

FADE IN:

EXT. GREYSTONE - NIGHT

A crumbling, four-story house in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood. Lightbulbs in sconces on either side of the imposing front door flicker.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The floor creaks.

SILVIA (mid-40's) pauses outside of a massive, worn, wooden double-doorway, holding a lit candelabra.

She quietly opens one door just a crack.

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

EVY's area of the greystone, doubling as her bedroom and makeshift art workspace. The room is dark, even during the day; many large, worn candelabras are present.

Hanging from clothesline all over the room are many pieces of her artwork that appear to be watercolors painted only with black and shades of gray, depicting the same thing over and over - a surreal, shadowy figure of a woman and a large knife.

One piece of art is unlike the others; unfinished, partly in color, depicting a beautiful woman in classical Greek costume.

Coals glow orange in the mammoth fireplace.

Evy (mid-20's) sleeps, surrounded by dim, still-dripping candle stubs.

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS (EVY'S DREAM)

The orange glow brightens. Suddenly, Evy sits up.

Her breathing becomes faster and faster; she surveys the room.

The figure of A WOMAN appears, carrying a huge knife, approaching the bed; Evy cannot move.

Nearing the bedside, the woman, face and clothing clearly visible, raises the knife. Evy's head hits the pillow.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Evy wakes up as Silvia pushes the doors open.

SILVIA  
What, again?

Evy  
Yes.

Silvia snaps on a light.

It flickers a few times; Evy squints.

Evy  
Turn it off.

Silvia turns off the light.

SILVIA  
You haven't been taking your pills.

Evy  
I'm ok now.

SILVIA  
They told you how to make it all go  
away...

Evy  
I'm not trying to do this!

SILVIA  
...if you would put that day behind  
you.

Old burns on Evy's hands have long healed, but the scars are still evident.

Silvia starts to leave.

Evy  
Is that really the reason?

Silvia stops.

SILVIA  
What do you mean?

Evy  
Mother. Something is wrong.

SILVIA  
That's why you need to do what the  
doctors say.

EVY  
Not that. Something else.

Silvia turns to the fireplace.

SILVIA  
Evy, I've asked you to please stop  
leaving coals burning in the  
fireplace!

She uses an iron poker to try and extinguish them.

EVY  
Don't!

SILVIA  
Ashes everywhere.

EVY  
I need them!

SILVIA  
You need them.

EVY  
Ashes keep the coals warm.

SILVIA  
Coals are just as dangerous as fire.

Momentary silence.

EVY  
Nothing ever works out for me.

SILVIA  
I'm doing my best.

EVY  
That's not it.

SILVIA  
No one is ever satisfied with me.  
Nothing I do is ever enough.

EVY  
(unconvincingly)  
You know I don't feel that way.

SILVIA

Not always. I got you into a good graduate school, your studies are going well.

EVY

I'm not talking about that.

SILVIA

I know what it is.

EVY

You do?

SILVIA

This place. The ashes, the darkness, the drawings.

EVY

They're paintings.

SILVIA

Must you keep drawing her? You give her life when you do.

EVY

She is alive.

Silvia turns around in the doorway.

SILVIA

Yes. But your Aunt Jane is never coming back.

She closes the doors.

EXT. SILVIA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brighter than Evy's ballroom cave, this room shows an elegant decorative effort, but one that couldn't quite overtake the deteriorating environment.

A view of A MAN, in dim light, sleeping in Silvia's bed, naked, sprawled on his stomach. Silvia removes her robe and closes the door.

INT. PANTRY - MORNING

A view of dark and rain through the grand but shitty windows. Silvia drinks coffee. Evy shuffles in.

EVY

Where's what's-his-name?

SILVIA  
Who.

EVY  
Will I ever see him again?

SILVIA  
Did you sleep?

EVY  
No.

SILVIA  
You'll take a pill tonight.

Evy engages in more of a rattling of dishes than a fixing of breakfast. She stops.

SILVIA  
(as if she's dealt  
with this many times)  
Ok. What is it?

EVY  
Each time she gets closer to me.

SILVIA  
What?

EVY  
Physically closer.

SILVIA  
To whom do you refer?

EVY  
You know who.

SILVIA  
She hasn't been in your life since  
you were a child, Evy.

EVY  
Then why do I keep on dreaming that  
she wants to stab me?

SILVIA  
Exactly.

EVY  
Right.  
(beat)  
She ages.

SILVIA

Ages?

EVY

In the dream.

SILVIA

That's impossible.

EVY

Like my mind is writing for itself  
how she's looked all this time.

SILVIA

The pills will help.

EVY

Fuck the pills!

SILVIA

Don't talk to me that way! Yes,  
your aunt lived an irresponsible,  
errant existence, and at times it  
was terrifying for everyone. Yes,  
you were left in her care at times  
and that was a mistake. I thought  
that forbidding my sister to have  
any contact with you was the answer.

EVY

Why did the family always treat me  
differently?

SILVIA

Differently?

EVY

Like there was something they all  
knew about me.

Momentary silence.

SILVIA

We did no such thing.

EVY

Is there something I should know?

Silvia pours herself another cup of coffee.

SILVIA

Like what?

Evy

Like maybe I wasn't supposed to be here.

Silvia sets the coffee pot down roughly.

Evy

Maybe it would be better if I weren't.

Evy runs out of the room.

Silvia

Evy!

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Evy runs up the mammoth foyer spiral; Silvia follows.

Silvia

Don't run away from me!

Evy

Leave me alone!

Silvia

I will not!

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Evy bursts in the doors and runs, stopping near her huge easel. She picks up a paintbrush.

Silvia arrives, breathless.

Silvia

Don't ever say that again!  
(pause)  
We're cleaning up this room.

Evy

No, we're not.

Silvia

Brighten it up a little.

Evy

It's fine.

Silvia

Can't you see that all I want is for you to be happy?

She starts to almost cry.

EVY

I'd like this room to look the way it did. I can picture it - the whole house, really. Did you know that there's a whole section of the city that was built on top of rubble from the Great Chicago Fire?

SILVIA

No.

EVY

I wonder. What were the entire... contents...of the ashes.

Silvia takes Evy by the arms.

SILVIA

Listen to yourself, Evy! That's not what normal people think about!

Evy breaks free.

EVY

I think I'm going to move in with Daisy for a while.

SILVIA

Does she know this?

EVY

Not yet.

SILVIA

What's "a while"?

EVY

Maybe for next semester.

SILVIA

You can't -  
(controlled nervousness)  
There isn't room for your drawings at Daisy's place.

EVY

They're paintings.

Silvia turns to the one that differs from the others.

SILVIA

What about this?

EVY

It's old.

SILVIA

It's different.

EVY

It's Hestia. Goddess of the Hearth. Every home had a hearth dedicated to her. If the fire went out, it was rekindled immediately. The Greeks believed she protected those who sought it from her.

SILVIA

Why did you paint her?

EVY

I felt better that day.

SILVIA

It's not finished.

EVY

The feeling went away.

SILVIA

When will you start painting in color again, Evy, with real paint?

INT. BALLROOM - AFTERNOON

Evy leans toward the glowing fireplace coals with an iron poker in hand, covering them with ash. Her nightgown comes perilously close to the heat for a few seconds.

INT. SILVIA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She buttons an elegant blouse and steps into a pair of expensive high-heeled shoes.

The lights flicker; she looks up, uneasy.

INT. BALLROOM - SAME

Lights flicker also. Evy's eyes move around the room; she lights a match without looking at it.

INT. STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Silvia hurries noiselessly upward.

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Silvia opens the doors; Evy ignores the sound.

SILVIA  
Don't leave that fire burning if you  
go out.

Evy  
It's not a fire.

SILVIA  
It might as well be.

Evy  
I'm not going out.

Lights flicker more energetically.

SILVIA  
Dammit.

Evy  
We need a real electrician this time.

SILVIA  
A little bit longer, and I might be  
able to buy a share of the restaurant.  
Things will change.

Evy  
When will you be home?

SILVIA  
One. Maybe two. Why?

Evy  
(uneasy)  
Nothing.

A knock on a downstairs door. They freeze.

SILVIA  
Was Daisy coming over?

Evy  
She's teaching this afternoon.

SILVIA  
Why would someone come to the  
servants' entrance?

INT. STAIRCASE - A MOMENT LATER

As they descend, the knock is heard again, louder.

INT. MUD ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

A coat rack, leaning under the weight of its burden, stands in front of the door, along with a wall of other junk.

SILVIA

Hello?

No answer.

EVY

Maybe it's somebody from school.

Evy moves the rack, which pushes aside her portfolio case. Half unzipped, some of the pictures inside of the lady and the knife spill out. She shoves all other junk aside.

She unlocks two deadbolts, turns the door handle lock and slides the door chain free. With some effort, she opens the never-opened door slightly.

There stands JANE (mid-40's), dressed exactly as she was n Evy's last nightmare, with the alley light casting the same orange glow upon her.

Evy pauses, wide-eyed, and slams the door shut.

SILVIA

What the hell was that?

EVY

(quickly)  
Nothing.

SILVIA

Well, who the hell -

EVY

She'll go away.

SILVIA

She?

Silvia moves Evy out of the way.

EVY

Don't!

Evy backs away to the doorway leading into the room.

SILVIA  
Oh, good god, Evy.

Silvia opens the door, her expression quickly replaced by Evy's kind of shock at Jane's presence, but the orange glow around her is gone.

JANE  
Hello, Silvia. Please may I come in?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Evy hides around the corner.

INT. MUD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SILVIA  
(loud whisper)  
Absolutely not.

JANE  
I know what you're thinking.

SILVIA  
Never say that again.

JANE  
We have to talk.

SILVIA  
How could you come here?

JANE  
Please.

SILVIA  
No.

JANE  
Something's happened.

Evy tries to remain unseen but can't resist the compulsion to look.

JANE  
It's bad, Silvia.

SILVIA  
(without turning around)  
Evy: go.

CONTINUED...