

The Jersey Devil Play

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By Allison Page

**MacDowell eval please begin  
on page 30 of the script**

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## CHARACTERS:

ABBOTT KRISTOFF (ABBY) - 30s, been in Sacramento her entire life until now. Generally has to be the strong one in the marriage because of Norman's tendency to crumple up at any sign of difficulty or stress, which often leaves her unable to fully express her own anxieties, which definitely exist in spite of her confident, capable exterior. Smart, funny, and loving in her way -- which is to say, while she makes fun of Norman, she does genuinely care for him. Zesty, lively, not brittle. Longing to carve out a place for herself, to feel connected to something, to build a home.

NORMAN KRISTOFF - 30's, Abby's husband, been in Sacramento his entire life until now. Frequently riddled with anxiety, which he's been avoiding actively dealing with forever. Whenever he starts spiraling, he counts on Abby to take care of the matters at hand, meaning he often misses signs that she may need him to reciprocate that care. High energy, clever, defers to Abby for major life plans. Better at short term planning, anything more than that is overwhelming. Very much loves his wife, which is why he moved across the country with her on an uncharacteristic whim.

SYLVIA CASCONETTI - 30s-50s, extremely New Jersey. Strong accent. One side of her family has been here since the 1700s, one side came from Italy 50 years ago. Loves everything Italian, has never been to Italy. Proud president of the Moorestown Downtown Development Committee. Good at holding a grudge. Long nails. Big hair. Always puts Moorestown first.

JEANIE - 70s-80s. Started a vlog with bff Gloria showing off different destinations in South Jersey. Always needs to know where the bathroom is located.

PRESTON GILBERT - horny teen who knows nothing about sex.

PHIL PROFUNDO - 30s-40s. Sylvia's henchman. Member of the Moorestown Downtown Development Association. Man of few words, will do anything Sylvia says. Moorestown local with deep roots.

RADIO ANNOUNCER - voice only

NED - 20s-40s, Works for the power company. Imposing presence. A little scary. Very dry.

CONRAD DRECK - 20s-30s, Cryptozoologist, member of the Norwegian black metal band Fjord Fuckers. Conspiracy theorist. Is always putting things in "air quotes," wears an eye patch. Is it necessary? Who can say.

GEOFF RUNYON - 50s, fisherman who had an encounter with the Jersey Devil. Married to a

domineering woman. Even tempered, likes to tell a story. Very "regular joe" -- vaguely midwestern demeanor.

GLORIA - 70s-80s, Jeanie's bff and co-host of their vlog about South Jersey. Very chatty and enthusiastic. Spins a good yarn.

STELLA FLOSS - 40s-50's, married to Chuck Floss, who she loves very much. Actually does believe in the Jersey Devil, and will exaggerate that if it's to her benefit.

PRUDENCE BENDER - 12 yrs old, amateur historian. Loves history and talking. Sweet natured. Likes to memorize facts and stories and generally recites them verbatim from books or the internet, which can come across very formal for a 12 year old. Glasses are always sliding down.

THE SOMETHING (no lines) - a mass of mysterious, murderous intentions.

TONY BRAVI - 30s-40s, along with Phil, Sylvia's other henchman. Of the two, Tony is the more talkative and active. Probably has to lead Phil around a bit or he'd just walk into walls or traffic. Secretly in love with Sylvia, and very dedicated to her cause and building up the active tourist business in Moorestown.

GUNTHER ROBAST - Teenager. Doesn't care much about school. Cares a lot about what other teenagers think, and what's new on TikTok. Never as haunted about bad things that have happened as one might think he should be.

CHUCK FLOSS - 50s, married to Stella Floss, who he loves very much. Mostly honest unless it behooves him not to be. Has filed a couple of fake insurance claims in his life. Doesn't really care one way or the other about the Jersey Devil.

Ensemble Character Tracks:

Track 1 plays: Sylvia Casconetti, Jeanie, and Preston Gilbert

Track 2 plays: Phil Profundo, Conrad Dreck, Prudence Bender, and Part of The Something

Track 3 plays: Geoff Runyon, Glora, Stella Floss, Radio Announcer, and Part of The Something

Track 4 plays: Tony Bravi, Ned, Gunther Robast, Chuck Floss, and Part of The Something

## SCENE 1 (MARCH)

New Jersey. The time is now. 80% of the stage is the inside of a sort of log-cabin-esque house, which also has a bar or counter top area you might see in a small mom 'n pop store. The other 20% of the stage serves as many other places where people are being interviewed throughout the play. Each location and character being "interviewed" is established with a changeable sign post in the DR corner of the stage. At rise, the cabin is dark. A spot comes up on the interview corner. The sign reads "MOORESTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. SYLVIA CASCONETTI, DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION" Sylvia has a New Jersey accent a la Teresa Giudice and speaks quickly. She has long nails. She's not typing but if she were you'd hear them go clackity-clack at a shocking volume. She wears a lot of shades of pink. Slightly behind her and on either side are TONY BRAVI and PHIL PROFUNDO.

SYLVIA

(fluffing her hair)

How's my hair? Good? Okay, good. Okay, action! Oh...I guess that's your job. I'll wait...okay, now? I thought you'd say action... Hullo! Welcome to Moorestown, New Jersey, the best place to live in these whole United States! And that's not just me, ya know, sayin' that. It's official. It was in Money Magazine.

PHIL holds up a copy of Money Magazine.

SYLVIA

Incidentally, I can get you a good deal on a subscription.

PHIL

Prescription.

TONY

(elbowing PHIL)

That's pain killers.

SYLVIA

Subscription. Oh, sorry, I am Sylvia Casconetti, the proud president of the Moorestown Downtown Development Association, as my mother was before me, and her mother was before her and so on and et cetera and such. My ancestors came to Moorestown in the early 1700s, and most generations have lived in the very same house.

TONY coughs.

SYLVIA

Oh, and I'm joined by my cousins here, Tony Bravi and Phil Profundo, who also proudly serve on the committee.

TONY & PHIL

Yep.

SYLVIA

I know everything there is to know about Moorestown! According to the last census we have 20,726 residents, though my cousin Salvatore and his garbage wife moved to Miami two months ago, so I figure it's 20,724 now. Amy's is the best hair salon in town. I've been going there for 22 years, except for the ill-fated 6 month period when I let my cousin Salvatore's wife do my hair.

TONY

The highlights made her look washed out.

PHIL

Sallow.

SYLVIA

We also have some beautiful natural landscapes if you're into that sorta thing....oh, The Pine Barrens? Yeah, those are about a 40 minute drive from here but there's really nothin' to see except some trees and birds. Oh! You can get to Philly in less than a half hour! We also have a lot of history here. Like we had a lot of Quakers, like the oats. 35% of our voters are registered as "Unaffiliated" so...that's a fun fact. I mean, not surprising. All the men I know here are completely unable to commit.

PHIL & TONY

Eyyyy! Ooohhh!

SYLVIA

So if you know anybody who isn't like that...I'm single and childless! ...Anyway, Moorestown is the only home I've ever known, and the only one I ever will.

(she breathes in the air deeply)

Nothin' like that sweet South Jersey air. Truly a perfect place. I'd die for it, if I had to.

PHIL

Yeesh.

TONY elbows PHIL.

SYLVIA

I would. And so would you. You'll have to excuse me, I need a cigarette...I know you said you wanted to keep it natural for this tourism video, but are you sure you don't want me to do some sorta... like "Come to Moorestown, we have candles!" or something? Because we got local candles. No? Okay, well, there's a lotta brochures here. You should take one - - hell, take 'em all! Gives me an excuse to use the new printer. Got a grant for that. Only took five years.

(she pops a cigarette into her mouth.  
Proudly:)

It's a laser printer.

PHIL

Laser.

TONY

Advanced.

PHIL

Printer.

They all nod slowly, proudly.

## SCENE 2

The cabin. A quiet morning, just after sunrise. ABBOTT KRISTOFF enters, carrying a large cardboard box and a lamp whose base is in the shape of a horse. The cord is dragging behind it and she keeps nearly tripping on it. The box is so large it's hard to see her face. She's wandering around mostly unable to see her surroundings. The lights aren't on yet. She's talk-shouting.

ABBY

Aren't you glad we're doing this at 7:30 in the morning? I mean we're going to have so much of the day left after this! Think of all the activities!

I wonder if we can get pizza delivered this far out. I doubt it. That's fine. Probably for the best, it'll force us to get used to this kitchen. Hey, do you know if you're holding the box with the bathroom stuff in it? I think I just got my period, like, just now. I think I'm talking too loud and it made my period start. Oh, maybe someone left some tampons in the bathroom either by accident or as a courtesy.

She sets the giant box down on the counter top, and the lamp next to it. NORMAN KRISTOFF enters behind her, carrying a stack of moving boxes.

NORMAN

I didn't hear any of that.

(a bit out of breath, rubbing his lower back)

I should have pulled the car up closer to the house. Actually, I thought I had. My senses are all screwed up here. I can't even smell right. Oh, I checked just for the hell of it, and can you believe we already have some mail?! Also, pretty sure I broke the mailbox.

NORMAN sets the boxes down and grabs the envelopes on top of them.

ABBY

Really? Lemme see!

(she grabs the pile and looks through it)

These all say "Current Occupant."

NORMAN

So romantic!

ABBY

(rifling through them)

Advertisement, advertisement, advertisement... "The Official Welcome to Moorestown Coupon Book!" Oh god, I love these. They're coupons for like 40 local businesses. Mindy's Candles, Moorestown Nuts & Mutts -- weird combo, but okay -- and an invitation to the county craft fair and accompanying coupon for 20% off official Moorestown merch! Very exciting. You know what this means?

NORMAN

All our future cinnamon brooms will be handmade instead of from Trader Joe's?

ABBY

(she beams)

We live here.

(she grimaces)

I'm gonna go see if the previous owners left any tampons in the bathroom.

NORMAN

It's not an AirBnB, Abby.

ABBY

You never know.

ABBY exits into another part of the cabin,  
looking for the bathroom.

NORMAN

(calmly)

I think I might be on the verge of a panic attack.

ABBY

(off)

You're fine.

NORMAN

We're moving into a house we've never even seen before. This is insane. This feels insane.

ABBY

(off)

We saw pictures! It's not like we had no idea what we were....oh, wow-

NORMAN

What?! Is there a severed head in the toilet? God I always knew this day would come. What are the eyes like?! ARE THEY FOREBODING?

ABBY emerges from the bathroom holding a  
dead raccoon by the tail.

NORMAN

(small and strained)

Noooooo.

ABBY

It's not Tampax, but it *is* organic. Always thought I'd try a Diva cup before going straight for the wildlife, but--



NORMAN  
(tiny, trying to squash the impulse to  
shriek)

Get it oooooout.

ABBY  
We could stuff it and sell it on Craigslist! Maybe give it a little outfit.

NORMAN  
Abbyyyyyyyyyy.

ABBY  
I don't know how to do taxidermy yet, but there's always youtube or the dark web.

NORMAN  
I don't think people here even have Craigslist.

ABBY  
(she walks to the door and tosses the  
raccoon out)  
This is New Jersey, not Mount Doom.

NORMAN  
(sighing with relief)  
What's the difference?

ABBY  
Orcs. Norman, your panic attack.

NORMAN  
I'm workin' on it.

NORMAN takes a travel bottle of hand sanitizer  
out of his pocket and plops a little into Abby's  
hands and a lot into his own. They rub the  
sanitizer in, Norman rubbing it far up his arms  
and then patting his face like it's aftershave.

NORMAN  
(he notices the horse lamp)  
I thought we threw that thing away.

She makes a face.

NORMAN

It's just...

ABBY picks up the lamp.

ABBY

It's just what? Majestic? Evocative of a simpler time?

NORMAN

I find it creepy.

ABBY

It's a lamp. It illuminates things. It chases the darkness *away*.

NORMAN

I don't like its...demeanor. Personality. No, demeanor.

ABBY

It can't challenge you, Norman. It's a lamp.

NORMAN

I just think--

ABBY

The lamp stays. If you're keeping all those Star Wars toys--

NORMAN

--Memorabilia, and to be fair many of them are actually from Babylon 5 and I know exactly how that sounds as I say it.

ABBY

If you're keeping those, then I get the lamp. I think that's only fair. I need every piece of comfort I can get.

NORMAN

I've been told I'm very comfortable.

ABBY

You are.

She kisses him. He tries to be grumpy about it, but it doesn't work.

ABBY

I am definitely getting my period. Help me find the bathroom box. Ugh. My skin hurts. I don't want skin.

NORMAN

I've got enough going on here. The last thing I need is to see your musculature.

ABBY

(searching for the right box)

I feel like trolls are shooting flare guns in my uterus.

NORMAN

Even ute trolls have guns now. What is this country coming to?

(pause)

Abby. I *am* silently having a panic attack.

ABBY

(gently rubbing circles on his back)

Okay, listen. I know everything is new. Like, really new. And just like New Car Scent, too much of it can make you feel sick. I know we don't have family here. I know we don't have friends here. We have no idea what we're doing and it's going to be absolute chaos.

NORMAN

(thick with sarcasm)

I feel so soothed.

ABBY

We're in this together. We're in everything together, no matter what. Deal?

NORMAN

Deal.

They shake hands and end with a sort of fist bump where they tap their wedding rings against each other.

ABBY

We're going to start fresh.

NORMAN

Fresh.

ABBY

No family butting into our everyday lives. No old friend gossip featuring the same shit we've been hearing about for 15 years like an endless hometown summer. This is our own thing. We're gonna *live* here, together, in peace and tranquility, selling kitschy antiques and collectibles, like we've *always* talked about --

NORMAN

-- for the last 6 months.

ABBY

Like we've always talked about for the last 6 months. Maybe we'll get chickens!

NORMAN makes a face.

ABBY

Or not! You're right. We're not *that* cottage-core. (*to herself*) Yet. And when we've got enough income from the shop, which I am spelling S-H-O-P-P-E, I'll stop designing websites on the side and we'll finally be living the millennial dream. We will NOT be the subject of a New Yorker piece about people who bought houses in the pandemic and regret it. This is an investment...in...*us*! Look around this place. All I see are possibilities.

(they both sigh contentedly and look around, taking in the moment. Abby sees a mouse run across the floor)

OH MY GOD IS THAT A FUCKING MOUSE?

NORMAN

AHHHHHHHHHH!

SCENE 3

Interview corner. The sign reads "GEOFF RUNYON, AVID FISHERMAN" next to which stands GEOFF, in full fly fishing gear.

GEOFF

Yeah I'd say there's some pretty good fishin' here. Me, I fish nearly every day. I'm retired now so I got plenty of time to throw a line out. Too much time, my wife says. She says a lot of things: Geoff take out the recycling. Geoff get your boots off the coffee table. Geoff, don't eat that, it's my foot cream. We've been married 38 years. Sometimes I take her out fishin' too, but she mostly likes to wear a big sun hat and read the latest James Patterson, while *I* do the fishing. I don't really read, but then I don't have to, she tells me the whole dang plot anyway. I've read about 40 James Pattersons without ever flipping past the cover. Oh sure, we've all seen some weird stuff now and then, here and there.

There's a lotta forest and such out here, and any body of water holds its fair share of secrets. Mostly just people getting their jollies with their mistresses and such. Not me, though! I'm as faithful as the day is long. I would be *anyway*, that's just how I am, but my wife also happens to be the most terrifying woman in the tri-county area, ask anybody.

(beat.)

I guess there was this one time, though--

(he lowers his voice)

I was out fishin' real close to here, it was a chilly morning so I brought my coffee out with me. I had some buddies coming out to fish with me that day but they were running behind. So I set myself up by the edge of the water, here, and I'm getting my rod 'n reel ready and choosing which bait is best for that particular time of year. Coulda been bloodworms...or shedder crabs. So I'm kinda leaning down to grab some bait and I see outta the corner of my eye, someone come up and grab my coffee mug, and drink it all down -- and it was *pipin' hot Folgers*. By the time I look up, they're gone! Poof! Now, that was my favorite mug. It was one of those ones with a lady on it, where you fill it up with coffee and the heat makes the lady's clothes disappear, type of thing. I found it about a hundred yards away, and ya know what's really weird? Ever since then, her clothes don't come off. I put boiling water in there, even, and the clothes just stay on. Like she's too scared to remove 'em. I swear it's true.

(beat, casually)

Also one time we found a dead body but we don't know who it was because it was all rotten and pieces were comin' off, so we just kinda threw it back in like a Viking funeral but without the fire. Let nature take its course. Sent the city an email about it, never did hear back. Politicians.

(he pops a piece of gum in his mouth)

Big Red. Want some? Got a three pack.

#### SCENE 4 (APRIL)

The cabin. One month later. Mid-day.

NORMAN is standing behind the counter. He's working on a ship-in-a-bottle. There are more things around the main room now -- photos in frames, books, and a noticeable assortment of small oddities, many with little price tags hanging off of them. There's a sign on the front of the counter that says "WELCOME" on it. NORMAN is talking into a rotary phone, and has been for some time. He's frustrated.

NORMAN

I understand. I understand that, but I just think there must be some larger problem here if our power is constantly going out, every other day. At least bi-weekly. Does that mean every other week or twice a week? Never mind, that's a me question. Has this address always had power issues? You don't know. Okay, great. Cool. Awesome. Yes I know we have power right now but that doesn't mean we'll have power ten minutes from now. So what should we do? You don't know that either. Okay, is there someone there who maybe, I don't know, *KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT ANYTHING?* *Jesus Christ.*

(the person on the other end of the line  
lays into Norman)

I...no...I'm...yeah...you're right...you're right, I'm sorry, it's not your fault. I know. Customer service is a thankless job...I know...I'm sure you do have a family...yes. I do respect Catholicism...to a certain degree anyway, well not really, organized religion is mostly a blight, but I didn't mean to---If you could...if you...if you could...yes, I'd love someone to come out and take a look at it. Thank you. Yes that works. Thanks. You have a good day, too. Praise 'em! I'm s--okay.

The person on the other end has hung up on NORMAN. He puts the phone back on the receiver and sighs. The sound of a toilet flushing. ABBY enters. She's clearly just been throwing up.

NORMAN

Who, me? Just bonding with the locals. How's ye olde morning sickness?

ABBY

It's 3pm. It's just a plague at this point.

NORMAN

Ohhh, don't say that about little baby Billiam.

ABBY

I get to say whatever I want for like ten years now, and there's no way we're naming this baby Billiam.

NORMAN

Sit down, put your feet up, and I'll make you some herbal tea.

ABBY

That sounds nice.

ABBY sits down, NORMAN brings her a footstool and she puts her feet on it.

She sits back with her eyes closed. NORMAN exits to make some tea.

ABBY

I just wanna get to the part where people say I look cute in maternity dresses. Right now I am not cute, nor obviously pregnant, so I'm just, like...a less charming Oscar the Grouch if he had sore boobs.

NORMAN

(off)

I think you're cute!

ABBY

What?

NORMAN

(off)

I SAID, I THINK YOU'RE CUTE.

ABBY

Yeah, well.

(she opens her eyes, rubs her temples, and spots something on a side table. She picks it up. It's an animal that's been whittled out of wood)

When did you start whittling? Is this a bird with a horse head? And you said my lamp was weird.

NORMAN

(off)

I CAN'T HEAR YOU.

ABBY

NOTHING.

There is a knock at the door.

ABBY

I think we might actually have a customer!

NORMAN

(off)

WHAT?

ABBY

EXTRA HONEY, PLEASE.

(she answers the door)

Hi there!

NED enters. He is a brusque man in his 50s. He wears workman's coveralls and carries a tool box.

NED

I hear you're having problems with your power.

ABBY

Oh! Yes, we are. Sorry, I thought you were a customer. Come on in.

NED

Nice place.

ABBY

Yeah... Hey, wow, how did you get here so quickly? My husband just called in about the power like...5 minutes ago? I mean...just curious, it's not like I think you're...a murderous stranger wandering house to house ripping people to pieces or anything.

(she puts her hand on top of the horse lamp, which would be a great weapon in case of an emergency)

But just out of curiosity though, you aren't, are you? A horrible murderer, I mean?

NED

Not yet.

(long beat)

Ha ha.

ABBY

Ha ha.

NED

I was up the road -- not too unique to have power issues out here -- and got a call from the main office that someone had a complaint at this address so I thought I'd pop by.

ABBY

Ah, I see.



NED

Multiple complaints, actually. From a man with a “needy” voice.

She finally believes him. She removes her hand from the lamp.

ABBY

Ah! Yes, that’s a harrowingly accurate description of my husband. I’m Abby, nice to meet you.

NED

Ned. So, what is it you sell here?

ABBY

Oh, just little knick knacks. This ‘n that. You’re technically our first customer. Or you would have been, if you were a customer. We’re just getting set up. We’ve only been here a month, and then I got pregnant and as you mentioned my husband is needy so it’s been-

NED

Uh huh.

ABBY

Sorry, we just don’t get many visitors -- or we haven’t yet, anyway. But I’m sure we will! Booming business is in our future! Please, come in before I swallow myself whole.

NED

I’m already in.

ABBY

Right, yes. What do you need...access to, or whatever?

NED

Probably out back.

ABBY

Right. Please, go ahead and do your thing.

NED exits with his tool box. A moment later, the sound of a tea kettle whistling. A few moments after that, NORMAN enters from the kitchen with a cup of tea. He sets it down.

NORMAN

One cup of tea for one mother-to-be!

ABBY  
Norman, please, no rhymes.

NORMAN  
Right, yes.

ABBY  
Honey?

NORMAN  
Yes?

ABBY  
Cute. For the tea. Honey.

NORMAN  
Ah! Yes.

NORMAN exits to get the honey.

NORMAN  
(off)  
I was thinking we should have a website. For the business.

ABBY  
Go ahead.

NORMAN  
(off)  
You don't wanna do it? I mean, you're the one with the expertise.

NORMAN re-enters.

ABBY  
I'm tired of having expertise. Just get a Squarespace account.

NORMAN  
Maybe I'll do that today. Except -- did we decide on a name yet? For the business.

ABBY  
How about you name the business and I'll name the baby.

NORMAN  
...Billiam's Antiques and Collectibles! Here's your--

NED appears in the doorway, holding six dead raccoons by the tail in one hand, like a bundle of salamis, and another medium sized furry animal in the other. NORMAN reflexively throws the bottle of honey at ABBY.

NORMAN

AHHHHH!

ABBY

(the honey hits her)

AAGGH!

NED

There's a bundle of dead raccoons caught in your power box. Or there was. Now there's a bundle of dead raccoons in my hand, in your house. Or business. Is this a house or a business?

ABBY

It's both.

NORMAN

(putting his hand on the horse lamp,  
whispering to Abby)

Is he a murderer?

ABBY

No, I already asked.

NED

Name's Ned.

ABBY

From the power company. He was--

NED

-- in the neighborhood

NORMAN

Oh...OH! Okay...so...um, welcome to Billiam's Antiques and Collectibles!

ABBY

I was just pelted with honey.

NORMAN

Oh gosh, I'm sorry.

ABBY

You'll have to excuse my husband. Generally.

NED

What should I---

ABBY

What's that under your other arm?

NED

Coyote.

NORMAN

Whoa.

ABBY

A COYOTE? And it...what, got electrocuted somehow?

NED

Don't think so. Too much blood for that.

NORMAN

(queasy)

Blood?!

ABBY grabs a large trash bag and holds it out.

NED dumps the raccoons into the trash bag.

NORMAN

(quiet horror)

Might be more of a compost thing.

ABBY grabs a second trash bag.

ABBY

We've seen the raccoons before, but is this a coyote-heavy area?

NED

Don't know. Could be. Lots of stuff gets around out there; can't always see what's lurking beneath the inky shade of the pines, waiting to crawl out under cover of night and execute its brutal animal blood lust.

NORMAN

...Are we still talking about coyotes?

NED

This isn't the city. You can't hack it on your own, then you can't hack it here. Maybe you'd be better off in town; nice apartment, neighbors, somethin' like that. You decide to go, I know someone who'll pay a good price for this place.

Ned hands a business card to Norman.

ABBY

Thank you, but we're in it for the long haul, come hell or high numbers of wildlife being zapped by power lines or whatever.

NORMAN

The coyote wasn't zapped.

ABBY

Listen, Ned, we appreciate your perspective and everything--

NORMAN

How much do you think this someone would pay?

ABBY

--but we really should get back to...things--

NORMAN

Like, ballpark. What are we talkin'?

ABBY

--other things. Thank you.

NED

Suit yourself. Power should be good for now. Be seein' ya.

NED exits. ABBY closes the door behind him, picks up the honey, and throws it at NORMAN.

NORMAN

Ow! Sorry, I didn't mean to throw the honey at you, I was just surprised.

ABBY

I don't care about that.

NORMAN

Then why do I have a quickly developing welt?

ABBY

This can't just be for me, Norman.

NORMAN

Jesus, Abby, I was joking...mostly. 78%.

ABBY

I need to feel like we can do this by ourselves. We're *it*. We're finally somewhere we *chose*. Not somewhere we landed. If we were to throw it away now...we'd never find another deal like this. We'd never have the money for a downpayment again. I can only ever have two dead parents, and my inheritance is shot. There won't be any more lump sums coming at us like that. And once the baby is born...

NORMAN

Hey, I know. I know how much this place means to you--*to us!* To us.

ABBY

We have to dig our heels in, even if we're digging them into a rotting coyote.

NORMAN

I know.

ABBY

This can't be a mistake...if it is...I couldn't...

ABBY goes uneasily quiet.

NORMAN

(pulling her closer)

Hey, come on. Hey--

ABBY

I--

ABBY gags and runs to the bathroom to throw up. NORMAN takes a deep breath. He takes the card out of his pocket and looks at it, turning it over in his hand.

NORMAN  
(reading to himself)

“Sylvia Casconetti”

The phone rings. NORMAN is lost in thought.  
The phone rings two more times. ABBY re-enters and answers it.

ABBY  
Billiam’s Antiques & Collectibles, this is Abby!

NORMAN smiles at her. He rips the business card into pieces and throws it in the trash. They look at each other lovingly.

ABBY  
We do have some vintage Pyrex, but not a lot. I think I’ve got some daisy and some gooseberry -- is there a specific pattern you’re looking for?

The zapping sound of something getting caught in a power line. The lights flash and then go out.

NORMAN & ABBY  
(in darkness)

DAMN IT.

## SCENE 5

Interview corner. The sign reads “GUNTHER ROBAST, LOCAL TEEN” Gunther has long, shaggy hair and speaks in a monotone teen voice. Everything is equally boring to him.

GUNTHER  
I can only talk for like five minutes and then I have to go to ISS. It stands for In School Suspension. More like...It Sucks Shit. Can I swear on here? Whatever, I already said it.

(Gunther dabs for emphasis)

Fine, okay, so last semester, I was leaving detention -- which was bullshit because I didn’t even do anything wrong. My cousin Shasta went through the nacho line at lunch and filled up 10 water glasses with pump cheese and we all took shots of it and I guess somehow they’re calling that an actionable offense, and I’m like, if drinking pump cheese is wrong then I don’t wanna be right, bro. Anyway, we were leaving detention and Shasta was like “Instead of going straight to your place, let’s go to the barrens and see if we can find any dead bodies the mob dumped there” Shasta is kind of a goth in addition to being a thief and a pump cheese connoisseur.

And I'm not usually into that kinda stuff but I was like "Sure, whatever" because it was better than just going home and eating Totino's pizza rolls again, and they're frozen anyway, they'll be there forever. So we take my dad's old truck out to the edge of the barrens and park it. I grab my backpack and Shasta just leaves all her shit in the truck. Now it's starting to get kinda dark out. I thought we were gonna be out there maybe 20 minutes or something, but Shasta was like "don't be a pussy, we gotta go farther in if we want to see anything cool" and I was like "I'm not a pussy, you're a pussy, and also that's sexist" so we kept going. All we found were some dead birds and hoof prints. The weird thing was that the birds had broken necks but I guess sometimes they're stupid and fly into trees. Maybe they have bad depth perception. I'm not a birdologist. So it's getting pretty dark and I'm ready to head back, but Shasta has to take a piss so she goes behind a tree. I can hear her pissin' because pissin' in the woods is loud because of the foliage. So when the pissin' stops, I'm like "all right, let's fuckin' go" and she doesn't say anything and I'm like "YO, SHASTA, LET'S GO" and she still doesn't say anything so now I'm kinda annoyed. My brother is probably at home digging into the Totino's and I'm out here digging around in shit with fuckin' Shasta. So I walk around the tree and...there's nothing there. I mean, there's a pile of piss, but no Shasta. That was three months ago. Hey, is this gonna be on TikTok?

#### SCENE 6 (JULY)

The cabin. There are more knick knacks and stacks of souvenir postcards, key chains, and New Jersey memorabilia, and more little whittled wooden creatures. ABBY is now 4 months pregnant and has started to show a bit. She's having a snack and about to work on her laptop while the radio plays. She's adjusting the station, she lands on a Sinatra-esque song, changes the station again and lands on one whose static sounds like a grumbling monster whose roar is growing each moment, she thinks she hears a voice in it saying "GET OUT" She changes it again and lands on a local station.

#### RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...Moorestown authorities announced today, after months of searching, that missing teen Shasta Robast is likely a runaway, making reference to her history of truancy and petty theft, and the lack of evidence of any foul play. Ned Finkle, known as a devoted Moorestown power plant employee who largely kept to himself, has now been missing two months and according to police, appears to have no connection to the Shasta Robast disappearance, though there are those who think otherwise. Overall, unsolved disappearances are up a shocking 48% over last year.



Up next, Sammy Dorn is joined by Tony Bravi of the Moorestown Downtown Development Association to talk about this weekend's 4th of July block party!

TONY (V.O.)

Eyyyy, glad to be here! Happy almost 4th of July!

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Thanks for coming, Tony. Now, what can folks expect at this weekend's festivities?

A loud SMACK sound from the window. ABBY jumps up. She grabs the horse lamp.

TONY (V.O.)

Well, ah, some of the usual type of fanfare, you know, the fireworks and stuff for the kids. Some adult beverages in the beer garden.

Another loud SMACK. She walks slowly to the window and looks out, but sees nothing.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Any new features this year?

Another loud SMACK. She walks to the door, hesitates, then throws it open. Seeing nothing, she disappears outside.

TONY (V.O.)

Well there's the Taylor Ham eating contest and the Pork Roll eating contest, but this year we're putting them on opposite ends of the fairgrounds because things got a little heated last time.

ABBY reenters, carrying three birds in her cupped hands, horse lamp under one arm now.

ABBY

You poor things. I guess the windows were a little *too* clean for once.

She sets the lamp down, and the birds next to it. She grabs a garbage bag.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

I remember, and I still have the scars to prove it! Ha ha!

TONY (V.O.)

Ha ha yeah, I can see that.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Any increased security measures, given the recent disappearances?

She opens up the garbage bag, scoops up the birds, and just as she is about to drop them into the bag, one of them moves in her hand.

ABBY

GAHHH! IT'S STILL ALIVE!

She drops all the birds on the floor.

TONY (V.O.)

Oh no, we really don't think that's necessary. Like you said, there's no evidence anything actually--

ABBY picks up the horse lamp and bashes the birds repeatedly with it.

TONY (V.O.)

--violent happened to either of them. No foul play or anything.

ABBY scoops up the remains of the birds, her hands bloodied, and drops them into the trash bag.

TONY (V.O.)

No blood at all.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Still, you can never be too careful!

TONY (V.O.)

I didn't come here to talk about this. And who's to say the two of them aren't together somewhere.

While ABBY is facing away from the door, two women in their 70s enter. ABBY doesn't notice them. They snicker. ABBY finally hears them and turns around.

ABBY

Oh! Hello there! Sorry, I was just...hello!

(launching into her usual spiel as she turns off the radio, grabs a towel, and wipes off the floor, her hands, and the lamp)

Welcome to Billiam's Antiques and Collectibles! Feel free to take a look and let me know if you need any assistance. As you browse, you're welcome to take photos if you like, and when you get home just post them on instagram with the hashtag...oh, um, nevermind...

JEANIE

What?

GLORIA

She thinks we're too old for instagram! What's the @ sweetie?

JEANIE

We have a joint account.

GLORIA

162,000 followers!

ABBY

Oh, wow. Um it's @billiamsantiques

JEANIE

We're @jeanieandgloriago and don't you forget it!

ABBY

I won't! Please, take a look around.

ABBY grabs the trash bag of birds, tosses it behind the counter, pulls herself together, smooths her hair, and takes a breath. JEANIE and GLORIA look around for a few moments, touching things, whispering to each other. Then GLORIA takes out her phone and starts an instagram live video.

GLORIA

Hey gang! Gloria and Jeanie here with more adventures in South Jersey! And as we always say:

GLORIA & JEANIE

If it's in South Jersey, we'll go there and talk about it!

JEANIE

Gloria, where are we today?

GLORIA

Today we're at a mom 'n pop antique store in the heart of devil country.

JEANIE

But not just any antique store! This little South Jersey cabin was built on the site of the original Leeds family home.

ABBY watches them.

GLORIA

That's right, Jeanie, it was right here on this spot in 1735 that Mother Leeds bore her 13th child who then turned into a horse-headed devil, sprouted bat wings, and brutally murdered everyone in the house before fleeing into the pine barrens where some say he still lurks to this day! ...Oh dang it.

JEANIE

What's the matter?

GLORIA

I lost service.

(to ABBY)

Does that happen here a lot?

ABBY, stunned, nods.

JEANIE

Well let's get some more pictures at least. We can do a video when we get home. I forgot my lipstick anyway.

(to ABBY)

Where's the shitter?

ABBY points to the bathroom, offstage.

JEANIE

BRB! TTYL! TCBY!

JEANIE exits for the bathroom. GLORIA is looking around the store, taking photos. ABBY approaches her.

Hi, Gloria, was it?  
ABBY

Yup.  
GLORIA

GLORIA takes a photo of ABBY.

What was all that?  
ABBY

Just something for the fans.  
GLORIA

No, I mean...that story.  
ABBY

You mean to tell me you don't know about the Jersey Devil?  
GLORIA

Oooh...like the hockey team?  
ABBY

No, that's the Jersey Devils, plural. But that *is* where they got their name.  
GLORIA

Oh...  
ABBY

GLORIA gestures for them both to sit down.

Jane Leeds had a pretty normal pregnancy by all accounts-  
GLORIA

ABBY unconsciously places a hand on her own belly. Lights lower a bit around them. Quiet foreboding music plays.

GLORIA  
-until close to the end, when her mood started to shift a bit, strange things started happening; things she couldn't explain.

Not that carrying a child isn't its own curse even when things go to plan. Your whole insides twisting, contorting, snapping from the tension, making new shapes. It's a precursor to your ultimate truth: that you'll never be who you were, again. And she proclaimed "Let this child be the devil!" Which is probably what I'd say if I were pregnant for the 13th time, too. One was good enough for me. He's an entrepreneur now, which means he doesn't have a job. Anyway, the baby is born, and it looks like a normal baby: screaming, purple-ish, like an aggrieved bruise forced to take its first breath...until it suddenly sprouts bat wings and its head changes to either a goat or a horse head depending on who you ask, and it tears apart the humble midwives, and the poor mother, who had already endured enough pain for three lifetimes, and flies off into the pine barrens, leaving only blood and sinew in its wake.

ABBY

Oh. So...so like a...myth. A local legend.

GLORIA

Sightings have been reported for nearly 300 years. The Leeds house has been gone for ages, but this building is exactly where it used to stand.

(she shudders, they both look around the room)

Oof, creepy right? But good thing it's just a store now and not a house.

ABBY

...Yeah.

GLORIA

If it were a house I mean YIKES, I wouldn't wanna live here.

ABBY

Yeah that would be...bad.

GLORIA

REAL bad. I would scoot my butt on outta this place, quick as anything!

ABBY

Yeah.

GLORIA

Imagine SLEEPING ON THIS SPOT?

JEANIE re-enters suddenly, startling ABBY and GLORIA. The lights are brighter again, the music having disappeared moments before.

JEANIE

I was all backed up.

GLORIA

(getting up)

What else is new?

JEANIE

(gesturing to Abby's pregnant belly)

Was that on purpose or a sort of oopsy-doodle type of thing?

GLORIA

Jeeppers, Jeanie! I'm sorry, I can't take her anywhere.

ABBY

No, it's okay. I mean, it was going to be on purpose eventually.

JEANIE

Well, you're beautiful, my dear. Not like me when I was pregnant. I looked like a floating casino. Let's hit the road. I don't like being out here after dark. Gives me the willies.

ABBY

(as they turn to leave)

I live here.

GLORIA

Ooooh...oh, honey.

ABBY

I just...thought I would mention that. I do live here.

GLORIA

(taking Abby's hands in her own)

You can't stay here. You just can't.

JEANIE reaches into her pocket, pulls out a business card and hands it to ABBY. GLORIA looks at JEANIE with a "you weren't supposed to do that" stare.

JEANIE

I know someone who'd really love to get her hands on this place if you do decide to leave. Which you should.

GLORIA

Or you could just go. Screw it. Pack up your stuff, and head out. Start over somewhere new! Maybe Australia!

ABBY

I--

GLORIA

Think about it, sweetie. Just think about it.

(putting her hand on ABBY's belly)

Just think.

JEANIE and GLORIA go to exit. As they do, NORMAN suddenly enters right in front of them, holding a bag of groceries. JEANIE smacks him with her purse.

JEANIE

Be gone, devil!

NORMAN

Agh! I live here!

JEANIE

Whoopsie!

GLORIA

Best of luck to you, my dear.

(to NORMAN)

Excuse us.

GLORIA and JEANIE exit. NORMAN sets down his grocery bags.

NORMAN

What was that about?

ABBY

I don't even know where to start.

The phone rings. ABBY goes to answer it.



ABBY

(into the phone)

Hello, Billiam's Antiques and Collectibles: if it's weird and small and says New Jersey on it, we probably have three and one's in good condition!

NORMAN

I'm making a ton of enchiladas.

ABBY

(absently waving at Norman like "yeah, fine, I'm on the phone")

Oh...actually, no, we don't have that. I'm sorry.

She hangs up and sighs.

NORMAN

(off, in the kitchen)

Then I figure we can eat leftover enchiladas for several days, save a little bit of money...they're chicken!

She takes out the business card and reads it.

ABBY

"Sylvia Casconetti."

A bird flies smack into the nearest window pane. ABBY doesn't react.

NORMAN

(off)

What was that?

ABBY

Another bird.

(to herself)

Fourth one today.

NORMAN

(off)

You seem kinda weird.

ABBY

Do I?

She puts the card back in her pocket.

NORMAN

(off)

Something wrong?

ABBY

(beat)

We're going to be okay, right?

NORMAN

(running back in)

Abby!

ABBY

(suddenly delicate)

I just...want to hear you say it.

NORMAN

Yes. Okay, look at me. Like, too close. Look really, really closely. Look into my eye freckles.

He sits beside her and takes her hands in his.

ABBY

God, the human face is *wow*.

NORMAN

I'm right here, okay?

ABBY

I know, I can feel your breath.

NORMAN

I'm not going to let you joke your way out of this Abby. I'm crafting a moment, here.

ABBY

Thank you.

NORMAN

I'm right here, and you're right there, and we're okay. Everything's okay. We're two otters floating down a river holding hands.

ABBY

You're better at this than I thought you would be.

NORMAN

I've had years and years of watching you be in control. I picked up a couple things here and there. We're a team, okay?

Abby nods.

NORMAN

Here, lie down and I'll tell you a story.

Abby lays her head in his lap.

ABBY

If you re-tell me the plot of a Star Wars movie, I'll know.

NORMAN

No you won't.

ABBY

I'd google it later and then I'd know.

NORMAN

Once upon a time--

ABBY

Oh god.

NORMAN

Once upon a time, in The Kingdom of Olde Jersey, there lived a mostly heterosexual couple.

ABBY

(laughing)

This is so stupid.

NORMAN

-- A mostly heterosexual couple, who both had pretty good hair, depending on the day. They came to this far off kingdom from Ye Olde West Coast, where they mostly had a good time, but sometimes not. They had up and moved from home, which the prince's parents thought unwise -- Yeah, he's a prince now, I made him a prince. But the pull of the sacred scroll of Zillow was too strong. The princess felt some absolutely baffling pull to its images of a beat-up log cabin, woke the prince in the night and said she knew this was the one.

The lights are starting to dim, and continue to get darker throughout the following:

## NORMAN

So, the prince and his princess - as in his wife not his sister, that would be gross, is it princess? I don't know how royalty works - began their lives anew in a strange land. It was peaceful, mostly, and sometimes that peace was...unnerving. Everywhere they looked, they expected to be shown they'd made a huge mistake and that Olde Jersey was a pile of disasters and exaggerated accents, full of large balding men yelling "Hey, I'm walkin' 'ere!" but that never happened because that's really a New York thing. And they had a frightening horse lamp, and a pile of bills to which they will be accountable for actual decades...and they had each other.

He lovingly strokes her hair. 100 birds fly into the window and squawk as they die. Blackout.

## SCENE 7

A moment of quiet, still darkness. A small, almost inaudible scratching sound. Slowly, the sound gets louder. The lights start to come up, but now they're red. ABBY enters, wearing a long, flowing white nightgown. At first it seems she's just standing there, until she reveals an enormous meat cleaver. She moves around the room, apparently looking for something. She takes her time. The scratching is now a very loud knocking, scraping sound. In the background, animal noises become distinguishable. Low, growling sounds, like a wolf that's about to attack. ABBY goes to the door. She carefully reaches for the doorknob, turns it, and begins to open the door. A greenish gray, ghoulish, clawed hand reaches through the crack. With a scream like a battle cry, she raises the meat cleaver up and brings it down hard and fast, chopping off the hand of the creature, who lets out a primitive screech. The hand falls to the floor. The lights cut out.

## SCENE 8

Interview corner. The sign reads "CONRAD DRECK, CRYPTOZOOLOGIST" His right eye is covered with a patch.

He sports a bushy mustache and wears what looks like a black band t-shirt that says “FJORD FUCKERS” on it, and a pentagram necklace. He likes using unnecessary “air quotes.”

#### CONRAD

What’s cryptozoology? Sure, I get that question a lot. Cryptozoology is the noble study of creatures whose “reported” existence is “unproved.” Which, first of all, you have to know right out of the gate that most folks are not going to “report” this kind of shit so that people won’t say they’re “crazy.” The Loch Ness Monster, and the majestic Sasquatch are a couple of well-known cryptids, but if you stop there you’re really robbing yourself of a lot of knowledge. To me, the most interesting cryptids, and the ones who teach us the most about who we are as humans on this planet are the lesser known, local varieties of cryptid, like Kentucky’s Pope Lick Monster, Mokele-mbembe in the Congo, or even Ohio’s Loveland Frog, which is a humanoid with a frog’s face. I don’t like to think about that one. They say it can ride a bicycle. I came to Moorestown, in 1999 to study the Jersey Devil, and I guess you could say I just “never left.” Something in me feels very connected to this place. People will tell you that you’re standing on a hotbed of supernatural activity. And they’re not “wrong,” but they also ARE WRONG. Your average Joe Blow just has a really limited view of the creatures on this planet, and it’s a shame. Did you know that only five percent of the entire ocean has been explored? FIVE PERCENT. Imagine being so full of your own shit that you think you know anything about anything. You don’t. I just know enough to know I don’t know, that’s the only thing that puts me ahead of “the game.” So if you’re gonna stand here on this troubled ground, in shitting distance of the *ONE POINT ONE MILLION* acres of land that make up the barrens, and tell me you don’t think there’s anything here we haven’t seen yet -- I don’t “buy it.” Anyway, if you’re interested in Norwegian black metal music, I’ll be playing with my band --

(showing his t-shirt)

The Fjord Fuckers, at the 4th of July block party. We *may* have gotten in by pretending our name was “The Fjord Folks.” We’re disrupting the system from the inside. They like to host events like this to expand “community engagement and growth” but I’m pretty sure it’s the same people every time.

(beat)

Oh, the patch? I fell on a fork. I told you, man, weird shit happens here all the time. I kept the fork. Never quite seen one like it. Has a goat head on one end. People make the weirdest shit.

#### SCENE 9 (JULY)

The cabin, the next day. NORMAN is sitting, drinking coffee, and painting the severed hand with a tiny brush. ABBY enters.

She's wearing pajamas (not the nightgown) and her hair is a mess. She almost looks hungover.

NORMAN

There's breakfast in the kitchen. It's an enchilada with an egg on it.

ABBY

A runny egg?

NORMAN

Of course. That's the only kind worth--

ABBY & NORMAN

(rubbing her eyes)

I/you can't have runny eggs.

NORMAN

Shit, sorry.

(finally looking at her)

Geez. Rough night?

ABBY

Yeah.

NORMAN

There's coffee in th--oh...right...can't have coffee.

ABBY

I'm definitely having coffee.

NORMAN

Is that...

ABBY

It's fine. I decide if it's fine and today it's fine.

ABBY exits to get coffee.

NORMAN

Oookayyyy...

ABBY

(shouting, off)

Most of those rules were made up decades ago anyway and aren't really based on anything other than fear!

NORMAN

So why don't you have the egg?

ABBY

(shouting, off)

Because I believe that one.

NORMAN

I talked to my mom this morning.

ABBY

(off)

Yeah?

NORMAN

They want us to come home for Christmas.

ABBY

(off)

Yeah?

NORMAN

I told them we'd think about it. Might be nice. You know, to see everybody. Like, before the...baby.

(he feels weird saying it)

Baby. Huh. Baaaaaby. So weird.

(weird baby voice)

Daddy has a baby...ew.

ABBY re-enters, carrying a cup of coffee in one hand, and holding a dead raccoon by the tail with the other.

ABBY

Friend of yours?

NORMAN

Jesus, AGAIN?! How are they getting *inside*?

ABBY walks over to the door, opens it, casually tosses the dead animal outside. She grabs a bottle of hand sanitizer and squeezes some into her palm, then rubs her hands together.

ABBY

They could come here instead. Your parents.

NORMAN

Oh, uh...I mean, yes, technically they could.

ABBY

Instead of making a pregnant woman travel across the country.

NORMAN

Well you'd be flying, not going by covered wagon. You don't have to eat gruel or anything.

ABBY

I'll be extremely pregnant at Christmas.

NORMAN

Too pregnant for flight?

ABBY

Yes. Much. We have a lot of pregnancy books. You could read a couple.

NORMAN

I know, I just...I get nervous.

ABBY

You think I don't? I keep imagining my vagina ripping open and the sound is like someone tearing a sleeve off to wrap around somebody's injured thigh in an action movie.

NORMAN

I feel like the more I know, the worse it's going to get.

ABBY

Imagine if it was *YOUR BODY*. Really, please imagine it. I imagine it all the time. Would truly love nothing more than to pass this on to you instead so I could...I don't know, smoke cigars and eat raw fish.

NORMAN

Is that what you think I've been doing?



ABBY

You could be! I can't even have fucking deli turkey.

NORMAN

I'm sorry you can't have cigars wrapped in deli turkey and spicy tuna. God, my palms are sweating just talking about this.

ABBY

Maybe it's time for some exposure therapy.

ABBY grabs *What To Expect When You're Expecting* from a side table.

NORMAN

Oh god.

ABBY

We're a team, remember? I'm just going to open this up to a random page.

NORMAN

Oh god.

ABBY

And we'll just read it together.

NORMAN nods several times, too quickly.  
ABBY opens the book to a random page.

ABBY

Okay, yeah, this is a good one, actually. "Your blood volume increases significantly during pregnancy, causing protruding veins and occasionally, bloody noses."

NORMAN

Your blood volume increases?! HOW? Doesn't everyone always have the same amount of blood? You can't hold more blood! No, I do not like this, Abby. Don't care for this at all.

ABBY

(flipping to another page)

Ah yes "The Mucous Plug!"

NORMAN

(flipping to a different page)

No thank you.

ABBY

“Anal Fissures!” Excellent choice!

NORMAN grabs the book and throws it over his shoulder.

NORMAN

I swear I’ll read it. I will. But I think I need to...ease into it a little more. Or have a stiff drink...or...something.

ABBY

I wish I could have a stiff drink.

NORMAN

Sorry. You’re right. Sorry. I’m shit at this.

ABBY spots the hand on the table.

ABBY

Where did you get that?

NORMAN

Hm? Oh! I don’t know, I thought you got it.

ABBY

No.

NORMAN

Ah, well, I probably just ordered it online at 3am and forgot. That’s how we ended up with those giant lawn gnomes! I’ve gotten lots of compliments on those.

ABBY

We should get rid of it.

NORMAN

What? No way! I’m just touching up some of the paint - it doesn’t stick well, weird texture on this thing - and then I bet we can sell it to some local goth kid or something. Do they still make local goth kids?

ABBY

I don’t want it in here.

ABBY grabs the hand and goes to the door again.

NORMAN

We can't just keep throwing weird shit out the door!  
 (grabbing a small trash can)  
 Here, throw it in the trash, I'll take it out later.

She hesitates. He wiggles the trash can. She sighs and drops it in.

NORMAN

(checking his watch)

Shit. I gotta go into town. I have a meeting with the guy from Moorestown Nuts & Mutts to talk about carrying some of their mixed nuts here. At least I hope it's that and not like 40 angsty Rottweilers.

He kisses her on the head and leaves. She's alone once again. She sighs and sits down on the couch. The sounds of a car starting up and driving away. She flips on the radio again. We hear the end of a radio jingle "Cuz when it's candles you want, then it's candles you'll get, at Mindy's candles and thiiiiings! Now with more things!" As she's listening, and looking straight ahead, the front door slowly creaks open. She doesn't notice.

ABBY

God damn it, Mindy. Things are supposed to be *our* thing!

Sylvia steps inside.

SYLVIA

I wouldn't worry about it.

ABBY

Oh! Hello there!

SYLVIA

Mindy is more into huffing candles than she is into running a business.

ABBY

I didn't hear you come in. Welcome to Billiam's Antiques & Collectibles! Here, let me just-

SYLVIA runs a finger along the countertop. She looks at her finger in disgust and brushes her hands off.

SYLVIA

No, no. Please, don't stand up on my account.

ABBY

Normally I would insist--

SYLVIA

But you're...encumbered.

ABBY

Thank you for understanding.

SYLVIA

(looking around)

Amazing how much the inside of a place can change, but the skeleton remains the same.

ABBY

(no idea where this is going)

Yeah.

SYLVIA

Sorry it's taken me so long to come out here. Busy, busy, busy. You know how it is.

ABBY

Definitely.

SYLVIA

Enjoying your stay?

ABBY

Well, we live here, actually. My husband and I.

SYLVIA

Do you?

ABBY

I'm sorry, have we met before?

SYLVIA

No. You and I haven't, no. But this house and I...we know each other like bones from the same body. Like ash from the same fire. Like my cousin Salvatore knows his cheap wife.

ABBY

I'm...sorry, I'm actually feeling kind of tired.

SYLVIA

Of course you are, honey. This place can either strengthen you like a thousand suns, or suck the very soul from your steadily weakening flesh.

ABBY

Maybe another time would be--

SYLVIA

My grandmother gave birth to my mother, here. I can't see the spot because of your hideous couch, but I know there's still a stain on the floorboards. Birth is so...

ABBY

Messy?

SYLVIA

Monstrous.

ABBY

Oh.

SYLVIA

I was born in the hallway. Mother couldn't even make it to the living room. I couldn't wait to get out. Foolish of me, really, but as an infant at the time I don't think I can take the blame.

ABBY

So you lived here?

SYLVIA

We all did. We can only *really live* here. But it turns out we had no official paperwork showing this house was ours anymore. There had been a fire some years before. The city used it as an excuse to steal it out from under us, so they could make a profit from people who think that feeling restless and unmoored in their perfectly typical hometowns is an existential crisis the world is responsible for solving. They changed the locks one day. At the time I was three months along, though later the doctor said she could find no sign that there was ever anything there. Just a hollow pit. They put the house on the market without telling me. They sold it...They took away my *birthright*.

ABBY

I'm...so sorry. I didn't know. How could I have known? ...Where do you live now?

SYLVIA

(bitterly)

A *condo* in town.

ABBY

A condo! That sounds nice!

SYLVIA

I suppose so. It has an indoor hot tub. Strong jets. Cold marble countertops.

ABBY

That sounds much better than this old place, anyway.

SYLVIA

Maybe so. But I can't feel it like I can feel this house. I can't breathe with the walls there.

(beat)

No woman from my family has been able to successfully conceive and give birth anywhere other than this house. We've all tried. Each time, our bellies swell, and then shrink down again. Each time it's as if there was never anything there.

(beat)

It can be stifling here.

(she nearly shudders)

The air sits tight in your lungs. I hate it here. I want to burn it to the cursed fucking ground. But without it...my family will die off, and with it, the legend of the devil, and the entire city of Moorestown.

ABBY

Is it...just a legend? Because I've seen some pretty w--

SYLVIA

Jesus, of course it is. You really think there's a big fuckin' monster going around eating people? My family, we've been keeping the legend alive for centuries. My great great great great grandmother was one of Mother Leeds' midwives. Her husband had insisted on more children at every possible opportunity. When her 13th baby died within minutes of being born, that was it for Mother Leeds, she couldn't take it anymore. Couldn't take the constant births, the babies feeding from her body for over a decade. Their growing strength meaning her increasing weakness. She vowed never to go through it again. So she and my clever however-many-greats grandmother concocted a story that the child had been born a beastly, feral, evil creature with wings, hooves, and a taste for human flesh. They destroyed the room in which he was born.

Blood wasn't hard to come by -- poor Mother Leeds provided that. They took her soaked sheets and streaked the walls with crimson.

ABBY

Jesus.

SYLVIA

Through the hysteria and the blood, her husband agreed they must never have another child together lest it be a devil. The midwives kept up the charade throughout their lives, to protect her, and the story grew and stretched and morphed. Mother Leeds outlived her husband, and when she passed, made sure the house was turned over to my ancestors for eternity. It wasn't hard, considering nobody wanted to touch the place. So, over the years, the legend became an important part of the fabric of this town. Nearly all our commerce is tied to it. And now I'm burdened with keeping it up, lucky me. The past has a way of screwing the present. So, now there are hoof prints here and there made with a stamp. A few people go missing. Some traces of blood. Just enough to keep people thinking there's something special going on here. The missing people just outsider-enough not to be missed much. Just enough for people to think "That may have happened to them but it'll never happen to *me*." Isn't it funny, the comfort that brings. Tragic. Not as tragic as the specific curse of my own family, of course. This town, this house, and I: we are all one. We're a bunch 'a heads sproutin' from the same body.

ABBY

Like a hydra?

SYLVIA

No, not like a fuckin' hydra. If you cut off a hydra's head it grows two back in its place. You cut down one of us, we all fall away. Without the mystery, without the *pizzaz* this stupid, fake creature brings, we're just...a town, withering away like an Olive Garden in an abandoned mall until we sink into the earth like fossils. But it doesn't have to be like that.

ABBY

...Of course not.

SYLVIA

You could leave right now.

ABBY

That's not what I meant.

SYLVIA

I don't care what you meant, Abby. Why did you come here?

Sylvia makes her way around to the back of the couch.

ABBY

The house was in our price range.

SYLVIA

But why this house, specifically?

ABBY

I don't know, I just--

Sylvia puts her hands on Abby's shoulders.  
Abby flinches but doesn't try to get away.

SYLVIA

You felt something.

ABBY

I felt that I wanted a house.

SYLVIA

You felt pulled here. Called here. Do you know why?

(Sylvia bends down next to Abby's ear.  
She's starting to push down on her  
shoulders now.)

Because you're from here too, Abby.

ABBY

I'm from Sacramento. I hate it, but I'm definitely from--

SYLVIA

The thing is, one of the midwives didn't go along with the plan. For decades, she blackmailed Mother Leeds and the others. Sucked up their resources. Threatened them all that she's go to the husband and tell him what happened. And what exactly do you think would have been done to those women in the mid 1700s if they were found out?

ABBY

Wait a minute, you don't know what you're--

The house creaks and moans. Sylvia lets go of Abby and walks around to the side of the couch.



SYLVIA

It's important to know who you come from Abby. To know who you are. A fucking traitor.

Abby tries to stand, but cannot. Her head is pounding.

ABBY

I feel like I weigh a thousand pounds. What are you doing to me?

SYLVIA

Oh, Abby. It's not me.

(the house creaks)

Unfortunately, I do have to run. But just know that this is your last chance. If you're not out of here by Christmas, we'll both regret it. How strong do you think that baby is, exactly? This house won't have it, Abby. This cannot stand. No one from outside my family has ever lived through bearing a child here since Mother Leeds, and the children don't survive it either. The violence of it. Oh, how easy it is for people to believe that monsters are real. And how hard it is for them to believe that what we do in a place gives it power we can't imagine. That the centuries of women who have given their bodies over for the next generation to live, would leave deep scars in the foundation of this house with their screams. Funny how often the men are not even brave enough to enter the room. Not funny like "ha ha" but funny just the same.

Sylvia tosses a business card on the counter and opens the door to leave. She runs her hand over the wood in the doorway.

SYLVIA

See you soon.

ABBY

I'm not afraid of you.

SYLVIA

I don't know about you, but it's the baby I'm worried about. But that's me. I worry.

Sylvia exits. Abby is alone for a moment. She hears the house creak like it's trying to squeeze her, moan, and settle.

SCENE 10

Interview corner. Sign reads “STELLA AND CHUCK FLOSS” a middle aged married couple who have a tendency to interrupt, talk over, and otherwise slight each other throughout every conversation they’ve ever had in their entire lives. Intense Jersey accents.

STELLA

Six foot nine.

CHUCK

I’d say six foot ten.

STELLA

Nine. And with wings like a bat if a bat were absolutely huge.

CHUCK

No, they were more kinda translucent-type. Almost a delicate kinda deal.

STELLA

I was much closer so I got a real good look. I saw it right smack dab in the middle of the 4th of July block party, equidistant between the Taylor Ham eating contest and the Pork Roll eating contest.

CHUCK

Yeah but I have better eyesight.

(smiling proudly and gesturing to his eyes)

20/40 vision.

STELLA

That’s not how it works, Chuck.

CHUCK

Anyway it had this big head and these huge glowing red eyes.

STELLA

More of an amber than a red.

CHUCK

They were red! Fire engine red!

STELLA

It spoke to me.

CHUCK

Oh, here we go with this now.

STELLA

It did! It spoke right to me!

CHUCK

It didn't say a thing.

STELLA

Yes, it did! It said "STELLAAAAAAA" -- that's my name -- it said "STELLAAAAA LET'S GET OUTTA HEEEEERE." Right before it snatched those two nice old ladies with the instagrams.

CHUCK

That was me. I said that.

STELLA

Ya did not.

CHUCK

I did so.

STELLA

I heard what I heard. And then those ladies, Jeanie and Gloria, were just gone. That's what you get for being internet famous.

CHUCK

Stella, how on earth would that thing know your name?

STELLA

I'm very popular in town.

CHUCK

That thing don't know your name. It did make a sound, though. Like an ocarina gettin' caught in a meat grinder!

STELLA

What the hell is an ocarina?

CHUCK

Don't mind her, she ain't worldly like me.

(too loud)

IT'S A WIND INSTRUMENT, STELLA.

STELLA

Ya see what I deal with here? Ya see? It's enough to make you celibate. Gals at home, please, just sit on your washing machine while it's spinning and save yourself the effort!

CHUCK

Anyway, the thing uh...it uh...stole our car. A new car. A...uh...a Bentley! No...a Porsche!

STELLA

Oh yeah, agreed. Definitely stole a very expensive car of some variety. So, if you know someone who could get us a replacement--

CHUCK

Or even the cash. We'll take cash.

STELLA

(hooking her arm into his)

We would love cash.

They smile at each other lovingly. Blackout.

#### SCENE 11 (OCTOBER)

The cabin. ABBY enters from the bedroom. She is 7 months pregnant, and casually carries a heaping pile of dead raccoons. She wears a heavy cardigan and slippers. It is mid November.

ABBY

Norman, hurry up! I'm probably getting a disease, here!

NORMAN enters hurriedly, carrying a big trash bag.

NORMAN

Right behind you!

ABBY

Open it up as big as you can, I don't want a repeat of last time.

NORMAN half crouches, and opens up the trash bag as much as possible. ABBY clumsily dumps the carcasses into the bag. She brushes her hands off.

Birds?  
 ABBY

On it.  
 NORMAN

NORMAN opens the front door, goes outside, and comes back with an armful of dead birds. ABBY holds the trash bag open and he dumps the birds inside, atop the raccoons. NORMAN ties the bag up and drags it outside.

Snakes?  
 ABBY  
 (calling after him)

Right!  
 NORMAN  
 (off)

ABBY grabs a new trash bag, and flings it open. She grabs a second one and puts the first bag inside it.

Always double bag the snakes.  
 ABBY  
 (to herself)

NORMAN reenters the house, then exits to the back of it, coming back with an armful of snakes. He dumps them in ABBY's double bag. She ties it up and hands it to him. She gives him a little kiss. He takes the snakes outside. ABBY covers her hands in hand sanitizer, then hands the bottle to NORMAN when he comes back, who does the same. They sit down and take a breath. ABBY grabs a book.

Now, where did we leave off yesterday?  
 ABBY

We had just finished chapter 12: the seventh month.  
 NORMAN

ABBY

Okay, chapter 13: the eighth month, approximately 28 to 31 weeks. We're almost to that now! "It's the eighth month, and it's time you learn something more about Braxton Hicks contractions, and the lack of bladder control."

NORMAN

Oooo my favorite.

ABBY

Hard same. Can't wait to piss everywhere.

They share a small laugh.

ABBY

Hey.

NORMAN

Yeah?

ABBY

No matter what changes your body goes through during these final months and weeks of pregnancy, I'll still think you're beautiful.

NORMAN

But my ankles are so swollen!

ABBY

You're still okay with all this, right?

NORMAN

What do you mean? The baby?! OF COURSE! God, I never thought I could be so excited about meeting a new person. Usually I hate that. Blech.

ABBY

No, I mean...well. The raccoons. The birds. The snakes that are somehow here even though it's cold outside.

NORMAN

What's a little dead wildlife for an eternity with our little family?

ABBY

(sighing with relief)

Okay, good.

(back to the book)

‘If the baby has testes they should begin to descend between weeks 30 and 34.’ I have to say, I’ve never felt great about having to grow somebody else’s balls. Fingers crossed we get one without balls.

NORMAN

Can’t blame ya.

ABBY

“You may feel tired and have difficulty breathing.” Yeah, I mean, no shit. “You may get varicose veins, or hemorrhoids, which are varicose veins of the rectum.”...Cool.

She is not enjoying this chapter. As she reads, her fear grows and the lights around her start to dim.

ABBY

“Hemorrhoids can be painful, itchy, and cause bleeding. You may also get stretch marks where you skin has expanded. Braxton-Hicks contractions, heartburn, and constipation are likely. You may urinate a bit when sneezing or laughing because of pressure from your uterus on your bladder. Leg cramps. Fatigue. Stress.” Anxiety. Fear. Increasing sense of doom. Absolute abject terror.

NORMAN

Abby. You can do this.

ABBY

I don’t know if I can. *You* don’t know either. How could *you* know if *I* don’t?

NORMAN

I know.

ABBY

What happens if we can’t make it to the hospital?

NORMAN

What? Why would you think that?

ABBY

I just mean...it happens, you know. Like women giving birth in taxis. Like what if...I just give birth here on the floor. What if the baby...

NORMAN

Wow. Okay. We already agreed that the moment you feel anything that could be a contraction, we're going in. If we get there and they tell us it's just gas or whatever, I don't even care. Great. Let it be gas. Give birth to gas *at the hospital*.

ABBY

It could happen, though.

NORMAN

*Anything* could happen, Abby. I could find out I'm a distant relative of Guy Fieri and inherit his bowling shirt collection. But I really doubt it.

ABBY

I'm just saying, things could go wrong.

NORMAN

And I'm just saying *no*, absolutely not. No thank you. I don't even want to talk about this. I can't talk about this right now. I'm going to clean. Or...what do they call it, nesting? You just stay here and rest.

ABBY

Rest. Right.

Norman grabs a few cleaning products and exits to the bedroom or bathroom to keep cleaning. When he's out of the room, Abby closes her book. The house creaks and sighs. She stands and touches the wall, closing her eyes and breathing slowly. A faint breathing sound that's not coming from her. Slowly, carefully, she pulls the couch back. She lowers herself to the floor with some difficulty. There is a faint stain on the floor where the couch used to be. She lies down on her side and puts her hand on the stain, slowly tracing it, and closes her eyes.

SCENE 12

Interview corner. Sign reads "LOCAL TEEN,  
PRESTON GILBERT"

PRESTON

I heard the Jersey Devil is actually a alien with huge tits.



He smiles and nods several times.

PRESTON

Nice

(pause)

Sixty niiiine.

Blackout.

### SCENE 13

The cabin. It's dark. Silent. The red light returns. ABBY enters, in the nightgown again. She's breathing heavily. She's carrying a large, old shotgun. There is a rustling sound outside. It pauses. Then a loud thud coming from overhead. She looks up at the ceiling. The sound of hooves walking around on the roof. Suddenly, she feels a sharp pain in her gut, like someone is reaching into her and twisting her intestines. She drops the shotgun. The lights go completely black. In the darkness, THE SOMETHING is walking into the cabin, between ABBY and the audience. The steps are heavy and deliberate. THE SOMETHING stops, and faces upstage so its back is to the audience. Still in pain, ABBY feels around on the table next to her and grabs a flashlight. She turns it on and points it at THE SOMETHING, which is holding a basket just big enough for a baby, with a little pink blanket in it. She gasps. The flashlight turns off. In the darkness, we see the glowing severed hand on a shelf.

### SCENE 14

Interview corner. Sign reads "PRUDENCE BENDER, JUNIOR LIBRARIAN & AMATEUR HISTORIAN" She is 12 years old, big glasses, big toothy smile. She sometimes has to push up her glasses, which have a tendency to slide down her nose.

## PRUDENCE

In the year eighteen hundred and twenty, Joseph Bonaparte, the older brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, whomst you may know of, had already been in the United States of America after abdicating his throne as the King of Spain in 1813 and fleeing in the wake of his brother's defeat. From his new home in Bordentown, New Jersey -- Go Scotties! -- he could easily keep up with the latest news from Spain and France because Bordentown was between two major sea ports in Philadelphia and New York. Joseph developed both a beautiful home and a friend group which included the likes of John Adams and the Marquis de Lafayette. The story goes, that one snowy day, Joseph Bonaparte went hunting on his own, as he was sometimes known to do, when he saw some mysterious tracks on the ground, which appeared to be made by something like a bipedal donkey, who had one foot that was larger than the other. As a side note, my left foot is a size five and my right foot is a six and a half, so I can relate.

(she smiles and waits as if for a laugh,  
and then moves on when she realizes she  
isn't going to get one.)

He also noticed that the tracks ended abruptly as if the creature had flown away. As he examined the footprints, he was alarmed to suddenly hear a loud hissing sound! When he turned around he found himself looking right into the eyes of a huge winged animal with a head like a horse and legs like a bird. Before he could gather himself up to do anything about it, the creature flew away. He never saw the creature again, but others did, including Commodore Stephen Decatur who was testing cannons when the beast flew over his head. He fired a cannonball and managed to hit the devil, but it seemed to feel no impact, and kept right on flying. The incident stuck with Decatur, haunting him until his untimely death in a duel at the hand of Commodore James Barron.

(she sniffles her stuffed nose)

Okay that's it.

## SCENE 15 (DECEMBER)

The cabin. There are Christmas touches throughout. ABBY is 9 months pregnant and is reading a pregnancy book out loud. She wears a cute wintery a-line dress. NORMAN is dusting things. When he's uncomfortable with what she's saying, he dusts faster.

ABBY

As the baby begins to descend through the--

NORMAN

Oh boy.

ABBY

You're tellin' me! -- descend through the birth canal, you will feel an enormous pressure often compared to the feeling that one needs to begin a bowel movement. This indicates that you should start to push. Eventually the head should become visible --

NORMAN exhales loudly.

ABBY

In through the nose, out through the mouth, Norman.

NORMAN

Hey, same to you!

Norman begins to breathe very deliberately.

NORMAN

Come on, do it with me!

ABBY

(alternating breathing and reading)

When the head does become visible, it's important that you continue to push through the often stinging, burning sensation that can accompany this part of the birthing process. Oh, I've heard about this! The ring of fire!

NORMAN's controlled breathing quickens a bit.  
He is dusting too fast.

ABBY

Oof, I gotta pee!

ABBY runs off to the bathroom.

NORMAN

Imagine a head coming out of a...GOD that sounds awful. I can't believe there are any new people, ever. How are they doing this over and over again?! I say this now because I cannot say it when she walks back in here. And now I'm talking to myself. This seems fine.

A soft rumbling in the distance. The sky has darkened.

NORMAN

(off)

Babe! It's THUNDER SNOWING! I've heard about this but I've never seen it myself!  
It's a Christmas miracle!

ABBY enters from the bathroom and looks out  
the window.

ABBY

Wow. Thundersnow. Who knew? Maybe you should put the car in the garage?

NORMAN

Does that matter?

ABBY

To be honest, I have no idea. Just sounded like something my dad would have said.

They both shrug, NORMAN grabs his coat and  
exits to put the car in the garage. A crack of  
thunder so loud that ABBY is startled.

ABBY

Ah! Jesus. That seems unnecessary.

She pulls her cardigan tightly around her.  
Another bolt of lightning. The power cuts out.

ABBY

Of course.

There is a sudden silence. She hears the light  
scratching sound from her dreams. Her breath  
catches in her throat. Everything suddenly feels  
very familiar and very real. The front door  
slowly opens, wind blowing bits of snow in with  
it. NORMAN appears in the door. The lights  
suddenly pop back on, and a burst of low  
thunder rattles in the distance.

NORMAN

Hoo, it's *wild* out there. But on the plus side, no dead raccoons to bag up!

ABBY

The power was out for a second there. I thought...

NORMAN  
(taking off his coat and mittens)

Hm?

ABBY

Nothing. Just deja vu I guess.

NORMAN  
(wrapping his arms around her)

You look so cozy.

He kisses her and touches her belly.

NORMAN  
And you know what? I really think we're ready for this.

ABBY

Cocoa?

NORMAN

You want to name the baby Coco?!

ABBY

No, I mean, do you want some cocoa?

NORMAN

Oh! Definitely.

(beat)

You want me to make it, don't you?

ABBY

Yup!

NORMAN scurries off to make some cocoa.  
There is a knock at the door. ABBY hesitates,  
then answers it. SYLVIA enters, dressed in an  
obnoxious faux fur coat.

SYLVIA

Mrs. Kristoff.

ABBY

Stop right there.

SYLVIA  
(staring at her belly)

Well, fuck me.

ABBY

Is there something you want?

SYLVIA  
This is...surprising. I mean that you're still here. Still pregnant. Unprecedented.

ABBY  
Look, I'm sorry you lost the house. I really am. But this is our home now, and I don't believe in or need any of your wacky made up bullshit, okay? Not today. Please just leave.

SYLVIA  
I'm afraid that's not possible. Especially not now.

ABBY  
My husband is here.

SYLVIA  
Oh, good! He can meet my cousins.

Phil & Tony enter, carrying baseball bats. Abby backs up.

ABBY  
(calling off)  
Norman!

NORMAN  
(off)  
Cocoa's almost ready!

SYLVIA  
They're not so bad once you get to know them.

TONY  
I'm great on a trivia team. And Phil here can make almost any animal out of a balloon.

PHIL  
Of course, we can also smash your kneecaps.

ABBY  
NORMAAAAAN!

NORMAN comes running.

NORMAN

What's wr--WHAT?! Who is that? Who are they? WHAT IS HAPPENING?!

ABBY

I really don't have time to catch you up on it right --

Abby gasps like the wind has been knocked out of her.

NORMAN

(moving toward her)

Abby!

He places himself between them and Abby.

SYLVIA

Shit.

TONY

What's goin' on, Syl?

SYLVIA

She's going into goddamned labor.

PHIL

We could toss her in the snowbank?

TONY

That's the first good idea you've had.

NORMAN

You stay away from her!

SYLVIA sighs and rubs her temples.

SYLVIA

Kill the guy. We don't need 'em.

Phil & Tony both come at Norman with their bats.

ABBY

Leave him alone!

SYLVIA takes a step toward ABBY, she puts her hands on her belly. ABBY is mid-contraction and in too much pain to do anything other than grab SYLVIA's arms as a reflex and squeeze them for dear life.

SYLVIA

I can't believe it.

The lights flicker. When they stabilize, it's clear there is blood running down ABBY's leg. The wind is picking up outside.

NORMAN

Babe, you're bleeding!

SYLVIA

Okay, Abby, you need to get down on the floor.

ABBY cries in wordless pain. SYLVIA starts lowering her to the floor, taking off her coat and putting it under her head.

NORMAN

(who continues struggling to fend off Tony & Phil with whatever he can grab -- trinkets, novelty license plates, etc)

Get your hands off of her!

SYLVIA

If you want this goddamn baby to live you better let me do what I'm doin'!

ABBY

I can't do this, I can't!

SYLVIA

You're probably right but it's happening anyway!

Lights continue flickering at random intervals.  
SYLVIA holds ABBY's hand.

ABBY

Don't fucking touch me-AHHHHH!



She has another strong, painful contraction. She squeezes SYLVIA's hand with all her might. Suddenly the lights cut out for a moment. Then red light floods the stage. Unintelligible sounds all mashed together: static, heart beats, snow crunching beneath giant feet, scraping on the walls that seems to be coming from everywhere. NORMAN, PHIL, and TONY all stop fighting and look around. ABBY feels like her insides are being ripped out, and maybe they are. SYLVIA looks all around, like she can feel the air shifting. She stands up.

ABBY

What's going on?

NORMAN

Thunder...snow? I guess? But red? Uhhhh...

The front door flies open. The wind is howling and bolts of lightning flash intermittently.

ABBY

It's happening, Norman! It's happening right now! This baby is HAPPENING TO US!

An inhuman screech like a dragon whose lair has been infiltrated. Everyone but ABBY, who has her eyes squeezed shut tight, looks out the door. A clawed hand reaches in and grabs TONY, dragging him kicking and screaming out into the night. It's loud in there, everyone has to shout to be heard.

NORMAN

Shiiiiit.

SYLVIA

It can't be.

ABBY

What? What happened?!

NORMAN

(his voice is too high)

Uhhhh...nothing!

ABBY

Really? Sounded like something was happening.

NORMAN

Nope, all good!

ABBY

AAAGGHHHHHHHHH!

SYLVIA

No. Not possible.

The hand comes back and grabs PHIL's leg.  
PHIL grabs onto NORMAN.

NORMAN

Release me, damn it!

ABBY

Norman!

The hand pulls both PHIL and NORMAN out the door. The stage goes black. The only sound is of howling wind, but a little quieter now. A very long beat. The first cry of a baby. The lights come back up and SYLVIA is holding a little bundle in her coat. ABBY is not moving.

SYLVIA

(touching the baby's face)

Shhhh. My baby. My sweet little baby. Cousin Salvatore's not gonna believe this.

NORMAN walks back through the door.

NORMAN

Put down my child.

She's clearly surprised to see him alive, and takes a step back.

SYLVIA

No.

NORMAN

Or, I mean, don't put her *down*, obviously, *give her to me*. Hand her the fuck over, right now or I'll...I don't know, I'll chew through your neck until your head falls off. That sounds impossible but like, right now I think I could do it. I think I could do anything.

He approaches her slowly but with purpose.

SYLVIA

I never got to...I never...

NORMAN

I'm sorry, lady. I am. I can see that you...I can see it's...

He carefully slips a hand under the bundle. SYLVIA is stiff but does not stop him. Silent tears stream down her face. He slips his other hand between Sylvia's body and the baby, and slips the baby out of her arms and into his, quickly stepping away from her. SYLVIA squeezes her eyes shut tight, she stands motionless and devastated. NORMAN goes to ABBY, touching her face. She stirs, opens her eyes, and looks up at the two of them. SYLVIA looks back out the front door. The JERSEY DEVIL calls to her with a light dragon roar. She gathers herself and walks out the door toward the waiting beast. Lights fade to black, but the hand on the shelf glows.

SCENE 16

Interview corner. Sign reads: "ABBY & NORMAN KRISTOFF, NEW PARENTS"  
ABBY is holding a little pink bundle of blankets.

NORMAN

What do we think about Moorestown?

They look at each other.

NORMAN & ABBY

We love it here!

ABBY

The Jersey Devil?

They look at each other again.

NORMAN & ABBY

Mmmm nooo, nope, no never heard of it.

ABBY

I don't think we'll ever leave. This is home to us now. Our daughter was born here and we're just...we feel very connected to this place. It would be hard to leave now. Also my husband hates change.

NORMAN

Guilty as charged! Haha

ABBY

I can see our family here for generations to come. We hope to pass our house down to our daughter some day.

NORMAN

(answering a question from the interviewer)

A second child?

ABBY

OH FUCK OFF!

NORMAN

Um, she means, we're pretty satisfied with just the one. But hey, you never know!

ABBY

(smiling)

No, I definitely know.

NORMAN

We should be getting back home. I think Sylvia's getting fussy.

The baby giggles, and then screeches like a monster.

ABBY

What would I say to people who want to know what Moorestown is really all about? I guess...

Um...  
NORMAN

They look at each other.

Yeah...  
ABBY

Family.  
ABBY & NORMAN

A single raccoon falls from the sky.

END OF PLAY.