

Scene 1

Rain against old windows.
Distant thunder.
A crackling fireplace burns low.
The bass low sound of a recording is fills the silence

The old, tired voice of Michael Oakes sighs.

MICHAEL:
If you're listening to this... then I am finally gone from this world.

A pause.

MICHAEL:
Seems like a cliché way to start, but perhaps, it's a strange thing to prepare for.
Your own absence. So why not start with something predictable?.

Ice clinks faintly in a glass as he raises it.
He takes a small sip.
Then lower it down.

MICHAEL:
Laura... I imagine this all must seem rather sudden to you.
A distant uncle in another country leaving you an old estate, and more paperwork
than grief.

A weak, humourless chuckle.

You barely know of me. I am certain.
That was intentional by your grandfather, my brother, I am sure.

Rain intensifies briefly. Clattering against the window.

...I do owe your grandfather an apology.
For some things I only realized these last years.
Not for how we ended... He made his choice.
And some wounds between brothers are too old to heal properly...
But, for what I have left behind.
For you.

A long silence.
The fire pops sharply.

MICHAEL:
As both he and your father kept their distance from me. If they had not..
Perhaps I could have been better prepared.

He exhales slowly.
Tired.
Old.

Lionel will give you this tape so that I may give you some private words.
There are things attached to the Oakes name, Laura.

...
Things inherited alongside the property...
...the money.
By the time you understand that...
It may already be too late for you my dear, and for that...
for what you have inherited.
I hope you forgive the choice I had to make.

The recording hums quietly beneath the silence. Distortion flickers through as if static interference, breathing.

MICHAEL:

I told myself I could bury it.
That isolation was enough.
Nearly thirty years...
...
Thirty years, and still I can feel him beneath the ground.

A tiny shift in tone at the word him.

Waiting.
Listening.

Thunder rolls in the distance.

I had intended to...
...end this line with me...
I should have ended it properly when I still had the will.
I tried...
but in the end...

A pause.

Perhaps, it was an act of cowardice.
Perhaps you will understand, in time, what needed to be done...
What needs to be forgotten...
...and do what I could not finish.

He wheezes out a sigh.
Sounding even older.

And if...

Wheezes.

...there is mercy in any of this...
Perhaps our blood ends with us.

A long silence.
Then—

MICHAEL:
...No.

A nervous breath.
His tone sounded like a man with dementia.

No, you hear me? Don't you?
Still listening...
Still here...

Agitated.

Stay where you are.
(amused, darkly)
Where you belong.

The glass is once again lifted.
He takes a weak sip.
Before practically dropping it back to the table.
Then Silence.
The rain continues.

MICHAEL:
(cold/low)
Leave well alone... Laura.
This is all I can offer you.

The recording turns to static.

A click.
Silence.

Scene 2

Wind and light rain hit the ground.
A car drives by, splashing through a puddle.
Trees blow in the wind.

A second car slows, and turns.
Car tires crunching slowly over wet gravel.
Rain taps softly against the vehicle.
Inside the car, muted heater noise.
Wipers moving back and forth.

Lionel Grey gives a relieved sigh.

LIONEL:
And there we are.

The car slows to a stop.

LAURA:
(a little nervous)
This... this it?

Windshield wipers continue rhythmically.

LIONEL:

(amused)

Yes, this is it.

A shame it's raining, it's quite nice in the sun.

LAURA:

(tired)

Did he really live alone in that?

LIONEL:

Yes, he did. Though an occasional visitor, such as myself, and his business Associate.

You'll meet her too, soon enough.

Seatbelt unclicking.

LIONEL:

So, welcome to Oakes House.

Or Oakes estate, depending on which century you ask.

LAURA:

(light amusement)

How does it look so big and... so small at the same time?

A faint amused breath from Lionel.

The Car doors open.

The two exit, treading on the wet gravel.

Wind rushes around them.

Rain tapping on them, as Laura heads quicker to the cover of the entrance. The smooth stone now underfoot.

Lionel rushes over, but he is slower.

LIONEL:

Forgive our weather, miss Oakes.

I would have liked to present the house to you under better conditions.

LAURA:

(apologetic)

I-I'm sorry I had you bring me out...

My... curiosity is...

Well... sometimes a...

...

(quieter)

Problem.

Lionel is searching his pockets for something.

LIONEL:

Think nothing of... it.

(mutters)

Now where did I...

Umm... do you have any questions?

Laura nervously reacts, put on the spot.

LAURA:

(anxious)

Well... h-how old is the property?

I-I mean if you know...

Lionel stops patting his coat, and opens his satchel.

LIONEL:

Built around the 1870s, if memory serves.

Your family built it to move to the countryside from the city.

AH!

keys jingling, as he pulls them out.

Lionel walks to the front door, and puts the key in the lock.

LAURA:

(quiet)

So... this is really all mine?

The door opens, and they step inside.

LIONEL:

Pending probate, technically.

But yes.

The house, the surrounding land, your great uncle's personal assets...

The business and investments are a separate matter, but part of the process.

LAURA:

(Nervously joking)

Right. The terrifying money part.

The door is closed.

The only sound at first is a clock ticking.

Lionel shakes his coat a little.

They both just stand.

LIONEL:

(joking)

I assure you, Miss Oakes, true terror is reserved for inheritance tax.

Laura laughs quietly despite herself.

But it does serve to relax her a little.

LAURA:

Yeah, I've...

(sad)

...dealt with that a little myself back in the states.

LIONEL:

I'm sorry to hear that, Miss Oakes.

Then I hope this won't be too... stressful for you.

Pause

If it's any consolation, you're free to stay here while matters are settled.
You can personally sort through belongings, decide what you'd like retained
...disposed of
...auctioned.

Pause

Once the probate valuers have been through the entire inventory.

LAURA:

They haven't already?

LIONEL:

No.

I started soon after your great uncle's death.

But, due to some circumstances, I thought it prudent to wait for you.

I wished to respect your right to make the call.

LAURA:

(worn, quiet)

Honestly, I still don't even know what I'm doing here.

(sarcastic)

We were so close it took you guys.. what a month to find me?

(sad)

To even know this stranger died?

I'm surprised he knew I existed.

He never called... even after...

Silence.

Lionel hesitates to comfort, but he continues.

LIONEL:

Yes... some time. I regret it took so much.

...

Again, I am sorry you missed his funeral.

That lands heavier than intended on Laura.

A slight awkward pause.

Laura take a breath to calm herself.

LAURA:

(Awkward)

No, Sorry.

That sounded harsher than I meant it to.

A man died...

A man I didn't know...

I shouldn't judge him...

LIONEL:

Think nothing of it.

A long pause.

The clock is ticking.

Laura takes another deep sigh.

LAURA:

So... this is the inside. It looks nice.
(light humour)
...honestly kinda what I expected.
The Museum motif.

Lionel gives a chuckle.
Laura walks further inside.
Her footsteps wander slowly.

LAURA:

Is this place huge?
I only saw the front.

LIONEL:

Rather large, yes.
But, your great uncle only used a fraction of it the last decade or so.

LAURA:

Why?

LIONEL:

Not sure... He really just used a few rooms, living by himself.
Probably felt no need.

Pause.

In fact, in all the years I handled his affairs...
I believe I saw perhaps only three rooms of this house.
And we're standing in one of them.
Then really, only one.
The living room, just over there.

LAURA:

Seriously?

LIONEL:

Well...
Back in the nineties I heard he used to have parties but then...
He just stopped.
Locked up the house.
I took over a few years later from my predecessor, but I heard about it.
Laura walks around more.

LAURA:

(Curious)
So the family's been here since... When?

LIONEL:

Well, as I said, the building dates back to the 1870s.
But the rise of the Oakes line dates back to the Civil War.

LAURA:
 (Absently)
 the 1860s?

Lionel stops walking.
A pause.

LIONEL:
 No.
 The -English- civil war.

Laura sighs.

LAURA:
 (embarrassed)
 ...Right.
 Yeah...
 And that was?

LIONEL:
 Seventeen forties?
 Oh!
 Forgive me. -sixteen- forties.

LAURA:
 (Surprised)
 Oh! Okay.
 Wow.
 (light joking)
 Yeah, that's definitely older.

LIONEL:
 Easy mistake to make, miss Oakes.

LAURA:
 It's okay, Mr Grey, you can say it; That was aggressively American of me.

Lionel chuckles softly for the first time.

Laura keeps moving, stepping slowly, carefully.
Tired, yet curious.
Fingers brushing old picture frames.

LAURA:
 These portraits...

She keeps walking, keeps looking.

LIONEL:
 Old family portraits.

LAURA:
 She looks pretty.

She stops.

Lionel stops beside her.

LIONEL:

The plaque says...
Sophie Oakes.

...
I believe that is your great...great-grandmother.
Your Great Uncle's grandmother.

Laura lets out an interested sigh.

LAURA:

(soft)
Grandpa's Grandma, huh?

The sound of a distant growl is heard.
Laura gasps.

Did you hear...

Lionel continues, not hearing her.

LIONEL:

Your family was rather committed to documenting their heritage.
Quite proud of their achievements and wealth.
Your Great uncle spent much of his life pushing that wealth further.

Laura swallows, nervous.
And then she moves on.

LAURA:

(anxious)
Yeah...
Quite the museum vibe.

A long pause.
Very faintly...
A distant, barely audible inhale.
Laura turns slightly.

LAURA:

What is that?

LIONEL:

What is what?

Lionel clearly not hearing anything.

LAURA:

(unsure)
...
I...
Nothing... I guess.
Sorry.

LIONEL:

Old homes settle constantly. Especially in weather like this.

Laura doesn't fully buy that.

LAURA:

(Anxious)

...Maybe.

Pause

LIONEL:

Um... well...

Perhaps we should move on.

...

For your convenience, I had the utilities restored.

Water, Electricity, Gas.

The mainline and internet will take a few more days to activate.

LAURA:

(absent)

Mm-hmm.

Laura is more focused on looking.

LIONEL:

I had a basic cleaning done after your uncle passed, but—

Laura grabs a door handle.

The door handle rattles in her hand.

Locked.

LAURA:

Huh!

LIONEL:

There are rather a lot of those, I'm afraid.

LAURA:

I see...

LIONEL:

Most of the locks are older than both of us combined.

Original fitting from the construction.

Laura walks over to another door.

She wiggles the handle.

Locked again.

LAURA:

Did he lose the keys or something?

LIONEL:

I don't know.

But, this is the reason for the Evaluator delay.
No access.

...
I did wish to speak to you about...

A phone starts vibrating.
A notification.
Lionel sighs quietly.

LIONEL:
My apologies.

Phone unlocking.
A message

LIONEL:
(annoyed)
Damn.

LAURA:
(quiet)
I-Is...
Is everything okay?

LIONEL:
(frustrated)
I'm afraid I'm due back in Birmingham within the hour.
Another appointment.
It slipped my mind.

LAURA:
(anxious)
Oh...
So... you have to go?

LIONEL:
Unfortunately, yes.
I can take you back to the hotel first.
If you wish.

A pause.

LAURA:
(unsure)
I...
I umm...

Pause

I-I think I wanna stay a little longer.
I-if thats okay!

LIONEL:
(amused)
It's your property, Miss Oakes.

You can stay as long as you wish.

Lionel pulls keys from his pockets.

The keys jingled as he placed them into her hand. Showing each key.

LIONEL:

Main entrance.

Main entrance deadlock.

Rear Entrance.

Garage side door.

...

Where the rest of the keys are... I don't know, as I said.

We'll have to discuss it further another time though.

LAURA:

(joking.)

I-I'll start a treasure hunt.

Her humorous tone hides her nervousness.

LIONEL:

(jokes)

If you find buried gold, please do inform me, for the probate before spending it.

Laura laughs, a little more genuinely.

Lionel quickly walks to the door.

LIONEL:

(Rushed)

Call me if you need anything, Miss Oakes.

Lionel opens the door.

Wind and light rain heard from outside.

LAURA:

(calls back)

L-Laura's fine.

Lionel stops.

LIONEL:

Then you may call me Lionel.

A small pause.

LIONEL:

Oh, one more thing, don't wander in the rear grounds. Especially at night.

Laura hears a soft, faint groan.

She gasps.

LIONEL:

Oh, nothing to be worried about, Laura. Purely practical.

Uneven ground.
Old structures.
Potential liability paperwork.

Laura swallows, unnerved, but ignoring it. Trying to joke.

LAURA:
Ah yes. The terror of Paperwork!

Lionel allows himself another faint laugh.

LIONEL:
Good afternoon, Laura.

LAURA:
(awkward)
Right...
Bye.

The Door closes.

Silence.

The house settles around her.
Creaking a little, faint sounds of rain against windows.
The clock ticks somewhere.

Laura exhales slowly.
Nervous.
Tired.
Lonely.

LAURA:
Okay...
(sad)
Alone again...

She takes a deep breath.

Stop it...
Y-you'll be okay.

She just breathes.
In and out...
Anxiously.

Scene 3

A ticking clock.
Occasional soft groans from old wood as wind stirs.

Laura's footsteps echo lightly as she wanders

LAURA:

Okay...

Fingers brushing across framed photographs.

T-tell me if you're haunted, okay, house.

...

(quiet)

Not funny Laura...

She pauses her walking.

A frame being adjusted slightly on the wall, rubbing against it.

LAURA:

(nervous)

Kinda... creepy though.

There's like... two hundred years of dead relatives staring at me here.

She walks slowly.

Wooden flooring beneath her.

LAURA:

(muttering)

You people really loved your oil paintings.

...

And looking...

Stoic?

She stops again.

Fingertips tapping old glass.

LAURA:

Dad would've enjoyed renovating this place.

A small silence after saying it.

Laura breathing in. Feeling lonely, sad...

After a moment to herself Laura continues onward.

The atmosphere subtly changes as she enters another room, this time carpeted.

LAURA:

(surprised)

Oh.

Okay, this is a little more modern

Hand brushing leather furniture.

And that is a big TV.

Sound system.
Fancy rich guy chairs...

She nudges something lightly.
Leather creaks deeply.
She sits experimentally.
Chair groans comfortably beneath her as she slowly lowers herself.

LAURA:
Oh no.
...
A leather chair should not be this...

Comfy relaxed sigh.
She sinks further in spite of herself.

LAURA:
(jokes)
This is how they get you.

A faint amused exhale.
She sounds more relaxed than previously.

Then her attention drifts again.
Laura notices more details.

LAURA:
He must have spent all his time here.
A few books...
Records...

She slowly stands up again.
Footsteps cross the carpet.

LAURA:
(Tired, sad)
You had all this...
All alone...
...and still never called anybody.
...
Not even after Grandpa died.

A pause.

(sad/lonely)
...Or Mom and Dad.

Silence.

Only the ticking clock now.

Laura swallows emotion back down.

LAURA:
Sorry.

(joke to self)
Didn't mean to make this weird Uncle Michael...

She feels a little ridiculous with that joke.

(resigned)
Like you're still here.

A faint breathe, eching, distant.

Laura gasps.
Breathing trembling.

J-Just a...
I don't know...
Could be... anything.

She sighs.

This is ridiculous.

Silence.
Then-
An indistinct voice.
Breathing
Distant.

LAURA:
H-H-Hello?

Nothing.
A nervous breath escapes her despite herself.

Silence

LAURA:
Just an Old house.
No one. And you're al-...
...
(quiet)
...alone

She resumes walking, slightly quicker now.

Laura approaches shelving.
Record sleeves shifting softly, as she runs her fingers across them.

LAURA:
Classics... anything from after the 80s?
and classical...

She steps away.

She picks up a light metal pocket watch.

LAURA:

Nice watch.

She opens it with a click.

The ticking inside is unnervingly loud compared to the room.

Laura studies it.

LAURA:

Still ticking? Must not be one you have to wind...

The watch suddenly STOPS ticking.

Silence.

LAURA:

Okay...

That's...

Then—

Very faintly—

Again, a slow breath somewhere behind her.

Laura turns sharply.

Gasping scared.

LAURA:

(trembling)

W-Who...?

L...Lionel?

Nothing.

Complete silence.

The watch suddenly starts ticking again.

Laura gasps again, startled.

LAURA:

(anxious)

Nope.

She quickly puts the watch down, harder than intended.

Laura is breathing harder.

LAURA:

(worn)

It's just jetlag...

My mind is...

Tired.

She starts to leave the living room.

Scene 4

Soft echoing footsteps through the house.
The clock chimes twice.
The sound of rain lightly tapping the windows.

Laura moves through another doorway.
The acoustics tighten.
Tiled flooring instead of wood.

LAURA:
Unexpected!
A nearly modern...
Kitchen.

Her footsteps tap across the tiled floor.

LAURA:
Not bad...

She opens a cupboard.
The wooden door creaks open.

LAURA:
Tea...
(slightly amused)
How English.

She closes the door.
Walk a couple of steps.
Opens another cupboard.

(confused/surprised)
Rich...
and he has supermarket brand cereal?!

Shakes a box of cereal

At least they're not stuck together.
They probably taste like wood chips now though.

She puts the box away.
Closes the door and moves to the next cupboard.

A pause.

LAURA:
Why does a single man own six gravy boats?

She snorts quietly to herself.
The tension eases slightly.
Laura crosses the room.

Hand brushing countertop with a light squeak.

She taps something metallic. A microwave.
Opens the door.
Then she closes it.
Pushes a few digital buttons.

LAURA:
Working Microwave.

Laura walks across to the cooker.
Twists a nob, presses the igniter.

LAURA:
I could cook...

Pause.
Scoffs, realizing the thought.

Why would I cook here?

She walks away.
A faint humming.
She opens the fridge.
The refrigerator hums louder.

LAURA:
Nothing...
Well... yeah.
Lionel must have cleared the expired stuff...

A pause.

LAURA:
Bottled water in here though.

.
The bottle crackles a little as Laura grabs it.
Laura opens it.
She sips a little, to test.
Then drink some more.

Aaah...
I needed that.

Silence settles again.

LAURA:
So... quiet.

She walks toward a back door.
Puts the key in and turns.
Bolt unlocking.
Door opens slightly.
Wind and distant rain drift in.
Laura breathes in deeply.

LAURA:

Okay... better.

Then—

Sound slightly dulling around her for a moment.
Faint Breath.

ROOK:

(barely audible. Spoken in a breath)
...here...

Laura slowly stops breathing.

Silence.

Only the refrigerator hums inside.
The rain and wind softly outside.
Laura laughs nervously at herself.

LAURA:

(Unconvinced)
S-Stupid wind.

She closes the back door, and locks it again

The kitchen immediately falls silent again.
Just the humming of the fridge, faintly.
Laura rubs her arms unconsciously.

LAURA:

I swear this house is...
...
No... just...
...
no...

She heads toward the sink.
Tap squeaks a little as she turns it.
Water sputters unevenly before flowing.
Laura mutters while running her fingers through the stream of water.

LAURA:

Were you alone too?

A pause.

Then quietly—

Almost without meaning to say it aloud:

Why didn't you ever call us?
Whatever happened between you and grandpa...
Couldn't you have still...

She breathes, trying not to cry a little.

She quickly splashes her face.

I'm alone too...

Silence.

The tap continues running softly.

Then—

Laura slowly shuts it off.

Silence.

Slow footsteps on tile.

Retreating from the kitchen.

The kitchen falls silent again.

Just the faint hum of the refrigerator, and the soft rain on the window.

Scene 5

Laura's footsteps move slowly through the hallway.

The house creaks softly around her

Clock ticking somewhere.

LAURA:

Why am I here?

What were you thinking?

Coming to another country...

just to walk around a creepy mansion, alone, the first chance you get!

She exhales a nervous laugh.

LAURA:

(worn)

I am jetlagged.

Overtired.

And letting my curiosity get the better of me... again.

...

(curious)

But... there is something about the place...

History...

My own... in a way.

A whole side to the family Grandpa wouldn't talk about.

She slows again.

Fingertips brushing wallpaper as she walks.

(groans)

Would he be happy I'm here?

Uncle Michael's recording made it sound like this is a...

...a burden.

Laura notices another door.
Handle rattling.
Locked.

LAURA:
 (disappointed)
 Of course.
 Another door.
 Locked again.
 Seriously, what is with all the locked doors?

She walks further.
Reaches another door.
Handle rattles in hand, a little more frustrated.

LAURA:
 Even the door under the stairs?
 (Sarcasm)
 Where does one put her coat?

She continues onward.
Staircase creaking beneath her feet as she heads upstairs.
The clock gets quieter, left behind.
Quieter.

Another breath in her left ear this time.
Quiet, hungry. Distant.

LAURA:
 Stop it!

Silence.

She quietly laughs at herself.

 It's just the wind...

She sighs heavily.

 Next you'll be jumping at shadows.
 ...
 I should just call an Uber and go back to the hotel...
 Sleep off this jet lag.

Wind brushing faintly against old windows somewhere down the corridor.
Laura walks slowly along the wooden floored hallway.
Rattling a handle as she passes.

Locked.

Another.

Locked.

LAURA:

What the hell are you keeping locked up here?

...

Okay... one more and... and I'm leaving...

J-Just one more door and... and...

She stops at another door.

Takes a breath...

and-

Handle turns freely.

Laura pauses.

Then slowly pushes the door open.

Door groaning inward.

A larger room beyond.

Stillness.

LAURA:

Oh...

She laughs at the irony.

Fine... I guess something wants me to stay a little longer.

She steps inside.

Slow footsteps across thick carpet.

Okay. This has to be his room.

A little musky in here...

She crosses further in.

Hand brushing a set of drawers.

Then the surface of a bed.

LAURA:

Big bed. Big wardrobe. Big creepy rich person energy.

A small smile enters her voice despite herself.

Curtains shifting lightly in a draft.

Laura approaches.

External Door handles rattling softly.

Locked too?

A pause.

(Sarcastic)

Wait... could it be...

A key?

A tiny metal key is already in the lock.

Laura turns it.

Lock clicking open.

She pulls the balcony doors inward.

Wind rushes into the room immediately.

Rain is softer now outside.

Laura breathes deeply.
Relaxing a little.

LAURA:
 Oh thank God.
 That feel better...
 This place feels stuffy...

She steps out onto the balcony.
Shoes against damp stone.
The distant sounds of the countryside beyond the estate walls.

LAURA:
 (relaxed)
 Wow...

A quiet moment.
Just listening to the rain.

LAURA:
 You can see half the countryside from up here.

She takes another breath.
The tension finally easing slightly.

 Okay... this I needed.
 ...
 Just... away for a bit.

The words come out more honestly than intended.
Laura goes quiet.
Wind moves softly through nearby trees.

Then—

Her phone buzzes in her jacket. - A notification.
Laura laughs softly at the interruption.

LAURA:
 (pleased)
 And there she is.

 (reading)
 “What-o. How goes it in ol’ Blighty?
 Had your tea and crumpets yet?”

Laura snorts with laughter.

 Wow... You absolute idiot.

She types.
Soft phone tapping.

(Reading as she types)
"Going fine.
At my... uncle's place.
Kinda gives.. off rich... British... villain vibes.
So much.. old stuff."

She sends.
She has time to take a deep breath, and stretch, as she relaxes.
Before her, the phone buzzes again almost immediately.

She reads again.
She giggles.

(Amused, Reading)
"Do you need to send in Indiana Jo..?"

Another message comes in.

"Or are you LAURA Croft now?"

Laura laughs properly this time.

Wow, way to pun a reference.

She types back.

(Reading as she types)
"Well I'm... pretty sure..
half the furniture...
does indeed...
belong in a museum."

She sends it.

Silence returns.
Wind through trees.
The rain lightly patted the stone, and the windows around her.

Then—

A feeling.
The sound dulls.
Muffling as if she was elsewhere.
a small tone ringing, barely audible.
light breathing. Not hers.
Deeper, hungry, feral.
Clearer than before, but still... distant.

Laura breaks the moment with a sharp inhale.
The world returns to normal.

Silence.

The trees creak, her own breath seems louder, more anxious.

Laura steps out slowly, rain hitting her.
When she stops, her hands touch the balustrade.
She breathes as she looks out across the overgrown garden below.
Wind rustling branches.

LAURA:
 (Anxious. denial)
 I...
 I must have started to nod off...
 ...yeah...
 ...Okay.

Her breathing slows unconsciously.
Drawn.

A faint whisper is mixed with the wind in the trees.

ROOK:
 (inaudible)
 ...here...

Laura leans slightly forward.
Without realizing it.

LAURA:
 Hello...?

No answer.
Only wind.

Laura steps away, slowly walking back.
Then—
Very faintly—
But louder than before.

ROOK:
 (distant, unclear):
 ...here...

Laura stiffens instantly.
A sharp breath.

The wind suddenly picks up.
Laura turns quickly.

Silence. Alone.

Only the trees.

Silence. Not even birds.

She backs toward the room slowly.
Breath nervous.
and closes the doors.

Scene 6

Wind through trees.
Rains softly falling to the stone and ground.
A door opens nearby.
Laura steps out.
Tapping over stone.
Laura walks slowly through weeds as they brush against her legs.

Her footsteps are quieter now. Her pace cautious

LAURA:
I bet this garden used to be nice when it was tended to...
If mom saw the state of this, she would di-...

Laura stops walking.
Just rain.
Wind.
Her breath trembles as she holds back emotion.

She sniffles a little.
Followed by a quick Exhale.
Trying to refocus.

LAURA:
I-I-I wonder if there used to be fish in this pond.

She taps some water. Gently running her fingers through it.

And maybe don't touch murky old water, Laura.
Ugh!

Rubs her hand on her jeans.
She keeps walking.
Wet leaves crunching under foot.
Grass brushing against her jeans.

Wind and trees sound lessens.
Muffles just that little.
yet the gentle tapping of rain still falls.

The wind catches words.

ROOK:
(whispered)
...closer...

Laura's breathing steadies strangely as she moves deeper.

LAURA:
(Uncertain)
This place is...

I dunno...

...

(anxious)

A weird feeling, like...

...

I'm not...

(a weird calm)

Alone.

Branches creaking overhead.

The wind whipping.

Still muffled.

ROOK:

(whispered)

...closer...

Laura stops.

Sound returns to normal

She breathes, anxious.

LAURA:

(afraid)

S-S-stupid wind...

Almost sounded like...

She sighs.

Continues to walk.

(disbelief)

Oh don't be stupid... It's just your tired imagination!

(sad, frustrated, lonely)

You are alone and...

Pause

Wait! What is that?

She steps closer carefully.

Grass shifting beneath her feet.

(impressed)

...Oh wow.

She brushes aside a bush.

Leaves dragged across stone.

A gazebo?

...

The wooden roof has seen better days.

...

The stone is grimey and overgrown, but otherwise...

She stops.

Doesn't look like it'll collapse on me, but...

She cautiously steps on to a wooden step, groaning as weight is applied.
Then a second step.

Then on to stone again.

Wind moves softly through the broken lattice walls.

Then—

Breathing... louder than before... closer, but still faint.
Deep, growly.

LAURA:

(trembling)

A-an animal... somewhere?

She cautiously steps forward a few steps, before stone turns to metal.
Laura freezes.

LAURA:

...What?

She kneels.

Leaves and soil brushed aside with her hands.

She taps metal.

Laura clears more away.

Dirt scattering across old iron.

LAURA:

(curious)

Is this a manhole? With an oak tree...

Laura Runs her hand over the metal.
focused.

Even the wind seems quieter here.

ROOK:

(inaudible)

...here...

Laura's breathing catches.

Then seems to settle, oddly calm, her hand still moving across the metal.

Only that sound seems to exist.

Her hand touches something.

Sound returns.

LAURA:

(confused)

huh?

What was I...

Groans.

Okay... seriously, I am losing it, and falling asleep...
(unconvinced)
That's... that's it.

...
(curious)
Wait... whats...

she rubs across something.
Something moves, metal scrapping across metal.

Is that... A keyhole?!
The wind grows stronger for a moment.

Laura's breath gets heavier.
Like anticipation.

Laura stands quickly.
Wood creaked sharply around her.

LAURA:
(disappointed)
And I don't have a key...
A locked mystery manhole... I can't right now...

She backs toward the edge of the gazebo.

But pauses again.

Breathing suddenly gets heavier, like a feeling washes over her.
She trembles, afraid.

The world muffles.
A gentle low tone starts to rise.

Then-

ROOK:
(faint, distant)
...I... wait...

She freezes instantly.
Laura's breath shakes.

LAURA:
Who's there?

Silence.
Total silence.
Just the tone.
Only her breathing as if echoing in a small dark room.

And then a second exhale, from someone else.
Feral, hungry.

Then—

A sudden gust of wind.

Sound returns.

The light rain, the trees.

Laura steps on to the wooden step suddenly.

Laura yelps as she falls backwards.

sound of grass and leaves as she lands on the ground with a wet thud.

LAURA:

Nope. Nope, nope, nope-

Laura gets to her feet the sound of her running through the grass fades in as she is soon gone.