle SIGH, as if the house itself breathes a sigh of relief. The sense of menace has dissipated, replaced by tranquility.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(grateful)
Thank you.

FADE TO:

INT. RENOVATED HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The first rays of dawn filter through the curtains. Elias stands before the open front door, looking out at the world with fresh eyes. He turns back to the house, a tender smile gracing his lips.

ELIAS
(to the house)
You're not just brick and mortar.
You're a testament to forgiveness
and the enduring human spirit.
Together, we've overcome.

Elias steps outside, closing the door behind him. The morning light embraces him, illuminating his path forward.

FADE OUT.

INT. LOCAL COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Elias Montgomery stands in the middle of a cluttered room, volunteers bustling around him, stacking chairs and arranging tables. The walls are adorned with flyers for support groups and charity events. Elias's hands are steady as he places pamphlets on the tables; each one titled "The Road to Forgiveness" with his contact information at the bottom.

VOLUNTEER #1
(passing by)
Elias, where do you want these
boxes?

ELIAS
(looks up, points)
Over there, by the window. Thank
you.

Volunteer #1 nods and sets down the boxes. Elias wipes his brow and glances around the room, assessing the space.

CLOSE ON ELIAS as he catches sight of an empty bulletin board.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He strides over, removing a rolled-up poster from a tube. Unfurling it, we see a professionally designed advertisement for a workshop hosted by Elias: "Finding Peace After Tragedy."

He pins the poster carefully onto the board. His eyes trace the words, a hint of pride softening the hard lines of his face.

VOLUNTEER #2
(approaching Elias)
Mr. Montgomery? We're all set up
for tonight.

ELIAS
(turns, nods)
Thank you. Let's hope we can help
some people find their way
tonight.

VOLUNTEER #2
(smiling)
I'm sure we will.

The volunteer heads back into the fray. Elias takes a moment, his blue eyes reflecting the flicker of anticipation.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - EVENING

Elias now stands at a podium at the front of the room, which is filled with a small group of attentive faces. A sign-in table by the door holds name tags and more of his pamphlets.

ELIAS
(speaking softly)
Forgiveness... It's not just a
word; it's a journey. One I've
walked myself.

The audience is rapt, hanging on his every word.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(takes a breath)
You may be carrying burdens...
guilt, anger, or sorrow. But
remember, no path is too dark to
find your way back.

A WOMAN in the crowd raises her hand tentatively.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN

How did you find your way back?

ELIAS

(meets her gaze)

By accepting the past, confronting
my demons, and dedicating myself
to acts of restitution.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - NIGHT

Under the moonlit sky, Elias stands outside the restored Hawthorne House. Its windows glow warmly, a beacon in the darkness. He looks up, his silhouette framed by the house's grandeur.

ELIAS

(aloud, to himself)

Alice, William... Your story lives
on through me. Through us.

A sense of calm envelopes Elias as he gazes up at the house that was once a symbol of his darkest moment but now represents his greatest purpose.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ELIAS'S STUDY - NIGHT

Elias sits at the mahogany desk, surrounded by the quiet of ancient books and the soft hum of a floor lamp. His fingers trace the grain of the wood, worn smooth by time and tender restoration.

CLOSE ON: Elias's face, a mask of contemplation. His haunted eyes move to a framed photograph of Alice and William. They smile back, frozen in happier times.

ELIAS

(whispering)

I've walked through fire and
brimstone to get here. To you
both.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Elias walks outside, the night air cool on his skin. Moonlight casts long shadows across the garden that was once Alice's sanctuary.

He kneels beside a flowerbed, his fingers brushing against the delicate petals of the blooms he planted in her memory.

ELIAS
(to the flowers)
"Though nothing can bring back the
hour of splendor in the grass, of
glory in the flower..."

A gentle WIND stirs, as if in response. Elias closes his eyes, breathing in the scent of earth and growth.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elias stands before the piano where William would have played his lullabies. He lifts the lid, revealing ivory keys untouched for too long.

His hands hover above them, hesitant. Then, with a resolve, he presses down, filling the room with a simple melody. The notes are tentative at first but grow more confident, more poignant.

ELIAS
(singing softly)
"Sleep, my child, and peace attend
thee, all through the night..."

The song fades away, leaving only the echo of redemption in its wake.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - WILLIAM'S LIBRARY - LATER

Elias pulls a book from the shelf, the leather-bound spine well-loved. He flips through the pages until he finds a passage marked by a dried rose.

ELIAS
(reading aloud)
"Love is not love which alters
when it alteration finds..."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks up from the page, his voice trailing off into silence. A realization dawns on him, profound and clear.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

(reassured)

This is it... I've been living in the past, chained to the ghost of who I was. But now...

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ALICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elias stands at the threshold of the room that once belonged to Alice. Her essence lingers - in the quilt on the bed, in the vase on the windowsill.

He approaches the dresser, touching the trinkets she left behind. A small music box catches his eye. He opens it, and a delicate tune plays out.

ELIAS

(finally
understanding)

Alice, William... I've been looking for your forgiveness when I needed to forgive myself.

Tears glisten in his eyes as he absorbs the gravity of his epiphany. He turns to face the empty room, a silent witness to his transformation.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

(resolute)

No more hiding. No more running from the truth.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - MAIN HALLWAY - DAWN

The first light of morning filters through the stained glass, casting kaleidoscopic patterns on the floor.

Elias descends the staircase, each step lighter than the last. At the bottom, he pauses, looking back at the house that has become his redemption.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIAS
(softly, to the
house)
We're at peace now. All of us.

FADE OUT.

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

A shaft of sunlight pierces the quiet gloom of the library, dust motes dancing in the golden light. The room, lined with filled bookshelves and comfortable furniture, exudes a sense of time-honored wisdom and serenity.

Elias Montgomery sits at an aged oak desk, his fingers tracing over the grain as he gazes out the window into the gardens beyond. The once derelict Hawthorne House breathes with new life; its walls hold stories of pain and healing, its rooms echo with whispered apologies and silent forgiveness.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

The garden is a bloom of colors, well-tended and vibrant. Elias steps outside, his presence no longer haunting the grounds but harmonizing with them. Neighbors pass by, waving and calling out to him with warm smiles.

NEIGHBOR #1
(holding a pie)
Morning, Elias! Made an extra pie
for you!

ELIAS
(grateful)
Thank you, Martha. Your apple pies
are always a highlight of my week.

He accepts the gift with a nod of appreciation, the interaction fluid and genuine—a far cry from the days of his reclusive past.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ENTRANCE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Elias places the pie on a table by the door, next to a guestbook brimming with names and messages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He flips through the pages, each entry a testament to the house's transformation and his own.

VISITOR #1 (V.O.)
(reading from the
book)

"An unforgettable visit. This house, once a place of tragedy, now inspires with its story of redemption."

VISITOR #2 (V.O.)
"Thank you, Elias, for sharing your journey. It gives hope to those of us with our own shadows."

Elias absorbs their words, the corners of his mouth lifting ever so slightly. His haunted blue eyes reflect not just sorrow, but also the warmth of connection.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ALICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Elias enters the room that once belonged to Alice. He approaches the window, pushing it open to let in the fresh air. The music box from years ago rests on the dresser, a symbol of remembrance.

Suddenly, a gentle breeze stirs the curtains, and a beam of light illuminates the music box. Elias watches, a knowing look in his eyes.

ELIAS
(whispering)
Your legacy lives on. In every person who finds solace here, in every heart that learns the power of forgiveness.

The music box lid opens seemingly of its own accord, the delicate tune filling the room, weaving a spell of tender memories and hard-won peace.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DUSK

As the sun sets, casting long shadows across the lawn, Elias stands on the porch. The house, majestic and inviting, draws people in like moths to a flame—not for the horror of its past, but for the hope it represents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A GROUP OF VISITORS approaches, their faces alight with curiosity and respect. Elias descends the steps to greet them, his demeanor calm and welcoming.

ELIAS
(greeting warmly)
Welcome to Hawthorne House.
Please, come in. Let me share its
story with you...

The visitors follow Elias inside, eager to hear the tale of the house's transformation—a narrative of darkness confronted and overcome by the relentless pursuit of light.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ELIAS'S STUDY - DAY

The room is drenched in the golden light of afternoon. Elias, his hair now streaked with silver, sits at an antique desk littered with papers and photographs. His fingers trace the lines of a letter he's composing, the ink from his pen flowing steadily.

ELIAS
(to himself,
contemplatively)
To ensure the past isn't
forgotten, to give the future a
place to remember...

He folds the letter carefully, sealing it within an envelope. He then places it into a time-worn wooden box, filled with similar envelopes, each one a year's promise to the house and those it shelters.

EXT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Elias walks through the flourishing garden, the colors vibrant against the backdrop of the restored house. He pauses by a rose bush, its crimson blooms swaying slightly in the breeze.

ELIAS
(gazing at the roses)
Alice's favorites... They bloom
every year, without fail.

A shadow crosses the garden, a cloud momentarily obscuring the sun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elias looks up, his eyes reflecting a depth of wisdom earned through years of sorrow and redemption.

ELIAS
(muttering)
Even in the brightest garden,
shadows will fall...

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - MAIN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Elias returns inside, where a YOUNG COUPLE stands admiring the grand staircase. The woman holds a pamphlet about the house's history; her partner has a look of awe on his face.

WOMAN
(to Elias)
Excuse me, are you Mr. Montgomery?

ELIAS
(nodding, extending a hand)
Yes, I am. Welcome to Hawthorne House.

MAN
(shaking Elias's hand)
We've heard so much about this place. They say it's haunted by its past but blessed by its present.

ELIAS
(smiling faintly)
Every house has its ghosts. Here, they teach us rather than terrify.

The couple exchanges a glance, their curiosity piqued.

WOMAN
May we ask... how did you do it?
Turn such a tragic story into something so beautiful?

ELIAS
(looking around)
It was never just me. This house, Alice, William... they guided me. And there were others who helped along the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gestures toward the photographs on the walls—moments captured during the restoration, volunteers working together, Tobias lending a hand.

ELIAS

(continuing)

This place is a collective effort,
a tapestry woven from many threads
of forgiveness and labor.

MAN

And what about you, sir? What
keeps you here after all these
years?

Elias gazes out the window as a soft sigh escapes him,
his reflection merging with the vista of the house's
grounds.

ELIAS

(softly)

This house is my penance and my
sanctuary. My story is etched into
these walls, as theirs is. I stay
to honor that, to preserve their
legacy—and mine.

The couple nods in understanding, moved by Elias's words.
They wander off to continue their tour, leaving Elias
alone with his thoughts.

CUT TO:

INT. HAWTHORNE HOUSE - ALICE'S ROOM - SUNSET

Elias enters the room where it all began. He approaches
the music box, placing a gentle hand atop it. A small
smile graces his lips as he glances at a new photograph
on the wall—a recent picture of himself with Tobias and
several community members in front of the house.

ELIAS

(whispering,
reflective)

In every corner, every creak of
the floorboards... this house
speaks. May it always be a voice
for those lost and for those
seeking the way back from
darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns to leave, his silhouette framed in the doorway. As the door closes behind him, the last rays of sunlight catch the edge of the music box, making it gleam like a beacon in the dimming room.

FADE OUT.