NOTHING LIKE THE SUN

Written by
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FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

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EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT (1949)

ALICE MITCHELL (20s) staggers from a car, dressed in a CHEAP FUR COAT for a touch of class. She's had a bit much to drink, disgusted over what she's just done.

She gathers herself, spits and wipes her mouth, gets back in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Alice entertains a client: a man in his 30s wearing a cheap suit. He's feeling her up, groping her, kissing her neck.

He's moderately drunk; reaches between her legs. She concedes and takes another drink to dull her sickness doing this.

INT. CLIENT'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

On a sofa, the client is half-drunk; kisses Alice's exposed breasts in his sleep, uses them as a pillow. She looks away to the television to distract herself from this.

INT. CLIENT'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

They have sex in his bed. He's on top, completely drunk, thrusting in an out repeatedly. She's gone numb.

INT. CLIENT'S BEDROOM - DAWN

He's asleep. She's awake, dressed, pockets her payment. She reaches for his wallet, takes what else he has, leaves.

EXT. MANGER HOME - DAY

A downtown home in a semi-squalor neighborhood.

INT. MANGER HOME, ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

After a bath in her towel, on the edge of her small bed, counting the little money she's earned.

Half her clothes are still in a suitcase on the floor; wet laundry dries on a radiator.

KNOCK AT THE DOOR. A female voice calls out;

FEMALE VOICE

Miss Mitchell?
ALICE
Yes?

MRS. MANGER, an attractive mid-30s woman, enters.

MRS. MANGER
May we have a word?

Realizing she's half-naked and being looked at, Alice warms up, just coyly smiles; stares at her.

INT. MANGER HOME, DINING AREA - DAY

Dressed in decent clothes, Alice sits at a small dining table across from her landlord, MANGER (40s), and his wife.

ALICE
Mr. Manger: I appreciate your patience with me so I won't take up more of your time. But if you're willing to overlook this lateness just a while longer, I'll guarantee full payment by the end of the week, plus a bonus added for your trouble.

MANGER
This is the third time --

ALICE
And the last, I assure you.

MANGER
(considering)
What kind of bonus?

ALICE
Five-percent - that's for the late fee. Plus another five for each week it's overdue - that's the gratuity.

MANGER
By this week?

ALICE
This weekend at the latest, but it can be paid sooner on installment just like before. Of course if it takes a bit longer that's just more the bonus that you'll get. I just need to know we're in agreement.

She offers a meager sum. He counts it, dissatisfied; hands it to his wife, also not convinced. Long pause between them.
Alice fondly turns her attention to Mrs. Manger.

ALICE
You look very beautiful today, ma'am. How long have you been married?

MANGER
(cutting in)
A few years. Miss Mitchell, what kind of work is it you do again?

ALICE
... It's domestic work. Caretaking and Service.
(to Mrs. Manger; sweetly)
If there's any housework you need done, I'm happy to help. It'll go faster if we did it together.

MRS. MANGER
If you don't mind, why aren't you doing this work for a husband?

Alice is caught off guard, pushes a false smile.

MRS. MANGER
Where is your family?

The smile fades despite her effort. Her face conceals a sadness in her voice.

ALICE
I, I wanted a marriage my mother and father didn't approve of that didn't work out.

MRS. MANGER
When was the last time you saw them?

ALICE
... It's just me now.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, FIRST STREET CORNER - DAY

Near the STRIP/AVE. Appliance stores, bakeries, repair shops.

Back in prostitute clothes, Alice has set up shop by a clothing boutique, making up her face with a hand mirror.

She spots an older, gaudier street-walker in the distance soliciting a well-dressed CLIENT, who declines.
The disappointed street-walker notices Alice; watches her glad-hand him as he approaches her corner.

ALICE
Good day, sir.

CLIENT
Good day.

ALICE
(sweetly)
Are you married?

CLIENT
No, thank you. Not today.

ALICE
Where are you headed?

CLIENT
Back to work.

ALICE
What kind of work?

CLIENT
Car sales.

ALICE
I've been looking for a new car. Is it your lunch break? How about a smoke break for good luck?

CLIENT
Luck's been down this week.

ALICE
Let's make it go up then. How does twenty dollars sound?

CLIENT
My wife would know if I spent that.

ALICE
So what wouldn't she know?

CLIENT
Not enough time.

ALICE
Fifteen's fine; whatever time you have left. Anything you'd like.

She sweetly takes him by the arm. He considers her offer.
Alice steps from his car as it hurries away. She counts her money. Her jaw aches; she spits, wipes her mouth.

Alice exits the store with a bag of groceries. A bit further down, the street-walker from before bars her path.

STREET-WALKER
Hello there.

ALICE
Who's that?

STREET-WALKER
I want to talk to you for a moment. Can you come closer?

ALICE
For what?

STREET-WALKER
I just want to talk. Where are you coming from?

Alice recognizes her from earlier and becomes wary. She readies her purse like a weapon.

STREET-WALKER
Hehehe. There's no need for that. Let's be friends. You're so pretty and you smell so wonderful. Why don't you come a bit closer?

ALICE
You stay where you are.

STREET-WALKER
I saw you with that horrible man, you poor girl. Are you working with anyone else? Let me help you --

A man grabs Alice from behind. She struggles to push him off, and brings them both down to the ground. The street-walker rushes in, kicks her, grabs her purse.

She and her pimp hurry away, TIRES SCREECHING. Alice is left on the ground, a bit bruised and bloodied.
Alice licks her wounds. She gets up, heads down the street.

Alice paces through a suburb as day becomes evening.

Alice is across the street. She comes here every night to watch her mother and father eat dinner, wanting to join them.

Next day. Alice is on her bed, puts LINIMENT to her wounds. Manger KNOCKS, lets himself in, looks her over.

ALICE
There was trouble at work yesterday.

MANGER
Yes.

ALICE
I need another week.

MANGER
I need something now.

ALICE
I can pay something today. What can I offer?

MANGER
What were you offering those others?

She goes quiet, avoids eye-contact.

MANGER
You must be tired from walking.

ALICE
...

MANGER
I want my bonus first.
Manger rests in a chair. Alice is on her knees before him.

**ALICE**
How much do I get for this?

**MANGER**
I want my money's worth. And there's interest on what you owe.

**ALICE**
I'm raising my price.

**MANGER**
I don't need you peddling or talking prices. You take my offer for this bonus or you don't.

Lower on her knees.

**MANGER**
Nice and slow.

**ALICE**
It's not nice. Just hurry it up.

She opens her mouth and goes lower; gets it over with.

Mrs. Manger serves dinner. She passes a glance at Alice, who avoids eye-contact; no appetite - no taste left in her mouth.

In front of a different boutique, two female BOOK-PUSHERS hand out newsletters. One of them sees something; heads over.

At an adjacent corner, Alice has set up new shop, clutching tightly onto a new purse and watching her back. A client is checking out her goods.

He's a florid little man with thick glasses: anxious, excited, trying this for the first time - an easy mark.

**BOOK-PUSHER**
(waylays them)
Excuse me, Miss. Are you saved?

**ALICE**
Yes, I'm saving right now.
(to client)
The standard fee is twenty-five dollars, but twenty's my offer to you.

The book-pusher slips a church newsletter into Alice's purse.

BOOK-PUSHER
There can be ways around this, Sister. Why don't you join our Service?

ALICE
Why don't you turn your way and mind your business?

BOOK-PUSHER
And your wife, sir? Wouldn't your family be upset to see this?

The client panics, scuttles off. Alice wrestles the articles from the book-pusher, who stumbles backwards.

BOOK-PUSHER
You shouldn't do that ...

Alice throws a BIBLE back at her. Then another, and another.

BOOK-PUSHER
You should be saved --

ALICE
And who's going to save you? Get away from me.

Alice hurls the last one hard. Newsletters scatter. The book-pusher collects the litter as she hurries away.

BOOK-PUSHER
You've got a terrible thing coming your way ...

19

EXT. MANGER HOME - DAY

Alice is tired from walking with no luck. She steps to the house: her suitcase and clothes all over the porch.

She tries her key; it doesn't fit. She KNOCKS. No answer. Reality dawns on her. She gathers her things and heads off; notices Mrs. Manger watching her from behind curtains.
EXT. MIDTOWN, SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Alice is across the street with her suitcase in hand, looking towards the same midtown suburban home from before.

She hesitates; then finally decides to head over.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - NIGHT

Alice reluctantly steps up to the door, afraid to knock. She sits down instead, freezing; uses her FUR COAT as a blanket.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - DAWN

Alice has fallen asleep. A PAPER-BOY'S BICYCLE BELL LOUDENS as it approaches. A NEWSPAPER hits her.

DAD answers the door; finds her at his steps like a vagrant. He's stunned, looks her over.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - MOMENTS LATER

Alice is at the porch bench, having a cup of warm milk. Dad, a carpenter in overalls, brings out MOM, a homemaker, comes out with a look of disbelief and concern.

They take this all in; Mom offers an awkward hug, backs away.

MOM
You look thin. Have you been eating alright?

ALICE
Just fine. I just had a full meal yesterday.
(looks around)
Everything still looks the same.

DAD
Where are you staying?

ALICE
Not far. I was in the neighborhood for work and I wanted to stop by.

MOM
Are you staying with someone? ...

ALICE
... Not yet. No. Almost.
Alice scatters for an explanation. Mom and Dad catch on.
ALICE
I've had some bad luck lately and a lot of bad offers, so I've been working on my own a bit.

MOM
What kind of work?

ALICE
Housekeeping, door-to-door: enough to get by.

They notice her FUR COAT and prostitute clothes. She realizes this, ashamed. Their hearts sink. Dad searches for a reason to get away.

DAD
I'll be a bit late. I'll stop by the market.

Dad kisses them; heads out.

ALICE
He always forgets the milk. I remember always reminding you.

Mom's quiet.

ALICE
I know I'll find better work on my own. But if you're still here now, maybe ... If there's some work here. I can be out of the way. I won't have anyone over, not like before - not even another girl --

At the mention of "girl", Mom seizes up, anxiously scurries off without saying anything. Alice just watches her go.

INT. PARENTS' HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

A family room, carefully preserved. She's dressed in decent clothes, reminisces over a FAMILY PHOTO of her as a child being held in Mom and Dad's arms.

She goes through the newspaper's help wanted, pulls a pencil from her purse, discovers the church newsletter from before. Some words grab her attention.
25  
**EXT. PARENTS' HOME, FRONT YARD - DAY**

Mom prunes the roses. Alice tip-toes closer; wants to help. She's clumsy, pricks her finger against the thorns.

26  
**EXT. PARENTS' HOME, BACK YARD - DAY**

Laundry dries along clotheslines. Mom hand-washes using a washboard and basin tub. Alice brings a new load, offers a hand but tears one of Dad's shirts.

LATER. Mom's at work at a nearby garden. Alice watches from a distance; dares not make another mess.

Mom sees this, reaches out and draws her close.

**MOM**

It's alright. It's not your fault.
I've missed you so much ...

Alice moves in, hugs her, relieved. Mom pulls her closer, hugs her tighter; very happy to have her back.

But Mom is still unsure of all this.

27  
**INT. PARENTS' HOME, BEDROOM - DAYS LATER**

Mom weeps uncontrollably in bed, between desperation and despair. Dad holds and comforts her, settles her down. It's all directed at Alice, who watches this mess nearby.

28  
**EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - DAY**

Alice is by her suitcase; reviews the newsletter from before.

One of Dad's workers is loading tools onto a truck idling in the background. Dad emerges from the house.

**ALICE**

I was hoping she'd be better by now.

**DAD**

Her doctor says it's stress. He says it causes extreme anxiety when she's reminded of it.

**ALICE**

I know I'm sick. And I know it's made her sick all these years to know it.
DAD
It's not her fault, Alice. She can't help it. It's not your fault either, but --

She turns to the house; ashamed, helpless, frustrated with herself. Dad's not sure how to help.

ALICE
So what are you saying?

DAD
She's also on medication for her blood pressure.

ALICE
Just say it to me plainly. I'd like to just hear you say it.

He becomes quiet and looks away. She catches on.

DAD
... You being a girl, it made sense for me to leave these sort of things up to your mother --

ALICE
...

DAD
Do you have money?

ALICE
A little. Not much.

He takes out his wallet, gives her everything he can spare. She reluctantly accepts it, feeling guiltier.

DAD
Work's been slow for us too. We had to mortgage the house a bit to keep up. But I know it won't be long till things get better.

A tender silence between them.

EXT. MIDTOWN, RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Alice heads out as day becomes evening.
13.

30  EXT. UPTOWN, SUBURBS - NIGHT

Walking a while, Alice enters a neighborhood with newsletter in hand. It's very dark.

She comes across a lit home with many cars out front. She checks the address against the newsletter, then heads over.

31  INT. VEALE'S HOME, FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

A formal party with many well-dressed people mingling.

Alice ducks away from the crowd, helps herself to wine and appetizers. Everyone's chatting; no one seems to notice her.

32  INT. VEALE'S HOME, ANNABEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Alice makes for the bed. She gulps down the wine and sleeps.

33  INT. VEALE'S HOME, ANNABEL'S ROOM - DAWN

Alice awakens to a girl sitting bedside, ANNABEL (18).

    ANNABEL
    Can you wake up?

Still hung over, Alice barely makes out the figure.

    ANNABEL
    Can you walk? Come with me.

34  INT. VEALE'S HOME, OFFICE - DAY

Annabel leads Alice to the home office of a doctor. Medical journals line the book shelves.

Behind an oak desk is VEALE (50s), an austere well-dressed man in a wheelchair.

Beside him is his meek and affable son, JOSEPH (late-20s).

    VEALE
    At last, finally.

She regains her senses, fights off a headache. She notices them sifting through her SUITCASE and newsletter on his desk.
VEALE
Forgive our curiosity. We don't normally entertain guests who sneak into our rooms and sleep in our beds. Are these yours?

ALICE
Is this your home?

VEALE
It was my wife's, yes. You look like you traveled here.

She moves in, gets friendly.

ALICE
Yes, I've been traveling for work. My name's Alice Mitchell. How do you do? I heard this was the Veale residence. I was hoping to speak to them.

VEALE
I'm Veale.

Delighted, she offers a handshake; smiles and charms him.

ALICE
A pleasure to meet you, sir. I read you're looking for a housemaid.

She hints at the newsletter. He reads through it.

VEALE
You came last night for this?

ALICE
I came to see your beautiful home! I also read that you needed someone quickly ...

VEALE
We just started interviewing. We haven't had much time.

ALICE
I'm saving you the trouble now.

He has a closer look at the newsletter.

VEALE
You came with someone from our church?

She inspects the room, notices a cross hanging behind him.
ALICE
I had other work offers but I wanted to come here first. I, I'm looking for a new church as well.

He softens up upon hearing this.

VEALE
Our faith is always open to strangers, especially one so pretty.

ALICE
Yes. Now, about this housework --

VEALE
You're a God-fearing woman of good character?

ALICE
That's right. And if we could start immediately --

VEALE
Good enough to guide my little girl in the kitchen?

ALICE
In the kitchen and more, yes, sir. I believe I am ... So when would be a good time to start?

He sets the newsletter down, turns his attention to her fur coat. Puts it to his nose. It captivates him.

VEALE
My Mary wore many perfumes but none so strange and lovely as this.

ALICE
Your wife?

He smiles; puts her fur coat away.

ALICE
Your children?

VEALE
Yes, all very fine and well.

Alice extends a hand to Joseph.
ALICE
You have a very handsome son, just like his father. Like my own father too.

JOSEPH
Joseph. Pleasure.

He kisses her hand obviously attracted to her. Repulsed, she pulls away, but realizes the opportunity; flirts with him.

ALICE
So, if I started now and saved you time, you'd have more time with your family. How do you feel about that, Joseph?

JOSEPH
(to Veale; zealously)
Yes, I think so too!

ALICE
Good! So I'll help with the clean up from last night; and we'll start with that.

Veale's pleased.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, BATHROOM - DAY

Alice washes off the weariness. KNOCK at the door. Annabel enters with an extra apron, hands it over.

ANNABEL
This looks about your size.

Alice sees her clearly now: very pretty, sweet, angelic in a Pre-Raphaelite innocence. She's captivated, skips a breath.

ALICE
Thank you, ah ...

ANNABEL
Annabel.

ALICE
Annabel. I like your name.

ANNABEL
I like your scent.

Annabel turns to the FUR COAT in the open suitcase.
ANNABEL
Was it very cold where you're from?

ALICE
It's warmer here. Was that your bed? You have a very warm bed.

ANNABEL
We have oatmeal and milk if you're hungry.

ALICE
Milk would be just fine. Thank you.

Alice lavishes a loving gaze; holds a look over her.

ANNABEL
I will warm up some milk.

She leaves. Alice watches her go.

36
INT. VEALE'S HOME, FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Alice and Annabel clean up: fold chairs, collect dishes and trash into a tub. Annabel brings it into the next room.

FAMILIAR VOICE
Good morning. You drank a bit much last night. Are you feeling better?

Alice turns about, immediately recognizes the Book-Pusher from the street corner, with Joseph beside her. This is LILLIAN JOHNSON, about Alice's age.

She doesn't seem to recognize Alice.

ALICE
... Much better. Thank you.

LILLIAN
Lillian. How do you do?
(re: Joseph)
You've met my husband. Are you here for the housemaid work?

ALICE
I'm the new housemaid. Yes.

Lillian recalls something.

LILLIAN
You seem familiar. We've met before somewhere.
ALICE
No, I don't think so. No ... Lillian looks harder, can't put her finger on it.

LILLIAN
(to Joseph)
Mother's brought some things for your father outside.

Joseph leaves. She turns back to Alice.

LILLIAN
I will help with the clean up also.

She heads into the adjacent room where Annabel went.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, DINING AREA - DAY

They take a break from cleaning. Annabel serves oatmeal. Alice has finished ahead of everyone; drinks milk.

Lillian sits across from her, beside Joseph and MS. JOHNSON, her mother. Lillian hasn't touched her meal, just watches Alice, who's aware of this and keeps an eye out.

MS. JOHNSON
Dr. Veale tells us you're looking for a new church.

Alice hesitates; all eyes on her.

ALICE
... Yes. I just left my old one not long ago.

MS. JOHNSON
What church was it?

ALICE
It was out of town, far away. And very small. Not as wonderful as yours here ...

Alice is all smiles, charms. Lillian sees this, looks around the table, with quiet disbelief.

MS. JOHNSON
What was their faith?

Alice ignores her, has a drink, wipes her mouth.
MS. JOHNSON
Can you tell us more about their faith?

ALICE
... Well, our faith was that we never talk about our faith openly, nor do we ask others about theirs.

MS. JOHNSON
My daughter and I have a church we go to downtown.

Alice nods, feigns interest, goes back to her milk.

VEALE
I would've preferred my son had a wife from my own church. But even the Lord can't stop true love. Yes?

Joseph nods, takes Lillian's hand. She mildly reciprocates.

MS. JOHNSON
What about your husband?

ALICE
In my family, we marry when it's appropriate for us to do so.

MS. JOHNSON
In ours, we marry when the Holy Spirit calls us to seek Him out.

ALICE
... That's fine.

MS. JOHNSON
My daughter also counsels women from our church with their marriages and families. They confess to her first.

Alice turns to Lillian, goes quiet. Ms. Johnson continues;

MS. JOHNSON
We're having an outreach ministry later downtown, if you'd like to join us for that?

ALICE
Thank you, ma'am, for your kind offer. But, according to my faith, a woman finds the Lord by being at home first - and through housework - and then she considers things like church and marriage later ...
Lillian suddenly speaks up.

LILLIAN
May I ask something?

ALICE
Yes, Lillian?

LILLIAN
What does your faith say about wearing perfume to Service?

ALICE...

LILLIAN
In my church, perfume means a strange and powerful temptation is nearby and is being used to deceive others. Was there anything like that at yours?

ALICE
No, there wasn't.

She's not sure what to say next, so she gets up from the table, collects the dishes, quickly ends this conversation;

ALICE
There are plenty of dishes to wash and dinner to get started, so if you'll excuse me --

LILLIAN
We appreciate your time coming by. Once everyone is interviewed, we will decide and get back to you --

ALICE
-- It's just a trial for the day. Payment for all your kindness.

VEALE
That's a very good idea! Very thoughtful. Thank you.

Veale's sentiments cascade to everyone at the table. Lillian and Alice just stare at each other, clearly annoyed.
Lillian notices Alice watching them, catches one last look.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

Alice pretends to clean as she comes across a small maid's room. The bed's comfortable; just what she's looking for.

Except for a bedside prayer altar, decorated with religious articles: a cross, pictures of Joseph, Mary, Jesus.

Beside it are holy texts including a BIBLE. She thumbs through, gets irritated just looking at it; sets it aside.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, OFFICE - DAY

Veale is with a church woman and her son, who he looks over for pneumonia - puts a stethoscope to his chest.

VEALE
There are rales in the lungs; not just a congestion. That's the irregular breathing.

Joseph assists, listens in, prepares an ice compress. The mother is nearby, comforts her son with her bible.

Alice enters with a serving tray, offers the son a milk toddy. He drinks it down; she falsely consoles him. His mother prays, takes Alice's hand to join in. Alice has no choice.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Alice, in an apron, blankly stares into an empty pot of water over a stove - holding a raw chicken, completely clueless.

Annabel enters with a grocery bag and bread loaf.

ANNABEL
This was their last loaf. I also bought some potatoes.

ALICE
Potatoes are fine. Better for the flavor ...

Alice hems and haws, looks through the bag, unsure. Annabel excitedly watches the "cooking".

ANNABEL
My mother taught me some cooking. I'm still learning though.
A thought comes to Alice - she jumps on it.

ALICE
Give it a try and I'll show you! No better way to keep learning.

Alice hands over the chicken, dresses Annabel in an apron. Annabel's very excited.

ANNABEL
We should boil some water first and cut the vegetables.

ALICE
Yes, fine! So ... How would you cut them?

ANNABEL
Mother cut them small so they would boil faster.

ALICE
You boil and I'll cut.

They get started. Alice dices the vegetables, very slowly ... Veale enters, his church suit in his lap, delighted to see them cooking together.

VEALE
Hm! For a moment I caught my wife's aroma again.

ALICE
I'm fixing it her way. Celery and carrots. With potatoes.

ANNABEL
Is this enough salt?

ALICE
Yes, almost, well, ah --

ANNABEL
It looks enough?

ALICE
It's enough. Yes. Ahuh ...

Veale holds up his church suit to her, embarrassed.

VEALE
I'm afraid the Lord no longer agrees with my waistline. And our last housemaid was allergic to sewing needles.
Alice stitches buttons back onto Veale's church suit. She fumbles, pricks her finger, drops a button. She tosses the shirt, licks her wounds.

ALICE
God damn it ...

Alice sets a tablecloth, lays out plates. They slip from the pain in her fingers, almost shatter. She gets on her knees: a look of defeat, considers leaving.

Annabel enters from the kitchen with a bowl, very excited. Alice tastes the broth, worried it's also a failure. But it's delicious. Alice is overjoyed; hugs her.

They sit by the bed. Annabel explores her suitcase; holds the FUR COAT to her nose. Alice discreetly eases the pain from her fingers, tightly holds an ice compress.

ALICE
You like your new coat? It's warmer if you wear it.

Alice puts the compress away, goes to Annabel.

ALICE
You're a good girl. You're doing a good job for your family. Are you cold? Let me show you.

Alice wraps the coat around her. Annabel's excited. A deep feeling stirs in Alice. Realizing this, she resists, lets go.

ALICE
So. We'll get your father to agree to a living arrangement here, then we'll do the housework together and share it between us. You show me what you know and I'll teach you better as we go along.

ANNABEL
Like sisters?

ALICE
Well, yes, what? ...
ANNABEL
I've always prayed for a sister To teach me like mother did!

ALICE
... Yes, yes ... How was your mother with the sewing?

ANNABEL
As good as she was with cooking. I'm still learning that too.

Alice is very happy at this. Annabel moves in, gets closer.

ANNABEL
You smell so nice ...

Alice's temptation grows. She fights herself, keeps her distance, grabs the sewing kit, puts it in front of Annabel.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, FAMILY ROOM - DAY
Veale's by an altar, puts up a photo of his wife.
Alice enters; delivers his suit and shirts, ironed, buttons double-stitched - like new again.

VEALE
Just like my Mary. Thank you.

She looks out the window; sees Joseph welcome Ms. Johnson back. But Lillian's nowhere to be seen.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS
Alice heads to her room. At a distance, she catches Annabel inside with Lillian, who's snooping around.

She goes through Alice's suitcase; nothing of interest. Sees a purse nearby, goes through it, finds the newsletter. She takes a second look at the purse - recognizes it immediately.

She pulls Annabel closer and whispers something. Annabel's mood suddenly changes to despondence.

Alice sees this; a fear washes over her.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, DINING AREA - NIGHT
Everyone is seated around the table, just after dinner. Alice is jittery, keeps an eye on Annabel and Lillian.
VEALE
A wonderful meal! Thank you.

ALICE
(off Veale's satisfaction)
If I may, there's something I'd like
to speak to you about in private.

VEALE
About our offer for the housework?

ALICE
That's right.

VEALE
My family has a say in this. You
can say to them what you say to me.

Alice collects herself, calms her nerves, glances at Annabel
who's still despondent. Lillian looks ready for something.

ALICE
You have such a beautiful home. I
love housekeeping. I've always
wanted to house keep for a man who
does good work himself.

Alice pushes forward, struggles to stay composed.

ALICE
Your ad called for three days a
week at a modest pay. I'll offer
full-time work; that's seven days
for the same wage with room and
board.

VEALE
You're asking for a room instead?

ALICE
No, no. I'm not asking, I'm giving;
in exchange for any other service
you may need.

Alice lets her offer sink in, urges Annabel to agree. But
Annabel gets anxious, troubled by something all night.

ANNABEL
(to Alice)
Excuse me, may I ask something? --

ALICE
We'll try it a month first on your
terms and if it proves successful --
Annabel repeatedly turns to Lillian for confirmation.

ANNABEL
There was a woman we came across recently downtown with the same perfume you were wearing. And she was soliciting money from men on the streets. Do you know something about this?

ALICE
... Something about what?

ANNABEL
About this other work I heard you did?

ALICE
There are plenty of other women you could've come across; with a similar perfume.
(to Veale)
Now let's discuss these terms --

ANNABEL
I was helping Ms. Johnson's church pass out their newsletters with our ad --

VEALE
Is this true?

Everyone skips a beat, unsure if they heard correctly. Alice is taken back, being found out, down-plays it.

ALICE
A room and board are very expensive to come by --

ANNABEL
But that's not allowed.

ALICE
-- Even more expensive without a home or family to go to. Imagine if that were your situation ... 

VEALE
No. There's no room for that here.

ALICE
That's all finished for good now. It's just the good Lord's company from now on. No more of those men.
Alice sweetly smiles to Annabel, who weakens her stance.

ANNABEL
Lillian, if she needs our help, we should try.

VEALE
Annabel, will you excuse yourself and go wash up? --

ANNABEL
(pleading)
She's blessed us with this meal!

Annabel’s plea cascades to her father who reconsiders this a bit more. Alice rides on this, pushes it along.

ALICE
Yes, Sister, I have! Thank you. Now what we can do is try it for five days a week to begin with --

LILLIAN
No.

ALICE
You've got someone else who can do it for less? Cook all this like I have?

LILLIAN
...

ALICE
As I said, we'll try it for six days a week --

LILLIAN
The work offer was for three.

ALICE
I'm offering you more; six days a week for room and board only. An honest woman's work for an honest stay is my offer to you now.

Alice reaches for Veale’s hand. Lillian reaches for Annabel's hand, pulls her back.

LILLIAN
Why do you really want this work with our family?

Alice brushes Lillian aside; brings Annabel back again.
ALICE
For God's forgiveness; through His work. Amen ... Now of course with the sewing, the room next to yours would be better --

LILLIAN
Forgiveness for this confession? Or is there something more?

ALICE
I don't know.

LILLIAN
CONFESS WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW THEN.

They stare at each other.

ALICE
So what's fair for you, Lillian?

LILLIAN
Saving my family. Saving my Sister from your sin.

Alice notices Lillian's firm grasp on Annabel's hand, pulling her closer. She also senses Veale's doubt linger and grow.

ALICE
With this wonderful work with your family, if there's time I'll try and have your wonderful Faith also.

LILLIAN
That's not enough --

ALICE
That's six days a week, "Sister", seven for the Service: the Book and the prayers; everything I give my Word on - God willing. So does that seem fair to all of you?

Alice pulls Annabel closer, signals her to agree. Annabel appeals to her father.

ANNABEL
She's offered to teach me, just like Mother did.

JOSEPH
Yes. I think it's fair!

Alice is surprised, delighted; reaches out to him.
ALICE
Thank you, Joseph. Now let's pray a moment together. Think it over.

She puts her hands together in a prayer-like fashion; watches Veale's reaction. He opens up a bit more, looks her over.

VEALE
You'll do all the housework here; and you'll become part of our church to repent properly. Is this right?

She bites her tongue, looks directly at him.

ALICE
... That's right, sir. Seven days at your service, just like your Mary.

He regards her again, long and hard, then considers his children, especially Annabel;

VEALE
Alright. We'll try.

ALICE
Good! This will be good for all of us. Better if we start right away.

She reaches out to thank him then clears the table. Lillian spitefully reaches over and crosses her. Alice is fuming.

48
EXT. VEALE'S HOME - DAY

A New-England style home of a Puritan-Conservative family.

49
INT. VEALE'S HOME, DINING AREA - DAY

Alice proudly serves refreshments to Veale, Joseph and DR. Z.B. HENNING (50s), a jovial man in a suit and spectacles. She receives their praises, takes their plates away.

50
INT. VEALE'S HOME, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Annabel's washing a sink half-full of dirty dishes. Alice enters, goes to her with more. Annabel removes her apron and heads off with her school bag.

LATER. A full-sink of dirty dishes. Alice is overwhelmed.
Veale enters, goes to her with a list of housework. She smiles it off as he trails away, irritated at all this.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, BATHROOM - DAY

Alice aches all over from scrubbing stains off the tub.

EXT. VEALE'S HOME, LEFT SIDE YARD - DAY

Alice weeds a well-kept garden bed similar to Mom's. She's dirty and muddy all over, a real mess. Her frustration grows.

EXT. CHURCHGOER'S HOME - DAY

A picket-fenced home of a newly-wed couple starting off.

INT. CHURCHGOER'S HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

A veteran soldier with a wounded leg in a bandage wrap. His wife comforts him with a bible passage while Joseph replaces the leg wrap under Henning's guidance.

Alice is by the foot rest with a pair of sterile tongs, collecting the flesh-and-blood soaked wrap into a bag. It disgusts her, made worse by the wife kissing her husband.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A neighborhood church about the size of a farm bungalow. Churchgoers gather inside.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

REVEREND GRANT (50s), at the lectern. Congregation follows.

GRANT

... As marriage unites Man and Woman as Husband and Wife to become one Flesh, the other acts of Flesh are evident: sexual immorality, fornication, and adultery ...

Alice, reluctant to be here, pretends to follow with a bible.

MOMENTS LATER. Annabel's up front with a choir, singing a hymnal. Alice tunes out. Something deep stirs in her ...

... She imagines Annabel completely nude, glowing against the backdrop. Alice tightens up, desperately wants to leave.
Alice gathers laundry into a hamper: Annabel's undergarments. She buries her face in the bed sheets, fighting her emotions.

After dinner, Veale's family gathers around Alice, prays for her. Alice stares vacantly into the distance. The pretense is made worse with Annabel close beside her.

Alice reads a bedtime story to Annabel in her bed. Annabel drifts to sleep. Alice strokes her hair, moves in closer. But then fights it off, gets up and leaves.

A month later, a few days before Easter.

Annabel and church friends unpack CHURCH PROGRAMS from boxes. ELLE, a socialite about Annabel's age, gossips with the girls instead of working.

Alice unwillingly helps them, assists Annabel stuff programs into envelopes. Alice takes a closer look.

ALICE
Do you have families coming for this?

ANNABEL
It's mostly new families coming for the Easter banquet.

A thought comes to her.

ALICE
Where's that done?

ANNABEL
At the reverend's home. His family usually does it.

ALICE
Can it be done here?
ANNABEL
I can ask.
Annabel hands Alice a bible.

ANNABEL
The reverend wants us to add a passage to the programs for the newer members.

ALICE
(preoccupied)
You can choose it.

ANNABEL
Father wants you to do it. Since you're also new.

Alice looks the church program over again. She reluctantly takes the bible - no choice.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, BEDROOM - DAY 62
Alice shifts her focus between writing a letter, the FAMILY PHOTO from before, and the bible.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY 63
A larger-than-normal gathering of churchgoers head inside.

INT. CHURCH, ANTECHAMBER - DAY 64
A transition room between the entrance and pews. Alice pens notes at a table; scans churchgoers as they enter. Annabel approaches with a stack of program.

ALICE
Who are these other people?

ANNABEL
Families who've just moved to the neighborhood, I think.

Annabel scans the newcomers, nervously prepares herself by reviewing her own notes from her bible.

ANNABEL
I made out a welcome --

ALICE
I'll speak first.
ANNABEL

...?

ALICE
These people who've come: they'd appreciate someone as new as they are to pray with them first.

Annabel hesitates, looks through all her hand-written notes.

ANNABEL
... I know Father will want me to do it. And I spent all last night --

ALICE
My thanks to your father and the Lord and all He's done. Just a moment then you can speak.

Annabel sneaks a peak at Alice's notes, smiles with warmth.

ALICE
Did you pass by the address I gave you?

ANNABEL
I tried again but no one was home. I left the program with your name on it - and the letter you wrote.

Alice quickly scans the crowd then checks outside.

ALICE
You sure they got it?

ANNABEL
I left it at their door. Maybe they'll be by later?

ALICE
They should be here, not these other people. I don't have time for these people ... We'll wait for them to come first.

ANNABEL
The Service is about to start.

Alice scrambles for time, still waiting for someone to arrive. She turns back to the crowd, unsure what to do.

Annabel recalls something.
ANNABEL
One other thing: a woman asked to speak with you the other day.

ALICE
What woman?

ANNABEL
She says her name's Myra.

ALICE
Who?

ANNABEL
Myra Ward. I passed her home on the way and she saw your name on the program. She says she was your closest friend. I told her you were here.

Alice becomes paranoid, suspicious.

ALICE
Is she here?

ANNABEL
She wants you to arrange a time to see her and her husband at their church.

Alice winces at the word "husband"; finishes her writing.

ALICE
One church is enough. I don't have time for this woman either. You did a wonderful job, Annabel. Thank you.

Time's up. Alice alters her strategy.

ALICE
Keep the door open a bit for anyone coming later.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Alice heads up to the lectern. She reconsiders speaking but it's too late. She eyes the door as she speaks;

ALICE
Ladies and gentlemen. It's such a pleasure to be here with you today. Now before we receive the sermon of our wonderful Reverend Grant, I'd like to say a few words: I've been found. I have been.
I've searched for a home and a family for many years. And I've found that a person without Faith can't make a family. It takes all of us coming together, and praying, just like this. And this is good; this is the best way! Fathers, mothers, children, grandchildren - the Lord blesses us in our family most of all...

Ill at ease, she buys time with a false prayer, turns to the door again; still nothing. She pushes forward against herself, addresses Veale.

ALICE
So bless our happy home together.
Bless all your faith. And of course bless you all --

She wraps in a hurry, obviously disappointed, quickly nods to Grant, not caring to wait for Annabel to come up.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Alice searches the crowd as late-comers arrive, disappointed.

In the distance, she spots Annabel passing out home-baked treats to church friends, mostly boy-girl couples, including Elle who's showing off her new boyfriend, AMOS.

Annabel's the odd one out, the only girl without a boy; until Elle introduces Amos's friend, who kisses her hand. Alice goes over to stop this but is stopped by Veale.

VEALE
Thank you for your kind words!

He introduces her to the same mother and son from before.

VEALE
Some friends of ours who've also joined recently. I promised you'd introduce and show them around.

Alice shakes his hand; he kisses hers. Alice is fuming, bites her tongue as Annabel and the boy walk off together.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, OFFICE - DAY

Alice receives a check-up from Veale, Henning and Joseph. She gulps down a foul-smelling MEDICINAL TONIC as they prepare a tourniquet and SYRINGE.
ALICE
Oh, God! ... What's that for?

JOSEPH
It's testing for sexual or venereal diseases. Anything irregular.

ALICE
Sexual diseases? ... How irregular?

JOSEPH
We'll do your regular checkup after but we need a blood sample first.

Joseph brings the syringe closer. She backs away.

VEALE
This is for your good and ours. Healing is central to our faith.

ALICE
Yes! But, my new faith teaches that a woman never allow her body to men not her husband. Even if they are so decent and faithful --

VEALE
This will be important for your husband as well when you marry.

She reluctantly extends her arm. He starts the blood draw.

HENNING
Ten milliliters. Not too quickly.

Henning collects the blood work as Veale comforts her.

VEALE
The Lord's blessed us with you here.

(to Joseph)
We have a few others to finish before everyone gathers. Can you finish on your own?

JOSEPH
Yes, sir, I think so.

They leave. Joseph pours her another cup of tonic, bandages her arm, then puts a stethoscope to her chest. She's too distracted from the tonic's effects to notice.

ALICE
Ughhhgh! That stuff's not normal.
JOSEPH
It's Father's brand of tonic that improves blood circulation. It was his work as St. Joseph's missionary doctor before his injury ... I'll have this over with quickly.

ALICE
You're doing a nice job. Your father ought to be proud.

He moves in closer, slips the stethoscope over her breasts.

JOSEPH
You smell very nice today ... Did you wear that scent for the work you did before you came here?

ALICE
It's my natural scent.

She notices him caressing her breasts with the stethoscope.

JOSEPH
What did you charge for it?

ALICE
Depends.

JOSEPH
What did it depend on?

ALICE
What I offered - what their wives didn't offer at home.

He stares at her chest, entranced, circles the same spot. She sees this, smiles it off, gives him the benefit of the doubt.

ALICE
Something wrong with them?

JOSEPH
No, no. Yours are a very good and healthy pair. God bless them.

ALICE
Better than your wife's?

JOSEPH
Yes! -- No, no. They are both very equal. Very well ... Just a moment longer ... It'd help better if you'd remove your blouse --
She HOLDS a deranged look on him - then lunges forward, wrestles him to the ground.

ALICE
Aren't you the faithful doctor and husband? Splash your tonic in your wife's mouth; see how she likes it!

JOSEPH
Wait, let us - let us discuss this.

She doesn't give him an inch; holds him down.

ALICE
Don't even try it, little man --

She restrains herself, looks deep into him: the same angst she had for her clients. A suspicion stirs in her.

ALICE
I want you to tell me something, Joseph. About your wife ...

INT. VEALE'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Alice soaps the dishes as Annabel towel-dries.

ANNABEL
Elle says most of the senior girls plan to marry once school finishes. Now she wants a marriage too.

Alice is quiet a moment, uninterested.

ALICE
How many times did you pass by that address I gave you?

ANNABEL
Twice, on the way back. I think they were out for the day. I know if my family could forgive the work you did, so could yours.

Alice considers something, speaks up;

ALICE
How much do you know about your brother's marriage?

ANNABEL
What do you mean?
ALICE
His wife's never around him much.
Not even in the same bed.

ANNABEL
Lillian says her faith's better if she had her own bed again, now that they've been married a while.

ALICE
That's not normal for a husband and wife ... 

ANNABEL
She attends our Service sometimes for his sake, and even invites me to stay over when her mother's away.

Alice pauses a moment hearing this.

ALICE
What about her father?

ANNABEL
... He's with a different woman now. My brother wouldn't do that to her though.

ALICE
You think you'll marry?

Annabel weakly smiles, looks away, continues washing.

ALICE
I'm asking you, Annabel.

ANNABEL
Mother married about my age, but she never taught about dating or finding a husband. And Father's very protective.

Alice is curious, looks her over.

ANNABEL
I thought, maybe, from your work ... If you could tell me more about men? What a married man would want?

Annabel appears genuinely confused, curious.

ALICE
What are you asking?
ANNABEL
There was a boy I knew before you came here, from my school. He was my first kiss. But I didn't know ... What else I should've done?

ALICE
... So, what are you asking?

Annabel's unsure how to answer.

ALICE
Maybe he wasn't the right boy?

ANNABEL
Maybe the Lord's preparing someone better for me?

Alice nods some sort of understanding. But something suddenly stirs in her mind - she just watches Annabel ...

69

INT. VEALE'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Alice and Annabel are in aprons, stirring a soup broth. Annabel's completely oblivious to Alice's affection.

ANNABEL
It boils better when you stir evenly. Is that right?

Alice nods, smiles.

ALICE
You need to know anything you ask me first and I'll show you, alright? No more worrying about those boys either, or their offers.

Their hands touch; warm smiles between them. The same feeling stirs. She moves in, tries to pull away, too hard to resist.

Veale enters smelling the aroma. Alice backs off, flinching and nervous; clumsily drops the ladle, quickly picks it up.

VEALE
Wonderful! May I?

Annabel gives him a taste. He's satisfied; turns to Alice.

VEALE
Thank you for all your trouble.

Alice gives an exaggerated nod. He hands a list to Annabel.
VEALE
Ms. Johnson will be starting her
desserts soon. She could use your
help. Alice can finish on her own --

ALICE
No, no, please. Let me -- You need
more practice in your own kitchen
first - to do the practicing.

She takes the list from him, reads it over - it's simple.

VEALE
It's just pastry cooking. It
shouldn't take more than an hour --

ALICE
Half-an-hour if I do it. You finish
up here, Annabel. Just like I
taught you.

She turns away from him, hurries away before he can ask for
more. He takes out another list of unfinished chores.

VEALE
The tables need to be cleaned before
we set out refreshments. We'll need
seating for about sixty --

She goes back to him with an evasive smile, grabs the list
from him then rushes off quickly before he can finish.

Veale persists as she trails off.

VEALE
The reverend's looking forward to
your cooking too. His wife enjoyed
your reading earlier. They have a
bible study I promised you'd help
with tomorrow --

She's steaming - the last straw - hurries away faster.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, PANTRY - DAY

Alice goes through the cooking list; gathers SUGAR, CINNAMON
and SPICE into MASON JARS; packs them into a SATCHEL.

EXT. LILLIAN'S HOME - DAY

Alice arrives on foot, protective of the SATCHEL like a
purse, reluctant to go in. She knocks; no answer.
Alice comes across a large room with unfamiliar churchgoers gathered in a circle, mostly husband-wife couples.

Lillian paces the center with a SATIN WEDDING PILLOW. She exerts a powerful charisma over the captive audience. Many of the women follow her words, including her mother.

LILLIAN
... Then He came to me in my sleep that night; into my bed: the Devil and His Mistress. She grabbed my body, touched all over, reached down, put her hands to my mouth ... But I reached up and grabbed the Lord's hand as He whispered, "Let no one say that He is never tempted, but blessed are those who do not submit." And I turned to that Whore and said, "I Will Not Submit."

She reaches to the crowd; moves in on JAMESON, a frail man, and his feeble wife, who appears very ill and upset.

LILLIAN
Mr. Jameson, sir. You've been tempted again, haven't you? Your wife has told me you've strayed from her and paid for the temptations of other women.

Quiet rasping, gasping from the crowd; they pray for him.

LILLIAN
Your wife also became sick from this sin, didn't she? From this sickness you brought home? Medical Science cannot save you. But there is a new way, and the new Faith will give you a new strength to drive this illness out. We will drive it out together.

She stirs the crowd, reaches for him and his wife.

LILLIAN
I've betrayed my wife. I've sickened my wife, Lord, and I've betrayed her. Return me home to hold her with these hands.

She puts the pillow to his hands. He tensely follows along.
LILLIAN
Take them and pray: forgive my
sickness. For I have sinned. And I
was unfaithful. And I have betrayed
-- Do not turn away! Look and say,
I Have Betrayed My Wife.

JAMESON
I'VE BETRAYED MY WIFE. I'VE
BETRAYED THE WIFE I LOVE.

She forces his hands to prayer with a pantomime frenzy.

LILLIAN
DO YOU TAKE THIS WOMAN TILL DEATH
DO YOU PART? Yes you do! Because
this is what's correct. This man
and woman and union!

She draws him closer then leads him to his wife.

LILLIAN
There she is. Go to her. It's okay.

He delivers the pillow like a new-born into his wife's arms.

LILLIAN
And he is home again!

ALL
HALLELUJAH. IT IS A MIRACLE. BLESS
THIS MAN, LORD. BLESS THIS FAMILY.

The crowd gathers around and hug him ... Except Alice, who's
just holding a SUGAR JAR, watching this show.

Lillian moves in on Jameson's wife, holds her face, then rests
her head on the pillow in the wife's lap; blesses her stomach.

LILLIAN
Bless you all for coming. And bless
you for joining us today, sir. The
Gospel of Light Church would love to
welcome you as well ...

Lillian takes his wife's hand, kisses them.

Alice is last, puts on a smile, regards the churchgoers who
just left, takes in what's just happened.
ALICE
Lillian, change of plans. Banquet's at five.

LILLIAN
Yes, I've heard.

ALICE
For a moment I thought I had the wrong church.

LILLIAN
They're a few from our church downtown – women who I counsel. We come together here sometimes.

Alice inspects this mother/daughter couple, unsure what to think or say. She hands over the satchel and jar to Ms. Johnson. Lillian intercepts them.

LILLIAN
See the others off then wait in the kitchen. I'll be there in a moment.

Lillian stares her down. Ms. Johnson leaves. Alice watches her go, stunned to see this.

ALICE
Annabel's having trouble cooking without me so if you'll help here instead, I'll be on my way --

LILLIAN
She tells me you've been reaching out to your family lately. And that your mother's become ill.

ALICE
...

Lillian offers a silent prayer, then looks up. Alice looks for an excuse to get away.

ALICE
There's plenty of work around the house till then: tables and chairs to clean; so if you'll excuse me --

LILLIAN
Alice, some of those men you had for your work had families of their own too, didn't they?

Alice tries to go around but Lillian dogs her.
LILLIAN
I've seen these troubles spread to many families including mine. Don't you think if you were saved that all this could have been prevented?

ALICE
Yes it could have been. Those men came to me and wouldn't have done it if their wives had offered better --

LILLIAN
Yes, it is a shame Mother's faith couldn't keep Father with us --

ALICE
Shouldn't speak about your mother that way --

LILLIAN
-- And awful to think that your own mother must be suffering for what you've done --

The last straw. Alice is ready to blow, holds herself back.

ALICE
-- A wife absent from her husband's bed leads him astray also --

LILLIAN
Joseph is a fine husband with a fine bed.

ALICE
(disregards her)
-- Then there won't be any marriage or mother or father --

LILLIAN
You've been spending a lot of time with Annabel lately. Do you think this is wise?

ALICE
-- Then there won't be a "Sister"; or any family anywhere.

Lillian goes quiet. They just stand there a moment.

ALICE
That's five o'clock in the yard. If you'd like to come early and help, that should be fine. Thank you.
Alice leaves.

EXT. VEALE'S HOME, BACK YARD - DAY

Holy Saturday banquet. Men set up tables, benches, chairs. Annabel and other women bring out plates, utensils, cups.

EXT. VEALE'S HOME, FRONT YARD - DAY

Alice greets arriving guests with a welcoming smile. She sulks to herself as they pass.

In the distance, she catches Mom and Dad; goes to them - only a long silence between them.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, DINING AREA - DAY

Alice, Mom and Dad sit, take in the decor. Veale's family enters, surprised to see them. Everyone shakes hands.

ALICE
My father and mother: George and Ellen Mitchell.

DAD
Thank you for looking after her.

VEALE
Her service has been wonderful.

DAD
Yes, we heard.

Mom shows them the CHURCH PROGRAM and LETTER. Alice turns to Annabel, satisfied.

DAD
Your children?

ALICE
Yes, all fine and well. This is the wonderful family I've been taking care of.

(re: Joseph)
Yes?

JOSEPH
Yes, yes! ...
ALICE
The banquet's starting in a moment.
But we also have a family dinner
afterwards ...

Alice nods to Dad, cascades to Mom. Mom's anxious; turns to
each person, then Alice, still unsure of the situation.

EXT. VEALE'S HOME, FRONT YARD - DAY
Alice walks Mom and Dad away from everyone.

MOM
Have you been eating well?

Mom looks Alice over with concern.

MOM
We heard about your new church ...
Have they been helping you with it?

ALICE
I haven't needed to tell anyone.
They're a very good family here.
I've been doing their housework.
And that's their church, see? It's
all helped.

Mom's relieved; so is Dad.

ALICE
It's just between us, alright? I'll
take care of this --

Alice helps Mom with her pills. They stare at each other,
with hope on both sides.

MOM
Is it really getting better now and
really you're going to be alright?

Alice is unsure, doesn't answer, just hugs and reassures her.

MOM
You'll have your own family and
children someday. We just want you
to be healthy and happy again.
That's all we've wanted.

Mom gets closer, hugs her.
EXT. VEALE'S HOME, BACK YARD - DAY

Everyone gathers by the main entree table. Veale's up front, chimes a wine glass with a spoon to get everyone's attention. As he's about to speak, Alice goes to him.

ALICE
If I may say a word?

Veale notices her happiness with her parents here, gives way. She takes the wine glass, offers a toast.

ALICE
Thank you all so much for being with us here to start this --

She pulls out her bible and the notes from before, fumbles with them. She reads through it; occasionally stammers.

ALICE
A person can't lead a faithful life praying on their own. It's family that makes an endeavor most rewarding. And this is the most important thing! So let's bless these mothers and fathers who've come here today.

Mom and Dad smile at her. She faces them directly.

ALICE
Bless their children. Bless their faith in their children ... Amen.

ALL
Amen.

Alice gulps down the wine. Churchgoers scatter to the food. Alice thanks Veale, hugs him, goes to her parents.

Lillian is with her mother off to the side, holds her bible like a doll; watches Alice lead her parents to the tables.

EXT. VEALE'S HOME, BACK YARD - DAY

Everyone gathers around the tables. Alice coordinates serving entrees with Annabel and other church women.

EXT. VEALE'S HOME, BACK YARD - DAY

Alice introduces Mom and Dad to Grant and his family. Veale, Joseph and Henning are nearby with other churchgoers, including the veteran and wife they healed from earlier.
Group photos. Families gather. Alice jockeys for position, leads Mom and Dad in with her. Directs the photographer to get closer. A happy family photo.

Alice fetches drinks for Mom and Dad. She catches Lillian speaking with them in private and heads over; confronts her.

**LILLIAN**

I hope you get well soon, ma'am.
May the Holy Spirit heal you and bless your family ...

Lillian walks away, goes to Annabel in the distance. She takes her by the hand, holds her by the face, kisses her forehead; they head off together.

Alice stares hard at them, then gulps down more wine, and turns to her parents instead.

Alice is nearly passed out on her bed in a fetal position with a wine glass in her hand. Her face buried in the pillow.

Annabel comes in, shakes her a few times.

**ANNABEL**

Alice. Alice. Wake up.

Alice, exhausted, can barely move or open her eyes.

**ANNABEL**

Mother's vigil is about started. Father needs the tables and chairs brought in.

**ALICE**

What time is it?

**ANNABEL**

Almost eight. You should wash up.

Alice is panicked; reaches out to Annabel.

**ALICE**

Is my family still here?
ANNABEL
They're outside, having a word with everyone.

Annabel inspects Alice's empty wine glass.

ANNABEL
How much did you have to drink?

ALICE
Help me up.

Annabel reaches out; Alice affectionately pulls her down to a seated position on the bed, pulls her close, nearly puts her head in her lap. Annabel thinks nothing of it.

ANNABEL
Are you feeling alright?

Alice rests in Annabel's lap, deeply inhales her scent.

ALICE
Just a bit sick. I'm just so sick always feeling this way ...

ANNABEL
I'll get some water.

Annabel tries to leave but Alice won't let go and pulls her closer. Annabel gently pries her off, then leaves.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Annabel passes Lillian who's been watching them, realizing there's more to Alice's affection toward Annabel.

ANNABEL
She must be overworked from Father's chores, and pushing hard for her family to be here.

Lillian takes Annabel by the shoulders, suspiciously looks her over but sees no reaction; lets her go. She turns back to Alice dozing off. This triggers a paranoia in her.

EXT. VEALE'S HOME, FRONT YARD - LATE EVENING

It's a bit later. Churchgoers leave for home.

Alice is still hung over, rests on the porch with water, watches them all go. Lillian approaches from the house.
LILLIAN
May I have a word, Alice?

Alice just drinks; doesn't make eye-contact or say anything.

LILLIAN
I'm glad to see you have your parents again. They look like a wonderful mother and father.

ALICE

LILLIAN
I think, sometimes, if you were more faithful and confessed to the Lord properly, they would've never been lost to you to begin with.

ALICE

LILLIAN
If there's something you'd like to confess now, He is listening.

ALICE

LILLIAN
I hear that you've never even been engaged to marry. When do you think that will happen?

Alice finishes the water, turns to the house, sees Mom and Dad inside happily mingling. Alice smiles, picks herself up.

ALICE
You're a worthless wife, Lillian. And your mother deserves better than anything you've given her. I'll have my parents back again soon. So I want you to stay away from me. Go back to your church - whatever church you belong to - and stay the hell away from my family.

Alice heads in. Lillian confirms her suspicions.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Veale's family and Henning, Alice's family, Lillian's family and Grant gather by the altar for a private memorial service.
Veale cradles his wife's photo. Annabel and Joseph by his side. Grant reads a passage;

GRANT
... And from this, each man and his kin gathered together to receive remission for their sins in the name of Jesus Christ who gave His Body for them and said: "I am the Lord and the Sun risen over the earth, the resurrection and the Light of Life! And whoever receives me, though they die, shall never die, but live on." For the Word became Flesh and took residence among this family who kept their home with Him, in spirit and health ...

Lillian sharply turns to Alice and her family.

LILLIAN
What about your home?

Alice, caught off guard.

LILLIAN
What about your inversion?

ALICE
... What is it?

LILLIAN
Homosexuality. That's not healthy.

Alice is stunned, plays it calmly;

ALICE
No, it's not. So what do you mean?

LILLIAN
You're a homosexual. That's not allowed. You shouldn't be allowed here either --

Everyone skips a beat, unsure if they just heard correctly.

ALICE
That's not --

LILLIAN
(to Mom, Dad)
You've never taken a husband or been with child.
ALICE
Just because there's nothing
doesn't mean there's something --

LILLIAN
(to Veale)
And being separated from your home
and family because of it, your
prostitution would have been a
means for you.

VEALE
Is this true?

Disbelief gives way to suspicion. Mom sinks away, speechless.
Alice quickly takes hold and pacifies her.

LILLIAN
(reaches for Mom, Dad)
Yes! It is a shame more wasn't done
sooner. I am so sorry for you both.

Lillian offers a prayer. Humiliated, Mom loses it, groans in
pain. Alice has a hard time holding her.

MOM
Let me go. I want to go ...

ALICE
It's alright. It's alright.
Everything will be fine --

Dad helps restrain Mom but it's too late. She becomes manic,
takes Alice to the ground with her. They inadvertently bump
the altar, knocks over candles, family photos. It's a mess.

MOM
NO. NO. NO. NO. NO.

Dad and Henning drag her out. Alice remains, picks herself
up, nothing to say to this disaster she's created.

Alice looks to Lillian, who's satisfied, then looks away,
avoids eye-contact. All eyes on her, shocked.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, BEDROOM - DAWN

Alice holds Mom down on the bed for Henning to examine. Dad
holds her by the legs. Mom's sobbing, hurting, struggling.

Alice pulls her close, tries to settle her, gives her water
and medicine. Looks to her with hope, but sees only anguish.
88 EXT. VEALE'S HOME - DAY

Dad and Henning help Mom into Dad's truck. Alice watches from a distance, helpless.

89 EXT. PARENTS' HOME - DAY

Alice is beside Henning's car parked in the driveway. She can only watch as he and Dad bring Mom into the house.

LATER. Henning returns, gets in the car.

HENNING
I gave her a chloral hydrate sedative to settle her nerves.

She's weary; exhausted. He sees this, aware of the situation.

HENNING
You need a ride back?

90 INT. HENNING'S HOME, OFFICE - DAY

A room with some chairs, an examination table littered with books. There are stacks of papers and folders, disorganized.

He makes room for her to sit, takes a seat beside her, goes over her last physical and other documents.

HENNING
Any history of serious illness?

ALICE
No.

HENNING
What about mental disorders?

ALICE
I don't know ... I need a drink.

HENNING
You shouldn't drink when you're sick.

ALICE
Is that what I am?

HENNING
If all this about you is true.

She looks to him, catches on to the meaning, turns away.
ALICE
You're a doctor. You can treat me.
I've seen you treat others.

HENNING
This is different.

Alice looks around the room.

ALICE
You're not living with anyone here.
And there are a few extra rooms ...
Why don't you treat me here?

He's not sure how to respond. Alice warms up to him.

ALICE
There are dishes in the sink and
floors to clean ... I can take care
of these things for you.

HENNING
I don't need a housemaid. And I
have other patients to look in on --

ALICE
I'll help with your work then and
keep you organized. I'm good with a
phone and know some typing. I hear
you're the best doctor. Your
patients should come to you, like I
am. You can have your practice here.

HENNING
These patients can't get out of
bed. They need me to go to them. I
haven't the time.

She moves in, tries something else with him.

ALICE
I came because I needed your help.

HENNING
I'd like to help, but --

ALICE
My mother's been sick. Her doctors
say she needs me better so she can
be better ... There's no other
doctor to help with this.

He sees her desperation. Ponders something but isn't hopeful.
HENNING
Our church has a place that's vacant; a sick home we put up as a hospice for soldiers after the war. But they won't be comfortable with you the way you are.

ALICE
We'll go to them together. You can tell them about treating me --

HENNING
My faith's in medicine first. But Dr. Veale's my partner; and his faith --

ALICE
Your faith's more forgiving. You can be more reasonable.

He softens up, weighs his options.

HENNING
Let me ask about your condition. If it's hormonal. Something that can be done. Just to clarify.

She's relieved. He considers one last thing.

HENNING
You'd need permission regardless.

Her face changes, tenses up. She looks over and sees a bible amongst other medical books, pulls it to her, flips through its pages a bit.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Veale and Joseph clean the mess left at the prayer altar. They stop in their tracks as Henning enters with Alice. Veale in particular isn't happy to see her. Alice goes to him.

ALICE
I've come for your forgiveness. I'd like to try again.

He closes up. Henning goes over, whispers to him. Veale's not convinced. Alice steps forward.
ALICE
I know you've struggled with your injury, like I've struggled with mine. Without my family; or your Mary.

She takes a breath, gauges his reaction, continues;

ALICE
I know if the Lord could bring her back for your sake - and your health - you'd also pray He'd return my family for mine.

Veale's expression softens. He looks at the mess around him, then to his legs, recalls his "injury".

VEALE
If you'll continue earnestly with our faith, you have my blessing.

They look each other over with some understanding.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Veale, Joseph and Henning converse in private with Grant. They occasionally acknowledge her.

Alice sheepishly searches the aisle for a seat, catches odd looks from some of the crowd.

She takes a seat in the back by herself, tries to look busy with her bible, keeps an eye out. Up front, Annabel sits with Elle and a group of church girls.

Elle's ribald gossip provokes dirty looks from the others except Annabel, who wants to stop them but doesn't dare say anything. She looks away but occasionally looks back.

Alice looks hard at them, fuming. Their giggling is the last straw. She approaches them, moves in - they go quiet.

ALICE
Look there. I want you to look.

Bible in arms, she points to the cross up front.

ELLE
Good morning, Alice. We were just talking --

ALICE
That's the Lord over on that wall, see Him?
Alice leans forward. Elle fearfully misinterprets a sexual advance, backs away into Amos in the pew behind her.

ELLE
... Let me introduce you. This is my boyfriend --

ALICE
He says there are few things more sinful than a whispering girl who breathes out lies ... You see Him there? Do you all see?

ELLE
... Yes.

ALICE
And that's a doctor over there. SEE? So I'm going to get better now and I'm going to make my family better.

Elle goes quiet; so does the church, looking over to them.

ELLE
We're very glad to see you haven't given up on the Lord - and pray that your mother get better --

ALICE
Don't talk about my family.

ELLE
I was only offering a prayer --

ALICE
Did you hear what I said?

ELLE
Yes, and I was telling everyone --

ALICE
Don't Ever Talk About My Family.

ELLE
We weren't talking anything. I'm sorry if you misunderstood.

Alice turns to Annabel, who sheepishly lowers her head and looks away, then scowls at the other girls as she moves off.

ALICE
I'll show you what I'll do.
INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, OFFICE - DAYS LATER

Veale, Henning, and a colleague review a medical journal, "Menorrhagia Psychopathy: A Clinical-Forensic Study".

Joseph is with them, preparing a medicine tray.

INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BEDROOM - DAY

A room with COT BEDS, like a barrack hospital. Alice goes through medical books.

Annabel quietly enters, brings in bed sheets and Alice's suitcase, sets it by the door. An awkward pause between them.

Alice buries herself in the book, her face filled with worry.

ALICE
What kind of doctor treats anxiety?
Sicknesses brought on by extreme stress; my mother's condition ...
Your father would know more.

They just stare at each other. Annabel closes the door, goes to Alice, sets out new bed sheets where Alice is sitting.

ALICE
Let me help you with that.

ANNABEL
Father says you should rest.

Alice forces conversation.

ALICE
So, so what else?

ANNABEL
Your other laundry's out back --

ALICE
I'll help with that then. We'll do it together. Alright? Sister?

Alice finishes up with the bed. Annabel gives way.

ANNABEL
Can ... I ask something?

ALICE
Yes?

ANNABEL
Is it true what Lillian says?
ALICE
About? ...

ANNABEL
You?

Alice searches for the right words.

ALICE
Don't you know?

ANNABEL
If you know better, I'd like to hear it from you.

Alice goes quiet. It's very awkward between them:

ANNABEL
Are you that way around me?

ALICE
...

Alice takes a moment; goes back to the bed.

ALICE
When I'm close enough. When it's quiet and no one's watching.

Annabel's stunned, takes a seat; too stunned to even move or say anything. Alice turns away, embarrassed.

95
EXT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BACK YARD - DAY

Alice's laundry hangs on clotheslines. Alice is by a wash basin and clothes hamper, pulling clothes off the line.

Annabel watches this from behind a corner many yards away.

ALICE
It's alright. You can come as close as you like ... Annabel?

Annabel ducks away when she spots Lillian approaching in the distance with Elle.

Lillian and Alice stand off.

LILLIAN
I've come to take my Sister home --

Alice throws a wet towel at her. Lillian falls to the ground. Alice moves in, grabs her, shoves the towel into her face.
ALICE
You're the Lord's Confessor: so
what about my mother's confession?
Isn't there a blessing to make her
better again?

LILLIAN
Don't you dare touch me ...

Alice drags her to the tub and pushes her face-down into it.
Lillian breaks free, crawls away. They wrestle.

LILLIAN
You should've confessed and been on
your way. I warned you away from my
family --

Alice drags her back, thrusts her face-down into the mud.

ALICE
I'll smite you down for this,
Lillian. You're as dirty as I am.

Elle charges forward to help Lillian pry Alice off.

Alice FIRMLY HOLDS; then gets off, grabs the hamper, heads
back to the house. Lillian frantically cleans herself off.

Alice passes Annabel; their eyes meet. Alice tries to sway
her but Annabel shies away, goes to help Lillian.

96

EXT. CHURCH HOSPICE - DAY

Annabel helps her father into a car while Henning sees the
colleague off. Henning has a word with Joseph, gets in
Veale's car; drives off.

Joseph heads back inside.

97

INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BEDROOM - DAY

Joseph sets the medicine tray beside Alice's cot bed. He goes
to her open suitcase on the bed, sniffs some of her clothes,
intoxicated by the scent.

Alice moves up behind him. He's unaware of her presence.

ALICE
BED, just fine?

JOSEPH
(gasps for breath)
Just fine. I was just --
She stares him down, accusingly. He catches on, folds the clothes he dropped neatly back into her suitcase.
ALICE
Fold it down the middle first. And the sleeves. Tighter. That's it.

JOSEPH
(re: medicine tray)
That's an iron supplement. You should take that after a meal.

ALICE
Stay focused.

JOSEPH
Alice, this is silly --

ALICE
Don't talk. Don't smile.

JOSEPH
I need to finish and be going --

ALICE
You need to keep quiet and keep folding ... Do it like you mean it. DO IT LIKE I'M YOUR WIFE.

He's petrified; realizes the predicament he's in, again.

ALICE
Get your things and ready the car.

JOSEPH
... Alice --

ALICE
You want this quiet? Then you keep quiet and come with me.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - DAY

Alice approaches with a SMALL WHITE BAG. She hesitates, knocks on the door. No answer. Knocks again. Still no answer.

A man approaches with a LARGE BROWN BAG. This is JACOB, a carpenter apprentice, about Alice's age: a young version of Dad - dresses identical to him.

JACOB
Are you Alice?

ALICE
Who're you?
JACOB
Your father sent me here for some things.

ALICE
Is my mother here? Where is she?

JACOB
She's resting; inside.

Alice is quiet; looks him over.

JACOB
Won't you come in?

INT. PARENTS' HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

Jacob nurses Mom in her bed with chicken soup.

Alice enters with water and MEDICINE from the SMALL WHITE BAG. Joseph follows in with a doctor's bag.

ALICE
The doctor says these will help.
Take it after a meal.

JACOB
Allow me.

She watches his every move with Mom.

ALICE
Where's my father?

JACOB
At work. He asked for me to stay here and look after her.

Alice looks to Mom for confirmation.

ALICE
How'd you know about me?

JACOB
She's told me. You're pretty just like her.

Alice is unsure how to respond. Mom reaches out, draws Alice closer. Alice kneels to her.

ALICE
This is Joseph, you remember? I'm going to have him help you and take care of this.
Joseph greets them. Alice moves in, takes Mom's hand.

ALICE
I'm having his father and Dr. Henning help with my illness also. I'm going to see to it now; what can be done. For us --

Alice promptly sets him to work.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME - DAY

Alice waits by the car, going through documents. Joseph approaches, packs his things into the back seat.

JOSEPH
She's doing better than before. Her blood pressure's gone down.

ALICE
But?

JOSEPH
It's still high enough to worry if she gets worse.

Alice worries, goes back to the documents, searching.

ALICE
Who is he?

JOSEPH
His name's Jacob. He says he works for your father.

ALICE
Carpenter work?

JOSEPH
House work mostly; building and digging. He got hurt on the job recently so he's helping here for room and board.

Alice sees a similar scenario.

JOSEPH
She seems better with him here.

ALICE
It was good medicine you recommended. But she's not your mother, Joseph. Don't tell me what's better for her.
JOSEPH
She said she wanted to thank you for coming.

Her face changes a bit; goes back to the documents.

JOSEPH
That's the dossier from the blood work we did. Everything looks fine. No sexually transmitted diseases.

ALICE
What're these here?

JOSEPH
That's the other blood from your physical. Your hemoglobin level's a bit low - about ten. That's low even for pregnant women.

Alice shows relief but also concern.

ALICE
Can my inversion be gotten?

JOSEPH
How do you mean?

ALICE
A sexual disease: something in my blood or body ... If it's gotten the same way, can it be treated?

JOSEPH
If it's a symptom of something, maybe. It might be hemolytic.

She studies the document closer.

JOSEPH
We can do another blood work if we had a better idea what we were looking for. If there were another woman like you who was already cured - and ask their doctor?

A thought comes to her. She recalls something important.

ALICE
Who'd he say he was?

JOSEPH
He's about your age. Your mother says he's single; not married. A good man, doing good work ...
You really think my father and Dr. Henning can help you with this?

She packs everything up. They head out.

A home similar to Alice's. She approaches with her bible, church fliers; and a church peddler's grin.

At the porch is a middle-aged man smoking a cob pipe. Two boys fix a truck nearby. They immediately recognize her.

ALICE
Mr. Ward? Good day, sir. I'm with Saint Joseph's Missionary Church. I'm looking for Myra. Is she home?

The two boys block her. One of them, FRED, speaks up:

FRED
She ain't here.

ALICE
You're her brothers?

FRED
Half-brothers. What do you want?

ALICE
When will she be back?

FRED
She doesn't live here anymore.

ALICE
Where can I find her?

FRED
She's got her own place.

ALICE
Where?

FRED
Somewhere downtown. You're Alice Mitchell, aren't you?

ALICE
That's right. She asked to speak to me. I'd like to speak to her now, about her church.
FRED
What about it?

ALICE
... I'll speak to her about that.
What's her address?

They look her over.

FRED
She ain't interested in girls anymore.

ALICE
Neither am I. So where is she?

FRED
We told you she ain't interested.

ALICE
Does she have a telephone?

FRED
Maybe.

ALICE
You've got a telephone here ...

They consider this, wanting to get rid of her.

FRED
We'll let her know if she ever comes by.

ALICE
And when will that be? I'll come by myself.

FRED
Not sure.

Alice steps forward; threatening.

ALICE
I'll speak with your neighbors about her then, see if they know.

They're anxious; look to each other, to Mr. Ward.

FRED
She comes by every week or so with her husband. You can leave your number.
ALICE
Tell her I'd like to speak with him as well. Tell her it's for the Lord's work - nothing else.

She writes a phone number on a flier, hands it to him.

ALICE
God bless you, young man. And your family.

She heads back, sneaking peeks through windows and fences.

102
INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, OFFICE - WEEK LATER

An examination office similar to Veale's. Henning squares up reports and results of another blood test.

Alice references medical books sprawled over the table, making sense of it all. She's clearly been at this a while.

ALICE
Who can we get to do "hormone therapy"? Oestrogen or something that could - a pill - something quicker to take care of this. How could we do that?

HENNING
There's "chemical castration" that's been done in Britain - suppressing the libido. But it's only been done in men and not very successfully. Not sure how it'd work for you. It'll take time regardless.

ALICE
What time?

HENNING
Your monthly cycle's much longer than normal.

ALICE
You sure this is working?

HENNING
Try this.

He pours a mixture of tonic. She recognizes the foul smell.

ALICE
That stuff's not normal.
HENNING
It's a blood tonic made from burdock extractives and liquorice. We prescribe it to anemic patients to increase the blood count and cleanse the kidneys. There's sarsaparilla added to help with the taste.

It's very strong. She forces it down, nearly spits it out.

ALICE
How much longer does this take?

HENNING
It'll take time to get your bleeding regular again. Sexual deviation affects those areas first. We should start there.

ALICE
You said that before and I haven't felt any different since we started.

She's frustrated, impatient, looks around for answers.

ALICE
So, what else? What's next?

HENNING
Hold still a moment.

He readies the sphygmomanometer, checks her blood pressure.

ALICE
What about hypnosis? Psychotherapy?

He looks to the book in her lap, amused.

HENNING
Well, that's all just laying about and speculation. Freud had his successes but rejected the idea.

Hope fades from her. He comforts her, directs her to the BIBLE, the other book beside her.

Her spirits lift reading its pages; but the tonic's effects get to her.

ALICE
It'll go faster if I drank more.

HENNING
One a day's enough. Relax your arm.
He records the test results.

HENNING
Cut down on salt and high-glycemic carbohydrates. Try a lean protein diet: red meat, beets, dark greens. Iron-deficiency’s also more common during menstruation - so’s insomnia. These should help.

He hands her a bottle of SLEEPING PILLS.

ALICE
This isn’t enough.

HENNING
One more time.

ALICE
May as well be praying --

He starts the test again. She looks down to her stomach and crotch. Her frustration is made worse by the tonic’s effects.

He finishes up. She pulls the cuff off, gets up and leaves.

ALICE
A husband and marriage solves these problems.

INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BEDROOM - DAY

Alice is hunched over, on her knees, by an altar on the far end of the room. She tries to get something going: blesses herself with the BIBLE, CROSS; not sure what she’s doing.

Her impatience grows. She tosses the BIBLE aside.

ALICE
Damn it ... God damn it ...

LATER. By her bedside, she fashions a mixture of tonic into a bigger bottle, adds sleeping pills, then forces it down.

EXT. CHURCH HOSPICE - DAY

Alice staggers about in the front yard, gets a breath of fresh air. She has more to drink; gets drowsy.
EXT. CHURCH HOSPICE, PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Heading back, stumbling a bit, Alice catches someone around a blind corner by the door. A sweet voice calls out:

SWEET VOICE
Alice?

ALICE
Who's that?

Coming closer: it's Annabel, carrying some books and a small box. They don't say anything for a moment.

ANNABEL
I brought some of Joseph's medical books.

ALICE
Dr. Henning's out on call.

ANNABEL
I thought you'd like to read them. I made you some lunch.

Alice regards her. She looks around, wary on her toes.

ALICE
You came with your father?

ANNABEL
He's with Joseph.

ALICE
Where?

ANNABEL
Downtown, on call.

ALICE
They know about you coming here --

ANNABEL
No, I didn't tell. Not to anyone.

ALICE
... You came over just for these?

ANNABEL
I wanted to see if you were okay ... Don't you want to see me?

Alice is touched by Annabel's warmth; reaches for her hand then gives way to hugging her.
ALICE
Come inside.

She pulls back and sees something in the girl's eyes.

ANNABEL
Alice: I need to ask something ...

EXT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BACK YARD - DAY

They sit out-of-sight by a BUSH HEDGE. Alice is a bit drunk from the tonic.

ALICE
Did anyone else know about it? What did you know?

ANNABEL
There were girls from my school. But none of us really knew anything or ever tried.

Alice considers this. Quiet between them for a moment.

ANNABEL
What was your first time like?

Alice takes a deep breath and another drink.

ALICE
She was a senior at the Higbee school I went to named Myra. She slept over and we woke up in the same bed somehow.

ANNABEL
Did you go away together?

Alice dredges up bitter memories.

ALICE
Just for a while after, before she went away somewhere, with someone else. I don't remember ... How was it you never tried?

ANNABEL
I was taught to be quiet about things I didn't know about.

Alice HOLDS on her for a moment. Then;
ALICE
I used to dream about marriage and chase after her. Now it makes me sick to still want these things. I've had nothing but disappointment from it since then. I've buried my anger deep inside and held my breath completely. All these years putting on this fraud; smiling to these people and working them over just to scrape by ...

She has another drink. Annabel contemplates this.

ANNABEL
What will you do about your mother?

ALICE
Maybe she'd get better if a doctor could fix me somehow ... Could a doctor do that?

She peers into the bottle with hope, like an alcoholic.

ANNABEL
If there was another girl like her that came by ...? You'd still rather be home with your family?

ALICE
I thought I'd be better off doing things my own way, but now I'd be happier to be home ... And without these feelings ...

She takes a gulp, offers a drink. Annabel reluctantly takes a sip, coughs. They burst into laughter; let it all out.

107
INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BEDROOM - DAY

Alice is by the altar. She's delirious, nearly passed out from the tonic. Annabel gently rocks Alice in her arms.

ALICE
"There is one Father, one Husband and one Son" ... But I can't even make a son with this body.

ANNABEL
What do you mean?
ALICE
My uterus is so dried and broken
up. How's a child going to grow
inside it?

Alice can barely open her eyes; takes a breath.

ALICE
My mother couldn't either. She
must've wanted me as a boy, seeing
how bad a girl I was in the kitchen
... Could you make one? Your mother
made Joseph well enough.

Alice turns her way, holds her face, wants to try something
but hesitates. After a moment, Annabel pulls her closer,
kisses her, trembles with excitement, unbuttons her blouse.

ALICE
Help me up.

108
INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BATHROOM – DAY

Alice sits nude in a tub of mild-running water. Annabel's in
her underwear, holds Alice from behind, then reaches down to
her crotch, gets to work.

ALICE
Damn it. God damn it ...

Their rhythm increases.

ALICE
Oh, God ...

Alice loses it, convulses, pulls Annabel closer, tighter.

She collapses into the tub. Annabel cleanses her all over.
Alice pants into Annabel's breasts then reaches for her face.

ALICE
You ready?

Annabel slips out of her underwear and enters the tub.

109
INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, DINING AREA – DAY

Alice and Annabel sit at a table going through the box of
muffins, smiling to each other. Alice's mood is a post-coital
elation. Annabel's restless, legs and hands shaking.

ALICE
Are you feeling alright?
Alice pours her milk and mixes in half a sleeping pill.

ALICE
Drink it. It'll settle your nerves.

Alice helps her drink it down, wipes her mouth, sits closer, takes her hand, very happy for the first time in a while.

ALICE
This is just between us, alright? Don't say a word to anyone and this will be fine. Alright?

Alice moves in, holds her face, kisses her over and over.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, ANNABEL'S ROOM - DAY
Annabel lies down in bed, hugs the fur coat, takes in its scent. She catches a portrait of Jesus, Mary bedside - an uneasy feeling stirs in her.

INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, OFFICE - DAY
Joseph does another blood draw from Alice's arms, careful not to let his eyes wander.

Henning readies another glass of tonic. Alice looks in an off direction, skeptical of all this.

EXT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BACK YARD - DAY
Alice and Annabel sit behind the same blind corner, by the BUSH HEDGE. Alice has her head in Annabel's lap, reaches up, brings her closer, kisses her.

INT. PARENTS' HOME, BEDROOM - DAY
Dad ushers Henning in with his doctor's bag. Dad looks to the bed with concern, heads back outside.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - CONTINUOUS
Dad's also confronted with past-due bills. Alice brings him coffee, sees this, looks back inside, ashamed and guilty.
INT. CHURCH - DAY

The congregation in full service. Everyone's praying, eyes closed. Except Annabel, who vacantly stares to the front of the room with a look of shame and guilt.

INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BATHROOM - DAY

Sex. Alice and Annabel collapse in the tub together.

INT. CHURCH HOSPICE, BEDROOM - DAY

Resting in the cot bed, Annabel uses Alice's bare chest as a pillow, like two 18th-century Parisian salon prostitutes.

Alice is caught in the moment, clearly fighting her better judgment and trying to convince herself of something.

She anxiously looks at Annabel then darts her eyes around the room and then to her suitcase. She lays out her plans aloud;

ALICE
We'll get a place of our own somewhere, with our own bed. You have any money?

ANNABEL
(confused)
About four-hundred I've saved -- ?

ALICE
Should be enough to get us started. Maybe in Tennessee or Arkansas. We'll find some work there and be away from all this ... 

Alice grabs her by the face and speaks directly at her, trying to reach an understanding between them.

ALICE
Get your things ready. We'll leave as soon as we can, alright? Alright?

Annabel just smiles some sort of understanding. Alice holds her closer, kisses her again and again.

ALICE
So how's my sweet girl? How's my sweetheart?

Annabel looks away, considers all this.
INT. VEALE'S HOME, DINING AREA - EVENING

Annabel serves dinner. They enjoy her meal, but she's unable to eat, guilt-ridden over what she's done.

Veale choked a bit. She panics, goes to him with water. He reaches for her: his sweet little girl.

She goes to Joseph, offers seconds, then takes her seat, smiles at them both. The guilt deepens into a dread.

INT. CHURCH - LATE EVENING

An evening service, empty except for a few people. Annabel's by herself in the back. She feverishly prays, hands shaking.

Elle comes over and comforts her. And a familiar voice comes from behind;

FAMILIAR VOICE
Hello, little Sister.

ELLE
Lillian, she's burning up.

Annabel notices Lillian standing over her - she's followed her here. She takes Annabel by the face, feels her forehead.

ELLE
I think she needs a doctor.

LILLIAN
No she doesn't ...

ELLE
But her body's hot all over --

LILLIAN
BE QUIET.

Lillian moves in close, gets right in Annabel's face.

LILLIAN
You listen to me, Annabel, because I know where you've been hiding and I know what you've done.

Annabel's paralyzed with fear, wants to get away.

LILLIAN
That woman has defied the Lord and she's tempted His Wrath. But you can be saved if you confess now.
Alice is still asleep, her suitcase packed beside her. A PILLOW descends from above, right over her face.

ANNABEL
(loud whispering)
It's alright. Please, listen: you have to leave. I'll give this to you ... But you have to leave and forget everything.

Alice tries to break free, gets violent. Annabel has trouble holding on. Alice shoves the pillow off and breaks free.

Annabel's terrified, no idea what to do. She has an ENVELOPE of money that she drops it in front of Alice then darts out. Alice runs after her.

Annabel takes cover behind the BUSH HEDGE from before. Alice catches up, catches her breath.

She charges forward, right, left; then leaps through the hedge, tackles Annabel to the ground, screams to her face.

ALICE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? TELL ME.

Alice slumps in a chair across from Henning and Veale's family with an ice bag to her head and suitcase by her side.

Annabel's off to the side, aware of the trouble she's in.

Alice looks to her, then to Veale, who's steaming. She tries to apologize but can't; instead picks herself up and leaves.

Everything goes quiet. Veale reaches for the telephone.

Alice anxiously approaches with suitcase in hand. Sees Jacob and Dad bring Mom into the backseat of a car. Jacob hurries off. Dad goes to his truck, prepares to follow.

Alice heads over. He's overwhelmed to see her, his patience all but gone.
ALICE
What's happened? Where's her medicine?

DAD
Doctor Veale called; about you --

She scrambles for an explanation.

ALICE
Did he tell you about that other girl - that she started all of it?

DAD
Alice: she's tried. She can't continue being sick like this again.

He shakes his head, sees her desperation. He gets into his truck and drives off. She just stands there a while.

INT. VEALE'S HOME, DINING AREA - DAY

Veale, Joseph, Henning and Lillian sit around the table to a meal Ms. Johnson has cooked. Annabel is absent.

Lillian's in an apron, across from Joseph, scowls at him with a deranged look. He's eating a potato, avoids eye-contact.

LILLIAN
I heard a confession last night, and I prayed, "What have you given to me, Lord, when I prayed for a husband and all I got for this effort was a weak and gullible idiot who eats and wipes his mouth and says, 'I have done no wrong'."

JOSEPH
She said she needed help. I didn't know.

LILLIAN
A better doctor would have known. A better husband would have known better. She came in to our family, spread her sickness to your sister; and you are a weak and gullible idiot for letting this happen.

Lillian swells up; a terrible anxiety builds up inside.

HENNING
I checked on her medical record. There's insanity in her family.
Her mother suffered from a postpartum psychosis after childbirth. And her aunt was discharged from the Women’s Army Corps as a field operator - over an illicit affair with a Russian.

VEALE
Enough. That's enough.

Joseph's unsure what to say or do. Ms. Johnson hands Lillian a tray of bread rolls to serve to everyone.

JOSEPH
This is very good, ma'am.

Lillian reaches her tipping point as she reaches Joseph. She grabs him, drags him off the side of the table.

LILLIAN
YOU FAITHLESS BASTARD. I'LL BREAK YOU FOR THIS.

Joseph tumbles to the floor, crawls away terrified as Lillian advances on him. The others can only watch in horror.

LILLIAN
Why was she able to get to Annabel like this? Do You Know Why? BECAUSE IT WAS YOU WHO LET HER DO IT.

Lillian gets right in his face, grabs him by the wrists, intimidates him.

JOSEPH
Dear, please, don't do this --

LILLIAN
YES YOU DID, JOSEPH -- YES. You let that dirty woman have her way with us - with your little sister - and you failed your family when they needed you most. A gullible idiot brother and husband ...
Alice is weary, exhausted. She takes a moment then heads down the street towards a familiar dimly lit home.

The porch lights are on. Alice approaches, stands there a while, very reluctant, doesn't dare knock.

LATER. Darkness except for the porch lights. She's made a bed by a bench; goes through the FAMILY PHOTO of her as a child, being held in her parents' arms.

On the back are notes: "November 26, 1933 ... Happy Birthday, Love Mom & Dad ... Our home ... Our family ... Our child ..."

Her stomach growls. She aches all over, starts to cry.

She takes one of the SLEEPING PILLS Henning gave her, and contemplates taking them all. She goes unconscious ...

LOUD ALARM BELL RINGING. Alice falls away in a panic. Above her is an imposing FIGURE holding an ALARM CLOCK.

This is MYRA WARD. Beside her are Mr. Ward, Fred and his brother. She has the CHURCH FLIER Alice gave them from before.

MYRA
Hello, Alice. You alright? You remember me?

ALICE
... Yes. Myra. I came to see about your husband. I came here before but you weren't ...

MYRA
There was a girl who came before that, who told me about you.

ALICE
She told me about you too.

MYRA
She told me you've been living with her in her home.

Alice quickly articulates something.
ALICE
I'm a housemaid helping her family. Her father's a doctor and my mother's been ill. So, I'm helping ...

MYRA
I know about your mother ... Is it true then? That your inversion is still with you?

Alice struggles along her back, still numb from the ringing.

ALICE
The doctor says it's something with our bleeding and can be fixed; just like you've done for your husband --

MYRA
The Lord has sent you here for this ...

ALICE
Yes. Now let me finish --

Her stomach growls; she has a hard time focusing. Myra offers a bread roll; then reaches down, crosses her like Lillian did.

MYRA
I was hoping to reach out to you first and keep this quiet between us, before these troubles could reach your family like this - and continue troubling mine.

Myra holds out Alice's church flier. Alice turns to the family with gratitude. They're very annoyed.

ALICE
I'd like your help now.

MYRA
I'd like you to try your faith at my church and be baptized into our Service.

Alice looks her over, baffled.

ALICE
... But that's not it -- Was it a treatment ...? What did your doctor do? What can I do?

MYRA
Confess. And save yourself from this other sin you were about to commit.
ALICE
Save myself - from what else? My menstruating?

Myra holds out a handful of SLEEPING PILLS that were scattered over the floor, bottles them.

MYRA
It was when my mother had succumbed to leukemia and passed on that I confessed for the first time and was born again.

ALICE
I'm very sorry to hear that, but --

MYRA
Confess to God, before it's too late. This is your only way: give your body to God.

Myra extends a hand.

MYRA
You can come to our home and clean up first.

Alice notices another MAN nearby, holding a LITTLE BOY. He walks to Myra - her husband and son.

INT. MYRA'S HOME, DINING AREA - DAYS LATER

Alice is cleaned up. She's around a table with Myra's family after a meal.

Myra clears the table, kisses her husband, feeds her boy: a loving family. Alice is touched to see this.

MYRA
I spoke with our Pastor and he's agreed. There's someone you should confess to first, like I did. And then be blessed into our faith.

Alice is happily curious, hopeful.

INT. LILLIAN'S HOME, FAMILY ROOM - DAY

The same "circle of faith" from before, but larger. Lillian's up front with a LARGER SATIN PILLOW, adorned with a cross.
LILLIAN
"For I am the Sun, says the Lord, and the light of the world that no darkness shall overcome. Flee from sexual immorality as every other sin is committed outside the body but the sexually immoral sins against it." And the Flesh is weak. And it is a sin. For us to obey God is to disobey ourselves and to Deny Temptation.

Lillian works up the crowd, directs everyone's attention to Alice. Alice relents, remains seated; stunned to see this.

MYRA
It's alright. Go on.

LILLIAN
Thank you for bringing her to us. Welcome, Sister Alice.

Alice receives a welcome. Lillian offers her the pillow to hold and pray to.

ALICE
Is this alright?

LILLIAN
Alice: you've come forward for a new start but you've also fallen backward on old vices. You've betrayed your faith - and your family - who took you in when no one else would. You've betrayed their faith for your own pleasure and your own sin.

ALICE
... Yes I have.

LILLIAN
So confess now. Hands together and confess: I have betrayed my family.

A deep feeling stirs in Alice. The crowd urges her to say it.

ALICE
... I've betrayed my family.

LILLIAN
I have sickened my mother, and I have betrayed my family.
ALICE
I've betrayed my family ...

LILLIAN
Forgive me, Father - I have betrayed my family!

ALICE
I've betrayed my family.

Lillian stirs the crowd into a fervor; holds Alice from behind and makes her pray harder.

LILLIAN
I relinquish my flesh.

ALICE
I relinquish my flesh.

LILLIAN
I deny Temptation.

ALICE
I deny Temptation.

LILLIAN
The Lord is the light and He will save me.

ALICE
The Lord's the light and He'll save ... Let go of me --

LILLIAN
I am weak and I am sick.

ALICE
That's enough --

LILLIAN
I am sick. Say it!

ALICE
I'm weak and I'm sick --

Lillian breaks off, circles Alice like a vulture.

LILLIAN
I have sinned against my body, Lord, and I have sinned against you. I have sinned in pleasure because my flesh is weak and I am sick. So say it again.
ALICE
(grumbling; to the ground)
... I'm sick and I've sinned.

LILLIAN
Say it to Him.

ALICE
(shouting; to the sky)
I'm sick and I've sinned, Lord.

Lillian holds her from behind again; closer, harder.

LILLIAN
I Have Sickened My Mother And I
Deny Temptation.

Alice is boiling - fights off Lillian's hold. She clenches her fists, bites her tongue.

LILLIAN
Confess it.

ALICE
I deny Temptation. Now let me go --

LILLIAN
Confess it again, everything -
EVERYTHING TO HIM NOW.

ALICE
I'VE SICKENED MY MOTHER AND I DENY
TEMPTATION.

LILLIAN
FILTHY SIN. GET IT OFF. OFF THIS
WOMAN --

Lillian squeezes her hard from behind, lifts her from her seat and wrings her body out like dirty wet laundry.

LILLIAN
DIRTY SIN. DIRTY SICKNESS. DIRTY
FILTHY SICK SIN.

Alice is fighting, pushing, suffocating. She tries to escape but Lillian won't let go; and gets dragged along as she pulls her back. The crowd urges her on with a prayer.

LILLIAN
OFF THIS BODY; AND OFF THIS FLESH.
AND LET THIS SICKNESS NEVER RETURN.

Lillian forces them down to their knees, offers a prayer;
LILLIAN
THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND HE WILL
SAVE ME.

Alice breaks free, choking for breath. Myra helps her up and embraces her, helps her breathe again.

MYRA
May I help somehow? ... I'll go back with you to your family and we'll put this behind us ...

Still out of it, Alice concedes with a nod. The crowd gathers around: fathers, mothers, children. Their warmth touches her.

ALL

Alice and Lillian stare at each other, both out of breath; exhausted. Alice backs down and moves off.

She's greeted by Jameson who gives way to hugging her and introduces her to his wife, who seems better now.

LILLIAN
Thank you all for your faith. Sister Alice will join us from now on, and return home to her family again once she is healed completely ...

Something changes in Alice. She reaches out to each person.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME - WEEKS LATER
Dad and a worker load tools into his truck.
Jacob pulls up in a car. Dad goes over, helps Mom out onto a wheelchair, hugs and kisses her.
Jacob shows Dad a DOCUMENT. Dad hands him money then helps Mom into the house. Jacob heads off in the car.

EXT. MYRA'S HOME - DAY
Jacob pulls up. Alice greets him at the porch. He appraises her of the situation and she invites him in.

INT. MYRA'S HOME, DINING AREA - DAY
Myra boils a pot of coffee. Jacob drinks as Alice examines the DOCUMENT: Mom's PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION LIST.
ALICE
When did she get back?

JACOB
Just earlier. She'll have to be in bed a while. I'm heading to the pharmacy now.

Reading it over, her face fills with worry.

ALICE
Is my father alright?

JACOB
He's been worried. But now that she's better, he's better. There's new construction on some bungalow homes downtown. It should be good work for us.

ALICE
He should have more time at home.

JACOB
It's better for him to work to get his mind off things.

ALICE
Rebuilding our family's more important. You're his best worker and you're like a son to him so I want you to tell him that.

She returns the prescription list.

ALICE
I want to thank you for coming here these past weeks and telling me all this. You've done a good job.

JACOB
You're welcome. My pleasure ...

He smiles at her. She sees this, makes an offer.

ALICE
I'll make some dinner tonight for us. For all your hard work. You're off at five?

JACOB
Six today.

ALICE
Come by at seven.
Jacob is well-dressed, seated at the table with Myra and her husband. Alice enters, also well-dressed, serves them bowls of chicken soup; then takes a seat next to Jacob.

Awkward silence. Alice looks around the table, prepares to speak grace. They follow her lead, close their eyes and pray.

ALICE
We thank you, Lord, for this bounty we are about to receive ... Amen.

They eat. The awkward silence continues for a moment. Alice breaks the silence, searches for something to say.

ALICE
So! So, so ... Work's alright?

JACOB
Work's fine. It's been a while being out like this again.

She searches harder, fishes up a compliment. Flirts with him.

ALICE
You look very nice tonight.

JACOB
I like your dress.

ALICE
I like your hair. A lot of women like that type of hair. Ahuh ... Are you sure you don't already have a girlfriend somewhere?

JACOB
No one special.

ALICE
Not yet?

They just look each other over for a while.

Alice notices Myra's eyes on her and Jacob, encouraging her to push forward.
MYRA
She made her hair special just for tonight.

JACOB
Yes, I like your hair too. Very nice ...

MYRA
He's a very nice-looking man. You both look very nice together.

Alice has nothing to say, keeps an eye on Myra who initiates a kiss with her husband.

They get close while Alice and Jacob remain stiff and awkward. Alice tries to move closer to him but can't.

Myra and her husband get closer, whisper to each other. Annoyed, Alice repeatedly taps her wine glass with her fork.

ALICE
I can see your lips moving.

Myra and her husband stop, turn back to Alice and Jacob, as if waiting for something to happen between them.

Alice turns to Jacob, who's baffled by her behavior. She takes a deep breath, reaches over, kisses his mouth: her first real kiss with a man.

Myra and her husband watch this. Alice finishes, trying to feel something, but it's very awkward for her.

Jacob is flustered; satisfied. Alice inches her seat closer to him against her will. They quietly continue dinner.

134 EXT. MYRA'S HOME - NIGHT
On the porch, Jacob kisses Alice then heads back to the car. She stands there a moment; heads inside.

135 EXT. PARENTS' HOME - WEEKS LATER
The house looks settled from weeks before.

136 INT. PARENTS' HOME, DINING AREA - DAY
Alice sits at the table beside Jacob. Myra's also here, with her husband and son. Dad wheels Mom in.
Alice gets up; she and Mom look each other over. Dad pushes Mom closer - they've arranged all this.

Alice goes to her; holds her tightly.

ALICE
Thank God ... Thank God for this.

Alice reaches for Dad, hugs him. Then directs Mom to Myra.

ALICE
Do you remember Myra? That's her husband and her little boy. See? I've been staying with her church. They're helping me get better, just like her.

She pulls a seat beside Mom, takes Jacob by the hand, signals him to go along with her. Mom sees this, curious.

ALICE
I've been getting better with him too. Better than I've ever been. We've been going out a while.

Alice kisses Jacob - flickers with unease - brushes it off.

ALICE
We're going to take care of all of this for good this time. Because I need your faith for this now. I need your help ...

Mom lights up with hope seeing Alice and Jacob holding hands. She reaches for Alice's hands, pulls her closer.

137 INT. LILLIAN'S CHURCH - DAY
Alice is half-submerged in a BAPTISMAL TUB, hands to the choke of her neck. The PASTOR reads a passage as she's dunked.

138 EXT. LILLIAN'S HOME - DAY
The Pastor delegates passing out church fliers. Alice is here with Jacob, who's escorted her.

She steps away a moment to take a handful of fliers, goes back to hug him farewell. He departs, and she prepares to leave with some of the churchgoers.

She spots Lillian and Ms. Johnson speaking with Myra and the Pastor. Alice heads off. Lillian goes to her.
LILLIAN
Hello, Alice. Has everything been alright with everything?

ALICE
Fine.

Lillian pauses a moment; looks her over.

LILLIAN
I'm glad to hear that.

ALICE
Are things fine for you?

LILLIAN
Yes. I've been summoned to the Goodwives Charity Hospital in Whitehaven for missionary work on behalf of our church. The Lord is reaching out to the world and has asked that I join Him ... I'm going to bring Annabel with me.

ALICE
...

LILLIAN
She's been having trouble at home lately and wanders away sometimes, so her father also thinks this is best ... Has she spoken to you in-person about this?

Alice is perplexed, has no idea.

ALICE
No, she hasn't.

LILLIAN
I know it wouldn't be good for either of you to see each other again.

Alice just stares at her, absorbs the meaning. Lillian searches Alice's face; then smiles it off.

LILLIAN
It's good to see that you've been doing better.

ALICE
Thank you for all your help. Good luck to you both.
LILLIAN
And to you. Jacob looks like a good man. I'm sure he'll make a good husband someday.

Alice has nothing left to say.

LILLIAN
God bless you, Sister ...

ALICE
Stay clear of any temptation along the way, Lillian. The Lord watches us even behind closed doors.

LILLIAN
... And bless your family.

Lillian heads back. Alice watches her go.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, SECOND STREET CORNER - DAY

Street corner from the beginning. Dressed as a book-pusher, Alice and a churchgoer solicit passersby. Most avoid her.

Annoyed, she solicits harder - heckles a man resembling the client from the beginning. He tosses her articles aside.

She gets on her knees, picks up the litter: a familiar scene.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, BACK YARD - EVENING

A family picnic. Alice serves sandwiches from a basket to Mom and Dad.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - NIGHT

Alice, Mom and Dad enjoy each other's company along the porch bench - she's home at last. Mom particularly enjoys it.

EXT. MYRA'S HOME - WEEKS LATER

A car pulls up with Annabel and a well-dressed man. He closes the door behind her as she walks up to the house.

INT. MYRA'S HOME, ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

A bare room with a cot bed and religious decor. Alice has a sewing kit out, sews buttons onto family clothes.
Myra's husband leads in Annabel and ROBERT (20s). Alice looks right at them as they enter - she's ready for something.
ALICE
Come in. Make yourselves at home.

ANNABEL
Can we have a minute?

Both men leave. Alice and Annabel look each other over.

ANNABEL
It's good to see you again ... Is it also good to see me?

ALICE
I heard you've been skipping school and church lately. Where have you been?

ANNABEL
... Can we talk somewhere else? I'd like this to be secret.

ALICE
There's no secret. The Lord's everywhere. He hears everything. So why don't you just tell me.

Annabel searches for the right words.

ANNABEL
This has been very difficult for me. But I know you'll understand and forgive what I've done.

ALICE
...

ANNABEL
I've learned a lot about myself from you. I've learned to be honest with who I've always been. And I know now that I have to be honest with the Lord before I can be faithful to Him.

ALICE
So what about him over there?

ANNABEL
Robert is a sweet man, sweet like Jacob. But if I could have a marriage, I'd rather go away with you and have you as a spouse than as a Sister --
ALICE
You need a husband for that.

ANNABEL
You've taught me to be a good wife.

ALICE
I didn't teach you this ... So, so what are you here for?

ANNABEL
I came for your blessing.

ALICE
You came for a feeling between your legs.

ANNABEL
No, you don't understand. Please listen --

ALICE
This is so stupid what you're doing.

ANNABEL
My family will forgive me.

ALICE
You'll have no family after this.

Alice's face changes - she's fighting herself.

ALICE
You'll just be a whore living in a hovel.

ANNABEL
It won't be like that --

ALICE
Just a whore living on her knees in a hovel ... A whore with no family and a hovel for a home.

ANNABEL
You'll forgive me and be my sweetheart again.

Annabel moves in, discreetly hands over an address.

ANNABEL
I know if my Faith stops me this time, I'll have the Lord's own strength to push it down.
She leaves. Alice considers all this.

144 INT. MYRA'S HOME, MYRA'S ROOM - DAY

Alice brings in the clothes she's just mended. Myra's folding family laundry; Alice joins in.

    MYRA
    What did she ask for?

    ALICE
    She should've stayed home. Now she wants to leave like this.

    MYRA
    She's just like we were back then, hoping it would work out somehow.

Alice thinks this over.

    ALICE
    She shouldn't have come here ... How long did it take for you?

Myra doesn't say anything, goes quiet a moment.

    ALICE
    If Jacob and I married, would it happen faster? ... To be like you are with your husband?

    MYRA
    ... It might be more important for you now that your father has someone to help with his work; and care for your mother as much as you do.

    ALICE
    ...?

Alice is puzzled. Myra stops her work, looks directly at her.

    MYRA
    I'm sure it hasn't changed for me, even with marriage. But I have a faithful husband. And my son is happy, and he'll always make me happy. And I know that I'm happy enough.

Alice gives Myra a second look, stunned to hear this.
Similar to Manger's home, a bit dirty, worn down, in squalor.

KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Annabel answers. Alice stands there, very nervous, carrying a LARGE BROWN BAG and a SMALL WHITE BAG.

ALICE
I was in the neighborhood to pick up some things and thought I'd stop by. Is this his home?

ANNABEL
Robert's gone for work.

They are quiet for a moment.

ANNABEL
Come in.

INSIDE. Cramped and desolate like Manger's home. Annabel's the only bright spot. Alice looks around, sees the bedroom.

ANNABEL
Thank you for coming.

ALICE
It's just one bed for both of you?

ANNABEL
Yes ...

Overjoyed, Annabel hugs and kisses her. Alice is reluctant, still taking this all in.

Alice sits along the edge of the bed, in her underwear. She's tense, still has trouble making up her mind; until Annabel rubs up against her, completely nude - a perfect fantasy.

Annabel makes her way down between Alice's legs.

LATER. Annabel uses Alice's bare chest as a pillow. She speaks up, very excited.

ANNABEL
We'll have our own bed in our own house far away from here. I can do housework for money.
We can do it together. A bigger family would pay more.

Alice takes a long pause, thinks it over.

ALICE
We'll need some things. I don't have any other clothes.

Annabel moves in, hugs her tighter.

ALICE
Are you very sure you're fine with this?

ANNABEL
I'll be fine if we go together. I know things will be better than they are for us now.

Alice takes another very long pause, looks into her eyes.

ALICE
Good. You wait here for me and I'll be back later. Alright?

Annabel nods ecstatically. They hug and kiss each other.

148  
EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - DAY

Alice, satchel over her shoulder, stops on the spot she slept ** when she first came back; recalls all of it. She goes in.

149  
OMITTED

150  
INT. PARENTS' HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

Alice serves Mom a meal in bed. Gives her medicine from the white bag. Mom's happier than anyone. Alice sees this too.

151  
INT. ROBERT'S HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

Annabel excitedly packs her things into a suitcase.
INT. PARENTS' HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alice, seated on the couch with satchel nearby, reminisces of her family. Looks to the photos and a toy from her youth.

INT. PARENTS' HOME, BEDROOM - EVENING

Alice nurses Mom bedside. Mom coughs, Alice pours her water, settles her, lays her down on the bed.

MOMENTS LATER. Alice rocks Mom to sleep in bed, hums a lullaby to her. Alice closes her eyes:

INSERT: She recalls the day she and Annabel met; cooking in the kitchen. They get close; their hands touch.

Alice comes to. Mom turns to her, feeling much better. Holds her child. Alice has a hard time with this.

EXT. PARENTS' HOME, PORCH STOOP - EVENING

Dad and Jacob sit along the porch bench. Alice comes out, serves them lemonade. She kisses him, then Jacob. They're happy to have her home. She recalls:

INSERT: Her first kiss with Annabel in the bedroom at the church hospice.

INT. PARENTS' HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's later. Alice is by the satchel, drinking wine, grabs a photo/toy from the fireplace mantle into the satchel. She slips into a stupor and recalls:

INSERT: Her moments with Annabel behind the church hospice, right before the first time they became intimate.

LATER. The wine bottle's empty; her satchel expanded from the photo/toy. The wine takes its effect. She falls over, passes out. Jacob enters, wraps a blanket around her.

INT. ROBERT'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Annabel's in bed next to Robert, his arms around her. She looks into the distance. But Alice still hasn't returned.

EXT. ROBERT'S HOME - DAY

The next morning. A bright new day.
157  INT. ROBERT'S HOME, FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Annabel waits on the couch, pretends to knit something; she checks the window, still waits for Alice.

158  EXT. PARENTS' HOME - DAY

Dad helps put Mom into the truck.
INT. PARENTS' HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alice is asleep, still in her apron, away from the satchel.

Jacob enters in his pajamas. He holds a glass of milk and medical pills, then kneels to her face.

JACOB
Alice - Alice, wake up.

He tries again. And then a familiar voice ...

FAMILIAR VOICE
Allow me, Brother. Sister Alice. You have a visitor.

Lillian approaches with her bible, fliers, BAKER'S BOX.

LILLIAN
We'll just be a moment.

JACOB
Your father took your mother to the doctor for a checkup. I'm going to get ready for work ...

Lillian takes the milk and pills from Jacob. He departs.

LILLIAN
Alice, it's your Sister. Wake up and thank the Lord for another beautiful day! I've made you breakfast.

Alice sobers up, sees who it is. Lillian hands her the milk and medicine; and offers muffins. Alice declines.

LILLIAN
What a very lovely home you have. A lovely family and husband-to-be!

Alice sets the suitcase aside, but keeps it close. Lillian takes a seat nearby. Alice gulps much of the milk down.

LILLIAN
"First-comes-love-then-comes-marriage-then-comes-a-baby-in-your baby-less-carriage ..."

Alice takes a moment, furrows her brow at Lillian.
LILLIAN
Sister Alice: my prodigal Sister, home again. After so many years! So many challenges the Lord besets upon us ... 

ALICE
Are you being challenged, Lillian?

LILLIAN
Not me, no; but there's been some trouble in our family lately. Annabel and I were to go away together for missionary work but she's run off. Have you heard this?

... 

LILLIAN
There is a man she's been with recently who seems to be a terrible influence on her. But ... She thinks she's in love! She thinks so many strange things, doesn't she?

Mention of Annabel makes Lillian uneasy. She sweats a bit, eats a muffin, wipes her mouth. Alice sees this.

LILLIAN
I heard she came to see you again.

ALICE
Just a few times.

LILLIAN
Have you spoken with her lately? Where has she gone?

ALICE
She's gone her own way.

LILLIAN
Away with this man? With another man? ... Another woman?

... 

LILLIAN
Alice; now that I know this about her, I must know. You must tell me.

Alice goes quiet, ignores her, turns back to her suitcase.
LILLIAN
Sister: God is calling to us. He is asking that we guide His child back to Him --
(off Alice's silence)
-- He is calling for you to bring her back to me - back to her home and family where she belongs.

ALICE
I can bring you to her immediately.

LILLIAN
(startled)
You could?

ALICE
That's best for everyone.

LILLIAN
Yes ... Yes, it is! Thank you.

ALICE
But I want you to do something for me first.

LILLIAN
Alright.

ALICE
I'd like you to ask for forgiveness.

LILLIAN
For what?

ALICE
I'd like you to confess and do what's best for your family.

LILLIAN
I don't know what you mean?

ALICE
Confess what you don't know then.

Lillian takes a moment, ponders this, baffled.

ALICE
Confess that you lust.

Lillian's stunned; remains quiet.

ALICE
Confess that you covet.
LILLIAN
Alice, I really don't --

ALICE
About Annabel.

LILLIAN
This is ridiculous.

Lillian slowly absorbs the meaning, uncomfortably laughs it off. She darts her eyes, finishes the muffin.

LILLIAN
So where is she now?

ALICE
Not far.

LILLIAN
And we can go to her right away?

ALICE
She's with this man right now.

LILLIAN
Where?

ALICE
She's been staying with him in his home downtown.

LILLIAN
Downtown.

ALICE
In his bed.

LILLIAN
... What?

ALICE
She's sleeping with him in his bed.

LILLIAN
... No she's not ... They've only met a few weeks, why would she do that?

ALICE
She's fornicated a lot since running off. A lot more just yesterday.
(sly grin)
And once she's pregnant she'll have to marry into his family.
LILLIAN
No, no, no - this is Sister Annabel, my Sister. She can't --

ALICE
But you can. So confess now.

Lillian still holds back. Won't say it.

ALICE
Because she's not your "Sister" anymore. And she's not your bride.

Lillian's at a loss, takes this in. Something crumbles apart inside her. She turns back to Alice with a look of despair, realizes she's been found out.

Very slowly, she breaks down and weeps like a little girl.

LILLIAN
Oh, Alice; please, I'm in such terrible trouble.

Alice gathers her suitcase, prepares to leave.

LILLIAN
Her father's asked me to bring her home. But now that I know this about her, I can't -- I'm sick. I'm such a sinner ... If you could see how sick he's been praying for her to return --

Hearing Veale's family troubles, Alice stops in her tracks.

ALICE
What sickness?

LILLIAN
-- Sick and worried and everything else he's stopped because of this: his work and church and family --

ALICE
...

Alice's face changes, despondent considering her own family; goes into the pit of her stomach, recalls everything.

LILLIAN
They need her home again. But I must have her first.
Annabel, she must -- I've done everything to be faithful but still, these dirty filthy things I've done with my body watching hers - I have so much sin. Alice, please, if there's something more I could offer her, you must tell me. Because the Lord, He won't listen! He just keeps talking and talking -- Always more of my Faith for His!

Lillian holds her BIBLE to her chest like a shield.

LILLIAN
BUT THERE IS NOTHING THERE. NOTHING TO BE DONE -- !

ALICE
Because you're not the Sister she prayed for, Lillian. You're just a frigid wife and a fraud ... I saw what you were and I got Annabel to confess to me first. I'm the Lord's confessor. I'm the Sister she chose, not you.

LILLIAN
This isn't true. Stop saying this --

ALICE
But it's my family I chose instead. So where's yours, Lillian? Who's going to save you? Who's still faithful to you now? The meek mother and husband you've backhanded?

Lillian sinks lower, hangs her head and whimpers, "no, no".

ALICE
Annabel's fixed with a man now just like us. She's having sex too. Lots of it. Twenty-four hours a day.

LILLIAN
Don't say these things to me --

ALICE
The Lord's not giving her back. He's taken her from both of us. She's Gone From You For Good.

LILLIAN
If she'd go on this missionary work with me, our family would accept --
ALICE
SEX, LILLIAN. LOTS-AND-LOTS OF SEX!
Adam and Eve just like it says in your Gospel, isn't that right?

LILLIAN
... That's right --

ALICE
(grabs the bible from her)
THAT'S RIGHT, JUST LIKE US. So she'll never be yours, and you'll never be her family. Just your mother's misbegotten child. Daddy and the Doctor should've slapped you and shoved you back into the hole you crawled out of.

Alice raises the bible, offers a mock blessing.

ALICE
Look at me. Look at the Lord, right here. Are you sick? Are you a sinner?

Lillian lifts her head to speak but no words come out. Alice smacks her with the book, throws it back at her.

ALICE
WHAT'S WRONG "SISTER"? PUSSY-CAT-GOT-YOUR-TONGUE?

LILLIAN
STOP SAYING THIS TO ME. PLEASE. I NEED YOUR HELP --

Alice grabs a pillow from her bed, beats and smothers Lillian with it. Lillian is hysterical: kicking, fighting, pushing.

ALICE
AREN'T YOU JEALOUS OF ME? COVET WHAT I HAD WITH HER? I TOOK HER FROM YOU AND I GAVE HER WHAT YOU COULDN'T. AND NOW YOU HAVE NO ONE, LILLIAN. AND YOU HAVE NOTHING. HOW DARE YOU CALL ME "SISTER"?

Alice slips her hand beneath Lillian's skirt. Lillian lets out a muffled moan of sexual frustration.

ALICE
Here's the blessing. Here it comes!
Alice gives it one last shove; leaves Lillian nearly passed out and panting for breath. Alice limps away, notices menstrual blood on her fingers.

She wipes it off on her apron, then takes the photo/toy out of the satchel and places it back on the fireplace mantle.

FOOTSTEPS. Jacob enters, dressed for work. He slowly takes in this mess, baffled.

She's hunched over, exhausted, looks to her crotch; satisfied.

    ALICE

        Amen.

THE END.