

FADE IN.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

In a dense Massachusetts forest sits a dimly-lit shanty. The tyrannical words of an angry man, BRUCE (25), coming from the shanty, fill the stormy night.

BRUCE (O.S.)
We have nothing, and you let
yourself get knocked-up. You whore!
You bitch! Where did you get this
money?

With a thunderclap, torrential rain pours down.

A lightning bolt illuminates the haggard-looking pick-up truck, sitting in front of the shack.

SUPER: "HAMPSHIRE COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS,
1982"

INT. SHANTY

The roof of the two-room dwelling leaks. Crumpled newspaper plugs ceiling and wall holes. Cardboard replaces a broken window pane. The bedroom door hangs by a single hinge.

BEDROOM

On a filthy mattress sits a weary-looking, pregnant (late trimester) JENNIE(20), helpless before the verbal assault of her drunken enraged boyfriend.

Next to the bed stands an ironing board. On the board rests an unplugged iron.

Bruce stands at the foot of the bed, gripping a whiskey bottle in one hand, folded money in the other.

BRUCE
(ref: money)
I want to know where you got this.

JENNIE
(in tears)
I told you! Sewing! The
curtains. Don't you remember?

BRUCE
Not for this kind of money!...You
been sharing it, ain't you?

JENNIE

What?

BRUCE

Come home with this much money,
want me to think you're making
curtains for Karen? Give me some
credit.

JENNIE

Look at me! Even if I wanted to,
who would?

BRUCE

Don't play dumb! You can skin
cats lots of ways.

Bruce pockets the money and sets the bottle aside. He
begins to unzip his fly.

BRUCE

Matter of fact, I'm going to find
out just how much practice you've
been getting.

Bruce pushes Jennie back onto the bed, knocking over the
ironing board. The iron drops to the floor next to the
bed.

He straddles Jennie, placing his full body weight onto
her chest, pinning her to the mattress. Jennie begins
to scream.

Bruce slaps her, once, twice. With the third slap, she
falls silent.

Half dazed, Jennie goes limp as Bruce wriggles atop her.
Her arm dangles off the bed; her fingers graze the iron.

Bruce lowers his trousers, his buttocks partially
exposed.

BRUCE

You're going to make this good for
me,
right, mamma? Take care of me
like the others.

Feeling the iron within her grasp, Jennie curls her
fingers around its handle. In an automatic reflex, she
nails Bruce with the end of the iron, its tip penetrating
his temple.

Bruce drops onto Jennie, lifeless.

Jennie shoves the body aside and sits on the edge of the mattress. She stares at Bruce's corpse and into his lifeless glaring eyes.

She rifles through his pockets, but as she pulls out the folded money, she's suddenly overcome by labor pains. Jennie slides from the bedding and onto the floor, holding her stomach.

JENNIE

Oh, no! God! Please, not now.

EXT. SHANTY - NIGHT

Jennie exits the shack barefoot, her dress dragging in the mud. In the hard rain, she wobbles toward the truck, trying to control her contractions with forceful, rhythmic breathing.

The truck keys slip from her hand. She drops onto her knees and probes the mud with her fingers.

JENNIE

My God! Work with me!

Locating the keys, she wipes them free of mud. She tries to stand but is unable.

On her hands and knees, Jennie crawls to the truck, opens the door, and climbs into the cab.

EXT. MASSACHUSETTS ROUTE 112 - NIGHT

The pick-up truck emerges from the forest, turning off the dirt road and onto Massachusetts Route 112.

INTERCUT EXT. AND INT. VEHICLE SHOTS:

Heavy rain makes visibility almost impossible. Jennie can barely negotiate the two-lane, asphalt road. The lightning and thunder unnerve her.

Steering her vehicle, she continues her rhythmic breathing. Fighting contractions, she pleads with her forthcoming child.

JENNIE

Not here! Not now. Oh, please, please, please, please.

Through the rain Jennie spots a road sign: "GOSHIN 3ML." She places her hand on her stomach.

JENNIE

Almost there. A few minutes...ah!
Ah! No!

Jennie's water breaks. In the confusion she loses control of the vehicle.

EXT. EMBANKMENT

The truck careens off the road, through a high brush-line, and down a steep embankment.

Out of control, the vehicle crashes down the tree-covered slope through a dilapidated wrought-iron fence.

The vehicle comes to a halt, striking a nearby tree.

EXT. CEMETERY

Jennie, still in the truck, is dazed but conscious. Suddenly, a short circuit in the truck's engine compartment sparks into a fire.

The truck's door bursts open and Jennie drops to the ground. Her contractions are much closer now, more profound.

Jennie looks around and sees that she has crashed through the fence of an old, abandoned cemetery.

As the flames consume the truck's passenger compartment, Jennie crawls clear of the vehicle.

Practically overwhelmed by her contractions, Jennie ceases crawling and tries to calm herself.

Then Jennie looks up and sees that she is on a grave!

By the flash of a lightning bolt, Jennie views the badly-weathered gravestone -- "Isabel Le Tellier, Born 1673, Died 1694 -- God Hath No Grace For Thee."

Overcome by another contraction, Jennie digs the heels of her bare feet into the mud and braces her shoulders against the gravestone.

Raising her legs, lifting her skirt, she prepares to deliver her child. Three times she pushes hard, but the infant does not come.

JENNIE

Come on! What's wrong?

Suddenly, the earth beneath her begins to move. Terrified, Jennie watches as snakes begin to coil out of the ground, crawling onto her feet and arms.

JENNIE

Ugh! What's happening?

Abruptly, two bony hands, flesh hanging from them, emerge from Isabel's grave either side of Jennie. The hands grip Jennie's stomach, kneading and rending her flesh.

JENNIE

God in Heaven, help me!

The hands tear open Jennie's abdomen, exposing the infant within.

LATER.

Jennie lies dead on Isabel's grave, serpents crawling over her body. The cry of a newborn mingles with the clap of thunder and the rush of a driving rain.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The red-brick facade of Clifford Presbyterian church shows prominent in the foreground.

SUPER: "SEVEN MONTHS LATER"

INT. CHURCH OFFICE

BROTHER FILMORE (35) sits with ELIZABETH (24) and BRADFORD (27) LATIMER. Suddenly, the office door opens and a female ATTENDANT enters carrying an INFANT wrapped in a quilt.

Elizabeth and Bradford quickly stand. Elizabeth anxiously accepts the baby.

Both Bradford and Elizabeth show elation and gratitude on receiving their adopted child. As Elizabeth holds the infant, Bradford enthusiastically shakes the Brother's hand.

INT. LATIMER HOUSE - DAY

The front door of a well-furnished, middle-class residence opens.

Bradford holds the door for Elizabeth as she enters their home, the baby held tightly in her arms.

NURSERY

Elizabeth lays the infant in a crib. She opens the child's swaddling cloth and spots an oblong-shaped nevus and circle at the infant's left collarbone.

ELIZABETH
She has the most exquisite
beautymark I've ever seen.

BRAD
Look at her. She's perfect.

ELIZABETH
And she's all ours.

BRAD
We'll teach her everything, and
she'll be wonderful.

ELIZABETH
She's already wonderful.
(to the Baby)
Isn't that right, my precious --
my darling Jane?

Janie coos and smiles.

INT. LATIMER HOUSE (JANIE'S BEDROOM)

A visual sweep of Janie's room shows the decor has changed. The crib is gone, replaced by a standard bed. Small dresses hang from the back of the bedroom door. A small vanity with a stool and mirror sits across the room.

SUPER: "1987"

Five-year-old Janie Latimer sits in the center of the room, playing with her dolls.

She can hear her parents in the kitchen down the hall.

KITCHEN

Elizabeth, nearly done with cooking, brandishes a drink. Brad, smiling, enters.

BRADFORD
(tasting from a pot)
Mmmm. Good.

ELIZABETH
 (flirting with her
 husband)
 It's almost done.
 (re: drink in hand)
 Want one?

Brad takes her drink and puts it down.

BRADFORD
 Oh, I think we've had enough.

She giggles and puts her arms around him. She turns on the radio.

JANIE'S BEDROOM

Hearing the radio and her parents laughter, Janie frowns. She goes over and closes her bedroom door.

Alone now, Janie bounces her favorite ball. It rolls under the bed. She tries to reach for it. She can't get it.

More laughter comes from downstairs and faint voices.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
 C'mon, let's dance.
 (louder)
 Please, c'mon!

KITCHEN

Bradford smiles and gives in. He dances with his wife.

JANIE'S BEDROOM

Janie tries and tries to reach the ball, fixating on it with all her might.

A black raven lands on her windowsill, the window open. The raven begins cawing.

Janie, still reaching under the bed, is about to give up when the ball starts to roll toward her, right into her hand. Janie sits up, astonished.

The raven watching, Janie rolls the ball away from her, focussing on it. Suddenly, the ball stops. It rolls back toward her. She catches it.

She rolls it away and again, without hitting any wall or other object, it reverses direction and rolls back.

This time Janie stares at the ball, hard. It slowly, shakily levitates.

A laugh from below breaks her concentration. The ball falls, bouncing once.

The raven flaps its wings.

KITCHEN

The radio's turned up now.

Bradford and Elizabeth dance, a swing song. They are laughing, having a swell time.

JANIE'S BEDROOM

Janie laughs as she suspends the ball against the ceiling. What fun! She lets it drop again. Suspends it again. Drops it.

Delighted with herself, Janie turns toward her stuffed animals, sitting in a pile on the bed. One by one she levitates them, until they are all in the air. Concentrating hard she makes them turn on end.

Thrilled, she laughs and claps her hands.

KITCHEN

Bradford pulls his wife toward him and kisses her.

JANIE'S BEDROOM

Pictures are spinning on the wall and the stuffed animals are dancing midair, while Janie, concentrating very hard, lifts a glass full of milk and a plate of cookies to the ceiling.

At a crescendo in the music, Janie turns the glass and plate over, letting the cookies and milk fall. Before they hit the floor -- presto -- the plate and glass are there to catch them.

Janie squeals with delight.

KITCHEN

Bradford hears Janie in her room, laughing. Meanwhile, still kissing him, Elizabeth reaches for the belt on her husband's pants.

BRADFORD

(stopping Elizabeth)

No, don't. She'll hear us.

Reluctantly, they break away and compose themselves. Elizabeth turns the radio down.

ELIZABETH
 (after a moment,
 calling out)
 Janie! Supper's ready!

JANIE'S BEDROOM

Janie, all of her toys levitated, is having a fine time.

JANIE
 (calling out)
 I'm coming!

One by one she returns the toys to their original places.

As she exits the room, she turns and looks back. All is quiet.

The raven, satisfied, flies off. Janie closes the door and heads downstairs.

EXT. LATIMER HOUSE (BACKYARD) - DAY

A birthday party for Janie Latimer, now 7, is underway. She wears a strappy t-shirt, her birthmark prominent.

SUPER: "1989"

INT. LATIMER HOUSE (KITCHEN)

Elizabeth, already a bit tipsy, peers through the kitchen window. With a drink in one hand and a cigarette in the other, she observes the CHILDREN playing in the backyard.

EXT. LATIMER HOUSE (BACKYARD)

Janie, sitting at a picnic table and surrounded by friends, enjoys her birthday festivities.

One girl, SIBYL BARTON (7), who demands the center of attention, is jealous of the favors afforded Janie.

Janie opens a large box given to her by her father, but Bradford is not present.

CHILDREN
 What's in it, Jane? Who gave it
 to you?

JANIE
 (proudly)
 My daddy.

Janie withdraws a beautiful doll from the box. The entire group, except for Sibyl, swoons. BARBARA STACTOL (6) is smitten.

BARBARA
She's so pretty. Can I hold her?

SIBYL
(envious)
My mamma gave me one just like it last year. It's old stuff.

Janie hands the doll to Barbara, and the little girl tightly hugs the toy.

SIBYL
Oh, stop it. It's just plastic.

BARBARA
I like her. She's nice, Jane.

Unlike the other girls who wear thongs on their feet, Barbara wears socks and shoes.

SIBYL
(to Barbara)
How come you don't wear flip flops? You got toe jam?

JANIE
Let her be, Sibyl.

SIBYL
Let me see!

Sibyl grabs the doll by its head, but Barbara will not relinquish the toy.

Another girl, red-haired NANCY REILLY (6), intercedes.

NANCY
Leave her alone, Sibyl.

SIBYL
(to Nancy)
If you don't shut up, I'll have your Daddy fired!
(to Barbara)
I want to hold her.

BARBARA
No.

SIBYL
Give her to me!

Sibyl yanks hard. The doll's head separates from the body.

Janie loses control. Jumping up, she glares at Sibyl with a look of hatred.

JANIE

Leave it!

As if by invisible hands, Sibyl is thrown off the bench. She lands onto the lawn, five feet from the picnic table.

Sibyl cries as the other children, speechless, watch her lying on the ground.

INT. LATIMER HOUSE (JANIE'S BEDROOM) - DAY

Later that day, after the party, Janie sits with her birthday gifts strewn on the bed.

She picks up the separated head and body of the doll and stares at them. Holding the doll next to her face, she talks to her own image in a mirror.

JANIE

You're a good girl, Janie. A real, good girl.

Bradford, just home from work, stands in the doorway, watching.

BRADFORD

(concerned)
Of course you are, honey.

Janie gives him a meek smile.

BRADFORD

Oh, come on now.

He runs over to her and tickles her.

JANIE

(laughing)
Daddy! No Daddy! Ha!

EXT. CLIFFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

The facade of a large beige-brick building fills the foreground.

SUPER: "CLIFFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 1991"