

THE NEW ORDER

a play by Ryan Bernstein

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**“There will be no more death
or mourning or crying
or pain,
for the old order of things has passed away.”**

- Revelation 21:4

CHARACTERS

The Boarders:

ANNA: 15

GAIL: 40s

CHARLIE: 30s

KATRINA 20s

The Sisters:

SISTER RUTH

SISTER NORA

SISTER BLAIR

SETTING

A secluded farmhouse in the rural Midwest.

TIME:

Year 2027.

Post-nuclear apocalypse.

SCENE 1

The year 2027. The living room of an old broken-down farmhouse in rural Illinois. The place is dilapidated: the walls are stained, the windows are dirty, the ceiling is peeling with water damage, and the door to the outside seems to be falling off its hinges, though held on with a heavy lock. On the right, a staircase leading to a dark landing. Upstage a dining room with six chairs, and downstage a fraying armchair and a couch. A dead houseplant sits atop a dark television set. There are modern light fixtures on the ceiling, and lamps on the floor, though none of them are working. Gail, a careworn mother of 40, sits at the dining room table, gazing out the window into the night. She holds a candle and sings to herself under her breath.

GAIL

*Be kind my lord
to me your servant
do not forget me
please stay observant*

From a great distance, the sound of voices from the road.

GAIL

*Keep me safe
this I pray
I ask you to give
when you take away*

The sounds come closer. Anna, a girl of 15, enters from the upstairs landing and runs down the stairs to Gail.

ANNA

Momma!

GAIL

Anna? What are you doing awake?

ANNA

Momma, blow out your candle!

GAIL

Why?

ANNA

I heard voices!

GAIL

No, you didn't.

ANNA

I did! There are vagrants out there! They can see you!

GAIL

No they can't, Anna.

ANNA

So you admit they're there?

GAIL

There's no one out there.

ANNA

The road isn't so far, and if they see light they'll come—

Anna runs to Gail and blows out the candle, submerging them into darkness.

GAIL

Anna!

Gail lights a match.

GAIL

I refuse to sit in the dark.

ANNA

But they'll see us!

GAIL

We can't be wasting matches like this. It's all in your mind. Just a bad dream. Come to me.

Gail beckons for Anna to come lay her head on her lap. Gail sings.

GAIL

*Be kind my lord
to me your servant
do not forget me
please stay observant*

ANNA

I haven't heard you sing in a long time.

GAIL

You haven't been listening.

ANNA

Dad used to sing that song.

GAIL

Does this mean you're ready to talk about him?

ANNA

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

GAIL

Hm. You'll talk when you're ready.

Gail looks around at the dilapidated farmhouse.

I'm very grateful for all your help around here.

ANNA

I wouldn't expect you to do it on your own, Momma.

GAIL

Though sometimes I'm afraid it isn't enough.

ANNA

What do you mean?

GAIL

You can't fix the door when it finally falls off its hinges, can you?

ANNA

I can try.

GAIL

You're so sweet...

ANNA

No really. I can.

GAIL

You know how I worry. What will eventually happen to this house with just the two of us. Sometimes I imagine it's a leaking ark, and there aren't enough buckets to keep it from sinking...

ANNA

We can keep ourselves floating.

I'm not sure we can...

GAIL

Gail begins to drift off into her own thoughts.

ANNA

I had a dream last night.

GAIL

Hm?

ANNA

It was like the one I had about Dad.

GAIL

What kind of dream is that?

ANNA

A warning. I had a dream that there were figures walking in circles around our farm—

GAIL

I have nightmares about vagrants too, Anna.

ANNA

But these ones were different. They weren't just passing. They were waiting. I was watching them from my window, and they knew, they knew I was watching them, and they circled around and around and around the house. They started tapping on the windows, banging on the doors—

GAIL

That's enough.

ANNA

—you told them to come in, we're not safe—

GAIL

That's enough!

ANNA

Just promise me.

GAIL

What?

ANNA

You won't let anyone into our house.

GAIL

Anna...

ANNA

I know something horrible will happen.

GAIL

Vagrants are hungry, suffering, *good* people just like you or me looking for clean water and work. They were just unlucky. I don't think you understand. Cities are destroyed. These people have nowhere to turn. They don't mean any harm, they simply want shelter and safety. Trust the goodness, Anna.

ANNA

You're letting them in aren't you?

GAIL

No, dear. I'm not.

ANNA

Do you promise? You're not going to let them know we're here?

GAIL

I promise.

ANNA

Then tell me... why did I find this nailed to the fence outside?

Anna goes over to the couch and pulls out a sign from under it that reads "2 ALIVE AND ARMED. WATER AND FOOD FOR WORK."

GAIL

You shouldn't have touched that.

ANNA

Were you planning on not telling me? What was going to happen when people showed up?

GAIL

We were going to discuss it.

ANNA

Momma, I don't want anyone in this house!

GAIL

Then what should we do Anna? Leave them out there to starve? Leave them to drink out of the poisoned streams?

ANNA

You don't want to be alone with me!!

GAIL

I cannot watch starving people wander past when we can prevent it! It's time for us to spread the good fortune God has blessed us with.

She takes the sign out of Anna's hand.

ANNA

I don't want to.

GAIL

Trust in God. People are good. Tomorrow, this sign will be out, and we will welcome a new family, helping keep this farm healthy and strong.

ANNA

Daddy wouldn't have wanted it.

GAIL

"Daddy wouldn't have wanted it." Time to grow up, Anna.

(softer)

Trust me. This is for the best.

From the window, the light has changed. The dawn is rising.

GAIL

Get me the hammer.

(suddenly harsh)

Do as your mother says, Anna.

Slowly, Anna goes to the couch cushions and digs her hand inside one of the rips. She pulls out a hammer.

GAIL

This is for the best. Pray on it, and you will see: I will keep you safe from harm, as I've always done.

A moment. Anna, trancelike, closes her eyes and walks to the center of the room. She looks up to the heavens and raises her arms. Gail looks at her with concern.

GAIL

Anna?

ANNA

If I must pray for protection, I will pray. And I will be protected.

SCENE 2

Five days later. Daytime. The house is in slightly better condition: the door has been fixed. Charlie and Katrina sit at the kitchen table ravenously eating a plate of scrambled eggs. Charlie is a rough man of 30, along with Katrina, a pregnant woman of 25. Gail is beaming, scraping the remains of a pan in a bucket. Anna stands shyly in a corner.

CHARLIE

Mmmmm... haven't had eggs in I don't know how long. Since I was at a Denny's I think... remember Denny's, Katrina?

KATRINA

Of course!

CHARLIE

Big old diner, serving all the eggs you could want. And bacon too. Where'd you get the eggs, Gail?

GAIL

We have one chicken and a rooster left out back. She just gave birth to a whole nest of chicks, so we'll be eating well for quite a while!

CHARLIE

Unless we eat the chicks!

A beat.

KATRINA

Charlie's joking, Gail.

GAIL *(forcing laughter)*

Oh. Ha! I can't thank you enough for all the hard work you've been putting in around here. The house has never looked more put together.

CHARLIE

I won't hear a word of thank you! I wouldn't have a roof over my head if it weren't for your trust and generosity.

KATRINA

I wish I could contribute. I really do. I'm sure I can—

GAIL

Don't be ridiculous.

CHARLIE

You've got a chick of your own on the way.

KATRINA

I just wish I could help.

GAIL

You need your rest. A healthy baby is worth its weight in gold.

CHARLIE (*darkly*)

You don't see too many healthy kids out there these days...

A beat.

KATRINA

So you said you were from up north originally?

GAIL

Yes. I moved to the farm for my husband. I was born and raised in Chicago.

CHARLIE

From the crater formerly known as Chicago.

KATRINA

If you don't mind me asking... when did he leave?

GAIL

He didn't leave. He died.

KATRINA

I'm so sorry, I just assumed that—

ANNA

The wind picked him up and blew him away.

A beat.

GAIL

He fell off the roof. Fixing a leak.

ANNA

You weren't up there, momma. You didn't see it.

GAIL

Well there you have it then! My husband, murdered by wind.

KATRINA

I'm so sorry.

CHARLIE

A better way to go than a lot of people went.

KATRINA

Charlie!

CHARLIE

What? We would've been killed too if we hadn't bought a ranch with a goddamn bomb shelter in the basement.

GAIL

Bomb shelter?

KATRINA

The realtor said it was from the Cold War. When we heard the bombs were coming we didn't even think, we climbed in—

CHARLIE

Best purchase I've ever made. No one survived near the city besides us.

GAIL

And what brought you down here?

CHARLIE

We walked on the interstate south, looking for my mom's farm. By the time we got there, we found it looted and didn't find her.

GAIL

I'm so sorry.

CHARLIE

What's the use in sorry? These days you're lucky to have anybody you love, you can't get picky.

GAIL

I suppose that's a unique perspective...

CHARLIE

Met a fella who said he was traveling down to an outpost in Florida... said there's some kind of promised land down there in the Keys.

GAIL (*astonished*)

Really?

KATRINA

No. He was trying to... well... trying to recruit us.

For what?

GAIL

Nothing we wanted to be involved with.

KATRINA

He wanted her baby.

CHARLIE

What?

GAIL

Shhh, don't scare them.

KATRINA

CHARLIE

He wanted her. Wanted a woman. He may have had us at first, but I took care of him in the end.

He admires his hands as though admiring a weapon.

ANNA

What was it like?

CHARLIE

What?

ANNA

Being out there?

CHARLIE

In the cities?

ANNA

Yes.

Charlie looks at Gail, asking permission. She nods.

CHARLIE

That kind of destruction... it's indescribable. Did you ever see pictures of Hiroshima in school?

Anna shakes her head.

ANNA

I was home-schooled.

CHARLIE

Total destruction. Cars gone. Houses gone. Everywhere charred rubble. Nothing was standing. To give you some picture, driving to my mom's house I'd see the Chicago skyline from the highway. After, there was no skyline, and there was no highway.

ANNA

Did you see anyone alive?

CHARLIE

No one. Well a few people, barely alive. Some of them barely people, poor fucks...

KATRINA

Charlie!

GAIL

Language!

CHARLIE

I'm sorry! I'm not used to proper society! It won't happen again.

KATRINA

And in front of the girl...

ANNA

Anna.

KATRINA

Of course. Anna.

GAIL

So how did you eat?

CHARLIE

Well, once we got into the farmland, we didn't think it was safe to eat for a couple of miles. Lots of dead cattle, wouldn't touch it. Dead crows everywhere. Didn't even drink out of the streams, though I wouldn't have done that even *before* the bombs. No, we waited until we got out far enough into the country and found some mushrooms and berries that looked okay. We survived and I suppose that's all that matters.

KATRINA

It's heartbreaking... seeing the casualties.

CHARLIE

Well what do you expect, Kat? We're at war. Or we were, I suppose. Our trigger-happy president may have wiped out our enemies just as they got us too.

GAIL

Any idea if we're being invaded?

CHARLIE

No clue.

KATRINA

He said we were “taking drastic action for the security of the nation.”

CHARLIE

And he ended up destroying the world.

GAIL

The whole world?

CHARLIE

Yes. If you want my honest opinion, I think our bombs hit them before they hit us.

KATRINA

And they told us we were impervious... Star Wars and all that. And their bombs were just as strong as ours.

CHARLIE

It was mutually assured destruction after all.

A beat.

GAIL

How many people do you think are left here?

CHARLIE

Here? You mean earth? Beats me. I’ve heard they’re okay in Canada, but then I’ve heard it’s all still on fire. Could be millions. Could be just us. There’s no way to know.

ANNA

I think the whole world is like this.

They turn, surprised to remember Anna’s still there.

CHARLIE

Well... that’s why what we got here is so important. Precious cargo.

KATRINA

Precious cargo.

They all smile.

GAIL

Well. I’m going to get out and tend to those chicks.

I'll get back to patching the roof.

CHARLIE

Are you sure I can't do anything?

KATRINA

No. Please. You need your rest.

GAIL

She goes to exit.

GAIL

Actually, if you wouldn't mind too much, I've been teaching Anna to knit. Would you mind—

KATRINA

Consider it done.

GAIL

Thank you.

CHARLIE

You two enjoy your girl talk.

With a wink, Charlie exits with Gail. Katrina and Anna sit. Their conversation has long, awkward beats.

KATRINA

Do you have a needle and yarn?

ANNA

Upstairs.

KATRINA

Would you like to go get them?

ANNA

Not really.

KATRINA

Why not?

ANNA

I hate knitting.

KATRINA

Thank God. I was always terrible.

A beat. They smile.

KATRINA

Come sit with me. We can at least pretend we're being productive if your mom walks in.

Anna sits on the couch with Katrina.

ANNA

Can I touch your stomach?

KATRINA

Of course you can.

Anna feels Katrina's stomach.

ANNA

What are you going to name it?

KATRINA

Well, if it's a boy, we're going to name him Charles, after Charlie. If it's a girl... well we have a few in mind. Grace. Maybe something else.

(She playfully nudges Anna.)

Maybe Anna.

ANNA

I'd like that.

KATRINA

Me too.

ANNA

Is it nice being married?

KATRINA

Er... Charlie and I aren't actually married. ...I'm not sure if I should tell you that.

ANNA

Well, then that means you're in love then. You are, aren't you?

KATRINA

Yes. Yes we are. Why do you ask that?

ANNA

Well... you're pregnant.

Oh... oh yes. It is nice.

KATRINA (*not understanding*)

Can you keep a secret?

ANNA

Of course.

KATRINA

I was too once. Or I thought I was—

ANNA

You were preg—?

KATRINA (*alarmed*)

—in love.

ANNA

Oh.

KATRINA

I can't ever be sure.

ANNA

Why not?

KATRINA

Well I never got pregnant. That's why I think it wasn't love.

ANNA

You mean...?

KATRINA (*not understanding*)

Or maybe it's because he never loved me back. I'm still not sure I understand what my mom told me. I want to ask her...

ANNA

OH, being *in love* gets you pregnant.

KATRINA

Right.

ANNA

Who was he?

KATRINA

ANNA

It doesn't matter. He's gone.

KATRINA

Oh. Right. I'm sorry.

ANNA

Promise me you won't tell my mom.

KATRINA

I won't.

ANNA

You have to give me a grown-up promise.

KATRINA

Grown-up promise. It's our secret.

ANNA

It's nice to have a secret. I feel like ours is the only secret left in the world.

KATRINA

For all we know, it could be.

The two women share a moment. Gail reenters.

GAIL

How's the knitting coming along?

KATRINA

Oh! Gosh, we just got to talking and—

GAIL

I'm not scolding you, Katrina, it's my daughter who got off track. Upstairs, Anna, and I don't want to see you until you've made a sock.

ANNA

Katrina's pregnant, mamma.

GAIL

Very observant. Upstairs.

Anna dejectedly gets up and heads upstairs.

KATRINA

I really am sorry, we just started—

It's not your fault.
 She gets mean when she's jealous.

ANNA
(under her breath)

Sorry, Anna, didn't catch that?

GAIL

What?

ANNA

I've got half a mind to lock you in your room with no dinner, now go!

GAIL

She hesitates.

GO!

GAIL *(a sudden, frightening scream)*

Anna runs upstairs. Gail washes her hands in a pail.

I really am sorry—

KATRINA

For what? She's a little weasel when she wants to be, will do anything to keep from doing chores. Don't let her trick you.

GAIL

I mean I wasn't sure if I was supposed to be talking about...

KATRINA

Oh that? Of course it's fine. She knows all about it.

GAIL

I just didn't mean to start a—

KATRINA

I was never able to bear a child after Anna.

GAIL

Oh. I'm sorry.

KATRINA

That's why she said I was jealous. All her sisters, born dead. Her father and I tried, but, we just had Anna. God's plan. But I wish I had another child, one that was a little more...

GAIL

GAIL
Grounded.

KATRINA
Normal?

A beat. Gail smiles wryly.

Oh gosh. I didn't mean—

KATRINA

GAIL
Well, you said it, not me. The girl's not normal.

KATRINA

No! Not at all, she's very sweet.

GAIL

How old do you think she is?

KATRINA

Anna? Oh, I don't know...

GAIL

Just guess!

KATRINA

I... maybe nine?

Gail lets out a humorless laugh.

GAIL

Yep. That's what I thought.

KATRINA

Seven? Ten? I don't—

GAIL

Fifteen.

KATRINA

You know how it is, all kids look like kids—

GAIL

It's not about her looks, Katrina.

A beat.

KATRINA

I don't mean to be rude. Is she...? I had a cousin who was, um, you know, on the...

GAIL

On the what, exactly?

KATRINA

Well, on the spectrum.

GAIL

I don't know what that is.

KATRINA

Oh. Did, um, did she ever go to school?

GAIL

Anna is a strange girl who has a real talent for frightening other children. We homeschooled her her whole life. I wanted to send her, but her father, well, Leonard always doted on her. Didn't like the idea of her going away on a school bus an hour into town to be taught some nonsense by the government. No, he wanted her here.

KATRINA

Did she ever see someone? I, well, you see I studied psychology in college—

GAIL

Oh yes. I had an appointment for her in town about a year ago. Her father didn't know obviously.

KATRINA

What did they say?

GAIL

Never got a chance to take her. Something... came up.

KATRINA

What?

GAIL

... armageddon.

A beat. Katrina begins to laugh. Soon, to her surprise, Gail is laughing too.

GAIL

You know, I never had a lot of friends. It's nice having you here. Having someone to talk to who's... "normal." I don't know. It's nice having a friend.

KATRINA

I like to hear that. You're a very good friend.

GAIL
I'm glad. Because you're stuck with me.

Charlie enters from outside, sweating.

CHARLIE
Boy oh boy, it gets hot on that roof.

GAIL
Are you finished?

CHARLIE
Taking a break.

KATRINA
Charlie! You're covered in sweat.

CHARLIE
Thought I'd come and see you while I've got my pheromones raging.

Katrina laughs.

CHARLIE
I'm going to go lay down for a nap, you want to join me Kat?

KATRINA
Oh, I took one earlier!

CHARLIE
I really want you to come nap with me.

GAIL
Why would she take a nap if she's not tired?

CHARLIE
Katrina. Come upstairs.

KATRINA (*understanding now*)
Ohhhh, you know, I actually am a little tired. I might go up if that's okay.

GAIL
I can go up and tell Anna to be quiet if you're going to sleep—

CHARLIE
No need, this is going to be a quick one!

KATRINA *(to Gail)*

Is that ok? We were in the middle of talking.

GAIL

Go ahead, if you're tired.

KATRINA

Be down soon.

Charlie and Katrina conspiratorially climb the stairs leaving Gail alone. She gets up and begins wiping down the table, humming to herself.

From upstairs, the sound of a mattress squeaking.

Gail looks upstairs, surprised. She pauses for a moment, looks at the ceiling almost longingly, then returns to scrubbing the table. Lights down.

SCENE 3

Night. The living room is empty. The sound of rain. A clap of thunder. A flash of lightning reveals a figure at the window.
Silence.

The sound of the doorknob slowly turning. Pushing. Locked.
Silence.

The door jangles again. Still locked.
Silence.

Anna rushes down the stairs, and stands still at the bottom of the landing, watching.

A figure moves in front of the window. A slow tapping. From another window, tapping.

Another window. Tapping.

The door. Knocking.

Slowly the stage is filled with the cacophony of something trying to come inside. Everything is dream-like.

Charlie runs down the stairs.

CHARLIE

Is someone there?

The knocking continues.

CHARLIE

We're armed!

And continues.

CHARLIE

One more knock and we shoot! Gail, where's the gun!?

Gail rushes down the stairs with a candle.

GAIL

There is no gun! Now up to bed, it's just the rain!

CHARLIE

It's not rain making those sounds!

Another crash of lightning reveals the figure at the window.

CHARLIE

Get me a knife, *anything*. Now.

GAIL (*whispering*)

You damn fool. How do you know they mean us harm?

Just get me a knife in case they do!

CHARLIE

The knocking reaches a crescendo.

What do you want?!

GAIL

The knocking stops. A pause. A female voice speaks in a ghostly, sing-song voice. Charlie shines the flashlight at the window.

Unlock the door.

SISTER RUTH/NORA/BLAIR

We mean no harm.

SISTER NORA

Are those... women?

CHARLIE

Who are you?

GAIL

We can work.

SISTER BLAIR

Work for food.

SISTER NORA

How many are you?

GAIL

Three.

SISTER RUTH

Are you armed?

CHARLIE

We are empty-handed.

SISTER BLAIR

We promise.

SISTER RUTH

Gail exchanges glances with Charlie.

We're going to let you inside.

GAIL

No—!

CHARLIE

God's blessings to you dear woman.

SISTER NORA

We seek a friend in you.

SISTER BLAIR

I don't think we should.

CHARLIE

How are they any different from you?

GAIL

I'm... well, *me*, I'm harmless and I've got a kid on the way—

CHARLIE

Letting them in is the right thing to do.

GAIL

Well I refuse to let them inside.

CHARLIE

Well, this isn't your house, Charlie.

GAIL

Gail pushes Charlie out of her way, unlocks the door, and swings it open. Framed in the doorway are three women, all are wearing long black cloaks, tall black habits. Their faces are covered in bloody bandages. Anna recoils.

SISTER RUTH

Thank you for your trust and kindness.

SISTER NORA

I know that leap of faith is not easy.

SISTER BLAIR

Especially when the human race is so hard to trust.

SISTER NORA

May we enter?

Please.

GAIL

Who are you?

ANNA

My name is Sister Nora.

SISTER NORA

My name is Sister Blair.

SISTER BLAIR

My name is Sister Ruth.

SISTER RUTH

As though in a trance, Gail approaches the Sisters.

I feel like... I know you.

GAIL

How strange.

SISTER RUTH/NORA/BLAIR

GAIL (*snapping out of it*)

Well. We are happy to have you here. I am Gail, the owner of this house. I live here with my daughter Anna. This is Charlie, one of our boarders. Please. Sit down. Can we get you something to eat?

Many thanks.

SISTER NORA

Gail busies herself making a fire in the stove. Katrina enters from the stairs.

The sisters glide into the room. The movements are strange, a collective inhale and exhale. No one knows what to say.

What's happened?

KATRINA

Katrina, we have new boarders.

GAIL

Oh. Well. Hello there. I'm sorry for not coming down, I have–

KATRINA

You are with child.

SISTER RUTH

Yes.

KATRINA

A miracle, that life can exist....

SISTER NORA

... amidst all this destruction.

SISTER BLAIR

A miracle.

KATRINA

What happened to their faces?

ANNA (*whispering to Katrina*)

A pause. It's unclear if the sisters have heard.

GAIL

How do you like your eggs?

SISTER RUTH

Our apologies.

SISTER NORA

We do not eat meat.

GAIL

They're just eggs.

SISTER BLAIR

We follow very strict rules.

CHARLIE

Haven't you been... out there? How did you survive if not eating little critters and such?

SISTER BLAIR

God brought food across our paths.

Charlie and Katrina exchange glances.

GAIL

How fortunate!

CHARLIE

Where did you all come from you say?

We did not say.

SISTER BLAIR

... where did you come from?

CHARLIE

The home of our Order.

SISTER BLAIR

Order?

CHARLIE

We should explain.

SISTER NORA

We belong to the Holy Order of Rebirth.

SISTER BLAIR

Never heard of it.

CHARLIE

We seek to cleanse the world of senselessness.

SISTER RUTH

Purify brutish evil.

SISTER NORA

Codify a lawless world.

SISTER BLAIR

So what are you, a bunch of nuns?

CHARLIE

We belong to the New Order.

SISTER RUTH

Huh. And these bandages are part of the “uniform” of this order?

CHARLIE

We have been touched by the hand of God’s wrath.

SISTER NORA

How do you mean?

GAIL

SISTER RUTH

God sent down brimstone and scoured the sinners. The scorch even touched the face of my Sisters here. See?

Sister Nora holds up a burned and disfigured hand.

CHARLIE

You were burned by the bombs, you mean.

Gail puts out a loaf of bread and a knife. The sisters drift towards it.

GAIL

Here you go.

The sisters circle around the table, join hands and begin to pray. They speak in a strange hissing whisper, their arms slowly undulating. The three bandaged sisters pull the drapes of the habits over their face and remove their bandages and put them on the table. They eat by sliding bread under their habits, keeping their faces diligently concealed.

GAIL

There's no need to eat like that. You're welcome to show your faces here.

SISTER RUTH

That is very kind. This is better for all of us.

GAIL

We have plenty of room in the attic. I'll go set up some fresh linens.

(to Charlie)

Take Katrina up to bed.

CHARLIE

I should stay.

GAIL *(icily)*

Should you?

CHARLIE *(to Katrina)*

... come on then. Nice to meet you all. I look forward to...

SISTER RUTH

A new beginning.

SISTER BLAIR

A new world.

God's work.

SISTER NORA

Yeah. All of that. Night, Anna.

CHARLIE

Charlie and Katrina exit upstairs.

GAIL

Anna. Go back to bed. We'll talk in the morning.

ANNA

I can't.

GAIL

Why's that?

ANNA

Because I'm already asleep.

GAIL

What are you talking about?

ANNA

I'm in my dream. They'll start to break the house apart—ripping off the siding and clawing at the door. I'll hear their footsteps in the hall, coming up towards my bedroom, and then they'll kill you mamma. They'll kill you!

GAIL

Anna.

ANNA

It's the same nightmare!

GAIL

Well, have I ever done *this* to you in your nightmare?

She pinches her on the arm, hard.

GAIL

Go to sleep. *Now!*

A little bewildered, Anna climbs the stairs and exits.

GAIL

I apologize for my daughter. She is...

SISTER RUTH

No need to explain.

SISTER BLAIR

I am sure she has seen too much for one so young.

GAIL

Yes. Well. Finish eating and come upstairs to the attic. Third door on the left.

Katrina exits upstairs. The Sisters float together for a moment, and then turn to Anna.

ALL SISTERS

We've come for you.

Lights down.

SCENE 4

Morning. Anna and Katrina sit at the table with all three sisters. Awkward silence. At no point does anyone besides Anna acknowledge the Sisters.

KATRINA

I wonder how those eggs are going.

SISTER RUTH

Yes.

SISTER BLAIR

I wonder.

SISTER NORA

Eggs.

KATRINA

Anyway... how did you sleep?

ANNA

Me?

KATRINA

Yes you, silly.

SISTER NORA

She was disturbed in the night.

SISTER BLAIR

I watched her thrash.

ANNA

I slept *fine*.

SISTER NORA

Oh.

KATRINA

I'm glad to hear that.

SISTER NORA

Tell her about your dream.

SISTER BLAIR

Would she believe you?

ANNA

My mom hates hearing about my dreams...

KATRINA

Well I'd love to hear yours.

ANNA

It was the same nightmare I always have.

KATRINA

I used to have nightmares too.

ANNA

What do you have nightmares about?

KATRINA

Tornadoes, mainly.

SISTER RUTH

I dream of the man with no eyes.

ANNA

I had the same dream I always do. They came to protect me.

KATRINA

Who's that?

GAIL (*offstage*)

Breakfast is almost done!

Charlie enters from outside, in dirty work clothes.

CHARLIE

Can I get a hand holding a ladder?

SISTER NORA

I cannot.

CHARLIE

Anna? Anyone?

A beat. The sisters exchange glances, uselessly.

KATRINA

I'll do it.

Sweetheart, the baby.

CHARLIE

I can hold a ladder, Charlie.

KATRINA

Katrina gets up and walks to the door.

KATRINA

Anna, I'll be right back.

She exits out the door with Charlie. The sisters stare at Anna.

SISTER RUTH

Do you like them?

ANNA

I don't like anyone.

SISTER BLAIR

But you must like your mother?

ANNA

No.

SISTER RUTH

She doesn't like her own mother.

SISTER BLAIR

What about your daddy?

ANNA

What's the point in liking dead people?

SISTER BLAIR

Do you love your sisters?

ANNA

My sisters are dead too.

SISTER RUTH

The dead never leave you. They protect you.

Gail enters with plates of eggs and a loaf of bread.

GAIL

Ok, time to eat! Where's Katrina gone to? Is her husband still working?

ANNA

He's not. Her husband.

SISTER NORA

Not her husband?

GAIL (*sarcastic*)

Thank you for clarifying, Anna.

(Gail opens the door and calls out.)

Breakfast! Charlie, get in here!

SISTER NORA

Not married...?

GAIL

Bread and eggs for us.

Gail sits down and begins piling scrambled eggs onto Anna's plate.

GAIL

Go on. Eat.

SISTER RUTH

I thought perhaps we would wait for the others.

ANNA

Should we wait?

Gail piles helpings of eggs onto her own plate.

GAIL

It's fine. I'm hungry.

SISTER RUTH (*whispering*)

I want to pray. Tell her.

ANNA

I don't want to tell her...

GAIL

Tell me what?

I think the sisters want us to pray.

ANNA

A beat.

Well. That might be a nice gesture.

GAIL *(suddenly quiet)*

Thank you.

SISTER NORA

After all, we used to pray here before every meal. Maybe it's time to start doing it again.

GAIL

Charlie and Katrina enter through the front door.

Honestly, I don't have much of an appetite if you want to go ahead without me.

CHARLIE

But we're going to pray.

ANNA

What for?

CHARLIE

Order.

ALL SISTERS

For all of us.

ANNA

The sisters form a circle and bow their heads. Charlie joins the circle begrudgingly. All close their eyes.

Fine...

CHARLIE

Let us close our eyes and pray.

SISTER RUTH

Should we pray silently?

ANNA

Sure.

GAIL

SISTERS NORA/BLAIR

No.

SISTER RUTH

Dear God, thank you for the opportunity to gather together before you, pure and grateful in your new world.

While she is praying, Charlie opens his eyes and grabs the plate of bread. He grabs a slice, stuffs it in his mouth, but catches Anna's eye. He offers her the plate of bread. She giggles. Katrina looks at Charlie pleadingly. Gail keeps her eyes fixed shut.

SISTER RUTH

We must remember to remain vigilant and—*WHO IS LAUGHING!?*

Anna suddenly drops her plate in surprise. Everyone jumps.

ALL SISTERS

WHO IS LAUGHING?

Charlie raises his hand, laughing slightly.

CHARLIE

That was my fault. I made Anna laugh.

GAIL

Well let's get it cleaned up. We don't have unlimited plates you know.

Gail exits to get a new plate.

KATRINA

He's sorry.

ALL SISTERS

He's not sorry!

CHARLIE

I am. I don't know what came over me.

SISTER RUTH

NO! Apologize to everyone here.

Charlie looks around.

CHARLIE

Sorry, everybody. I'm really embarrassed. I was just kidding around.

SISTER RUTH

Forgive our transgressions when you judge us someday, Lord.

Gail reenters.

GAIL

Well. No harm done. Let's eat!

CHARLIE

I'll be right back.

GAIL

Where are you going?

KATRINA

Oh—he said he's not hungry.

Sister Ruth begins cutting the bread with the knife from her pocket nonchalantly.

SISTER RUTH

He will be.

Lights down.

SCENE 5

Anna is on her hands and knees scrubbing the floor with a bucket of water, humming. Charlie enters with his shirt wrapped around his hand.

CHARLIE

Gail? Gail? Anna, where's your mother?

ANNA

I think she's resting.

CHARLIE

This hurts, fuck. Shit—shoot, I'm sorry.

ANNA

It's okay.

CHARLIE

Shouldn't use words like that around you. A lantern fell off the hayloft onto my hand, think it must've been your mother who left it there.

ANNA

Are you hurt?

CHARLIE

Hurt? No... just a little blood. A little broken glass never hurt anyone.

He looks under the cloth.

CHARLIE

Oh, god.

He reaches in and begins to pick out glass, grimacing.

ANNA

Are you okay?

CHARLIE

Yeah yeah, I can sort it out myself.

ANNA

No please. Come here.

Tentatively he approaches Anna.

Sit down. Tell me if I hurt you.

ANNA

Charlie sits at the kitchen table chair. Anna begins to pick out the glass from Charlie's hand.

Is that okay?

ANNA

Charlie nods, watching her, mouth agape.

There's only one little piece left. This doesn't hurt?

ANNA

Charlie shakes his head. She takes her apron and dips it in the bucket and begins to wipe the blood from Charlie's hands. A bandaged face appears in the window, watching.

There.

ANNA

Thank you.

CHARLIE

You're the one doing work on our farm.

ANNA

You're the one with the gentle hands. Do you want to take off that apron?

CHARLIE

Oh....

ANNA

It's filthy. On my account.

CHARLIE

She tries to untie it but struggles.

CHARLIE

Let me.

ANNA

No, I'm fine.

CHARLIE

Let me.

He goes to her and unties her apron. He's very close.

ANNA

Thank you.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

ANNA

Back to work for me I think...

CHARLIE

Yeah... me too.

Sister Blair barges in the door.

SISTER BLAIR

What's happened here?

ANNA

Nothing happened.

CHARLIE

What?

SISTER BLAIR

What did he do?

ANNA

Nothing.

CHARLIE

I'm going back to work.

SISTER BLAIR

You stay right here.

But Charlie exits without a word, followed by the Sister.
Moments later Sister Blair reenters.

SISTER BLAIR

You let him touch you.

ANNA

What?

SISTER BLAIR

Did he touch you?

ANNA (*confused*)

He needed someone gentle.

SISTER BLAIR

SLUT. There was lust in your eyes.

ANNA

No, you've got it wrong, I was helping—

Sister Blair covers her ears, unwilling to listen.

SISTER BLAIR

He has compromised your innocence!

ANNA

What are you talking about? He didn't do anything wrong!

The sister screams so she cannot hear.

SISTER BLAIR

Curse the sin of man! We must put the world back in order!

ANNA

Stop yelling! He didn't do anything wrong!

SISTER BLAIR

Mothers daughters sisters wives blackened by the stain of man!

ANNA

Stop yelling!

SISTER BLAIR

The sin of men will not stop soiling the daughters of this earth—

ANNA

SHUT UP!

A beat. The sister and Anna stare at each other. Blackout.
The lights come up.
Anna is standing alone.
Real blackout.

SCENE 6

Daytime. Gail scrubs the table as Anna enters.

ANNA

Have you seen my book?

GAIL

Which book is that?

ANNA

Nancy Drew.

GAIL

I used it to start a fire last week.

ANNA

Oh.

GAIL

You shouldn't be reading while you still haven't done your chores.

ANNA

I've done my chores!

GAIL

I saw a rat in the barn today.

ANNA

Oh?

GAIL

Did you set the traps?

ANNA

Yes.

GAIL

You did?

ANNA

Yes.

GAIL

You're sure you put food in there—

What, do you think I'm lying?!?

ANNA (*dizzily forceful*)

No. I just want to be sure.

GAIL (*taken aback*)

She rummages through a cupboard and pulls out a small bottle, and shakes a few pills out.

GAIL

Go put this in the barn.

ANNA

What's this?

GAIL

Rat poison. Put it in a piece of bread and set it out for them.

ANNA

But...

GAIL

But what?

ANNA

Poison... just seems wrong.

GAIL

Do you know what else is wrong? Getting someone sick through your stubbornness. Go on.

Anna goes to the door but hesitates.

GAIL

Yes?

ANNA

I don't want them here anymore.

GAIL

Who?

ANNA

Any of them.

GAIL

Our farm has never been more productive—

ANNA

They make me think awful things.

GAIL

Who?

ANNA

They put ideas in my head. When I'm alone, they all come down. They talk to me.

GAIL

I've never heard them leaving their room. I think it's time you learn to tell dreams from reality. These nightmares tend to be ridiculous—

ANNA

They're not!

GAIL

Well, Anna, you don't have a very good track record! Now I suggest you go out to the barn and put out that poison and kill the rats before they kill us. Now *there* is something to be afraid of.

Anna exits. Gail puts the bottle back into the cabinet. Charlie enters from the stairs.

GAIL

I thought you were outside?

CHARLIE

I was taking a break.

GAIL

Taking a nap?

CHARLIE

No. Don't worry, I'll be breaking my back again soon enough.

GAIL

That's not what I meant. I appreciate the work you do here, you don't need to—

CHARLIE

I know. I was *joking*. You're a dry sort of woman aren't you?

GAIL

What's that supposed to mean?

CHARLIE

Just that you don't laugh a lot, is all.

GAIL

Well, I found there was less and less to laugh about as I grew up. Didn't you?

CHARLIE

Not at all. Say, how old are you?

GAIL

You're never supposed to ask a woman her age.

CHARLIE

You're never supposed to invite a stranger into your home.

GAIL

I don't see the connection.

CHARLIE

Typical social conventions are sort of out of play in light of recent events don't you think?

Charlie pantomimes a big "KA-BOOM." Gail laughs.

GAIL

It's sort of miraculous we're alive isn't it?

CHARLIE

Fate smiled on the four of us.

GAIL

I like to think God did.

CHARLIE

Sure.

GAIL

I believe in God, you know. I used to be afraid to say it because I felt it wasn't right to impose my views on others, but I do believe. Especially now. It just makes more sense to me that we are here for a purpose rather than that we are just dust, here as some accident. And now that we're left, I think—no—I *know* that He kept us here for some higher purpose.

CHARLIE

Then what's your great mission?

GAIL

It's silly.

CHARLIE

Try me.

GAIL

To reunite the human race. To foster a sense of interest in our fellow man that has been lost through the ages. Remind us that we're all in this life together.

CHARLIE

And you've done that.

GAIL

Ha. Not yet.

CHARLIE

I'd be dead now if it weren't for you.

GAIL

Well, thank you for that... validation.

CHARLIE

Do you want to know what my mission is?

GAIL

I expect to keep patching up that roof.

CHARLIE

You really want to know?

GAIL

You're going to tell me either way.

CHARLIE

My mission is to repopulate the world.

GAIL

... how will you do that?

CHARLIE

In that respect, I'm pretty... old fashioned.

GAIL

I should go check on your wife.

CHARLIE

She's not my wife.

GAIL

I'm going to go.

What would it take?

CHARLIE

No. We're in too close of quarters to–

GAIL

You traditional? I'll marry you.

CHARLIE

You have a child on the way–

GAIL

And the world will need another. And another.

CHARLIE

Anna reenters from outside.

CHARLIE

And another.

He looks pointedly from Anna to Gail.

ANNA

What's going on?

GAIL

Anna, go outside.

CHARLIE

Relax. I'm joking. No need to have her–

GAIL

Anna. Go.

Anna exits into the kitchen.

GAIL

Stay away from her.

CHARLIE

I'm not going to do anything.

GAIL

Stay away from her and we will talk. Get it?

Gail starts walking up the stairs.

GAIL

I'm going to go check on Katrina.

Charlie is left alone. Anna reenters. Upon seeing her, Charlie walks upstairs.

The Sisters all appear one by one from the kitchen. They stare at Anna. A beat.

ANNA

I'm afraid that they are going to—

SISTER RUTH

He will be punished.

Lights down.

SCENE 7

The middle of the night. The stage is dark. From the kitchen the sound of panting, then.

GAIL (*offstage*)

Get dressed. Go upstairs. Quietly.

CHARLIE (*offstage*)

That was—

GAIL (*offstage*)

Quietly.

Gail emerges from the kitchen, disheveled. She lights a match. Charlie follows.

CHARLIE

Can we do this again?

Gail kisses him.

GAIL

Of course. It's my house.

Gail walks upstairs. Charlie follows her up the stairs, leaving the stage dark. Suddenly the TV turns on, illuminating the stage with white noise and revealing Anna, who had been sleeping on the couch, unseen. On the TV, a man's voice speaks.

MAN ON TV

Wake up.

Anna opens her eyes.

ANNA

What?

MAN ON TV

It's your fault. You did this to yourself. You asked them to come. This is what you deserve.

ANNA

No. No it's not. I wouldn't ask them to come. I wouldn't hurt my family.

MAN ON TV

You have. And you will again.

I hurt you. Because you hurt me.

ANNA

It's time you learn what is a dream and what is reality.

MAN ON TV

It was real.

ANNA

Was it?

MAN ON TV

It doesn't matter. You're not real anymore.

ANNA

Because of you. And your dreams. When I loved you—

MAN ON TV

YOU NEVER LOVED ME!

ANNA

All of a sudden, the lights go out. In the darkness, a footstep on the stairs, and a voice:

Anna?

KATRINA

Katrina appears at the top of the stairs, holding a candle. Anna is illuminated, staring at a dark TV set.

Sorry I startled you. Charlie woke me up coming back from the bathroom. What are you doing down here at this time of night?

KATRINA

I was watching TV.

ANNA

Anna. The TV is broken.

KATRINA

I fixed it.

ANNA

Did you fix the electricity too?

KATRINA

I could if I wanted to.

ANNA

Katrina laughs.

KATRINA

I have no doubt. Do you think you might've been sleepwalking again?

ANNA

How do you—?

KATRINA

Your mom told me.

ANNA

I'm not crazy.

KATRINA

No one said that. I used to sleepwalk when I was a girl too.

ANNA

Really?

KATRINA

Mhm. I would find myself standing in the garage in the middle of the night, holding a pair of my mom's pants with no idea how I got there. I used to set off the security system.

ANNA

Do you remember how you felt when you woke up?

KATRINA

Confused. Always confused.

ANNA

Are you worried?

KATRINA

About?

ANNA

Everything. Your baby surviving. Us surviving. The Sisters. Charlie and my mom. Whether we're the only ones on earth. Whether we'll be attacked by vagrants. Whether they'll come for our food. Whether we'll run out of food. If it was my fault. If I'm crazy. If it wasn't a dream. If it was. If—

Katrina starts to rub Anna's back.

Shh. Baby. Shh.

KATRINA

Do you worry?

ANNA

Of course.

KATRINA

Why doesn't it seem like anyone else is worried?

ANNA

Adults do worry. They just don't like to let it show. They like to push it deep down so they can press on. If we worried all the time none of us would be able to do anything. We'd be paralyzed.

KATRINA

There's so much to be afraid of.

ANNA

But there's so much to be grateful for.

KATRINA

A creak from the corner.

ANNA

What was that?

Nothing to worry about.

KATRINA

Do you believe in what the Sisters say?

ANNA

The Sisters—?

KATRINA

A New Order?

ANNA

... I think if we're to have a new world, it can't be like last time. We have to find a way to stick together. And that's what we're doing now.

KATRINA

Are you going to be here forever?

ANNA

KATRINA

I don't know that. Do you want us here forever?

ANNA

Just you.

KATRINA

Not Charlie?

ANNA

Just the two of us.

Katrina hugs Anna.

KATRINA

Let's get you back to bed, huh?

Katrina, holding a candle in one hand, takes Anna's hand with the other and leads her up the stairs. As they walk up, they take the only light source in the room with them, leaving the stage dark.

Suddenly the TV turns on and the white noise illuminates all three Sisters lurking against the wall, having witnessed everything.

SCENE 8

In darkness, the sound of a chicken being slaughtered. Lights up. Daytime. The sound of chicken sizzling in a pan. Gail sits on the couch by herself, pensive.

CHARLIE (*offstage*)

We will be eating well today, friends! Meat! Fresh, glorious meat!

Gail stares off into space. Charlie enters, holding a whiskey bottle.

CHARLIE

It's been months since I've tasted sweet strips of meat between my teeth. I want a whole breast all to myself!

GAIL

Where did you find that bottle?

CHARLIE

In the barn. Your husband had a secret stash.

GAIL

You shouldn't be drinking. Katrina's going to go into labor any day now. We're going to need your wits about you.

CHARLIE

We're celebrating! We're alive! We beat the odds. And we've got a baby on the way. We'll be a real family.

Charlie disappears into the kitchen.

GAIL

A real family with two wives...

CHARLIE (*offstage*)

I never thought I'd convince you to even let this happen! You're too careful, we've got all those chicks left, a full grown rooster...

Charlie reenters with a piece of chicken between his thumb and forefinger.

CHARLIE

Try this.

GAIL

No thanks.

He places the meat into her mouth anyway. She chews and shudders.

GAIL

God... that's incredible.

CHARLIE

I know. Makes you kind of want more...

GAIL

Maybe just one more tomorrow?

CHARLIE

That's the spirit! We got things to celebrate!

GAIL

Why not?

CHARLIE

Life is short!

GAIL

Carpe diem!

He kisses her, she kisses him. Anna enters from outside.

ANNA

Momma, there's an emergency!

GAIL

One second, dear!

ANNA

The Sisters want me to show you.

GAIL

Show us what?

Anna exits and reenter the house with Sister Nora and Blair, swinging a dead rooster.

SISTER NORA

A feast!

GAIL

Wh-what?

SISTER BLAIR

We heard there was a call for celebration.

SISTER NORA

You told us you were going to eat chicken.

SISTER BLAIR

And we wanted to help.

Charlie gets up to inspect.

CHARLIE

That's a rooster. A rooster!

GAIL

What happened? Where did you find this?

SISTER NORA

We swung it round and round until its neck splintered and cracked.

ANNA

I just found it dead on the ground.

CHARLIE

How is that possible? Did you do this?

ANNA

No.

CHARLIE

God damn! How are we gonna get more eggs, huh?

GAIL

Charlie. Calm down. We'll just wait for the chicks to grow up.

SISTER NORA

I thought it was wrong.

ANNA

I'm sorry about the chicken, momma.

CHARLIE

Rooster! Who would've killed it?

GAIL

I asked Katrina to go out there to help me collect eggs this morning... maybe there was an accident.

CHARLIE

Don't you pin this on her!

GAIL

Shush, Charlie. It's all fine. There are two more chickens, plus plenty more chicks left in the coop, they're just not grown up yet.

The two sisters exchange glances with Anna.

GAIL

Aren't there?

CHARLIE

Course there are. I saw them when I went to get the first one.

GAIL

So we will have roosters to breed when the chicks grow up—

ANNA

The coop is empty.

GAIL

What?

SISTER BLAIR

The coop is empty.

SISTER NORA

Someone left the door ajar.

ANNA

... it was open when I went outside. Someone left it open.

Gail gets up and rushes outside.

CHARLIE

That's impossible. GAIL. GAIL!

He follows her out.

SISTER NORA

You should learn to be more careful.

SISTER BLAIR

They clearly don't want you to see what they are doing.

SISTER NORA

Respect their wishes.

ANNA

What do you mean?

SISTER BLAIR

The baby will be born to a lecher.

SISTER NORA

And lechers must be punished.

Gail storms in, followed by Charlie.

CHARLIE

I swear to God, I did not even touch the coop let alone leave the door open!

GAIL

Tell the truth!

CHARLIE

I am!

GAIL

Charlie, do you realize what this means?

CHARLIE

I didn't do it!

GAIL

It means no more meat. No more protein. You think your baby's going to survive on bread?

SISTER BLAIR/ANNA

Man cannot live on bread alone.

GAIL (*viciously*)

THANK YOU, ANNA.

CHARLIE

I didn't do this. It wasn't my fault.

ANNA

Is something burning?

A beat. All sniff.

CHARLIE (*softly*)

The chicken.

GAIL

Go have a good long taste, Charlie. It may be the last you ever have.

CHARLIE

Gail. I didn't leave it open.

GAIL

Your chicken is burning.

A scream from upstairs.

GAIL

I'll go see to Katrina now.

Gail exits upstairs.

CHARLIE

Did you do this?

SISTER BLAIR/ANNA

Sometimes the mind can trick itself.

SISTER NORA/ANNA

Forget things that it has done.

SISTER BLAIR/ANNA

We know you are not lying.

ANNA

Just forgetting.

CHARLIE

What the fuck are you talking about?

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Watch your tongue.

CHARLIE

I'm going to see Katrina. Stay out of that room.

Charlie exits upstairs.

You know what we need to do.

SISTER BLAIR

Cleanse the world.

SISTER NORA

End men's destruction.

SISTER BLAIR

Are you willing to do it?

SISTER NORA

Both sisters look at Anna.
Lights down.
The sound of a baby crying in the darkness.

SCENE 9

Night. Anna is asleep on the couch by the light of a candle. The Sisters walk down the stairs carrying blood-stained sheets.

SISTER RUTH

She may not make it.

Anna is still asleep.

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Anna. Anna. Anna.

Anna wakes up.

ANNA

Yes?

SISTER RUTH

She may not make it.

ANNA

The baby?

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

The woman.

ANNA

Katrina.

SISTER RUTH

She is too weak.

ANNA

No. I wanted her to stay alive...

SISTER NORA

We can try to save her perhaps, but sometimes we cannot get what we want.

A beat. The Sister draws something out of her cloak and replaces it in the cabinet.

ANNA

What is the baby?

A boy.

SISTER RUTH

As you'd hoped.

ANNA

As we'd hoped.

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

A beat.

SISTER RUTH

Are you alright?

ANNA

Sister Ruth?

SISTER RUTH

Yes, child?

ANNA

What does this mean?

SISTER RUTH

It means that we now have exactly what we need.

ANNA

For what?

SISTER NORA

You know.

ANNA

For *what*?

SISTER BLAIR

To build the new order.

ANNA

The new order.

SISTER RUTH

I have the upmost hope in your hand being instrumental in reshaping our tattered world.

ANNA

Will anyone have to die?

SISTER RUTH

Not if you don't wish it.

ANNA

I don't want this anymore.

SISTER RUTH

Of course you do. You would not have summoned us here otherwise.

ANNA

I summoned you here?

SISTER NORA

We came to save you from the sins of man.

SISTER BLAIR

We know you have been a victim once. We will protect.

ANNA

Then someone must die again. Just like last time.

SISTER RUTH

Yes.

ANNA

Is this real? Or is this a dream?

SISTER RUTH

My child, you must live your life as if it were a dream, where your actions have no true earthly consequences. Only then can you follow the heavenly path.

ANNA

But I won't wake up from what I've done...

SISTER NORA

We will be leaving.

SISTER BLAIR

You will lead on your own soon.

ANNA

My momma?

SISTER RUTH

You can protect her still, if that's what you want.

ANNA

I don't want to protect her anymore.

SISTER RUTH

And we are your last, best hope. Go on child. Do not worry. Steal away for a while. Live elsewhere. Sleep for an instant.

Sister Ruth blows out the candle submerging the stage into darkness. Suddenly, the stage is re-illuminated as Gail lights a match from the corner. The Sisters are nowhere to be seen, but Gail has been watching.

ANNA

Momma?

GAIL

Who were you talking to?

ANNA

No one.

GAIL

Don't lie to me. Were you talking to Daddy?

ANNA

No.

GAIL

You were talking to someone. I was here the whole time. Was it Daddy? Your sisters? Hm. Which one? Ruth? Nora? Blair?

ANNA

Maybe.

GAIL

It's okay. Come here. Come to me. It's sweet you still talk to them... I talk to them too. Except with me, they talk back. Because they're my children. I knew them. They lived in me. You... you never knew them. And when you talk to them, you imagine they talk back. Shhhh. When I talk to them, they're really talking to me. Straight from heaven. And you? Straight from your mind.

ANNA

They're not in my mind. They protect me. They guide me.

GAIL

Do they? Were they there when Daddy fell off the roof?

ANNA

They're everywhere.

GAIL

And did they tell you to push him?

ANNA

What?

GAIL

You pushed him.

ANNA

I...they told me it was the wind.

GAIL

My daughter, my disturbed, sweet little girl killed my husband.

Gail lights a match and lights another candle.

GAIL

We're almost out of matches... I suppose we're just going to always keep a candle burning, passing the flame from wick to wick. Protecting the light. The way I knew I couldn't protect you.

ANNA

Protect me from what?

GAIL

When I first met your father, he was too good to be true. He had this way of making me feel at ease. He'd hold me close and say "Gail, it's all in your mind. Stop seeing the worst." He would make me feel like I could trust anything he said, even when I was afraid of what he was deep down. But he was a monster, wasn't he? Only a monster could think of what he thought of... I told him I'd rather have our family die, die out than what he wanted to do to you. It was my fault, I thought, my fault that I couldn't bear him a child, but my daughter... it's like Genesis, he told me. Like Lot and his daughters after the fall of Sodom. He wanted a child, so damn what I thought. I was useless. You were not. But you were stronger. You fought back.

ANNA

That's why he took me to the roof... and you let him? Because you couldn't...

GAIL (*touching her own stomach*)

But he was wrong. It wasn't me that couldn't bear a child. It was him. I'll have another chance now. Another chance to protect a child, the way I couldn't protect you.

ANNA

How could you, *momma*? You knew the whole time, you knew, you knew, you knew, you let it happen, you let it happen, and you made me a murderer! YOU HATE ME, YOU ALWAYS HATED ME—

Suddenly, Gail grabs a pillow and shoves it to Anna's face. Anna thrashes as Gail holds it there with resolve. Anna grabs a fistful of Gail's hair and pulls, shoving her head towards the coffee table. Charlie rushes in. He pull Anna away from Gail. Anna becomes limp in his arms. He's holding a bottle of something and has clearly been drinking.

CHARLIE

Anna, leave your mother alone. This is no time for your nonsense.

A beat.

Katrina's not breathing. She hasn't been for ten minutes now.

The Sisters enter, watching.

GAIL

What?

CHARLIE

She's... she's dead.

GAIL

Oh, Charlie...where's the baby?

CHARLIE

Sleeping. I should've never left her alone...

GAIL

No. Come here...

He comes to her and she holds him.

SISTER NORA

Tell the truth now Anna.

Charlie begins to sob.

CHARLIE

Why couldn't we save her? She was healthy...

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Tell them how she died.

ANNA

I told you mamma. I told you it would kill her.

CHARLIE

What?

A beat.

GAIL

What are you talking about?

ANNA

You gave the bad pills to Katrina, didn't you?

GAIL

I don't know what you're talking about.

CHARLIE

What bad pills?

GAIL

She's just a little shaken up. Charlie, let me go to her...

CHARLIE

Shut up! Anna what are the bad pills?

Anna points to the cabinet.

ANNA

The ones momma makes me kill rats with.

GAIL

Anna, I gave her aspirin. She was in so much pain, I was trying to—

Charlie goes to the cabinet and begins opening bottles until he finds the one for the poison. He shows Gail the one in his hand and then spews the content all over the room.

CHARLIE

Rat poison. Can you tell me why you would bring rat poison in the room where my Katrina died?

GAIL

I can explain. I gave Anna the pills to kill the rats in the barn...

ANNA

Don't lie!

Gail grabs Anna by the hair.

GAIL

I'm putting her to bed, it's been too much. I'm sorry—

No you're not!

ANNA

What?

CHARLIE

You wanted this! You're having his child now. You wanted her out of the way!

ANNA

Anna. Do not talk nonsense.

GAIL

She did this.

SISTER RUTH

She did this.

ANNA/SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Charlie! Don't be ridiculous! I wouldn't kill anybody!

GAIL

No.

CHARLIE

Charlie, I promise, I loved Katrina, I did.

GAIL

Did you kill her?

CHARLIE

No.

GAIL

Did you kill her?

CHARLIE

NO.

GAIL

Tell the truth!

CHARLIE

Tell them Anna.

SISTER RUTH

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Be strong.

ANNA

I saw you, momma! I saw you go upstairs with the poison!

GAIL

What? No!

ANNA

She told me! She told me she was going to kill Katrina!

GAIL

What are you doing, Anna? Why are you saying this?

CHARLIE

Is this true?

GAIL

NO!

ANNA

I tried to stop her, I told her it was wrong, I told her Katrina must live—

CHARLIE

YOU'RE LYING!

GAIL

It's not a lie, it's not! She's the one who's lying—

CHARLIE/ALL SISTERS

YOU WANTED HER DEAD FROM THE BEGINNING.

GAIL

Why would I want that?

ANNA/ALL SISTERS

SO YOU COULD PLAY HOUSE WITH HIM!

Charlie seizes Gail by the throat.

ANNA

No—

SISTER RUTH

Be strong. It's God's plan.

You killed her!

CHARLIE

Gail tries to speak but cannot. She beats her arms against Charlie as he grips her harder.

You *killed* her!

CHARLIE

She will be home soon.

SISTER NORA

This is what you wanted.

SISTER BLAIR

Gail stops beating her arms, running out of air. She chokes and falls to the ground, out of sight behind the couch, one hand dangling out from behind. She is dead. Anna fights through tears.

Momma.

ANNA

It was meant to be.

SISTER RUTH

She is dead.

SISTER BLAIR

You've killed her.

SISTER NORA

Charlie is breathing hard, distraught. Anna is fighting through tears.

Gail?

CHARLIE

You are marked for death.

SISTER RUTH

You can see it now.

SISTER NORA

The New Order.

ALL SISTERS/ANNA

What?
CHARLIE

And we don't want the world we had last time.
ANNA

We want piety.
SISTER NORA

Patience.
SISTER BLAIR

Purity.
SISTER NORA

And you are a swine.
SISTER RUTH

I lost control. Oh, God...
CHARLIE

Men destroyed the world.
SISTER NORA

We must rebuild it.
SISTER BLAIR

And now the final task.
ANNA

Our mission is to rid the world from the likes of you.
SISTER RUTH

Gullible man. Stupid man.
ANNA

Anna, why would you lie? Why would you—
CHARLIE

Kill the man.
ANNA

The Sisters looks towards each other. Anna pulls the knife out of her pocket and takes a step towards Charlie. Charlie tries to disarm Anna, but by taking her arm he causes Anna to stab Sister Nora in the neck. Sister Nora falls to the floor.

The Sisters seem unconcerned with Charlie. They look at the ground where Sister Nora is slowly standing, her neck hanging at an odd angle, but otherwise fine. Charlie looks genuinely frightened.

SISTER NORA

My neck is severed.

SISTER RUTH

It is God's will.

SISTER NORA

Perhaps I will heal.

SISTER RUTH

We will pray for healing.

ANNA

After we punish the swine.

Anna picks up the knife from the floor.

She lunges at Charlie, knocking over the candle and submerging the scene into darkness. The sound of metal against wood, then a scream.

CHARLIE

Stop this Anna!

ANNA

No!

The sound of a body being thrown against a wall.

CHARLIE

ANNA!

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Stand down.

The sound of someone scrambling up the stairs.

CHARLIE

Get back here!

Footsteps follow and the sound of a banister breaking and a body being thrown over it.

SISTER BLAIR

I have the knife!

SISTER RUTH

Do it!

The rip of fabric. The sound of Charlie exhaling in pain.

Sister Ruth lights a single match. The stage is illuminated. Sister Ruth is standing over Charlie. Blood is flowing from between his legs. Anna stands over him.

ANNA

No more wickedness will stem from you.

ALL SISTERS

Our work is complete.

ANNA

Retrieve the baby.

Sister Nora and Blair exit upstairs.

SISTER BLAIR

And the meat?

ANNA

I want to say goodbye.

SISTER BLAIR

God brought food across our paths.

ANNA

Yes.

Charlie exhales deeply as the sisters return downstairs with the baby. He reaches for it feebly.

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Our new hope.

ANNA/SISTERS

Adam.

The sisters hand the baby to Anna.

You will start a new world.

SISTER BLAIR

A New Order.

SISTER NORA/BLAIR

Anna...

CHARLIE

Anna stands over Charlie as he struggles. As Anna speaks to him, the sisters begin to fade away.

I love you, Charlie.

ANNA

Charlie expires.

He's gone.

ANNA

Anna looks around, now completely alone.

Sister Blair? Sister Ruth? Sister Nora?

ANNA

Anna gazes at the casualties, then looks to the baby.

We're the only ones left in the world, aren't we?

ANNA

She clutches the baby to her chest.

But our world will be a new one.

ANNA

End of play.