

INFINITY

by

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FADE IN:

A wide-winged blackbird soars in a cloudy sky. The bird swoops down to reveal below:

EXT. FAIRHURST MANOR - DAY

A sprawling red-roofed manor, magnificently large and built of brick and stone, nestles into forested mountain foothills.

The manor is a jumble of buildings, clustered and patched together into one grand expanse.

A tower, with a roof like an observatory, stands guard over the west side.

The bird soars down, past the tower. Windows are carved into the walls.

A man, dressed in a black suit and with a neat black beard, stares somberly out the highest window.

The blackbird flaps down to the lower walls of the manor. NORRIE, a woman in her energetic 60s, beats a rug on a balcony.

The flight soars past a long row of windows. A glimpse in a window shows ANDREW and ELLIE, brother and sister in their 20s, arguing.

The bird perches suddenly at the next window, which is open. White drapery flutters slightly in the breeze.

ELLIE (O.S.)

Where are they?

INT. FAIRHURST MANOR - DAY

SITTING ROOM

Just inside the window, MIRIA, Ellie's 5-year-old daughter, sits coloring on a rug decorated with blue flowers.

The room has a decayed elegance, with tattered wallpaper, wood trim stained dark over time, antique furniture, and

thread-bare carpet. Paint cans and tarps scatter across the room.

MIRIA

Miria concentrates hard on her work. Her coloring has neat edges and meticulous shading.

ANDREW (O.S.)

I don't know what you want me to say.

ELLIE (O.S.)

Anything, Andrew. At this point, I'd love to hear you say anything.

EXT./INT. SITTING ROOM

The bird ruffles its wings, then swoops down into the room, over Miria's head.

She looks up, startled. Her crayons fall to the floor.

ANDREW (O.S.)

I didn't...

The bird flies through the open door of the room into the hallway.

ELLIE (O.S.)

You're lying to me!

Miria jumps to her feet and rushes to the doorway to see where the bird has flown.

HALLWAY

Miria glances with a worried frown toward the arguing adults.

The bird careens around the far corner.

The voices fade as Miria makes her decision and scrambles down the hall to catch up with the bird.

The walls are lined with paintings, all ornately framed. Blank spaces and empty hooks show that paintings are missing here and there.

Miria turns several corners. The bird pops in and out of view, its wings flapping desperately against the ceiling and walls as it searches for escape.

Miria slows as the halls grow darker and quieter. She is small amidst the tall hallways and thick doors.

Suddenly, she stops and looks to her right.

In an open doorway, she stares into a reflection of herself on the far wall of a darkened room.

STUDY

Miria walks slowly through the doorway.

The room is a gentleman's study with a large desk at the center and numerous bookshelves. White sheets cover a stack of chairs in the corner.

Miria stares into a tall mirror propped against the wall next to the window. Her small reflection stares back.

Miria waves her fingers at the girl in the mirror.

MIRIA

Hi.

She notices in the reflection another gaze on her.

Miria turns quickly to see a tall portrait of an elegant woman on the wall opposite the mirror.

The woman's face is kind. Her dress is long and flowing, with a tight waist and long, puffy sleeves.

Miria takes a step toward the painting, mesmerized.

She frowns and turns to the wall on her right.

A man in a well-cut suit and a dark beard gazes at her with a hard and piercing stare.

Miria backs away from this painting, unnerved. She backs toward the silent, dark hallway.

With a rasping cry, the bird darts into the room, brushing Miria's head as it lunges toward the window.

Miria screams as the bird pounds itself against the glass.

She turns in a frenzy, stumbles back across the room, and falls into a group of chairs covered in white sheets.

The sheets entangle her as she screams.

Footsteps pound down the hallway and Ellie and Andrew run into the study.

Ellie gathers up Miria while Andrew opens the window to let the bird out.

The bird shoots into the sky.

ELLIE

Shhh, Miria, shhh, it's okay.

ANDREW

Is she hurt?

ELLIE

No, she's okay. Just scared.

Andrew wrings his hands as Ellie holds Miria.

When Miria is calm, Ellie looks up at Andrew. Her face is hard.

ELLIE

You can have it. This, all of this,
I won't ask any more questions. Do
what you want.

She gathers up Miria and walks out of the room with the girl's arms around her neck.

Andrew hurries after her.

HALLWAY

ANDREW

Ellie...

ELLIE
(without turning)
I'll tell Norrie I'm leaving.

Ellie takes a step, then stops and turns back.

ELLIE
I'll call you when we get home.
Good luck, Andrew.

Andrew watches her walk down the hall.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Rows of students huddle over papers on their desks.

A TEACHER sits at her desk at the front of the classroom.

The classroom door opens just enough for someone to motion to the teacher.

She stands and walks to the door. She stops to address the class before leaving.

TEACHER
I'll be right back. Eyes on your
own work while I'm gone, please.

She walks out and the room is deathly silent for a long moment.

Then the whispering begins.

Miria, age 14, concentrates on her Algebra test. She flies through the problems, neatly answering the questions with perfectly aligned x's, y's and coefficients.

The students near her watch enviously as she works.

A BOY smirks at his neighbor.

BOY
Her brain is going to explode.

Miria hears, flushes red, and works faster.

BOY

I think it's getting bigger. Look
it's pulsing!

Miria swallows hard and turns over her paper. The other students giggle softly.

Miria finishes the last problem.

The teacher walks into the room and the students snap back to their papers.

Almost immediately, the final bell rings. The boy drops his pencil in frustration.

Miria picks up her paper and grabs her bag.

Everyone files out for the day, dropping their papers on the teacher's desk as they exit.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

The bus is chaos.

Wads of paper fly back and forth, students scream in high-pitched squeals, laughter follows backpacks being tossed across the aisle.

Miria sits near the back with her head resting against the seat, eyes closed and the window above her as far open as it will go. The wind ruffles her hair around her face.

The bus slows to a stop and Miria opens an eye.

She jumps up, grabs her bag and works her way carefully down the aisle through arms and legs and backpacks.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

Miria hops off the bus to the curb.

Her home is a squat brick structure with a square of four balconies surrounding a door with peeling paint. Beautiful college campus buildings are all around.

The bus pulls away as she runs down the sidewalk, up the steps, and into the front door.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWAY

The stairway is dark and rickety. Soda cans and food wrappers litter the hallway and a sign on one door reads "English Tutoring \$10".

Miria sprints up the stairs to the second floor.

Ellie's muffled voice grows louder, becoming clear as Miria opens the apartment door.

INT. MIRIA'S APARTMENT

ELLIE

We only have to draw a correlation
between the weight of the particle
and the energy levels to prove
it's possible.

Ellie and DANIEL, Miria's father, are sitting on an old, lumpy sofa debating over a mess of papers scattered across the coffee table.

DANIEL

But that will never be enough to
get approval for testing.

The apartment is tiny and half-unpacked moving boxes fill every corner. The kitchen and living room make up the main living area. A hallway leads past the kitchen to bedrooms and a bathroom.

Miria walks in.

DANIEL

My savior! Come tell your mother
she's being unreasonable.

Ellie jumps up and covers Miria with a hug.

ELLIE

Ignore him. How was it? Any better
the second day?

Miria groans and drops her backpack.

She collapses on the couch next to Daniel.

MIRIA

I'd rather tell you you're being unreasonable. What's she being unreasonable about?

DANIEL

Existence. Now tell us about school.

MIRIA

You went to school. I'm sure not much has changed.

Miria stands and walks to open the refrigerator.

Ellie and Daniel exchange a glance, then Ellie drops her papers on the coffee table.

ELLIE

Time for pizza.

MIRIA

It's only 3:45.

DANIEL

Then the place will be empty.

Ellie grabs her purse.

Daniel jumps up and guides Miria to the door.

Miria smiles as her parents push her ahead of them into the hallway.

INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - DAY

Miria, Ellie and Daniel sit in a tall booth with college paraphernalia decorating the walls all around them. The lighting is dim and the music is loud enough to make them lean across the table to hear one another.

They devour a huge pepperoni pizza while they continue to discuss their research plans.

ELLIE

I just think that if we publish now, we'll be able to get some attention.

DANIEL

If we rush to publish before we have a solid theory, no one will take us seriously enough to let us run our tests. You know that...

ELLIE

The Dean will support us and maybe put us in contact with one of the labs. She hired us because of our research.

DANIEL

At this point, I doubt our paper would be accepted by any journal anyway.

ELLIE

We need to publish openly.

DANIEL

That does nothing toward tenure.

ELLIE

I hate academics.

Ellie and Daniel both take a bite of pizza and stare one another down.

Miria sets down her slice of pizza.

MIRIA

So, Mom, Dad.

DANIEL

Yes, Miria. Go.

MIRIA

You've been talking about this for five years now, and I've always wondered... When you do go to test this theory, and you will, how will you make sure you won't blow up?

ELLIE

We won't set off a bomb.

DANIEL

What makes you think we're going to blow anything up?

MIRIA

I saw this video online...

Ellie drops her pizza on her plate and holds up a hand to Miria.

ELLIE

Stop. Particle accelerators are not going to blow up the world. The internet is wrong.

MIRIA

I didn't think it was exactly right. But your test is more dangerous than the others, isn't it? Dad thinks so.

Daniel stops wiping pizza grease off his chin and looks up in surprise.

DANIEL

Did I say that?

MIRIA

You said it would take too much energy. Or something like that.

ELLIE

Our theory pushes the limits, it's true. But if - when - we get the chance to run tests, we'll take all the precautions we can think of, and some that might not even be necessary, to make sure it's safe.

DANIEL

Well, thousands of pounds of magnets smashing atomic particles together can never be exactly safe.

ELLIE

No, but it's discovery. So it's worth the risk.

Miria nods, then picks up her slice of pizza again.

MIRIA

Okay, I believe you. I just thought I'd check. You know, for when you do finally publish your paper.

Miria arches an eyebrow, grins, and takes a huge bite.

Ellie opens her mouth to respond, but Daniel cuts her off.

DANIEL

Let's get the check.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The night is warm. They walk along a street of campus buildings lined with perfectly green lawns and hedge borders. Students pass by occasionally in groups or alone, enjoying the mild night.

Ellie receives a phone call and lags behind while Daniel and Miria walk ahead.

MIRIA

Which star is ours?

He points at a tree just ahead of them to the right.

DANIEL

That one, just above the highest branch.

MIRIA

Do you think it has a planet?

DANIEL

They say there's a planet around every star.

MIRIA

Do you think there's a girl up
there pointing down at me?

DANIEL

I don't know. What if she's
pointing up at you?

Miria pushes him.

MIRIA

Don't ruin my dreams with
relativity.

Daniel laughs and drapes his arm around Miria's shoulder,
pulling her close.

Ellie hangs up her phone and calls out to Daniel:

ELLIE

Daniel.

Daniel and Miria stop and turn around.

ELLIE

That was the Dean. Someone just
published a paper online.

Ellie walks closer to them.

DANIEL

Okay, you're right. Open
publishing is better.

Ellie grabs Daniel's shoulders.

ELLIE

It's a proof of our theory. It
proves the concept of capturing
energy from dark matter.

DANIEL

How can anyone have gotten that
far already?

Ellie backs away, growing more excited.

ELLIE

I don't know. Apparently it's getting incredible feedback all over the world. The possibilities are huge. And...

MIRIA

What?

ELLIE

The Dean knows we have a working hypothesis. She must have called in about a thousand favors. They've opened a space for us at the Large Hadron Collider.

DANIEL

Geneva? They're letting us test at the LHC?

ELLIE

Immediately. We need to leave now. This is...this is everything.

They hug and laugh and celebrate.

Off to the side, Miria laughs at their exuberance, then suddenly stops.

Her eyes widen and mouth drops as she realizes something.

ELLIE

We have so much to do.

DANIEL

I'll call the team.

ELLIE

I'll look for plane tickets.

Daniel makes a call and Ellie begins tapping her phone as they speed walk away.

Miria follows, half grinning and half biting her lip.

DANIEL

Get out your suitcase, I've got news.

Ellie drops her hands to her side, stops and turns.

Miria nearly runs into her.

ELLIE

Miria, what am I going to do with you?

MIRIA

Isn't that what you always say?

ELLIE

Have you made a best friend in the last two days that you can stay with?

Miria raises her eyebrows and shakes her head.

Daniel hangs up his phone, realizes Miria and Ellie are far behind him and calls out:

DANIEL

What's wrong?

Ellie turns to him.

ELLIE

We don't have anywhere for Miria...

MIRIA

(calling to Daniel)

I'm going to go stay with Uncle Andrew while you're gone.

Ellie snaps back around to Miria.

ELLIE

Not a chance.

Miria rushes to explain her plan.

MIRIA

I have it all figured out. Four hours away by train. I can catch a cab in town. Norrie will be there to meet me so you don't have to worry about Uncle Andrew forgetting I'm coming. All you have to do is call. And buy me a train ticket. And give me money for the cab. Although I have some money saved up, so if I have to...

ELLIE

Not a chance.

MIRIA

Please!

Ellie turns and walks on toward Daniel.

ELLIE

See if you can get ahold of anyone from the department. There's got to be someone we can have Miria stay with while we're gone.

Miria runs to get in front of Ellie.

MIRIA

Mom, I don't know anyone you work with yet. I don't want to stay with a stranger.

ELLIE

You haven't seen my brother since you were five. He's as much a stranger as anyone here.

MIRIA

That's not my fault!

Ellie looks pleadingly at Daniel.

ELLIE

Dan...

Daniel opens his mouth, and then shrugs his shoulders.

DANIEL

It's not a bad idea.

Ellie gives Miria a pained look.

Miria bites her lip.

Ellie closes her eyes.

ELLIE

I'll have to call your school...

Miria squeals and hugs Ellie fiercely.

Ellie kisses the top of her head.

INT. MIRIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They walk in the front door, throw down their coats and jump right into packing.

Miria goes down the hall to her room.

MIRIA'S BEDROOM

She pulls out a suitcase from under her bed and throws clothes from her dresser into it.

She walks to her bedroom door and takes a careful look into the hallway.

She shuts the door quietly, then goes to her closet and pulls out a small shoebox from behind a pile of stuffed animals.

She places the box in her suitcase.

On the lid is pasted a black and white newspaper picture of Fairhurst Manor.

Miria piles more clothes on top of the box and continues packing.

The door opens a crack and Ellie pokes her head in.

ELLIE

Miria...

Miria looks up.

Ellie walks in the door and over to the bed.

She picks up a shirt and refolds it, placing it neatly back in the suitcase.

ELLIE

Call me every day, okay?

MIRIA

I will.

Ellie gives Miria a long look, then lifts her hands to her neck. She unclasps her necklace, a thin chain with a small diamond pendant set into a circle of gold.

ELLIE

Here, turn around.

Miria turns so Ellie can clasp the necklace around her neck. Miria touches it and turns back to face Ellie.

MIRIA

Your necklace? Why?

ELLIE

I found it there, when I was still helping your uncle fix up the house. I've always felt like it belonged there, but I never wanted to take it back. I guess it was waiting for you to bring it back for me. Miria, I...I wish...

Miria wraps her arms around her mom.

MIRIA

We'll all be back in a week.

INT. TAXI CAB - DAY

A taxi drives slowly on a winding paved road through a thick forest.

Miria leans against the window in the back seat, watching the forest flash by. It's turning to fall and the trees are just beginning to turn rich reds and oranges.

The cabbie speaks to her over his shoulder.

CABBIE

So I guess you're a relative? Not too many people ask to come out here.

Miria turns from the window.

MIRIA

I'm visiting my uncle.

CABBIE

Your uncle, eh? I haven't seen you before.

MIRIA

I haven't been here since I was little.

CABBIE

Can't say I blame you.

Miria opens her mouth to respond, but shuts it and turns back to the window with a bemused expression.

The cab slows and turns right onto a gravel lane.

CABBIE

Okay, here we go.

The lane winds around, trees closing in narrowly on either side. A fence lines the road, broken in places.

As the paved road disappears behind, the forest grows dimmer.

CABBIE

Watch now, we're almost there.

The cab slows and turns abruptly to the right.

Fairhurst Manor comes into view, a dilapidated wreck of a building surrounded by yards of nicely trimmed grass and neat garden beds.

Miria stares up at the house, astonished.

It's a stunning building, extending up and to both sides like a looming castle. The architecture is a baffling mix of styles. Its assorted wings huddle together, their roofs joined like a stack of books just fallen into a heap.

In the center of the huddle is a main façade that is more imposing than the rest. It has tall columns set into each side and three flights of windows in classic style. A grand set of doors tops a crumbling flight of stairs.

The car stops in front of the doors.

Miria hands the driver several bills. He takes them and turns around to her.

CABBIE

Sure you want to stay?

MIRIA

Can I get my bags first?

CABBIE

Sure thing.

They step out of the car.

EXT. FAIRHURST MANOR

Miria gazes up and around at the wreck of the house while the cabbie pulls out her bags. She shivers and folds her arms tight.

The car starts and Miria spins around to see the cab driver racing away, gravel spitting out behind him. Her bags are piled in a heap behind where the car had been parked.

She watches him peel away around the corner of the drive until silence falls again.

Miria walks to her bags. She pulls a jacket from a large backpack, slips it on, then slings the backpack across her shoulder. She grabs the handle of her rolling suitcase.

She carries everything to the front entrance.

The doors are a thick dark wood decorated with intricate scrollwork. She sets her bags down and looks for a doorbell. There is nothing.

She knocks tentatively between the scrolls, but her knock comes out as a slight tapping.

She tries the heavy metal handle and the door pushes open slightly.

She pushes the door open further and peers inside.

MIRIA

Hello?

Silence.

Miria picks up her bags and goes inside.

INT. FAIRHURST MANOR

GRAND ENTRANCE

Miria stands in an elegantly massive room. The walls soar up to a curved ceiling painted with a faded fresco.

Curved staircases on either side of the room lead to a high balcony running around the entire second floor.

Small doorways lead off in every direction. Miria looks around nervously. She calls out and her voice echoes back eerily.

MIRIA

Norrie? Uncle Albert? Hello?

She moves across the room, pulling her rolling suitcase.

She chooses a doorway straight across the room and comes into a hallway leading away deep into darkness.

Miria turns again and calls out into the empty room.

MIRIA

Hello?

She takes a deep breath, turns around, and walks forward.

HALLWAY

Paintings hang here and there. The floor is carpeted, but bare wood shows through in places. Doors lead to rooms left and right.

Many of the doors are open.

The rooms are of different sizes, most filled with broken furniture and lined with peeling wallpaper.

Miria pushes open a nearly closed door.

MUSIC ROOM

A piano sits in the corner of the room with a broken bench lying in front of it. Miria steps into the room and looks around, but it's empty except for the piano.

She pushes several keys on the piano. They're out of tune.

A man, dressed in a dark suit and with a neatly trimmed black beard, passes behind her down the hall.

Miria steps out of the music room.

She turns and continues on her way as the man turns a corner out of sight.

HALLWAY

She comes to another closed door.

Pushing it open, she sees white linen curtains framing a large window. A rug with blue flowers covers the floor.

MIRIA

The bird.

She looks up the hallway.

She heads in the same path she took as a little girl,
turning corner after corner until she stops in a doorway.

STUDY

The furniture has been righted, but the study is otherwise
unchanged.

Miria sees herself in the mirror and waves her fingers at
her reflection.

MIRIA

Hi.

Miria pulls her bags into the room and turns to see the
portraits.

She gazes up at the lady, then slowly turns to look at the
gentleman.

MIRIA

Where did you go?

A hand comes from behind and grasps her shoulder.

MIRIA

Ahhh!

Miria jumps backward, stepping into her luggage.

She falls across the room, back into the same white-sheet-
covered chairs.

NORRIE cries out and rushes to help.

NORRIE

Oh, Miria, I'm so sorry!

Norrie helps Miria escape the sheets.

NORRIE

I heard you calling, but couldn't
find you.

Norrie pulls Miria to a stand. Miria smooths her hair and
catches her breath.

MIRIA

It's okay. I'm okay...

She stops, then throws her arms around Norrie in a big hug.

NORRIE

Oh, Miria, I'm so glad you're here.

MIRIA

Is Uncle Andrew here?

NORRIE

Oh, yes, he's...he'll be down soon. In the meantime, I'll show you to your room.

Norrie picks up Miria's rolling bag.

NORRIE

We'll take the long way.

Miria grins and follows her into the hallway.

HALLWAY

They walk in the opposite direction from the sitting room.

At the end of the hall, a stairway climbs up to the right. A window at its base looks out onto the lawns and mountains.

NORRIE

I suppose you remember very little?

MIRIA

I'm not sure what I remember and what I've only imagined. Some things feel familiar.

Norrie climbs the stairs. Miria takes a peek out of the window before following.

Hedges, lawns, and flower beds create an orderly, elegant space between the house and the edge of the forest. A boy pushes a wheelbarrow across the lawn.

Miria gives him a puzzled glance, then hurries to catch up with Norrie.

NORRIE

Some days I feel the same way. I still come across rooms I haven't seen before.

The stairway leads to another hall that looks promisingly light and open at the end.

MIRIA

How many rooms are there?

NORRIE

I have no idea. There are nearly a hundred in the main part your great-great-great-grandfather P. Fairhurst built. The rest that your great-uncle Thomas added on are such a jumble they're impossible to count. This room is one of the finest.

GRAND ENTRANCE BALCONY

They step out onto the balcony overlooking the Grand Entrance.

The room spreads below them. The windows on the front of the house frame a stunning view of the mountains.

MIRIA

It's so different from above. I feel like I'm flying over the mountains.

NORRIE

This was the first part of the house built. This and the tower. World-renowned architect J. Thomas Hunt designed both of them.

MIRIA

The tower is where...

NORRIE

You know the stories. Yes, where
your Grandfather Fairhurst died.

MIRIA

But I thought no one knows if he
died or not. I thought he
disappeared.

NORRIE

In my mind, it is where he died
and left behind his two children.
If he just left and disappeared...

Miria waits a moment before finishing Norrie's sentence.

MIRIA

He abandoned them.

Norrie nods and turns away from the balcony.

Norrie

I'll take you through the garden
room. It was once the highlight of
the manor.

They walk left across the balcony and down the stairs.

At the lower level Norrie leads Miria into an entrance to
the left.

GARDEN ROOM

The entrance leads into a room made almost entirely of
windows, letting sunlight pour in.

Three dry fountains run down the center. Large stone
planters of all sizes sit empty and crumbling throughout.
Several doors along the right wall lead outside.

NORRIE

These used to be filled with
plants year round. Your great-
uncle Thomas' wife loved every
kind of exotic flower.

Miria peers into the nearest fountain. It is several feet deep and has blue and green stones set into the bottom.

MIRIA

Do you ever turn the water on?

NORRIE

The fortune that Thomas spent
running these fountains was gone a
long time ago.

Miria moves away from the fountain and walks through the planters, running her fingers along the edge of the stone. She looks up at the light filtering through the windows.

MIRIA

Was everything really so elegant?
I read in a book once about the
people that used to visit here.
Artists and musicians and actors
and...

NORRIE

And anyone else who would drive
all the way out here. You read it
in a book? You should tell Wanda
about that. Though she probably
has that book already.

MIRIA

Who's Wanda?

NORRIE

The caretaker's daughter. Though
now...well, you'll meet her soon.
Come through here.

They move through a wide doorway into a room soaring high with bookshelves.

LIBRARY

Exquisite antique books fill every shelf. Comfortable reading chairs fill every corner and a writing table sits in the center.

Miria steps in and claps her hands in joy.

MIRIA

This is amazing! Can I read these books?

NORRIE

If you're careful. Your Grandfather Fairhurst brought all of these books over when he built the house. Some of them are very fragile.

Miria runs her finger along a row of books.

MIRIA

Norrie. My mom said something once...she said that this house destroys everyone in my family who sets foot in it.

She turns to Norrie.

MIRIA

My mom isn't always the quietest person in the world.

NORRIE

No, she's not.

MIRIA

Is it true?

NORRIE

Do you think it is?

Miria pulls a book from the shelf and delicately turns its pages as she talks.

MIRIA

P. Fairhurst disappeared only a year after he built this house. Thomas Fairhurst tried to make it into a palace and lost all of his money. Now my mom and uncle...

She looks up at Norrie.

NORRIE

The problems between your mother
and uncle are easy enough to
solve. They won't try.

Miria nods. She places the book back on the shelf. Norrie
turns and walks to a door on the opposite side of the
library.

NORRIE

Come on. I think you'll like the
next room.

HALLWAY

Norrie leads Miria out of the library into a hallway. A
flight of stairs immediately to the right leads them up.

At the next level, a stepladder juts out of the doorway of
the first room and a painting tarp spills out of the room
into the hall

NORRIE

Sorry. You'll have to be careful
of my little projects. I have
things torn apart here and there.
Someday...

Norrie stops at a door in the middle of the hall.

NORRIE

Okay, now you have a week to
explore the rest. You can start
here.

MIRIA'S BEDROOM

Norrie opens the door to an exquisitely furnished bedroom,
with antique furniture polished to a shine and a four-
poster deep and soft with covers.

Miria gasps. She walks in and gazes around in delight.

NORRIE

This room has always belonged to the young ladies of the family. I thought you might like to stay in here. I finished it just in time.

Miria sets her bags by the bed. She turns to Norrie and wraps her in a hug.

MIRIA

It's perfect.

NORRIE

The kitchen is just below, so if you...

A loud explosion rocks the house.

Fragments of dust fall through the air and the furniture rattles.

Norrie and Miria stare at one another with wide eyes.

MIRIA

What was that?

NORRIE

I'll kill him.

Norrie hustles out of the room, with Miria following.

HALLWAY

Norrie rushes through the halls at a furious pace, Miria barely able to keep up. They turn corners and pass through rooms cluttered with furniture.

TOWER ENTRANCE

They pass through a narrow hallway that opens to an expansive room with a vaulted ceiling. Sunshine floods in through a grand skylight in the ceiling.

There is a small door in the wall to the left, surrounded by rows of windows showing the back lawns.

A massive door is in the wall in front of them. The wall is curved -- it is the tower base. Smoke pours out through the cracks. Norrie strides over to these doors and bangs on them.

The door has an imposing lock. It turns as Norrie bangs.

The door pushes open and smoke billows out.

ANDREW, covered in grey dust, stumbles out of the doorway. He leans over, coughing and catching his breath.

NORRIE

Andrew, what have you done? Is there a fire blazing up there? It sounded like the entire house coming down around our ears. If you...

Andrew holds up a hand to silence Norrie.

He stares at Miria's feet, then looks up at her.

ANDREW

Norrie, who is this...wait.

He moves his head closer to peer at Miria's face.

ANDREW

This is Miria, isn't it? This is Ellie's daughter. Norrie, why didn't you tell me Ellie's daughter was coming here?

NORRIE

Andrew, I told you twice...

Andrew grabs Miria by the shoulders and holds her back to look at her.

ANDREW

You're so tall. I'd say about five feet four inches, am I right? You were just over two and half feet when I saw you last.

Miria looks at her feet, then back at Andrew, then a glance at Norrie.

Norrie shakes her head.

Miria smiles at Andrew and curtsies.

MIRIA

Hello, Uncle Andrew. Thank you for letting me come stay with you.

ANDREW

Of course, of course, of course. Ellie's daughter is welcome here anytime, any day. Wait.

He turns to Norrie, slightly panicked.

ANDREW

Ellie's not...

NORRIE

It's just Miria.

MIRIA

What were you doing up there?

ANDREW

Up where?

Miria points to the door.

ANDREW

Oh yes, magnificent, aren't they? This entire tower is an architectural wonder. It's based on DaVinci's double helix staircase, you know. No one going up knows who's going down. Two staircases intertwine, just like the DNA that writes the story of every cell in your body.

MIRIA

Can I see?

She walks away from Andrew, toward the door.

Andrew steps quickly in front of her.

ANDREW

It's very smoky up there, right now.

NORRIE

Why is it smoky up there right
now?

Andrew casts a side glance to Norrie, but keeps his focus
on Miria.

ANDREW

Not a pleasant tour at the moment.

MIRIA

What do you do up there?

ANDREW

You must have had quite a train
ride up here, all the way from
Virginia.

MIRIA

We live in Philadelphia now.

ANDREW

Really? You move quite often,
don't you?

MIRIA

This is the seventh time so far.
Mom and Dad have plans, you know.
So are you experimenting? Mom says
you experiment.

Andrew backs to the door, then suddenly turns around, slams
it shuts and locks it with a big key from his pocket.

ANDREW

Norrie, I have to run to town.

He backs toward the door in the left wall.

ANDREW

I -- ahem -- have a few items that suddenly need replacing. Won't be long, expect me back for dinner. Miria, it is wonderful to have you, you are already the brightest star in this house. We have to talk more about your moves and your mother and...

He opens the door, bright sunshine floods in the dim hall, and he is gone.

Norrie calls out as the door slams:

NORRIE

Is anything still on fire up there?

A crash outside the door.

Norrie and Miria run to the door and Norrie pulls it open.

EXT. BACK LAWNS - DAY

A few steps from the house, Andrew is sitting in a wheelbarrow.

PENN stares at him, perturbed.

MIRIA

Uncle Andrew, are you okay?

Andrew jumps out of the wheelbarrow. He brushes his coat swiftly.

ANDREW

Didn't see you there, Penn. Working hard, good to see. Be back, Norrie.

Before anyone can reply, he's off and around the corner of the house.

A car starts in the distance and tires crunch rapidly across gravel.

Norrie takes a deep breath and rubs her eyes wearily.

PENN

Where's he off to? He never leaves.

Norrie looks at Penn as if just realizing he is standing there. She wraps an arm around Miria.

NORRIE

Penn! This is Miria, Andrew's niece. I told you she was coming. Miria, this is Penn. He takes care of everything you see out here.

MIRIA

But I thought you said...

NORRIE

Why don't you show Miria around out here? If you didn't already have anything...

PENN

Sure.

NORRIE

Thank you, Penn. Now, I need to go start dinner before Andrew comes flying back here. Miria, dinner is at six in the dining room.

Norrie turns to go back inside. She mutters to herself as she opens the door and disappears inside.

NORRIE

Someday I'll wake up in my bed and this entire house will be crumbling down around my head...

MIRIA

Wait! Where's the dining room?

The door slams shut.

PENN

Don't worry. Just follow the smell of food later and you'll find it. Come on, I'll show you around.

Miria glances at the door Norrie disappeared through, then turns and follows Penn.

EXT. FAIRHURST GARDENS - DAY

Penn pushes the wheelbarrow across a wide green lawn dotted with elegant garden plots of shrubs and flowers. The forest edges it all around, looming silent and vast above the grounds.

PENN

So Andrew's your uncle? What made you think visiting was such a good idea?

MIRIA

My parents are out of the country, so I came here. Isn't that a completely normal thing to do?

Penn glances over at her.

PENN

There's not much about your uncle that's normal.

MIRIA

You work for him.

Penn nods, acknowledging her point.

Miria gestures to the gardens passing them by.

MIRIA

You take care of all this?

PENN

Sure. They're just a bunch of plants.

MIRIA

It looks like more than...

They reach a small green shed. Penn pushes the wheelbarrow inside before she can finish.

Miria stands outside for a moment, then follows him inside.

The walls are covered with tools, neatly hanging from hooks and pegboards. The wheelbarrow fits in neatly at the back.

Penn hangs up a shovel he takes from the wheelbarrow and throws a pair of gloves in a pail.

MIRIA

Is this all yours?

PENN

I've bought a few things, but most of these tools are my grandpa's.

MIRIA

Is he the one who made everything so perfect out there?

Penn shrugs.

Miria looks out the door of the shed at the house, crumbling and neglected, surrounded by pristine landscape.

MIRIA

You have to admit...

PENN

So why did you come?

Miria turns.

MIRIA

This is my home.

PENN

No, it's not. This is your uncle's house.

MIRIA

This is my family home. My great-great-great grandpa built this.

PENN

Do you even know why?

MIRIA

He...

Miria looks back at the house. Her forehead wrinkles and she bites her lip at the frustration of having to admit:

MIRIA

No. I don't.

She turns back to Penn.

MIRIA

And I don't know why he left it,
either, but I'm going to find out.

PENN

Really.

MIRIA

I have a week.

PENN

Really.

Miria turns and storms out of the shed.

Penn runs after her and catches her by the arm. She shrugs him off, but he runs around in front of her.

PENN

Are you afraid of heights?

Miria stares at him a moment before answering.

MIRIA

Why?

EXT. FAIRHURST MANOR WALL

A ladder is propped against a corner where the roof of a short building runs along the wall of a taller building.

Penn and Miria stand at the base of the ladder, looking up at the high roof above.

PENN

Your uncle never leaves the tower.
This is our chance.

MIRIA

Isn't there any other way to get
into the tower door?

PENN

Not unless you can pick a lock.

Miria sighs and shakes her head.

PENN

Hold the ladder for me.

Penn starts up the ladder. Miria grabs the legs and watches
him climb to the top.

He reaches the edge of the roof and climbs over. He turns,
grabs the edge of the ladder and calls down.

PENN

Now you.

Miria cautiously starts up the ladder. Halfway up, she
closes her eyes tight as she climbs.

PENN

Don't close your eyes.

MIRIA

I thought I wasn't supposed to look down.

PENN

Yeah, but keep your eyes open.

Miria reaches the edge of the roof, climbs over and stands
up carefully.

FAIRHURST ROOFTOP

The tower is three roofs away. Miria looks at it nervously.

MIRIA

Penn, have you ever done this
before?

Penn stands next to her, his hand trying to grip the wall.

PENN

No, but the roofs are all so close together. I've always thought it would be easy to get across them.

MIRIA

Easy.

They make their way carefully along the wall.

They make it to the next roof and climb up.

Its peak has a flat surface about two feet wide, which they edge carefully across.

Halfway over, Miria stops.

MIRIA

Is the window open?

Penn looks at the window. He doesn't answer.

They continue their climb.

The last roof is a little too high for Miria. Penn helps her up, then climbs up after her.

A skylight covers much of the roof sloping to the right.

The tower wall is flush against the far edge of the roof.

MIRIA

That's the skylight from the tower entrance.

PENN

Right. We can crawl along the edge of the skylight and get to the window.

Miria takes a deep breath, and follows Penn.

He steps over to the edge of the skylight, which juts out from the roof just enough to let them walk carefully along it.

They reach the edge of the skylight and take a few precarious steps to the tower window, which is just over their heads.

Penn gives Miria a boost up to the window, then pulls himself in.

INT. TOWER - DAY

There are no lights. The window behind them and several other windows barely illuminate the wide expanse.

In the dim light, they can see a room full of clutter and contraptions. The center of the room is pitch black.

PENN

Look for a light switch.

Miria and Penn feel along the wall. He moves to the left, she moves to the right.

Miria bumps into a table.

MIRIA

Ouch.

She steps out from the wall to go around the object, but in moving away from the wall, catches a glimpse of something in the middle of the room.

Miria takes several steps toward the center of the room, focusing on what she sees.

Sparks of light crackle in a tiny sphere in mid-air.

Miria walks forward and is jerked to a stop by a railing enclosing a wide hole in the floor.

Miria leans over the railing, looking intently and trying to see what is making the sparks.

Penn finds a switch and light floods the room. The sparks disappear.

MIRIA and PENN

Wow.

They turn in circles, taking in the jungle of contraptions and devices surrounding them.

It is a mix of old and new. The old equipment is of a heavy, thick build. Some look as if parts have been scavenged from them and most are being used as shelves for stacks of papers.

The newer devices have been attached on top of the old equipment. A variety of computers and monitors scatter on tables and some even sit on the floor. Mirrors large and small take up most of the wall space.

A three-foot tall laser sits on a table directly across from the window. It hangs on its base at a disjointed angle. The control panel is wide open and black with soot.

Everything is oriented to the gaping hole in the middle of the floor, bordered by a thick metal railing.

A door to the left leads to the stairway. It is just slightly open.

PENN

What's down there?

He moves to stand by Miria and stares down into the black.

MIRIA

I have no idea. There was a...a light.

PENN

A what?

Miria shakes her head.

MIRIA

A light...I can't explain.

They move away from the railing and explore the room.

Penn looks closely at the devices, trying the assorted levers and switches.

MIRIA

Careful.

PENN

Nothing's actually running.

Miria finds a tall shelf full of papers and binders.

On top of the middle shelf is a paper with the title
"Methodology for harvesting renewable energy from exotic
dark matter - Final draft."

Her mother and father's names are listed as first authors
underneath the title.

Miria pulls out the paper and with a puzzled look turns to
show it to Penn.

At that moment, he hits the wrong lever on what looks like
a tiny cannon pointed at the center of the room. A marble
shoots from the barrel.

No sound. The marble doesn't hit a wall or clatter to the
floor.

Penn and Miria look at one another.

Miria folds the paper, stuffs it into her jacket pocket and
walks over beside Penn.

MIRIA

Try it again.

Penn pulls the lever and another marble shoots into space.
Again, nothing.

The marbles come from a removable base at the back of the
cannon. Miria pulls this off the cannon and pours out a
handful of marbles. She replaces the base.

Miria walks to the railing and tosses a marble into the
middle of the abyss.

It clatters to the ground far below.

She throws another marble, harder.

It hits the opposite side of the wall and bounces down,
clattering to the ground.

MIRIA
Turn off the lights.

PENN
Why?

MIRIA
I have a theory.

Penn walks over and turns off the lights.

The sparks reappear.

Miria throws a marble straight at the sparks. No sound. The sparks briefly flame brighter.

Penn joins Miria at the railing.

PENN
What is that?

MIRIA
I have no idea.

Penn takes the rest of the marbles.

Just as he gets ready to throw them, the sound of a door opening and slamming shut comes from below.

MIRIA
He's back!

Penn's arm has already swung and the marbles fly from his hand.

The sparks flame bright, but half the marbles fall and clatter raucously to the ground.

PENN
Let's get out of here.

Penn starts toward the window, but Miria grabs his arm.

MIRIA

We can't get down fast enough
without him seeing us. We have to
take the stairs.

They go through the door, close it carefully and duck into
the descending stairway.

Uncle Andrew comes bounding out of the other passage,
carrying an armload of packages.

STAIRWAY

Penn and Miria wait for a moment in the entrance to the
stairway until they hear the lab door open and shut.

They tiptoe as fast as possible down the stairs.

TOWER ENTRANCE

Penn and Miria slip out of the tower door. Penn turns and
shuts it carefully behind them.

They rush to exit through the side door.

EXT. BACK GARDENS - DAY

Miria leans against the side of the wall to catch her
breath.

Penn grabs her arms and motions above. The tower looms over
them.

They run around the corner to the left until they are
sheltered from the tower's view.

PENN

Did he see us?

MIRIA

I don't think so. Penn...

PENN

That was incredible.

Miria moves to peer around the edge of the house at the
tower.

MIRIA

What is he doing up there?

PENN

Whatever it is...We need to go
back. We can watch him next time.

Miria stares at the tower.

MIRIA

Okay, but not now. He's coming
down to dinner any minute. Can you
come back later?

Penn nods, grins at her and runs off.

INT. FAIRHURST MANOR - DAY

HALLWAY

Miria wanders down a hall, sniffing the air.

She turns a corner and comes to a wide entrance framing a
long, elegant table set for a fine dinner.

DINING ROOM

Norrie is setting a covered dish on the table.

Four lit candelabras form a centerpiece. Fine china is set
for three, one chair at the head of the table and one at
each side.

MIRIA

This looks like a wedding.

Norrie smiles and sits down at the table setting across
from where Miria stands.

NORRIE

I like to practice if I get a
chance. Someday we'll host crowds
of people in this room again.

Miria takes off her jacket, hangs it on the back of the
chair across from Norrie, and sits down.

She runs a finger down her sparkling silverware and then looks to the nearest dish. She reaches for the lid.

MIRIA

It smells amazing. What did you make?

NORRIE

Wait now. We'll give your uncle three minutes and then...

Andrew sweeps into the room and jumps into his chair.

ANDREW

And then what? As if I would be tardy tonight. I knew you would not miss the opportunity of making a fine meal for a favored guest. And I'm sure she has worked up a very healthy appetite tonight.

He winks broadly at Miria and pulls the lid from the nearest dish. It is macaroni and cheese. Miria gulps and pulls the lid from her own dish. It's hot dogs.

MIRIA

Oh!

NORRIE

Fine doesn't have to mean fancy. Go on, serve yourself.

They open up more dishes and find potato chips and bowls of fruit.

NORRIE

Did you pick up everything you needed today, Andrew?

ANDREW

Bits and pieces of this and that, nothing more. Miria, your mother and father are in Geneva. How is their experiment proceeding?

Miria drops the spoon in the macaroni and cheese and looks at him in surprise.

MIRIA

Oh, um...they're just arriving, I think.

Miria takes a spoonful of macaroni and cheese and reaches for a hot dog.

ANDREW

Good. Tell me when you hear more.
I didn't steal anything, you know.

Miria drops the hot dog in her lap.

She picks it up hurriedly and puts it back together on her plate.

MIRIA

What?

Andrew scoops a large serving of macaroni and cheese on his plate.

ANDREW

A decade ago your mother and I
agreed to sell a few of the fine
paintings you see around you to
raise money to restore this
mausoleum.

He grabs a hot dog and looks around for the mustard.

ANDREW

Your mother believes I stole that
money. I didn't. I told her then,
and I want to tell you now.

He finds the mustard and methodically squeezes a line onto his hot dog.

ANDREW

Just so there's no confusion. I
used the money for restorations
just as we planned. As I'm sure
you've been able to discern.

He takes a bite of the hot dog and winks at Miria while he chews.

NORRIE

Andrew...

MIRIA

Thank you for telling me.

He waves his hot dog around the table.

ANDREW

We are family. And we're now together so I'd like to get everything in the open, just like a real family. Tell me about your schooling. Are you a bright student?

Miria drops her fork into her macaroni and cheese and turns to Norrie, who is just taking a sip of water.

MIRIA

Norrie, why is Penn taking care of all the lawns and gardens? I thought you said there was a caretaker. Is that his grandpa?

Norrie sputters and sets her drink down.

NORRIE

Oh, dear, I did mean to tell you. Penn's grandfather Ben was our caretaker until this last winter when he passed away. He'd been here fifty years, during all the years this place lay empty. It's thanks to him things aren't any worse than they are.

Miria face registers her surprise and sadness. She looks intently at her fork as she wipes it off with her napkin.

ANDREW

An unfortunate circumstance, but the boy seems to have picked up the job nicely.

NORRIE

Andrew, I've told you that we can't let Penn do this job himself. We need to bring in outside help.

ANDREW

Nonsense, he's doing fine. And Wanda can help him.

Norrie dips a spoon into a bowl of fruit and slaps a helping on her plate.

Miria looks up.

MIRIA

Wanda. She's...

NORRIE

Penn's mother. Wanda came to live with Ben after Penn's father was killed in a mining accident. Penn has lived here longer than we have. Which is why he knows the place better than we do.

ANDREW

Oh, he surely does.

He winks broadly at Miria. Miria looks away and takes a large bite of her hot dog.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miria carries a plate through the kitchen door, following Norrie. The room is a shining example of a perfect 1930's kitchen, an original, untouched masterpiece kept spotlessly clean.

Norrie takes the plate from her and sets it in the sink.

NORRIE

Thank you, dear. Now run along and get some sleep. I'll get this.

MIRIA

Thank you, Norrie.

Miria turns and starts to leave the kitchen.

NORRIE

And Miria.

Miria turns back.

NORRIE

It's good you came.

Miria smiles, and turns to go.

INT. MIRIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miria walks through her bedroom door and goes immediately to her bags, still sitting where she left them by the side of her bed.

She lifts her rolling suitcase onto the bed and opens it. She digs through the clothes and pulls out the shoebox.

She takes off the lid and dumps the contents of the box onto the bed.

The pile includes pictures of Fairhurst Manor, inside and out, most with smiling celebrities at parties.

Copies of newspaper articles have titles like "Forest Festivity Attracts High Society" and "Fairhurst Manor Closed Indefinitely."

Miria arranges the papers in a careful pile. She takes the research paper she took from the tower out of her pocket and lays it on top of the pile.

She pulls out her phone and dials her mother's number.

The call goes to voicemail, but the line is full of static and the call drops.

Miria starts to send a text when a shower of pebbles rattles the window.

Miria puts her phone in her pocket and goes to the window.

Penn is standing on the ground, getting ready to throw another handful of pebbles.

Miria waves at him and opens the window.

PENN

Can you come down?

MIRIA

Meet me in the garden room?

Penn waves and runs off.

Miria shuts the window and leaves her bedroom, moving like a burglar through the door and down the hallway.

INT. GARDEN ROOM - NIGHT

Miria comes into the room just as Penn is opening one of the side doors.

PENN

Come out here.

He slips back outside and Miria walks across the room to follow him.

EXT. GARDEN TERRACE - NIGHT

Penn turns around as Miria comes onto the terrace.

PENN

Did he know we were there?

MIRIA

Maybe.

Miria walks toward Penn.

MIRIA

Penn, they told me about your grandfather. And your father. I'm sorry.

PENN

Oh. It's... Can we forget about it?

MIRIA

Yeah. Okay. Well, no, actually.
Have you really lived here your
whole life?

Penn turns away and answers reluctantly.

PENN

Almost.

MIRIA

You know everything about this
place?

Penn stares at the forest.

PENN

You haven't met my Mom yet, have
you?

MIRIA

No. I'm starting to feel like I
need to.

PENN

What do you think Penn is short
for?

MIRIA

I don't...wait. Is your name
Penley? As in...

PENN

Your great-great-great...

MIRIA

Grandfather. Your mom named you
after him?

PENN

My mom...my grandpa used to say it
was his fault for telling her all
the stories about this place.
After my dad died...her obsession
with this was all she had left.

MIRIA

Well, and you.

PENN

Hmm. Our entire house is a museum. She believes that someday she's going to solve the mystery of where Fairhurst went and why he built all of this in the first place.

MIRIA

So then you don't know either?

Miria's turns suddenly in the direction of the tower.

MIRIA

Wait...

Miria walks to the edge of the terrace and looks up to the tower. The lights are shining in the windows, flickering dark as Andrew moves back and forth inside.

MIRIA

My grandfather had a famous architect design the tower. It's built around that thing. Why would he do that?

Penn walks to stand beside her. He looks up.

PENN

I don't know. We have to go back up there and see what your uncle is doing.

MIRIA

We can't climb up while he's in there without him seeing us.

PENN

Sure we can. We have to try.

Miria stares at the tower a moment, then turns to Penn.

MIRIA

I'll try if I can meet your mom
first.

Penn groans a little, but nods his head.

PENN

I'll come back in the morning and
get you.

Penn walks to the edge of the terrace and swings a foot
over the edge.

MIRIA

Wait...

Penn grins at Miria and jumps. She runs over and looks
down.

There's a series of landings descending to ground level,
beginning out of sight at the far edge of the terrace. Penn
runs to the bottom, waves and disappears around the side of
the building.

Miria waves back just a little too late, then turns to go
back inside.

INT. GARDEN ROOM - NIGHT

Miria starts back toward the hallway to her room, but then
stops and thinks for a moment.

She turns and walks a different way.

HALLWAY

She moves through the hallways until she's at the door of
the study.

STUDY

Miria steps inside, glances at the paintings, then goes to
the bookshelves. She runs her fingers along the spines.

MIRIA

These were all yours.

Behind her, the man in the black beard and suit steps into the room. He walks to the desk and sits down as Miria scans the bookcase.

Miria pulls out one book after another, flipping through each carefully before replacing it on the shelf. The man opens a drawer in the center of the desk. He pulls out a piece of paper and a pen. He starts writing.

Miria finds a large book and looks at the title. It's a Bible.

She flips through it and as she reaches a page near the back, a piece of paper falls out and flutters to the ground.

Miria puts her finger in the Bible to hold her place, then bends over and picks up the paper.

She stands up and walks to the desk. The chair is empty now.

Miria places the Bible on the desk and opens to where she found the paper.

It is I Corinthians 13. She skims through the chapter. She shakes her head and closes the book with a sigh.

There's a sound in the hallway. Miria quickly replaces the Bible on the shelf, slips the paper in her pocket and walks out.

HALLWAY

She nearly runs into Norrie, who is coming down the hallway with a glass of water in her hand.

MIRIA

Oh, sorry!

NORRIE

It's okay. Just a little water spilled. I was just going to bring you this. It's a long way to the kitchen at midnight. Have you been roaming?

She hands Miria the glass.

MIRIA

Oh, thanks. Yes. There's so much...

NORRIE

Just be careful how far you go at night. Not all the rooms have lights. My room is near the kitchen if you need anything. Goodnight, dear.

MIRIA

Goodnight.

Norrie turns and walks down the hall. Miria watches her for a moment, then turns and heads the opposite way to her bedroom.

INT. MIRIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miria sits on her bed reading the paper she found, which is a letter. The glass of water sits on the nightstand next to her. The bed around her is still covered with the papers from her box.

INSERT - THE LETTER, which reads:

"Catherine,

I will arrive in no more than two weeks. I have several things to finish here, and then I will close the house and follow you. I miss you both more than you may imagine. If I could turn back time and erase the last two years, or at least live them again, remembering how valuable a treasure I have in you...but never mind. I have years ahead of me and I will attempt to gain back the time and more besides. I will make things right here and then I will make things right there. Is there any more a man can try to accomplish in the days of his life? I'll find out soon. Love to you and Matthew.
Your father, P.F."

BACK TO BEDROOM

Miria lays the paper on her lap and leans back, staring at the canopy above her. Slowly, her eyes close.

INT. MIRIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Miria wakes up to pebbles raining against her window again.

She groans and sits up from where she has been sleeping slumped over her pile of papers.

She rolls off the bed and goes to open the window. A hail of pebbles smatter against her and into the room.

MIRIA

Hey!

Penn stands on the ground. He waves at her. Miria leans out the window.

MIRIA

You could call next time.

PENN

Meet me at the shed.

Miria waves and shuts the window.

EXT. GARDEN SHED - DAY

Miria, changed out of her pajamas, walks quickly across the lawn. The shed door opens as she approaches and Penn lets her in.

PENN

Ready?

Miria peeks back out the door to the tower, then turns quickly back to Penn.

MIRIA

I get to meet your Mom first.

PENN

Does it have to be now?

Miria walks out of the shed and points toward the right of Fairhurst.

MIRIA

Is it this way?

She starts walking.

Penn runs out of the shed and catches up with her. He pulls her toward the left.

PENN

No, it's this way.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Penn opens the gate of a white fence enclosing a small white cottage surrounded by the forest. A dirt lane runs into the trees behind them. Fairhurst is just in view at the end of the lane.

MIRIA

This is nice.

PENN

Home sweet home. My mom should be in back.

Miria follows him into the house.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

A box is blocking the front door. Penn pushes hard to move it out of the way to make enough space for them to slip inside.

The house is, almost literally, a museum. The front room is a living room, with a couch, coffee table, and television, but also bookshelves with glass doors running along all the walls, holding hundreds of objects.

Penn leads Miria through the living room and straight into a kitchen, which is small but clean. A round 1950's vinyl table surrounded by similar-era chairs takes up most of the room.

MIRIA

Mmm. It smells like coffee.

PENN

It always smells like coffee.

He motions to an old, large, battered coffee maker sitting in central place on the kitchen counter. A huge canister labeled "Café" sits next to it. The carafe is half full.

PENN

She should be back here.

Penn leads Miria down a narrow hallway to the left and back into a long, tall room.

ARCHIVE ROOM

The place is packed floor to ceiling with shelves and filing cabinets full of boxes, books and piles of paper.

A table in the center is covered by some kind of active project. A few assorted chairs surround the table and fill the corners.

WANDA is just placing a box on a high shelf when Penn and Miria walk into the room behind her. The shelf is just a little too high for her and the box hangs precariously off the shelf as she pushes up on the bottom edge.

PENN

Mom.

WANDA

Wait just one more...

She hops up, pushing up on the edge of the box. It pops up and into place, perfectly aligned with the rest of the boxes on the shelf.

WANDA

Ha! Got you.

Wanda steps off the stool and turns to Penn and Miria.

WANDA

Not a lot of time, Penn, what can I do for you?

PENN

Mom, this is Miria.

Wanda looks from Penn to Miria. She cocks her head to one side and takes a step closer. She reaches out her hand toward Miria. Miria looks nervously over at Penn.

PENN

Mom, what are you doing?

Wanda gently picks up the pendant from Miria's necklace.

WANDA

Where did you get this?

MIRIA

My mom gave it to me. She said she...

WANDA

Found it here. She had to have.

Wanda looks up at Miria. She drops the necklace.

WANDA

You're Ellie's daughter. I remember her. She was nice. I thought...but she found the necklace? That's important. I think, right here...

Wanda turns and goes to the shelf to their left. She pulls a box off of a shelf near the middle and plops it on top of the piles of things on the table.

She rummages through it and pulls out a photograph.

WANDA

Look here, do you recognize it?

She points to the picture. Miria and Penn walk forward and look.

It's a picture from the early 1900's, maybe even the late 1800's. It's a portrait photograph of a gentleman with a beard and his lovely wife.

MIRIA

That's her! She's in the portrait
at the house.

WANDA

Yes...those are very special
portraits. He had them made just
as the house was being finished,
as a dedication to her. Now, look,
look at her necklace.

Miria looks. The necklace is the same as the one she wears.

MIRIA

This was hers?

WANDA

He brought it here, don't you see?
He kept it by him and brought it
here. She was all he had, she was
everything...

Wanda turns away and continues muttering under her breath,
running her fingers along the boxes of books, thinking and
looking.

Miria glances at Penn with a worried frown.

PENN

Mom! Miria came here to ask you
about your artifacts.

Wanda turns and smiles.

WANDA

Of course she did. We have everything
you want to look at, Miria.

She walks around the room as she talks, motioning
to the collection.

WANDA

We're the ones that took out the trash
all those years, so we've collected
every piece of paper that's gone
through the house...well, not every
(MORE)

WANDA (CONT.)

paper...We have invitations, menus, newspaper articles, pictures, postcards, letters. Even a couple of journals, though they were a little more difficult to acquire.

She stops and turns to Penn and Miria.

WANDA

Did Penn tell you where this collection came from?

MIRIA

No.

WANDA

Did he tell you our family has been caretakers for Fairhurst since it was built?

MIRIA

No.

WANDA

Did he tell you his Mom is a crazy hermit with a museum for a house?

MIRIA

Um...

She looks desperately over at Penn. Penn shrugs his shoulders and mutters:

PENN

You wanted to come.

Wanda grins and pulls down a box right beside her. She plops it next to the other one on the table.

WANDA

The menus are some of my favorites. I have hundreds of them from both P. Fairhurst's and Thomas' dinners. Did you know your grandfather held dinners here? Not for artists like Thomas. Penley

(MORE)

WANDA (CONT.)

Fairhurst hosted some of the most important scientists of the time. I haven't been able to prove that Albert Einstein came here, but I'm working on it.

Miria steps forward and looks into the box, curiosity overcoming her nerves.

MIRIA

Really?

WANDA

Yes. See here? The menus don't list just the foods being served, but the guests being honored. This one lists A. Eddington and E. Schrödinger.

Miria grabs the paper and stares at it, dumbfounded.

MIRIA

That's impossible.

Wanda giggles and takes the menu back from Miria.

WANDA

It's not. No one here knows or cares who came here, except for me. But it's important.

MIRIA

Does my uncle know about this?

Wanda sniffs derisively.

WANDA

Andrew.

Wanda shakes her head and slams the lid back on the box of menus. She shoves it back on the shelf.

Miria watches her, then glances at Penn. He motions his head to the door. Miria shakes hers no. She turns back to Wanda.

MIRIA

Wanda, Penn says you think you know what happened to P. Fairhurst. Why he disappeared.

WANDA

Well, he didn't abandon them. He wouldn't have left his children like that. He sent them back to England just before it happened, so I know that.

She sits at the table and motions to the other chairs.

Miria walks forward and sits down. Penn just leans back against the door frame.

Wanda looks at Miria.

WANDA

I've spent my life searching through this stuff. I just can't find the hint.

MIRIA

But you have ideas, theories?

Penn snorts. They both ignore him.

Wanda jumps to her feet and paces around the room again.

Miria watches her, turning in her chair.

WANDA

Those scientists...I come back to them every time. These mountains are full of iron, rich veins of it. Maybe he was trying to find the secret to alchemy...turn it all into gold.

MIRIA

I doubt Schrödinger would...

WANDA

Or a time machine. He loved his wife so desperately and she died so suddenly.

Wanda turns quickly to face Miria.

WANDA

You know she died of a fever? In two days, just like that, gone. He must have gone mad with grief. He came here, didn't he? To escape the rest of the world. People who lose the one they love, they...

She turns back and starts pacing again.

WANDA

So I thought, maybe a time machine. He could go back and see her, save her somehow. Maybe he did...

Penn steps away from the door.

PENN

Okay, let's go.

WANDA

Or he could have been a spy for Germany. This was all just before the Great War.

Penn walks to Miria and pulls her arm.

PENN

Come on, let's go.

MIRIA

Wait, not yet.

WANDA

He left England and built the manor, then disappeared. Who knows who he really brought here? It's all just so...

She stops and turns back to Miria.

WANDA

That necklace is so beautiful. I
don't suppose you would mind
leaving it here, so I can study it
for a while?

Miria grabs the pendant and holds it tight.

PENN

Come on, we're going.

He grabs Miria's arm and pulls her up.

WANDA

Oh, Penn, I was just asking.
Miria, come back any time. This is
all yours, really, secrets of your
family kept by my family. Next
time maybe I can show you...Now,
where was that...

Wanda turns around and looks up and down at the boxes
again.

Penn pulls Miria out of the room. Miria looks back at
Wanda, then turns and follows Penn.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Penn closes the gate behind them and starts down the lane.

MIRIA

Wait, Penn.

Penn turns around.

MIRIA

He brought scientists here. He was
exploring that thing.

PENN

Yes, I know. Your uncle is up there
right now exploring that thing. Do you
want to think about mysteries, or go
and actually solve them?

He turns and breaks into a swift jog down the lane. Miria starts after him.

MIRIA

Wait, I'm coming.

EXT. WALL - DAY

The ladder is tucked close into the corner of the house. Penn pulls it out and leans it carefully against the roof.

PENN

You want to go first?

Miria looks up at the roof.

MIRIA

Why not?

Miria starts to climb the ladder. Penn follows.

FAIRHURST ROOF

They pull themselves onto the roof of the Tower Entrance.

Miria and Penn duck as low as they can and edge their way quickly across the top of the skylight.

Sounds of tinkering echo from the window. They can hear Andrew talking to himself inside.

Penn and Miria raise their heads until they are peeking just over the windowsill.

Andrew is adjusting the controls of the large laser device, which has been repaired. He pushes buttons that move the device, targeting it precisely at the center of the room.

He leaves the laser and moves across the room.

Miria and Penn duck below the window as he comes close.

Miria's phone rings. Her ringtone echoes across the rooftops.

Miria pulls her phone from her pocket and frantically pushes buttons.

PENN

Turn it off!

MIRIA

I'm sorry!

ANDREW

Hello.

They look up.

Andrew grins down at them. His head and shoulder hang out of the window above them. Miria slips her phone back into her pocket.

ANDREW

Won't you come in?

Miria and Penn stand, confused and sheepish.

ANDREW

Visitors usually use the staircase. Though I can't remember the last visitor I had...so come in, come in!

Miria glances at Penn. He shrugs and climbs in the window. Miria follows.

TOWER

As they stand up, Andrew hands them both a black controller. Miria looks at hers. It looks like a chunky smartphone. A touch pad displays a number grid below a display showing a complex set of decimal numbers.

ANDREW

You are both in time to play the role of my very helpful assistants. That is, if you're interested in the job.

Andrew raises his eyebrows at them each in turn. Penn glances at Miria and shrugs.

PENN

Oh we're definitely interested.
What do we do?

Andrew waits for Miria's response.

MIRIA

What kind of experiment?

Andrew walks to the laser and pushes several buttons. It powers up and begins to hum.

ANDREW

I'm testing the limit of light wavelengths. I have a roomful of reflectors that need to be precisely positioned throughout the experiment, and...ahem, Miria, may have noticed that I had some difficulty keeping up yesterday.

MIRIA

The explosion was...

ANDREW

Explosion is a strong word. A simple miscalculation of an energy wave.

Andrew walks to one of the mirrors on the wall. He points to the controllers in their hands.

ANDREW

Your controllers set the angles of the mirrors you see here on the walls. I've calculated the initial angles, but I'll need you to help me adjust the reflectors as the light waves vary. I can't tell you how much I will appreciate your valuable assistance.

PENN

Well, then, let's go.

ANDREW

Thank you, Penn, I thank you.

Andrew walks to Penn and presses several buttons on the controller. He hands it back to Penn.

ANDREW

You will control the array of
mirrors just above you.

Andrew walks across the room and motions to another set of
mirrors.

ANDREW

Miria, you'll be over here.

Miria walks to stand next to him and hands the controller
out to him.

ANDREW

Press three-five-point-two.

Miria looks at the device. She pushes three - five -
decimal point - two.

Andrew

Very good.

He walks to the large laser and pulls three pairs
of thick black glasses from the cabinet next to
him. He throws a pair across the room to Penn and
one to Miria. They slide them over their eyes.

ANDREW

Now at my direction use the arrows
to adjust the mirrors one degree
at a time. Good?

Miria nods and Penn raises his control.

PENN

Got it.

Andrew runs around the room, adjusting the other mirrors.
Then he dashes to a computer setup next to the laser and
punches some keys. The laser's hum grows louder.

ANDREW

Now, steady on.

A stream of light shoots from the laser into the middle of the room. The beam disappears in the center of the abyss and for an instant there is no result.

Then, a tiny sphere of light bursts into the air. It grows very slightly.

ANDREW

Ready Penn? It will hit your array first.

He punches several buttons on his computer.

The laser moves just slightly, and a beam of light splits from the sphere. It hits Penn's mirrors and splinters into four beams of light that reflect to other mirrors across the room.

The beams split from these mirrors and fill the room with the colors of the rainbow, each as its own intense beam of light.

The sphere grows brighter and the colors magnify in intensity.

Miria stares up and around and puts her hand to her glasses to lower them.

ANDREW

Don't! Believe me, dear niece, you will enjoy the show more if you retain your vision. Penn, adjust three points north.

Penn pushes his controller.

ANDREW

Excellent. Miria, prepare yourself.

He pushes a few more buttons and the hum from the laser drops an octave. The beam begins to pulse.

The sphere shudders at the change in light and the beams splitting around the room scatter, most of them aiming at Miria's mirrors.

The light reflects from her mirrors and fills the room. The very air seems to be a beam of light, making every surface glow and every color seem to shimmer like a precious stone.

ANDREW

Miria, adjust two point west. No, three. Quick, now!

Miria pushes her buttons.

The sphere shudders and the light filling the room starts to rotate, just slightly, and then begins swirling, moving in sequence with the sphere. The sphere seems to gather the light to itself.

ANDREW

Here we go!

He pushes a button and the laser goes dark.

Penn and Miria watch in awe as in a swift, dazzling moment the light beams sweep around them in an overwhelming wave of blazing color, pulled like a hurricane into the blinding sphere.

And then, the sphere puffs out of existence and the room returns to its simple, plain reality.

Penn doubles over in laughter. Miria stares open-mouthed at the center of the abyss.

MIRIA

Uncle Andrew, what...how...

Andrew is typing furiously at the computer.

ANDREW

You have both been enormously helpful. We need just a few moments for the sensors to...never mind, we will let the computer do the calculations.

He turns to Penn and Miria and walks to stand in the center of the room between them.

ANDREW

Now, tell me honestly, brilliant niece, haven't you guessed what we just witnessed? I know that you must have the idea tickling the back of your brain.

Miria shakes her head.

MIRIA

It's impossible. It's impossible, Uncle Andrew.

Uncle Andrew almost giggles and runs to her. He grasps her hands and waves to the center of the room.

ANDREW

But yet there it is. Science must make sense of things...until nonsense stares it in the face. Then true discovery can begin.

Penn watches them both.

PENN

Miria, what do you know?

MIRIA

Penn, the only thing that I can think that would behave like that is...Uncle Andrew.

ANDREW

Go on. Tell him.

MIRIA

A black hole.

Penn stares at the abyss.

PENN

What?

ANDREW

Good.

MIRIA

But how is it possible? Black holes are massive. They are monsters eating the centers of galaxies.

ANDREW

All that is required is an amount of mass collapsed into a singularity. That is what you have just observed.

MIRIA

But you flooded it with light and made it grow. Why doesn't it keep growing?

PENN

Right. Shouldn't we have been sucked into it, too? Shouldn't everything...

ANDREW

It's not quite that strong. The event horizon is not even as wide as the point on the end of a needle. If anything, it should evaporate and vanish. But it doesn't.

He pauses and smiles at them, waiting. Miria finally gives in and asks the question he is waiting for.

MIRIA

Why doesn't it vanish?

Andrew walks around the room as he talks, lecturing to the walls as well as Penn and Miria.

ANDREW

My best theory is that this mountain is filled to the brim with iron. Iron with enough magnetism to hold this black hole in perpetual rotation. Enough rotation to sustain it indefinitely. No matter how much

(MORE)

ANDREW (CONT.)

light I flood it with, it evaporates back in an instant into a stable point of infinity. An infinity I will observe and study and use to unlock the secrets of the universe. And you have been very helpful assistants in that today. I believe...

He walks to his computer and pushes a few buttons.

Numbers scroll up the screen, and merge into a swirling graph of lines.

Andrew navigates through the numbers and graphs as he speaks.

ANDREW

Today, you have helped me unlock a key characteristic of the particle-wave duality of light. This will allow me to carry out a much more complex experiment tomorrow about a much more mysterious subject.

He turns and leans against the computer table.

ANDREW

May I ask if you are both available again tomorrow morning, say about eight a.m.?

PENN

Absolutely.

ANDREW

And my brilliant niece?

Miria gives him a long, troubled gaze. Then she nods.

Andrew claps his hands together, then begins pushing them toward the door.

ANDREW

Well, then, I have work to do.
Penn, I am certain you do as well.
Thank you again for all your very
hard work taking care of this fine
manor. I know that your
grandfather would be proud of how
you've carried on his legacy.
Thank you both, I will see you
first thing tomorrow morning.

He ushers them out the tower door into the stairwell. The door is shut behind them and they hear a lock turning in the door. A moment later, they hear a window sliding shut inside.

TOWER STAIRS

Penn and Miria look at one another, then Miria walks to the stairway and begins to descend.

Penn catches up and walks beside her.

PENN

Did that just happen? Isn't this
something someone should know
about? Should we call somebody?
How can your uncle have kept this
a secret my whole life? Is he a
genius, or is he mad?

MIRIA

Both. Penn.

She stops and grabs his arm.

MIRIA

Maybe you're right. Maybe we should
call somebody. My mom...

PENN

No. Forget I said that. He's
letting us help him tomorrow. We
can help him...what did he say?
Unlock the secrets of the
universe. Then we'll tell
somebody.

MIRIA

Even if we did tell someone. What can anybody do? Maybe it would be even worse if someone else knew. He's studied it for years and years and nothing has happened. But...

PENN

But nothing. We have to come back tomorrow.

MIRIA

We don't have to.

PENN

I do. I don't care what you do.

Penn stares at her. She stares back.

Miria looks away and continues down the stairs. Penn follows.

At the tower door, Penn opens the door for her and they both step out.

INT. TOWER ENTRANCE - DAY

PENN

Like he said, I've got work to do.

He turns quickly and leaves by the side door.

Miria watches him leave and stares at the door a moment after it has shut.

She turns away and walks across the room, under the skylight, toward the garden room.

INT. MIRIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Miria gathers up the pile of papers on her bed and shoves them back into her box.

She picks up the letter, folds it carefully and puts it in her pocket.

She walks out of her bedroom door and closes it carefully behind her.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Miria steps through the gate and walks to the door of the cottage. She knocks lightly at the door. After a moment, she hears footsteps inside.

Wanda opens the door.

WANDA

Miria, hello. I didn't expect you back so soon. Has Penn abandoned you?

MIRIA

Oh, um, no. Can I show you something? I found it last night.

WANDA

Sure, come to the kitchen. I just started a pot of coffee.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Miria and Wanda sit at the kitchen table. A steaming cup of coffee is in front of both of them. Miria ignores hers. Wanda takes frequent sips.

Wanda finishes reading the letter and folds it up.

WANDA

Where did you find this?

MIRIA

I looked through the books in his study. I...I've dreamed about that room my entire life.

WANDA

Yes. I know what you mean...Well, this proves he didn't abandon his children.

MIRIA

Right. But what was he trying to finish? I wondered if you might have any idea about that?

Wanda runs her fingers through her hair.

WANDA

It must have been the work he was doing, whatever he was studying. Maybe he finally discovered something he could reveal to the world.

MIRIA

Maybe. But where did he...

WANDA

No one will ever know for certain where he went. Except the man himself.

Miria looks up at her in surprise

WANDA

I do have moments when I let myself admit the obvious.

She raises an eyebrow and takes a sip of coffee.

Miria nods her head, sighs, and stands up.

MIRIA

Well, thank you for looking at this at least.

WANDA

No, thank you for showing it to me. You wouldn't want to...

MIRIA

Oh no, I'll keep it. If that's okay.

Miria holds out her hand and Wanda hands her back the letter.

WANDA

No, of course. Sorry, habits. If you see Penn can you tell him to be home in a couple of hours? I need him to do a few things before dinner.

MIRIA

Okay.

Wanda shows Miria to the door.

EXT. COTTAGE LANE - DAY

Miria walks away from the cottage and down the dirt lane toward Fairhurst. The trees murmur gently in the wind around her. Her cell phone rings.

Miria answers it.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

MIRIA

Hello?

ELLIE

Miria? Why I haven't been able to get ahold of you? I tried to call.

MIRIA

I know. Sorry I didn't answer.

ELLIE

Is everything okay?

MIRIA

Yeah, everything's fine. How are you? Have you done your test yet?

ELLIE

No. We're set up to run tomorrow after lunch, probably around two. I think that's around eight a.m. your time. Miria, tell me the truth. Is everything okay there? How is my brother? Is he...

MIRIA

Fine, Mom. He wanted me to know he didn't steal anything.

ELLIE

He...! And how's Norrie?

MIRIA

Good. I think she misses you.

ELLIE

I felt terrible leaving her there. Actually...did I ever tell you I asked her to come with me? To take care of you? She wouldn't do it. She wouldn't ever tell me why.

MIRIA

I think she's waiting for you to come back here.

ELLIE

Hmm.

MIRIA

Mom, I was wondering about something.

ELLIE

Uh oh.

MIRIA

No, just...that other paper that was published. Who was the author?

ELLIE

It's strange...it was anonymous.

Miria stops walking and stares at the tower, which has just come into view, framed perfectly by the canopy of trees.

ELLIE

We read it on the plane ride over. It's outstandingly good. And then we found out when we arrived that there have been four other

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT.)

anonymous papers published over the last few years. People around here have been keeping an eye on them because they're almost definitely from the same author.

MIRIA

Did you read them?

ELLIE

Of course, once I found out about them. Oh, and get this...the Dean didn't set all of this up. They called her to have us come over because we're mentioned in the paper. I'd like to know who's responsible for getting us here.

MIRIA

Yeah, that would be...good to know.

ELLIE

Your dad is still worried though. The way the paper presents the theory, it requires running our test at the highest energy levels we ever thought would be necessary.

MIRIA

Is it still going to be safe? You promised you weren't going to blow yourselves up.

ELLIE

Miria, these machines are so precisely calibrated, nothing will go wrong. Barring a solar flare twice the size of Jupiter, I will not blow up. Your father will not blow up. We'll meet you Saturday morning at the train station to rescue you.

Miria nears the end of the lane.

ELLIE

But please, call me every day. Maybe
even...

The connection breaks up as Miria steps out into the open
lawns.

MIRIA

Mom, what did you say? Mom?

The call has dropped.

Miria looks at the phone, then slips it back into her
pocket as she walks across the lawns to Fairhurst.

INT. GRAND ENTRANCE - DAY

Miria opens the doors and walks into the entrance.

A loud crash echoes from across the room to the left,
followed by muffled sounds of cursing.

Miria runs across the room and into a parlor off the side
of the Grand Entrance.

PARLOR

Norrie is sitting on the floor on top of a pile of shredded
wallpaper. A toppled stepladder lies next to her.

New rolls of wallpaper and a can of paste lie next to a
wall that is half covered in wallpaper. The rest of the
room has been neatly papered. Furniture is pushed together
in a jumble in the corner.

MIRIA

Are you okay?

Norrie stands up, assisted by Miria.

NORRIE

Oh, I'm just fine. This ladder and
I have never gotten along.

MIRIA

Let me help you.

NORRIE

No, you don't need to...

MIRIA

Please. I want to.

NORRIE

Well, if you want to. Help me set
up the ladder.

Miria and Norrie push the ladder up and Norrie grabs the
end of the wallpaper and lifts it to the ceiling.

NORRIE

Grab the end. Careful you don't
get any glue on yourself.

Miria grabs the end and holds it tight. Together, they fix
the wallpaper neatly to the wall.

MIRIA

It looks really nice.

Norrie climbs down, grabs a wallpaper smoother from the
floor and carefully runs it over the panel.

She stops and offers the smoother to Miria.

NORRIE

You want to try?

MIRIA

Sure.

NORRIE

Just be very smooth and don't
press too hard

Miria tentatively runs the smoother down the wallpaper.

As Miria smooths out the wallpaper, Norrie moves the ladder
to the side.

MIRIA

Have you been working on all of
this ever since my Mom left?

NORRIE

I never saw a reason to quit.

She gathers up a bundle of old wallpaper. She stops and looks out into the Grand Entrance.

NORRIE

My grandmother told me so many stories of when this place was a glittering palace. When I was a little girl I used to dream about dancing across the hall with some handsome gentleman.

Norrie shoves the wallpaper into a black trash bag lying on the floor.

NORRIE

Now, I'd settle for showing a group of sightseers around a hall that's not falling down.

MIRIA

I don't understand. How did your grandmother know so many stories?

NORRIE

Did your mother never tell you?

Miria shakes her head no.

NORRIE

My grandmother was the governess when your great-uncle Thomas was here. She filled my head with so many dreams, I applied to be the governess for your mother and father when they were young. I was sorely disappointed when I found out that the family had abandoned Fairhurst.

Miria stops working and turns to Norrie.

MIRIA

But Norrie, if you told my Mom and Uncle Andrew all of those stories when they were little, you must be the reason they ever came back at all.

Norrie picks up the last of the wallpaper and shoves it into the bag.

NORRIE

Oh, you can't say that.

MIRIA

I can say exactly that.

NORRIE

Well, then, you know what they say about the bed you make. I can thank myself for a decade of hard work. Help me with this furniture, won't you?

Miria puts down her tool and walks to help Norrie move a couch back into place.

Miria grabs a chair.

MIRIA

Where does this go?

NORRIE

Just put it in that corner.

Miria pulls the chair across the room.

Norrie pushes a tall standing mirror into the opposite corner.

Her reflection, wildly disarrayed from the day's work, looks out at her. Norrie ruffles her hair and shakes her head.

NORRIE

Through a glass, darkly. Not dark enough.

Miria finishes setting an end table next to the couch. She looks up at Norrie.

MIRIA

What?

NORRIE

One of my old Sunday School verses. First Corinthians thirteen-twelve. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." There's more but I don't remember...

MIRIA

Norrie, do you mind if I go now?

NORRIE

Oh, yes, I think I've got it now.
Thank you, Miria. You...

Miria rushes out of the room before she can finish.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Miria hurries into the study. She finds the Bible and places it on the desk. She opens to I Corinthians 13. She runs her finger down the page and comes to verse 12.

INSET - THE BIBLE, I CORINTHIAN 13:12

For now we see through a glass, darkly;
but then face to face: now I know in
part; but then shall I know even as
also I am known.

BACK TO STUDY

She closes the Bible, then turns and leans against the desk.

She stares at the painting of Helen, then turns to look at the painting of P. Fairhurst.

MIRIA

Tell me your secret.

She walks to the mirror and stares at her reflection. She shifts her gaze up, to the portrait of Helen.

MIRIA

You're wearing your necklace.

She walks forward, close to the mirror, and lifts her hand to touch the reflection of the necklace in Helen's portrait.

As she walks forward, her angle toward the mirror shifts and the portrait of Fairhurst enters the view.

Miria stops and stares. In the reflection, the painting of Fairhurst is gazing with deep adoration at the portrait of Helen.

MIRIA

How...?

She turns her head to see the portraits on the wall. The gaze is as before, stern and solemn.

She turns back to the mirror and shakes her head. The portrait of Fairhurst shifts in the reflection and the gaze is steadily on Helen.

MIRIA

You wanted to be with her forever.

She picks up the Bible from the desk, places it back on the shelf and leaves the study.

HALLWAY

Miria approaches the stairs leading to her room, but then catches a glimpse of Andrew walking through the hall, toward the tower. She stops, watches him for a moment, then turns to follow.

She follows him down the halls, but pauses before following him into the Tower Entrance. Andrew walks across the room, opens the door to the tower, then pauses.

He speaks without turning around.

ANDREW

Are you coming?

Miria steps out of the hallway.

INT. TOWER ENTRANCE - NIGHT

She walks across the room.

MIRIA

Yes.

She follows him up the tower stairs. When they reach the top, he opens the door and lets her walk in first.

TOWER

The room is dark. Instead of flipping on the lights, Uncle Andrew pushes a button and the roof of the room begins to turn, opening like an observatory to show the night sky.

MIRIA

Oh, that's beautiful.

ANDREW

Wait.

He pushes several buttons on the computer. The laser hums lightly, and the sphere in the center of the room glows dimly. Andrew stares up at the sky and pushes buttons as the ceiling moves.

MIRIA

You knew we were coming back today,
didn't you?

ANDREW

Hmm.

MIRIA

You knew we were here yesterday.

ANDREW

Hmm.

MIRIA

Was the experiment today just a show?

ANDREW

Oh, no, brilliant niece, you helped me discover some very important functions of light as a particle.

MIRIA

Will you publish on that soon? Mom would like to read it, I'm sure.

Andrew smiles and waves his finger at her.

ANDREW

Brilliant. I want to show you one of my favorite features of this phenomenon. I discovered it quite by accident, though in retrospect, I ought to have anticipated it. Watch.

He picks up a controller and pushes a few buttons. The mirrors on the wall begin to shift. Above them, the stars begin to grow, moving closer as if the sky is zooming toward them, or they are shooting up into space.

Miria stares, entranced.

ANDREW

Can you guess how?

MIRIA

It's the gravity effect. I can't remember...

ANDREW

Gravitational lensing. I'm pulling the light of the stars into the room. The black hole is magnifying them for us. We are drawing the universe to ourselves.

Andrew presses buttons on the controller and the light shifts. Planets sweep forward and shift into focus. Stars glow, racing across the observatory view like shooting stars.

Miria watches, turning in place and gazing into the sky like she is flying through the universe.

ANDREW

Astonishing. Every time,
astonishing. I knew from the first
moment I discovered this place
that I was witnessing a revolution
in human knowledge.

MIRIA

Uncle Andrew, how did you find
this?

ANDREW

It was a bird, just like your
bird, the one that frightened you
to tears and drove my sister away.

Miria turns and looks at him, watching him bring the stars
to himself.

MIRIA

What did it do?

ANDREW

It disappeared. I stepped into
this room, on an assignment from
Ellie to survey the tower, and the
ceiling was open. The birds had
nested right up there, and I
startled them. They flew away in a
panic, and one of them flew right
into...nothing.

MIRIA

And then you knew?

ANDREW

Oh no, brilliant niece, it took me
years of experimenting to
determine what I was seeing. I
examined the devices and the very
few papers he left up here, and
gathered from them some idea of
what he was trying to do. I even
altered a few of the devices to
make them run with better
precision.

MIRIA

That's where the money went.

ANDREW

Ellie would never have approved.

MIRIA

I'm not sure you're right about that.

ANDREW

Perhaps. But the idea of black holes was very vague when Fairhurst discovered this...they hadn't even been given the name yet. Einstein had only just offered us the theory of Special Relativity. General Relativity was several years away. He brought in the best minds, but they could not decipher what man had not yet conceived. It was waiting for me, for this time.

Miria watches him control the stars flashing across the sky.

MIRIA

What will you discover?

ANDREW

Truth.

Miria looks up, letting the stars fill her eyes.

MIRIA

See you in the morning, Uncle Andrew.

He drops his gaze and looks at her.

ANDREW

Rest well, Miria.

Miria turns, walks to the door and leaves, shutting the door quietly behind herself.

TOWER ENTRANCE

Miria comes out of the tower door into the entrance.

She hears a sound of something dropping outside and sees Penn passing by through the windows.

She leaves through the side door.

EXT. BACK LAWNS - NIGHT

Penn is walking across the lawn carrying a garden rake and shovel in one hand and a bag of flower bulbs and a trowel in the other.

He looks over as Miria comes out of the door.

MIRIA

What are you doing?

PENN

Working, like I told you.

MIRIA

In the middle of the night?

PENN

Is there a better time?

MIRIA

Well, yeah...

PENN

Do you want to help?

Miria walks over and takes the shovel and rake from him.

MIRIA

Sure.

EXT. FAIRHURST GARDENS - NIGHT

Miria and Penn work in a small plot near the forest line. The ground is freshly raked.

Penn and Miria are kneeling next to the garden bed. Penn shows Miria how to dig a hole and plant a bulb in the soil.

PENN

Cover it carefully. I'll come back tomorrow and water them.

MIRIA

What are these?

PENN

Daffodils. I found some bulbs in the shed that I think...

He stops and uses the trowel to cover the last hole. He sits back on his heels. He looks up at the sky.

PENN

Want to know the real reason I come out here at night?

MIRIA

Yes, I do.

PENN

He's closer to me. When I'm not sure about things, or just...you know...I come out here and work in the gardens. Under the stars, I feel like he's watching me and telling me what to do and...proud of me. That sounds stupid.

MIRIA

No, it doesn't.

Penn stands up.

PENN

Anyway, thanks for helping. I can take the tools back if you want to throw the bag away inside.

Miria picks up the bag and crumples it.

MIRIA

Sure. See you in the morning.

PENN

You're coming?

Miria nods and turns around to head back to the house. Penn gathers his tools and heads toward the shed.

INT. TOWER ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Miria walks into the tower entrance. She looks down at the bag.

MIRIA

I'm not actually sure where to
take you.

She walks across to the hallway.

HALLWAY

Halfway down the hallway, Miria stops.

She turns to her right and looks at the painting on the wall.

It is a landscape, showing the Elysian Fields from Greek mythology.

Miria walks quickly down the hall, gaining speed until she is practically running, looking at each painting as she passes. They are all renditions of heaven, from Greek and Roman mythology to Medieval visions of heaven.

She passes into the hall leading to the dining room and runs straight into Norrie. They collide in a crash.

MIRIA

Oh, sorry!

NORRIE

We need to plan this better. Have
you been helping Penn?

Miria looks at the bag.

MIRIA

Oh, yes, I was supposed to throw
this away.

NORRIE

I'll take it for you.

MIRIA

Thank you.

Miria hands the bag to Norrie.

NORRIE

And then I'm taking these tired bones to bed. Good night, dear.

MIRIA

Good night.

Miria turns to go back toward her room, then stops and turns back around.

MIRIA

Wait, Norrie. Can I ask you a question?

Norrie turns.

NORRIE

What is it?

MIRIA

All these paintings? Did great-uncle Thomas put them here?

NORRIE

Oh no, these were all original. Your Grandfather Fairhurst had them brought over. They are very valuable.

Miria nods.

MIRIA

I know.

NORRIE

Goodnight, dear.

Norrie turns and walks away. Miria stares up at the painting above her.

It's a painting in the style of the late Middle Ages, showing heaven as a glorious vision of clouds and angels, the celestial light bathing the earth and saints below.

She turns and heads to her bedroom.

INT. MIRIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Miria blinks at the sunlight shining through her window and into her eyes. She is wrapped up in the mountain of blankets on the bed in her room.

A door somewhere outside slams shut.

Miria grabs her phone from the side table and checks the time. She sits up, then jumps out of bed.

INT. TOWER ENTRANCE - DAY

Miria comes to the end of the hallway before the Tower Entrance.

She sees Penn coming in the side door. He walks to the tower door and goes inside.

Miria walks into the room, but pauses halfway through the room.

She walks quickly to the side door and slips outside.

EXT. GARDEN SHED - DAY

Miria opens the shed door and walks inside. The room is dim and dusty.

Miria looks at the wall of tools hanging neatly on the wall of the shed. She scans them, then chooses a large wrench.

She slips the wrench into her jacket pocket and turns to leave.

INT. TOWER STAIRS - DAY

Miria starts up the bottom of the stairs. She walks quickly, but slows at the top and then stops, listening to Penn and Andrew moving around and talking above her.

Below her, the man in the suit climbs the stairs, walking slowly but with determination. He approaches Miria.

Miria starts to walk again, climbing the last few stairs and coming into the landing outside the tower door.

The man follows her, only two steps behind.

Miria opens the tower door and goes inside.

TOWER

Andrew and Penn are busy setting up a much more complicated arrangement of mirrors than the day before. Andrew stares at a computer and gives directions to Penn.

ANDREW

Set north two points.

Penn pushes a controller and watches the mirror rotate into place. He looks at Andrew, who nods.

Penn walks to another array and passes Miria still standing in the doorway. He winks at her as he goes by.

PENN

Morning.

He picks up a controller and waits for Andrew's instruction.

ANDREW

That one is fine. Good morning, niece.

Miria walks to Andrew. Penn puts down his controller and hurries over to walk beside her.

ANDREW

Can you remember the coordinates we just set?

Penn nods.

ANDREW

Good. Both of you must monitor the arrays and ensure that they are reflecting at all times.

PENN

Got it.

Andrew picks up the three pairs of glasses from the table beside the computer. He hands a pair to Penn and one to Miria.

ANDREW

We will wait just a few more minutes, then begin.

He types one more number into the computer, then walks over to the laser.

The time at the bottom of the computer screen catches Miria's eye. It says 7:57.

She thinks for a moment and looks up at Andrew.

MIRIA

Why do we need to wait?

Andrew walks to the laser and checks the control panel. He doesn't answer.

PENN

Why does it matter?

Miria looks at him and whispers:

MIRIA

I need to know.
(to Andrew)
Aren't we ready?

A faint light begins to pulse in the center of the room.

Andrew turns and smiles

ANDREW

Yes, we are. Glasses please.

He presses two buttons and the laser powers up.

A beam shoots from it into the sphere.

Penn and Miria hurry to put on their glasses as the sphere bursts into blinding light.

The intensity of the beam and the sphere is far greater than the previous day. Andrew presses another button and the hum from the laser grows louder.

The beam intensifies, and the sphere grows remarkably brighter and begins to steadily grow larger.

MIRIA

Uncle Andrew, I know what you're doing.

Andrew takes a step toward the sphere and watches it intently.

ANDREW

Penn, be ready.

Penn runs to the nearest set of mirrors and grabs the controller.

Andrew walks to a button against the wall and presses it.

A ring of disks folds out from the edge of the ceiling, rotating until they face the sphere. The disks are sleek metal, polished to a blinding sheen.

MIRIA

Uncle Andrew, it's too dangerous.
You can't control it.

ANDREW

Control is a decision, my brilliant niece.

He walks to the laser and presses a button.

It dies in an instant. Immediately, the sphere bursts into a tidal wave of light.

The circles catch the light and scatter the beams around the room. They catch on the mirrors and reflect into a tight web of blinding white light.

ANDREW

Penn, turn them down about a degree.

Andrew points to a second set of mirrors to the left.

ANDREW

Those as well.

Penn shifts the mirrors, then runs to the next array as Andrew presses the button on the wall again. The disks shift, angling the light into the center of the sphere.

The web transforms into a closed loop, circulating from the sphere to the array of mirrors and the disks. The room begins to shake as the sphere feeds on the light and the light circles around the room faster and faster.

Penn watches in fascination, walking toward the railing and gazing upward at the spiraling light.

Miria yells to Penn:

MIRIA

We have to stop him. He's using the energy of my parent's test to make his experiment stronger.

Penn turns and looks at Miria.

PENN

How could that be possible?

MIRIA

I don't know, but that's what he's doing. Somehow, they're connected.

Andrew points across the room to the wall behind Penn.

ANDREW

Penn, watch that array. Keep it centered.

Penn turns around and picks up the controller again. He looks up at the mirrors and then at Miria.

PENN

Are you sure?

The sphere gives a sudden burst, violently shaking the room.

Penn stumbles and knocks over the table next to him. Papers scatter across the floor.

Miria grabs the railing as a second burst of energy shakes the room.

Andrew looks up, exhilarated as the light builds around them.

Miria grabs the wrench from her pocket and stumbles over to the nearest set of mirrors.

She covers her face with her arm and strikes the mirrors swiftly, sending showers of glass into the air.

Andrew runs across the room to stop her.

ANDREW

Stop. You can't!

Miria is already at the next mirrors, shattering them one by one.

The light stutters and falters, but the discs gather the swirls and send them shooting into the sphere at an even higher frequency.

Penn grabs a small metal bar from one of the old devices and smashes the mirrors above him. Miria runs to the last array and strikes the last mirror.

As the mirror shatters, the light that was directed into the array is caught by the pendant hanging from Miria's neck. She stumbles back as the light surrounds her.

The diamond scatters the light to the discs. A fierce wave of energy jolts the entire tower as the discs gather all of the light and send it shooting into the sphere.

Miria loses her balance and stumbles across the room, falling over the edge of the railing.

Andrew and Penn watch in horror as she falls.

ANDREW

No!

CENTER OF THE ABYSS

Miria plummets down through the light flooding the abyss.

Just before she strikes the ground, the pendant catches a beam of light and this time sends it back directly into the sphere.

The sphere surges, brighter than ever before. The energy from its gravity captures Miria's lifeless form. Her body stops, is lifted up and briefly hovers.

The next instant, the sphere evaporates and Miria falls gently to the ground.

TOWER STAIRS

Penn races down the stairs.

He bursts out of the bottom of the stairway. He runs into the center of the tower floor and drops at Miria's side.

She groans and tries to sit up.

PENN

Miria! How...?

She opens her eyes and looks up into the darkness.

MIRIA

Penn, did you see...?

Above them, they see the sphere burst back into light.

PENN

What is he doing?

MIRIA

Help me up.

She sits up and places her hands underneath her.

Her fingers close around a large key. She picks it up as she stands and looks at it.

She slips it in her pocket as Penn pulls her toward the stairs.

TOWER STAIRS

Penn and Miria race back up the stairs together and through the doorway into the tower.

TOWER

Penn and Miria burst into the doorway. Andrew is at the laser, pressing buttons to control the pulse of light into the sphere.

ANDREW

They must have shut down their experiment when we received the final burst of energy. But I have it, I saw it.

The sphere grows brighter, and pulses with a steady energy.

ANDREW

I can recreate that last moment. Do you realize what you've done? The numbers...the wavelengths...they can't exist in our universe. This will answer every question.

Miria takes a step forward into the room. Penn tries to grab her arm.

Miria turns to Penn. She backs up as she talks.

MIRIA

Penn, Uncle Andrew is right, but he doesn't realize what he saw. I saw it, too. He was looking for her. I think he might have found her.

She turns and steps to the edge of the railing. Her hair starts to wave in the energy from the sphere.

ANDREW

No, step back! It's too close.

Miria leans forward, staring intently into the light.

Andrew starts to run toward her, but as he leaves the control panel the beams falter and the steady spiral of light begins to scatter.

They catch the light from the shattered mirrors and break into an infinity of beams.

The discs catch the beams and focus them into the sphere. It bursts into a blazing light.

Miria stares at the brilliance. She pulls off her glasses and throws them to the floor. As she does, something catches her eye across the room.

The man in the suit is moving frantically among the equipment against the wall. He pulls down a lever and turns to look at the center of the room. He looks right at Miria.

He turns and pulls down two more levers. Then he opens a box on his left side and lifts a key to insert into the center of a panel.

He is jerked back by a sudden force and falls across the room. The key slides over the edge of the railing and falls down into the abyss.

P. Fairhurst is lifted off his feet and vanishes.

PENN

Miria, come back!

Miria spins around. Penn is holding out a hand to pull her back.

MIRIA

He lost control. It was too much.
He went too far. We have to...

She turns to call at Andrew:

MIRIA

We have to finish this for him.

She backs away from the railing, then runs to the wall where the man was. She finds the levers and pulls them down.

She finds the box behind a computer monitor. She dashes the monitor to the ground and opens the panel.

The keyhole is above a small red button. She pushes in the key, turns it, and pushes the button.

Flashes of light spark around the entire perimeter of the room. The walls begin to crumble.

Penn grabs her arm from behind. He yells to Andrew.

PENN

We have to get out of here.

Andrew stares at the light of the sphere, then breaks free and runs to join Penn and Miria.

ROOFTOP

All three catapult out of the window and race across the roof as the tower begins to crumble behind them.

As the walls collapse, the discs break their sequence and the light flickers. The sphere gives one last burst and then implodes, pulling in a mass of debris around it, including the laser.

They run from roof to roof, to the ladder still propped against the edge of the house.

Penn jumps off the bottom of the ladder and helps Miria, then Andrew, to the ground. The tower collapses, taking the skylight with it in a shatter of glass and brick.

INT. FAIRHURST MANOR - DAY

GRAND ENTRANCE

The room is newly renovated and decorated elegantly for Christmas.

A crowd of people circulate around the room, chatting and laughing. A string quartet plays Christmas music in the background.

Norrie leads a group of people up the stairs near the parlor.

NORRIE

This room is one of the finest in the manor. World-renowned architect J. Thomas Hunt designed the windows to perfectly frame the mountain views...

The group looks as she points.

Just below, Ellie and Daniel are in the middle of a group of people.

Ellie holds up her glass of wine to accentuate her point.

ELLIE

No, that's the theory. If you were sucked into a black hole, your image would become a hologram on the event horizon for the rest of time.

DANIEL

So black holes are just alien movie screens now.

The group around them laughs.

ELLIE

You can laugh, but...

Across the room, Miria and Penn stand near the garden room, watching. The necklace still hangs from Miria's neck.

MIRIA

Nothing like a disaster to make everyone's dreams come true.

PENN

At least the insurance wouldn't pay to reconstruct the tower.

Miria nods, and turns to watch Uncle Albert as he gestures animatedly to a group of men in suits. He points to the sky and then shakes his head as someone speaks.

Penn follows her gaze.

PENN

They really find it hard to believe he wrote the papers, don't they?

MIRIA

Well, he won't admit how he really came up with all those theories, so can you blame them? But my mom says people are calling him the next Einstein.

PENN

Who knows maybe they're right?

(pause)

Hey, want to go outside?

MIRIA

Sure.

GARDEN ROOM

They walk through the garden room. It is bursting with plants and flowers. The fountains bubble and shimmer.

Penn holds open the terrace door for Miria.

GARDEN TERRACE

Snow covers the ground and piles on the edge of the railing. Miria pulls her light sweater closer to her. Penn takes off his jacket and wraps it around her.

MIRIA

Thanks.

They walk toward the edge of the terrace. Both turn to look toward where the tower used to stand. The sky is empty.

PENN

Do you think you'll ever tell them what happened?

MIRIA

No. Their experiment went so well. They have years of research ahead of them. They were both hired as full professors and we even bought a house. I don't know how to explain why...why they might never be able to get those results again.

PENN

Do you think your uncle will?

Miria raises her eyebrows and shakes her head in a definite no.

MIRIA

It doesn't matter. It's gone now.

PENN

Miria...

She turns to him as he pauses.

PENN

I never asked you before. When you fell, and I ran down to you, you said that you saw something. Do you remember that?

Miria nods. She lifts her hand to the necklace and twists the pendant around in her fingers.

MIRIA

I dream about it sometimes. I can't explain it. It was just a light. I think he saw it, too.

PENN

You're shivering. Let's go back inside.

They walk across the terrace and go back into the brilliant splendor of the garden. Behind them, the sun begins to set.

A black bird takes off from the trees near the house, up into the darkening sky.

It sweeps up, soaring on a light wind, toward the center of the house.

In an instant, it disappears.

FADE OUT.