

ROSALIE

Written By
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FADE IN:

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN (HIHO). DAY

A road sign welcomes us to...

*HIBISCUS HOLLOW (HIHO)
BIRTHPLACE OF DILL COTTON & THE DILL HIBISCUS
EST. --*

But the year established is hidden beneath a sticker of a RED-AND-GREEN SNAKE COILED AROUND A RED-AND-WHITE HIBISCUS FLOWER.

In the distance sits the town of HIHO. We fix on its matrix of streets and buildings. Unease begins to gnaw at us. Something awaits us within that ordered grid. *What?!*

DISSOLVE TO:

A LADYBUG CRAWLING ALONG A FLOWER STEM. A SHADOW passes over it. The ladybug flitters away.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAWN

In her garden, ROSALIE DILL (80) runs a rusted push reel mower over withered grass.

She's a tall, gaunt woman. Proud and severe. A relic. Garbed in an old moth-eaten gardening dress.

She pauses, surveying the surrounding grounds. Nothing to see brown, wilting flower beds.

She gives an indignant snort and returns to her task.

Behind her, the DILL MANSION stands in crumbling anguish, an antebellum relic that should be condemned.

AS THE SUN RISES...

Rosalie prunes dead leaves... lays down FERTILIZER.

She's kneeling in a bush of DILL HIBISCUS (the same red-and-white flower from the sticker) when she suddenly stops.

An ODD VINE is wrapped around the base of the bush. She stares at it. Then she whips her head around her garden.

To her right, a tin shed is stuffed with bags of FERTILIZER and piles of ROPE.

To her left, A BIG FAT ANGUS COW leans over a wire fence with its tongue curled around some of her flowers.

Running up the slope behind the cow is a PASTURE, at the top of which stands a SLAUGHTERHOUSE and a LARGE SHED with SHORTHOOF INDUSTRIES stamped on its side.

Rosalie leaps to her feet. Or tries to. She's no spring chicken anymore.

ROSALIE

Stop that this instant! Get your
foul mouth away from my poppies!

The cow looks to her in surprise. Rosalie points to the vine.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Are you responsible for this?

Beat. The cow POOPS. Rosalie's lip quivers.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Well somebody is.

She stomps over and pries the poppies from the cow's mouth. She's bending down to re-settle them when she GASPS.

SHE'S BEEN BITTEN ON THE BACK OF HER HAND! For a brief moment she catches sight of a BLACK TAIL slithering away. Then she glowers sidewise at the cow...

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Oh now look what you've done.

... and PASSES OUT.

EXT. DILL MANSION. FRONT WALK. DAY

On a dented mailbox, chipped lettering reads *R. Dill*.

A hand reaches into frame and deposits a BLACK AND WHITE ENVELOPE into the mailbox slot.

DISSOLVE TO:

A HAZY PINK SNAKE wagging above our heads.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAY

On the ground, Rosalie comes to. The snake wags closer. It isn't a snake at all. It's a COW TONGUE trying to lick her. She swats at it and climbs unsteadily to her feet.

Hours have passed. Her bite throbs red. She prickles at the cow...

ROSALIE

Next time you get the shears!

... and hobbles off toward Dill Mansion. A telephone *BRINGS*.

INT. DILL MANSION. PARLOR. DAY

Beside an old ROTARY PHONE, Rosalie waits impatiently, pointedly ignoring her rapidly bloating hand.

INT. GRACIE GOODWILL'S HOME. LIVING ROOM. DAY

GRACIE GOODWILL, late 70's, answers her buzzing cellphone cheerfully as her husband, FRED, watches RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE.

WE INTERCUT BETWEEN HER AND ROSALIE.

GRACIE

Why good morning, Rosalie. How are-

ROSALIE

Grace, I've found something in my garden.

GRACIE

Gracie, Rosalie. You know I prefer Gracie.

Rosalie gives an indignant sniff. Gracie sighs. *Lost cause*.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Alright, what did-

ROSALIE

A vine. A nasty little vine that is suffocating my Hibiscus.

GRACIE

A vine? Rosalie, aren't vines supposed to grow in gardens?

ROSALIE

Not in the Dill Garden. I certainly didn't plant it there.

GRACIE

No? Then naturally someone else must've.

Rosalie scowls. Across the room, a public access show plays on an ancient TV SET: *The Alexander Hour with Xander Rednax*.

ROSALIE

I find it very odd, *Grace*, that the week I begin preparing my garden for inclusion as a town landmark-

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, you know that hasn't been approved yet.

ROSALIE

Please! The Dills founded HiHo. I've already scheduled a meeting with the town on the 18th. An assessor will be out shortly, and it will be approved.

FRED

Gracie!

ROSALIE

And I find it very odd that this week, of all weeks, is the one I should find a vine unplanned and unplanted in my garden. *Don't you!*

FRED

(re: RuPaul)

Gracie, where'd his pecker go?

GRACIE

Freddie, won't you- Hold on, Rosalie! What do you mean, *don't you?!*

Rosalie purses her lips as Gracie waves her husband quiet.

ROSALIE

As I recall, *Grace*, you were in my garden not two days ago.

GRACIE

Is that why you're- Of course it- Rosalie, you're being irrational!

On the TV, XANDER REDNAX quivers.

XANDER REDNAX (TV)

I look out on this country, and I don't recognize what it's become.

ROSALIE

I'm being- After that foul ragweed
appeared out of thin air and
destroyed my family's cotton-

GRACIE

That was sixty years ago!

ROSALIE

After the textile mill closed down-
After we fell into ruin- After my
parents die- I'M BEING!

GRACIE

Rosalie.

ROSALIE

Of course, it begs the question,
*why?! After all the good the Dills
have done, after all this time, why
would someone want to stop the Dill
Garden from becoming a-*

GRACIE

ROSALIE!

Rosalie falls silent. Gracie shakes her head.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Please. Just tell me you still have
the good sense to know that
sometimes a vine is just a vine.

Rosalie narrows her eyes.

ROSALIE

Have you seen what HiHo has become,
Grace? I have. It wouldn't surprise
me at all if one of those *people-*

GRACIE

Rosalie. *Please. Move. On.*

Gracie's words bounce between motes of dust and decay. *Move.
On.* Rosalie stands there, blinking at them, until...

ROSALIE

Fine. I will acknowledge that it is
still... *unlikely* that someone...

Gracie beams.

GRACIE

Thank you. Now, Fred and I have
been talking and... Hello? Rosalie?
Are you there?

But Rosalie is not. She's hung up. A sickly *SHHHHNNNIIPPPP...*

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAY

... as she slices away the vine with shears. She examines it.
It's RED, GREEN and SCALY. She turns and wings it at the cow.

ROSALIE

Don't you come back.

It bounces off the cow's nose. The cow gobbles it up.

Rosalie bends down and picks up a bottle of LONGSHRUB
WEEDKILLER, tilting it over the remains of the vine.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

You neither.

But nothing happens. The bottle is empty.

Off in the distance, HiHo beckons. Rosalie eyes it. She
shivers in the warm Spring air.

DISSOLVE TO:

A BANNER flapping in the air. It's for the HIHO BICENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION.

EXT. BUS STOP. DAY

Dressed in a musty frock patterned with Dill Hibiscus,
Rosalie stares up at the banner. Its slogan reads...

HiHo turns 200!

Starting May 15 come celebrate its New Beginning!

She scoffs and flexes her snake-bit hand, which is now
covered by a WHITE SILK GLOVE. She turns to a sign post.

The post is plastered with flyers for the BICENTENNIAL and
MISSING PETS. On one such flyer, a chihuahua stares out puppy-
eyed as writing reads, "Chivalry is-" Someone's crossed out,
"missing!" and replaced it with, "DEAD!"

Rosalie snorts. She spots a sticker pasted beneath the
flyers. It's the snake coiled around the flower.

Her eyes widen. THE STICKER GROWS IN HER VISION. She reaches for it. Then she pauses, Gracie's words echoing...

GRACIE (V.O.)
Sometimes a vine is just a vine.

She leans back, biting her lip. With a sudden screech, the bus arrives. She frights. Then, giving the sticker one last glance, she clambers onboard.

I/E. BUS/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

Rosalie sits with her hands folded neatly in her lap, brooding darkly as HiHo flashes past outside.

Much, or perhaps not at all, to our surprise, the town isn't the horror show she's made it seem. In fact, it's trendy.

An ART DISTRICT trundles by... A well-manicured PUBLIC PARK. Another BANNER for the BiCentennial. All deserted.

A frown punctuates her gloom. *Where is everyone?*

Electric CHARGING STATIONS... a new APARTMENT COMPLEX... a nearly constructed COMMUNITY THEATER. No one in sight.

She looks about the bus. She's the only passenger. Her eyes bug. She smushes her face up against the window, scanning the deserted streets. Finally, she sighs.

They've turned down Main Street. There, in front of TOWN HALL, stands a LARGE STATUE of a noble looking man holding a flower. A placard tells us this is NATHANAEL DILL.

Surrounding the statue are bushes of Dill Hibiscus, and hovering over them, a GARDENER with a pair of shears.

A thin smile spreads on Rosalie's lips.

The gardener looks to the bus. With a particularly vicious SNAP of his shears, he slices off one of the flowers.

DISSOLVE TO:

A MELEE of TOWNSPEOPLE.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BUS STOP. DAY

At the edge of the HIHO SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT, Rosalie teeters in open-mouthed shock.

Before her is a street fair. Tents and RECRUITERS tout various causes: HBCU. NARAL. YDA. ISNA. NNIRR. A DRONE whizzes by her ear. A DELIVERY ROBOT almost takes her out at the knees. She spins back to the bus, but it's already chugging away.

EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY

Rosalie tiptoes between townspeople in UNION and CONFEDERATE SOLDIER UNIFORMS. A MEXICAN BARISTA offers her a cup.

MEXICAN BARISTA

Sample, ma'am? It's our latest creation, Black Drink. Named aft-

Rosalie clutches her handbag to her chest and hustles by him, gaze drawn to a SINISTER BUILDING twisting above the trees.

An INDIAN WOMAN beneath a tent for COALITION FOR A BETTER HIHO: RENEWAL AND ADVANCEMENT thrusts her a petition.

INDIAN WOMAN

The BiCentennial draws near! What say you? The land must go back!

ROSALIE

No, thank you!

She totters toward the safety of the supermarket, but, as she draws near, she stops dead.

In a BACK ALLEY, two teens, ANGEL and MARCO, share a joint. Marco suddenly collapses, seizing on the ground.

Angel bends over his friend. He has ANGEL WINGS tattooed to his chest. For a brief moment he looks up and meets Rosalie's gaze. Then, grinning, he exhales a lungful of GREEN SMOKE.

DISSOLVE TO:

A STAND UP for LONGSHRUB WEEDKILLER.

INT. SUPERMARKET AISLE. DAY

Rosalie sways before it. Text reads:

Longshrub Weedkiller

Your local, home-grown option since 1863!

Longshrub Weedkiller

If it moves, we kill it!

A BARE CHESTED BLACK MAN with an "aw shucks" smile and sweat-stained overalls holds up a smartphone. More text reads:

*Friendly Bobby loves the Longshrub Smart App!
Let him diagnose that pest in your garden!*

Beyond the stand up extends an unending row of PESTICIDES and WEEDKILLERS. It's a lot. A voice offers Rosalie some welcome relief...

VOICE (O.S.)
Ma'am, *they* can help you.

ROSALIE
They?

She pivots to the voice. A MANAGER points to her SALES CLERK: a transgender man. Rosalie blushes.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Oh- I- no, thank you.

She spins away and pretends to read a label.

FRANTIC MUTTERING reaches her. It's coming from an OLD MAN huddled over a shelf. She recognizes this man.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Preacher Hardly? PREACHER HARDLY!

The man whirls to her. It is indeed PREACHER HARDLY (80's) -- yellowing eyes, a hearing aid, and tufts of hair out of every orifice. He holds a PEN and wears STAINED VESTMENTS.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
It's Rosalie. Rosalie Dill. Of the Dill Family.

The preacher squints, trying to place her in his memories.

PREACHER HARDLY
Ah, yes. Rosalie.

ROSALIE
How long has it been? You must forgive me, I don't get out much-

But Preacher Hardly has waved her quiet.

PREACHER HARDLY
Shh, Rosalie! They might be listening. *They might be watching.*

ROSALIE
Watching? Who might-

PREACHER HARDLY
They watch. But we watch too.

ROSALIE
Preacher, who are- *They?*

Rosalie levels a finger back at the sales clerk. The Preacher follows her gesture. He twitches.

PREACHER HARDLY
Eww.

Rosalie sniffs.

ROSALIE
Well said. Imagine when we were
children a woman in-

But the Preacher cuts her off, grabbing her hands.

PREACHER HARDLY
There's danger, Rosalie. Here.
Danger in HiHo. Danger for the
Dills. Danger for us all.

ROSALIE
Danger? What-

PREACHER HARDLY
The Lord's left town and something
else has moved in. Yes it has.

ROSALIE
Preacher, for heaven's sake, what
are you talking about?

The preacher makes to respond. But before he can, a CHILD LAUGHS in a neighboring aisle, and the preacher lets out a cry and books it from the aisle.

Rosalie stares after him, baffled.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Does it have anything to do with
vines?!

Her words sound uselessly. She looks to the shelf where the preacher was huddled. Plastered to it is the snake-and-flower sticker. The preacher has written a PHONE NUMBER on it. Once again, THE STICKER GROWS IN HER VISION.

A BELL TOLLS. She yelps.

LOUDSPEAKER

*The bell means one thing folks.
It's super saver hour...*

DISSOLVE TO:

Bygone cotton fields choked with trash... Decrepit Georgian-styled mansions... LOW-INCOME HOUSING, windows busted out... a SIGN for DILL TEXTILE MILL half-hidden in unruly bramble...

I/E. BUS/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

Seated with supermarket bag in tow, Rosalie watches as an older, not-so-trendy HiHo flits by.

PREACHER HARDLY (V.O.)

There's danger, Rosalie. Here.

She scans the bus' occupants. Two CHINESE TEENS point their phones at her outfit and laugh... A GAY COUPLE gabs... a NATIVE AMERICAN WOMAN in a Longshrub uniform naps.

PREACHER HARDLY (V.O.)

Danger for the Dills.

She studies the seat back before her. There, yet again, is the sticker. It has the preacher's NUMBER scribbled along its edge. Someone else has written SLIP YOUR SNAKE IN HERE and drawn an arrow to a glory hole in the seat back.

Rosalie hesitates. Then she peeps through the hole...

PREACHER HARDLY (V.O.)

Danger for us all!

... when AN EYE APPEARS ON THE OTHER SIDE!

She screams. Angel and Marco emerge over the seat back, eyes bloodshot and vacant. Angel grins.

ANGEL

I know you. You were watching me.
Shit, now Angel's watching you.

Marco giggles, WEAVING HIS HAND THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A SNAKE.

MARCO

But who's watching Angel? Marco is.
Cause Marco sees.

ROSALIE

I- I- Pl-please, tu-turn around.

But Angel doesn't. Instead, he leans menacingly forward... when Marco starts having a FIT. He drops into the aisle, convulsing. The BUS DRIVER spots him and yanks the bus to a smoking halt.

BUS DRIVER

You two, off. Now!

Angel leers at Rosalie. Then he grabs Marco and drags him writhing away.

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

You O.K., lady?

Rosalie isn't listening. Outside, a FLICKER OF SHADOW has appeared at the edge of her vision.

She snaps her head to it. The shadow disappears. Her eyes remain trained on the now empty space. She turns back to the sticker and considers it. She rips it off the seat back.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAY

Rosalie and Gracie stare down at the empty patch of dirt beneath the Hibiscus bushes. Rosalie pours weed killer on it.

ROSALIE

It was right here.

Gracie wrinkles her nose and notes the garden's shabbiness.

GRACIE

Maybe, but it's gone now.

ROSALIE

Because I disposed of it, but that-

GRACIE

Rosalie, it's gone. Now come on, let's go back inside. These cows smell awful.

INT. DILL MANSION. PARLOR. DAY

Rosalie and Gracie enter from the garden. Rosalie settles down into an armchair and pulls her handbag onto her lap.

ROSALIE

If you aren't going to even
entertain listening to me, Grace, I
see no reason for you to be here.

Gracie points to a bag of GROCERIES.

GRACIE

What should I do with these?

ROSALIE

Stop bringing them. I'm quite
capable of buying my own.

Gracie sighs. She drops the day's mail onto a teetering piles
of BILLS. We spot the black-and-white envelope amongst them.

GRACIE

How was your expedition into town?
Anything exciting happen?

ROSALIE

No. Nothing.

GRACIE

Nothing? You haven't been to town
in months. There must have been
something. What's that in your bag?

The sticker peeks out of Rosalie's handbag. Rosalie stuffs it
down and drops the bag out of sight.

ROSALIE

It's a sticker. Haven't you seen
one before?

Gracie rolls her eyes.

GRACIE

Won't you at least tell me whether
you saw the BiCentennial banners?
The Historical Society's been
working on them day-and-night. I
think they make the town look so
lovely.

Rosalie sniffs.

ROSALIE

Well I thought HiHo looked worse
than I ever remembered it.

GRACIE

Did you.

(re: the groceries)

So I'll just bring these to the kitchen then?

Rosalie doesn't reply, nor does she make a move to help.

INT. DILL MANSION. SERVANTS KITCHEN. DAY

Plates are piled high. There's mold in the corners and cobwebs across the ceiling. Gracie surveys the filthy space.

INT. PARLOR. DAY

Rosalie stares out at her garden. A LADYBUG crawls up her arm. She brushes it away. Gracie reenters.

GRACIE

Rosalie, I thought you said you were going to clean up the kitchen.

Her gaze is drawn to a blinking ANSWERING MACHINE.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

And look at this, you haven't even used your answering machine!

She stomps over and presses a button. A MESSAGE plays.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Rosalie Dill... this is an automated scheduling reminder. You... Rosalie Dill... have a scheduled appointment at HiHo Town Hall on May 18 at... 4 pm. Bye.

The message ends. Rosalie scowls.

ROSALIE

Thank you for that, Grace. Now I'm aware of the meeting I scheduled.

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, I wish you hadn't've scheduled it at all!

Gracie begins pacing.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

It's like I was trying to say earlier.

(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Fred and I have been talking... We think you're overextending yourself with this garden business. We think you should give it up and move in with us!

ROSALIE

Move in with you?!

GRACIE

Yes, we- it wouldn't be forever. You could sell this place and-

ROSALIE

Sell the Dill Mansion?!

GRACIE

Yes! I mean- if you were to pass away now, the estate would just go to the town, and they're not going to make it into-

ROSALIE

AHA! So that's what this is about! Money! You want a piece!

GRACIE

No, Rosalie, that's not-

ROSALIE

I should have known. Known a servant's daughter wouldn't care a bit about Dill Estate! Known beneath that smarmy smile was a greedy, grubbing-

GRACIE

I DON'T THINK YOU ARE WELL!

Gracie's words fill the room and slowly die away.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I've known you since you were a child, Rosalie. And I don't think you are well.

At the corner of Rosalie's vision, a SHADOW CREEPS. She looks to it, but it's just a tree in the breeze.

ROSALIE

I'm perfectly well, Grace.

GRACIE

Then you should leave this place.
There's nothing left for you here.

ROSALIE

Nothing left- Generations of- What
about the garden?!

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, it's just a garden.

Before she even knows it, Rosalie is on her feet.

ROSALIE

It's not just a- You know it's not
just a- HOW DARE YOU!

GRACIE

Rosalie, please, you sound loony!

Rosalie glares at Gracie, chest heaving, mind forming words
too quickly for her tongue to speak them.

ROSALIE

Just because you refuse to believe
anything I- You should know I tried
listening to what you- For heaven's
sake, odd things are happening in
this town, Grace! I saw Preacher
Hardly at the supermarket today.

GRACIE

So something *did* happen in town!

ROSALIE

And he told me there was danger in
HiHo. Danger for me.

GRACIE

Rosalie, Preacher Hardly's a coot!

ROSALIE

After all the good my family has
done, I don't understand why anyone
would want to stop my garden from
becoming a landmark. But this week,
of all weeks, is-

GRACIE

For Christ's sake, it's a vine!

ROSALIE

I AM NOT A LOON, GRACE! THERE IS
SOMETHING GOING ON!

Rosalie's words echo. She realizes she's standing and she sits back down. Gracie kneels before her.

GRACIE

Last week it was the mail man. The week before that it was a rustling in the bushes. You sit here each day watching that awful Xander program, refusing to watch anything else. Which, if you did, at least you might learn something. If you keep on with this *only ill will befall you*.

Gracie holds up a dust-coated PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I found this is in the kitchen.

The color drains from Rosalie's cheeks.

ROSALIE

That's because I- I don't need it. I told you, I'm perfectly well.

GRACIE

Rosalie, you must take these. With your family history... you know you must. Please. Keep them with you.

She drops the bottle into Rosalie's handbag and smiles sadly.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have put this on you all in one day. Just think about what I've said. Ok?

She stands and gathers her things. As she heads toward the door, Rosalie speaks, voice little more than a whisper.

ROSALIE

I am well, Grace. I am.

GRACIE

(unconvincing)

Yes, Rosalie, I know.

Then, with a wave, Gracie leaves.

INT. PARLOR. NIGHT

Xander Rednax glares at us. Jowls quivering.

XANDER REDNAX (TV)
*There are evil forces. Dark forces.
 Trying to rid us of all we once
 found right and precious.*

In her armchair, Rosalie works at a bed sheet, sewing a second "2" onto DILL SPRING GARDEN GALA 20-. But she's done a poor job of it. The threading is all tangled.

She throws down her sewing needle and glares about the room, finger tracing her snake bite. It's a sickly purplish-yellow.

ROSALIE
 Not well. Ha! What a laugh. How can
 Grace even- Not her family, her
 crops mysteriously- *NOT WELL!*

Her voice echoes. Outside, a FOG rolls over the garden.

XANDER REDNAX (TV)
*What do we say to them. These dark
 evil forces? We say EW!*

Rosalie's eyes flick to the television, but Xander's moved to a segment on the benefits of Vodka in one's diet. Rosalie stands and moves to a rickety RECORD PLAYER, bringing its needle down. A warm crackle fills the room...

NARRATOR (RECORD)
 (folksy, inviting)
*Good even'n y'all. Whoopsi
 Productions presents: A History of
 HiHo. Chapter One: New Beginnings.*

Rosalie returns to her armchair and picks up a PHOTO ALBUM.

NARRATOR (RECORD) (CONT'D)
*It was 1820 Nathanael Dill founded
 HiHo. A gold prospector come south
 seeking fortune, he found himself
 one day in a tangled hollow west of
 the Georgia Pine Barrens.*

She flips through it. Photos of generations of Dills flit by. Now come photos of SLAVES dotting a cotton field. We recognize the land, it's where Shorthoof stands today.

NARRATOR (RECORD) (CONT'D)
*The hollow was an odd place; filled
 with grazing cattle, Creek Injuns,
 and a red-and-white flower the
 likes of which Nathanael had never
 before seen.*

Outside, a dog BARKS. Rosalie ignores it.

NARRATOR (RECORD) (CONT'D)
*He took one look at its velvety
 petals and knew it a sign heaven
 sent. Here was to be his
 Providence. So, with some polite
 persuasion, he convinced the
 amicable Creeks to depart their
 land...*

She stops at a picture of MEN and WOMEN gathered beneath a banner for DILL SPRING GARDEN GALA 1947. At their center, a YOUNG ROSALIE (6) smiles like she hasn't a care in the world.

NARRATOR (RECORD) (CONT'D)
*... built the Dill Cotton
 Plantation and founded Hibiscus
 Hollow, named after the flower
 which had so inspired him.*

Tears form in her eyes. She traces the photo lovingly.

NARRATOR (RECORD) (CONT'D)
*Each year, as a celebration of the
 Dills and their famed flower, a
 Spring gala was held in the
 family's renowned garden...*

The narrator's voice hums. Her head begins to nod...

NARRATOR (RECORD) (CONT'D)
*... a polite gathering where both
 Dill Hibiscus and Southern belles
 might bloom...*

... her eyes now closing with sleep.

INT. PARLOR. DAY [DREAM]

Rosalie awakes. She's SIX-YEARS-OLD. The parlor is well-kept and lovely. A BLACK SERVANT offers her a platter of delicacies.

BLACK SERVANT
 What would you like, Ms. Dill? You
 can have anything you want.

She giggles and runs from the room, passing a LITTLE GIRL (6), who eyes her enviously and wears a cheaper version of Rosalie's own dress. Rosalie pays her no mind at all, prancing out into...

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAY [DREAM]

Where FANCY PARTYGOERS gather beneath the GALA BANNER and make way for her, clapping as she runs past.

She reaches the last of them. Spread before her is Dill Garden, as verdant and vibrant as the Garden of Eden itself. In the fields beyond, WORKERS bend among cotton plants.

She laughs and rushes forward, skipping through flower beds.

NATALIE DILL (O.S.)

Hello, darling.

NATALIE (26) and ROBERT DILL (40) kneel before her, pictures of genteel beauty both. Robert nestles a Dill Hibiscus behind her ear. Natalie gestures to HiHo in the distance.

NATALIE DILL (CONT'D)

Do you see that, darling? One day
it will all be yours.

YOUNG ROSALIE

Really, mama? You promise?

Natalie smiles and hugs her daughter close. A cloud passes over the sun and she's cast in shadow. She opens her mouth again, but what comes out is...

BRINGGG!

Young Rosalie pulls away, frowning. Natalie's face is melting. From her lips again, loud, too loud...

BRINGGGG!

INT. PARLOR. NIGHT

Rosalie wakes in a cold sweat. The rotary phone is rattling.

BRRRINNGGGG!

She looks about the parlor. It's back to its decaying self. She scowls, bitter. Then she stands and yanks up the phone.

ROSALIE

Hello? Who is this? Why are you
calling at this hour?

(static)

I said, who is this?

(more static)

Who is this?! What do you-

AUTOMATED VOICE (PHONE)
*Rosalie Dill... This is an
automated scheduling remin-*

She slams the receiver back down. Her hand trembles.

She goes to her handbag and takes out the prescription bottle. She's about to open it when she suddenly stops. Outside, a bark has been silenced with a SQUEAL.

The bottle slips from her hand and bounces over the floor. There's something out there. There's something in her garden.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. NIGHT

Rosalie peeks her head out into the dark, her shears held aloft.

ROSALIE
To all trespassers present, I warn
you, I am armed.

There's no reply. With a deep breath, she makes her way out into the fog. She finds herself before her Hibiscus.

The VINE is back. It's wrapped itself up the bushes. What's more, it's spread to some nearby CARNATIONS. And there, it chokes some LILIES and strangles some PETUNIAS.

A TWIG snaps. Rosalie whirls to find... THREE COWS along the fence. She gasps, relieved. Relief turns to anger.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
What did I tell you? Don't think
about coming back. And now you've
gone and brought your fat friends?

She slices her shears at the cows. They don't budge.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Fine. If the shears don't scare
you, I'll get the hose.

One of the cows POOPS. Rosalie glowers and turns to her shed. She freezes.

OUT FRONT, THERE'S SOMETHING BESIDE HER MAILBOX. A SHADOW.

Her heart pounds. She seems to have forgotten how to move. A PHONE SCREEN lights up. It isn't a shadow, but a MAN.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Ex- ex- excuse me.

The man spots her and freaks out. He bolts off, only to trip and fall hard on his face.

MAN

Aw, fuck my taint!

He hobbles back to his feet and LIMPS off into the dark. Rosalie watches him go, paralyzed in place.

EXT. FRONT OF DILL MANSION. NIGHT

A SNAKE-AND-FLOWER STICKER has been plastered to Rosalie's mailbox. Rosalie gapes at it. Writing reads:

BOA IS WATCHING YOU! And below, The Shade will burn / 'N in its turn / Dat garden'll cease to be!

She rips it off her mailbox.

INT. PARLOR. NIGHT

Rosalie holds the rotary phone to her ear, staring at the number on Preacher Hardly's version of the sticker.

GRACIE (V.O.)

Only ill will befall you.

She looks out to her garden. In the moonlight, the vine glints. A new determination comes over her. She dials the number. The phone RINGS. Once. Twice. Five times. Someone picks up.

ROSALIE

Preacher Hardly? Is that you?
PREACHER HARDLY! It's Rosalie Dill.
Of the Dill family. Preacher, I
want to know what's going on...

INSANE ARCADE MUSIC can be heard. Finally...

PREACHER HARDLY (PHONE)

*Rosalie, what do you know about Boa
Constrictor?*

The lights flicker. An answering machine BEEPS.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. MORNING

Rosalie lays a MOUSE TRAP down beside her uprooted poppies. She pours Longshrub weed killer over tangles of the vine.

ROSALIE (MACHINE)
*Grace, it's Rosalie. The vine is
back.*

INT. DILL MANSION. FOYER. DAY

Rosalie enters, gussied up, her silk glove back on.

ROSALIE (MACHINE)
*What's more, a trespasser
vandalized my mailbox last night.*

She drops a STEAK KNIFE into her handbag.

ROSALIE (MACHINE) (CONT'D)
*Something is afoot. I intend to
find out what.*
(beat)
Also... I told you so.

She walks out the door. It slams shut behind her and the
voicemail ENDS.

DISSOLVE TO:

A NEON SIGN DISPLAYING A DANCING SNAKE MASCOT.

EXT. SIDEWALK. DAY

Flashing words inform us that this SLIP N SLITHERS, a
children's playhouse. This comes as a surprise, as the
building appears to be an old church. Indeed, a trampled SIGN
reads: HIHO PROTESTANT CHURCH, EST. 1850.

Rosalie scrutinizes the building. Then she approaches.

INT. SLIP N SLITHERS. DAY

Rosalie enters a world of ROTATING LIGHTS and INCOHERENT
MUSIC. Flyers for the Bicentennial are tacked to a board.
There's no one about.

ROSALIE
Preacher Hardly? Preacher Hardly?!

PREACHER HARDLY (O.S.)
Rosalie.

A pink, liver-spotted orb emerges from a ball pit. It's
Preacher Hardly. He's clad in CAMOUFLAGE made up of toys and
discarded candy wrappers.

PREACHER HARDLY (CONT'D)

It's me.

Rosalie ogles him.

ROSALIE

What are you doing in there? What on earth are you wearing?!

But the preacher ignores her. He hobbles off towards a DOOR hidden between arcade games. Rosalie sighs. Reluctantly, she follows him. She finds herself in...

INT. A VERY TIGHTLY PACKED HIHO PROTESTANT CHURCH. DAY

PEWS are crammed together. There's GRAFFITI everywhere. TEN IDENTICAL TELEPHONES hang on a wall. Preacher Hardly checks a CLOCK. It's 11:45 AM.

PREACHER HARDLY

Good. We still have time.

He clambers onto a pew. Rosalie stares about, aghast.

ROSALIE

What happened here? PREACHER, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHURCH?

The preacher turns, pausing as if it takes a second for Rosalie's voice to reach his brain.

PREACHER HARDLY

I was in a lurch. Had to sell most of the place. Folks don't come to service no more. The Lord's left town.

ROSALIE

Yes, and something else has moved in. You said that at the supermarket. But what is it?
PREACHER- oh, this is ridiculous!

The preacher has begun listening to the walls. Rosalie mounts a pew and starts awkwardly after him.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING FOR?!

PREACHER HARDLY

No, not four. They get out of school at three. Still, today might be a half day.

Rosalie waves the sticker from her mailbox in his face.

ROSALIE

On the telephone you said Boa
Constrictor.

(re: the writing on the
sticker)

Boa is watching. Is this them? What
are they? Why are they attacking my
garden?!

The preacher wrings his hands.

PREACHER HARDLY

Everybody gone. I thought, the
Sapps. Maybe the Sapps.

ROSALIE

Oh, for heaven's sake...

PREACHER HARDLY

Haven't seen them in days. Haven't
seen anyone. Just me. All gone.

Rosalie grabs the preacher and shakes him.

ROSALIE

PREACHER HARDLY, WHAT IS BOA
CONSTRUCTOR?!

This seems to scare Hardly straight. He frowns, lucidity
returning.

PREACHER HARDLY

I- I don't know, Rosalie. I only
have theories. And I don't know if
I should... it's too dangerous...

Rosalie fixes him with her sharpest glare.

ROSALIE

Preacher Hardly, I'm not leaving
until you quit this foolishness and
tell me exactly what's going on. *So
tell me.*

The preacher gulps. Then nods.

PREACHER HARDLY

Al- Alright, Rosalie. Alright.

He leans in close. A little too close.

PREACHER HARDLY (CONT'D)
It all started with the *children*.
When Slip N Slithers moved in they
starting coming. And I started
hiding.

ROSALIE
Hiding? Why on earth did you hide?

PREACHER HARDLY
Well, you see- Nowadays- DOGGONE
IT! Things just aren't the same!

He gives Rosalie a miserable, hangdog look.

PREACHER HARDLY (CONT'D)
All you need now is words,
accusations, to ruin a man. If one
of those children were to get near
me, who knows what they'd say?! No
one trusts a preacher anymore! So
when they come... I hide in the
confessionals.

A CAR PASSES OUTSIDE. He twitches.

PREACHER HARDLY (CONT'D)
I hide and I listen. The old ones,
all they talk about is Boa
Constrictor. Then I find the
stickers all over town. I see
what's on them. A boa constrictor
strangling a Dill Hibiscus. It's
all so very *symbolic*. I've been
writing down my number, waiting for
someone to call. To tell me what
Boa is. But no one has. No one
until *you*.

He trails off. A candy wrapper drops from his camouflage.
Rosalie blinks.

ROSALIE
But... *That's it?!* Preacher, you
were supposed to have answers. You
were supposed to tell me *why!*

PREACHER HARDLY
But, don't you see, Rosalie? There
used to be more! The Sapps. The
Evergreens. The Dickey-Birdsongs!

ROSALIE
More of *who?*

PREACHER HARDLY

Eww!

Rosalie could almost cry with frustration.

ROSALIE

Yes, Preacher, it's all so very wretched. But won't you please-

PREACHER HARDLY

No, Rosalie, *EWW*.

And now Rosalie notices a BANNER along the far wall. It reads E.W.W., and beside it is a FRAMED PHOTO of Xander Rednax.

PREACHER HARDLY (CONT'D)

E W W. Eli Whitney's Workers. Eli Whitney created the cotton gin that made cotton profitable. He created the south and the way of life we hold so dear. Without him there'd be no HiHo. There'd be no Dills. There'd be nothing.

ROSALIE

Is that Xander Rednax?

PREACHER HARDLY

Yes, it is all under attack! We were just some kind-hearted folks celebrating our heritage. *EWW* goes back to the very start of HiHo! First there was WHOOPSI, then DAISY, and now there's *EWW*. We weren't harming anyone. We have chapters all over the state! Xander Rednax's even a fan.

The preacher is near tears.

PREACHER HARDLY (CONT'D)

Our HiHo body held one cookout to save the church then the children started coming and our members started disappearing! Now it's just me. Now, I'm *EWW*.

The tears arrive. Rosalie considers the preacher.

ROSALIE

And you think Boa is behind it?

PREACHER HARDLY
I don't know! But haven't you seen
how everything's changed? Something
is taking away all we hold dear.
Something *sinister*. And the
children know.

Rosalie sniffs.

ROSALIE
Do they ever talk about vines?
PREACHER, DO THE CHILDREN TALK
ABOUT VINES?

PREACHER HARDLY
Vines? No. But they talk about
weeds. Rosalie, you must go talk to
them. Because I can't.

Rosalie steps back, appalled.

ROSALIE
Me? No- I- I wouldn't even know
where to begin.

PREACHER HARDLY
Yes, wings! The one with angel
wings on his chest. He and his pal,
they talk about Boa the most.

ROSALIE
Preacher, this is- I'm not going to-

But just then car doors SLAM. Children's voices SOUND. The
Preacher freezes.

PREACHER HARDLY
A half day. I knew it!

He edges toward a CONFSSIONAL. Rosalie wags a finger at him.

ROSALIE
Preacher Hardly, stay right where
you are! We're going to figure out
what Boa Constrictor wants with my-

PREACHER HARDLY
Find angel wings. He'll know! About
the vine. Your garden. Everything!

The CHILDREN'S VOICE grow closer.

ROSALIE
Preacher, get back-

PREACHER HARDLY
Trust no one, Rosalie. No one! I'll
keep you in my prayers!

And with a burst of astounding athleticism, Preacher Hardly sprints down a pew and dives headfirst into a confessional.

INT. SLIP N SLITHERS. DAY

Streams of CHILDREN rush past. Rosalie searches amongst them, but Angel and Marco are nowhere to be found.

DISSOLVE TO:

AVIATOR SUNGLASSES reflecting a Dill Hibiscus Bush.

EXT. DILL MANSION. FRONT YARD. DAY

A COP (30s), black and hulking, leans against his squad car, watching as Rosalie approaches up a dirt lane.

COP
Rosalie Dill?

Rosalie stops beside her mailbox and gives him a disapproving once over.

ROSALIE
Yes?

COP
Your friend Gracie called in. She said you might've had an intruder. She said you might want to file a report.

He flashes her a bright smile. She does not return it.

ROSALIE
Well, I do not.

She bustles past him up the front walk. He doesn't budge, studying her behind those impenetrable lenses.

COP
My parents used to tell me about this place. They said Dill Garden was the prettiest darn garden in all the county. Ms. Dill, do you mind if I go take a look?

Rosalie's eyebrows shoot up into her hair.

ROSALIE
Yes, I very much do mind!

She rushes to the front door, stumbles inside...

INT. FOYER. DAY

... and slams it shut behind her.

Outside, the cop stares. Then he gets into his car and drives off.

Rosalie watches him go, her eyes wide and her mind churning.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. EVENING

The vine has spread. Rosalie works at it with her shears. As she looks about her, she spots still more of it slowly taking over. She HOWLS and snatches up the weed killer, spraying it over everything she sees.

INT. PARLOR. DAY

The answering machine BEEPS. A SHADOW passes over it.

GRACIE (MACHINE)
*Rosalie, it's Gracie. Did you speak
with the police officer? Please
pick up. I'm getting worried.
Promise me you won't do anything
foolish. Promise me...*

DISSOLVE TO:

A LARGE BLUNT being lit.

EXT. LOW INCOME HOUSING. PARKING LOT. DAY

Angel sucks from the blunt, blowing green smoke over Marco's giggling face.

Behind a nearby dumpster, Rosalie's HEAD appears. She keeps one eye on the gabbing duo and her other on her surroundings.

Voices comes from the project housing. Languages she can't understand. MENACING FIGURES glare out behind from barred windows. A DRONE hovers overhead. She tries to ignore it all.

A TEEN approaches Angel and Marco. Angel hands her something. The teen walks off. Angel and Marco follow suit.

At a distance, and not nearly as stealthy as she believes herself to be, Rosalie follows. She passes a light pole. Pasted there is the STICKER.

INT. BUS. DAY [DRIVING]

Angel and Marco wrestle in their seats. A few rows back, Rosalie holds her handbag in front of her face and eyes them.

EXT. BACK ALLEY. DAY

Angel and Marco converse at the alley's end. Behind a garbage can, Rosalie grips her nose and eavesdrops.

ANGEL

She wants... haven't found out...
will soon...

She frowns. *Are they talking about her?* She leans further out. Angel glances in her direction. She dives, or more realistically, topples, back.

She waits a few seconds, her heart thumping. Then she ventures another look...

Angel and Marco loom before her. She gasps and drops her handbag, steak knife and pill bottle spilling from it.

Marco giggles. Angel bends down.

ANGEL (CONT'D)

Why've you been followin' Angel,
silly lady?

He picks up the knife.

ANGEL (CONT'D)

You gonna carve him up?

Rosalie opens her mouth but no words emerge. Angel tosses the pill bottle to Marco. Marco reads the label.

MARCO

Hicmodonihil. Hicmodonihil. Silly
pills for silly thoughts.

ANGEL

You have silly thoughts, silly
lady? Sure was silly to follow
Angel.

Angel uncaps the bottle and pours its contents onto the ground. He begins to STOMP ON THEM.

ANGEL (CONT'D)
Tell him why you did it.

Rosalie is trembling all over. She still can't seem to speak. She spots a RUSTED PISTOL in Angel's waistband.

ROSALIE
B-b-b-oa C-c-c-on-str-str-ictor.
V-v-v-i-i-ne... G-g-gar-ar-de-den.

Angel twitches. Marco whispers in his ear.

ANGEL
How do you know about buddha?

ROSALIE
Bu-u-u-d-dha? Th-the pr-prea-prea-
ch-cher, h-he-

ANGEL
That deaf diddler? He don't know
shit.

Angel straightens up and studies her.

ANGEL (CONT'D)
Get up. Angel says we're going.

ROSALIE
G-g-go-in-ing? Wh-wh-where?

But Angel doesn't respond. He and Marco march away. Rosalie lies there, crushed pills littering the ground about her.

DISSOLVE TO:

A sign warning SITE SET FOR DEMOLITION.

EXT. TEXTILE MILL. COTTAGE VILLAGE. DAY

Behind a broken chainlink fence, abandoned cottages extend a quarter mile to an OLD TEXTILE MILL.

A beat-up sedan pulls up. TRAP MUSIC blasts.

FEMALE RAPPER (RADIO)
*Bite 'em with that pussy/ Strike
'em with that pussy/ Coiled all up/
Slangin' ven'em with that pussy...*

The engine cuts out. Angel and Marco clamber out. Rosalie follows behind. Horror dawns on her face. We quickly see why. On the distant textile mill can be read: DILL COTTON ROPE.

ROSALIE

No- We- Wha-what are we doing here?

Marco giggles.

MARCO

The silly lady must see The Medusa.
Then *she* will see.

He points through the fencing to where GREEN SMOKE billows from a collapsing cottage.

INT. MILL COTTAGE. HALLWAY. DAY

SMASHED FIRE ALARMS litter the hall. SMOKE clogs the air. Angel and Marco lead Rosalie along. She mutters dumbly...

ROSALIE

There's a fire.

ANGEL

Shit's blazing alright.

They turn down another hallway. At its end is a RED DOOR from behind which the green smoke seeps.

Now Rosalie shakes like she never has before. As if what awaits her behind that door is death itself.

ROSALIE

N-no. I-I ca-can't. I can't!

Her legs give out. Angel and Marco drag her along as she fights against them, all decorum forgotten. She reaches into her handbag, grabbing for the pills she no longer has.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

I can't! I CAN'T! Let go of me! I'm
Rosalie Dill. Of the Dill family!
The DILL FAMILY!

There's a FLICKER OF SHADOW at the edge of her vision. This time it isn't a tree. This time it doesn't disappear.

It hangs in the air, forming something. *What?*

They reach the door. It swings inwards and smoke covers Rosalie and she chokes and barely hears Angel say...

ANGEL

After you.

... before she collapses. BLACKNESS. Then, a voice...

VOICE (O.S.)

Who's this bitch?

MARCO (O.S.)

It's Rosalie Dill. Of the Dill
Family.

CUT TO:

THE SUN. Blurred behind eyelids. A DARK SHAPE blocks it out.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAY [DREAM]

Young Rosalie awakes to find herself staring up at the
dirtied and torn banner for the DILL GARDEN SPRING GALA 1957.

Around her, the Dill Garden is dying. WORKERS march from the
cotton fields and Dill Mansion towards HiHo in the distance.

Rosalie frowns. FRANTIC MUTTERING reaches her. It comes from
a figure huddled over some Dill Hibiscus. It's Natalie Dill.

YOUNG ROSALIE

Mama, where are all the workers
going?

VOICE (O.S.)

I don't want to go, Ms. Dill. I
want to stay and play with you!

Rosalie turns. Behind her is the little girl. The little girl
extends her hands.

LITTLE GIRL

I have something to show you.

Young Rosalie frowns and swivels back to her mother.

YOUNG ROSALIE

Mama, where are they going?

LITTLE GIRL

Why won't you let me show you?!

YOUNG ROSALIE

HiHo will still be mine, won't it?
You promised. Mama, you promised!

Natalie's muttering suddenly stops. Then, booming...

NATALIE DILL
Oh, Rosalie, *grow up*.

The air reverberates. Rosalie is slung forward and Natalie spins to her and Rosalie gasps. Natalie's face is emaciated. Her eyes dart about, finding the SHADOWS. The air shakes faster. Faster.

NATALIE DILL (CONT'D)
Do you see him, Rosalie?

YOUNG ROSALIE
See who, mama?

The little girl yanks at Rosalie's elbow. Harder. Harder.

LITTLE GIRL
My papa says it's dangerous.

NATALIE DILL
The Shadow Man.

YOUNG ROSALIE
Who is-

NATALIE DILL
He's coming for us, Rosalie!

LITTLE GIRL
Dangerous for the Dills.

NATALIE DILL
Coming for the Dills.

LITTLE GIRL
Danger for us all!

NATALIE DILL (CONT'D)
Coming for us all!

The ground disappears beneath Rosalie's feet. She tips back into the little girl and she sees what's in the little girl's hands and she cries out, and the air is full of SMOKE and it engulfs her, and she falls, falls, falls...

YOUNG ROSALIE
Mama! Mama!!!!

... into nothingness.

VOICE (O.S.)
I ain't your mama.

INT. MILL COTTAGE. ROOM. DAY

Rosalie's eyes open. She's sitting in a chair in the middle of a smoke-filled room. Somewhere, a voice speaks to her.

VOICE (O.S.)

I ain't never seen it hit someone
like that before. You was floppin'
around. Shit was silly.

Off in the murk, Marco giggles.

MARCO (O.S.)

Silly lady.

VOICE (O.S.)

Then again, I guess I shouldn't be
surprised, it is your shit.

Rosalie tries to get her bearings. Tries to find the voice.

ROSALIE

Who is that? Who are you? Reveal
yourself at once!

A FAN blows and a pocket of smoke clears.

Seated before Rosalie is THE MEDUSA (15), a Mexican girl with her hair parted into EIGHT BRAIDS. A BLUNT is stuck in one of them. Its smoke CURLS AROUND HER HEAD like a snake.

THE MEDUSA

We been lookin' for you a long,
long time, Rosalie Dill. Now we
finally found you.

Rosalie's mouth drops open. *Who is this... this creature?*

THE MEDUSA (CONT'D)

So, tell us, how'd you do it? How'd
you make it?

Rosalie blinks at The Medusa stupidly.

ROSALIE

M- Make? Make what?

THE MEDUSA

Buddha.

ROSALIE

*Buddha? I don't- Boa? Boa
Constrictor? But that's you!*

The Medusa studies her. Then she calls off into the fog.

THE MEDUSA

Angel, you *culo*, you said she knew.

ROSALIE

Knew? What did I knew?

Angel's face appears out of the gloom.

ANGEL

She told Angel about the vine.

ROSALIE

Yes, the vine! Your vine! In my garden! And the sticker!

But Rosalie stops dead. More smoke has cleared. Now she's able to make out what covers the room's walls: THE VINE.

ANGEL

She told Angel... Angel thought-

THE MEDUSA

Angel thought shit. Angel shoulda *thought* before bringing this *bruja*-

ROSALIE

IT WAS YOU! You planted the vine in my garden. You are Boa Constrictor!

Rosalie is on her feet, her finger leveled at The Medusa. But The Medusa just smirks.

THE MEDUSA

It's time for you to go, grannie.

Rosalie isn't having any of that. She plants her fists on her hips.

ROSALIE

Oh, no! I'm not leaving! Not until you tell me *why*. *Why* you planted that foul vine in my garden? *Why* my family deserved that? *Why* you don't wan't my garden as a landmark? And WHAT is Boa Constrictor?!

The Medusa tests one of her acrylic nails.

THE MEDUSA

Grannie, I didn't plant that shit in your garden. And I ain't no Boa Constrictor.

Rosalie falters.

ROSALIE

Y- Yes, you are. You must be!
Perhaps, someone older- You are
very young. Your parents. Yes. They
must've told you- Go get them,
please.

THE MEDUSA

My parents aren't here. And nobody
told me anything.

ROSALIE

But- They must've! Because if it
wasn't you... then who was it?

THE MEDUSA

You tell me.

Rosalie stares at The Medusa. Shaking. Refusing to believe.

ROSALIE

You're lying. You're a snotty,
indecent girl. And you are lying.

She drops back down into her seat.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

But- but you brought me here.

THE MEDUSA

We brought you here cause Angel,
thought you planted it. Cause if
you did, we'd want more. Lots more.

ROSALIE

Why- why would anyone ever want
more of that horrid thing?

THE MEDUSA

Cause we slang it.

ROSALIE

Sla- slang?

Marco giggles. Another FAN begins to blow, revealing...

A BODY-PIERCED TEEN hunched over a table. On the table sit
VINE LEAVES, a MORTAR and PESTLE and a SCALE. The teen pours
a powder--ground-up vine leaves--into baggies.

THE MEDUSA

We call it *Buddha Constriction*.

Rosalie's face falls. *Buddha Constriction*. Not "Boa Constrictor." *Buddha Constriction*. The preacher was wrong.

THE MEDUSA (CONT'D)

The Medusa turned men to stone.
Well shit, I get them stoned.

EXT. MILL COTTAGE. FRONT STEPS. DAY

Rosalie stares glumly at the distant textile mill as The Medusa lights a blunt beside her.

THE MEDUSA

We call it *Buddha* cause it's buddha. *Constriction* cause when you smoke it you can't breathe. That shit gets in your lungs.

Out by the beat-up sedan, Angel plays with his rusted pistol. Marco examines some flowers.

ANGEL

It makes Angel want to spew. But he doesn't. Cause Buddha shows him things. *Things he needs to see*.

THE MEDUSA

Once it pops up that shit takes over. Takes over. Disappears. Takes over. Disappears. Always the same.

Rosalie is silent. The Medusa shoots her a look.

THE MEDUSA (CONT'D)

What? Is grannie mad we didn't plant *buddha* in her garden?

Rosalie's expression sours.

ROSALIE

You may not be Boa Constrictor. Boa Constrictor may not even be- be...

THE MEDUSA

Real.

ROSALIE

But someone planted that vine in my garden.

Rosalie fishes in her handbag and holds up the sticker from her mailbox. The Medusa eyes it.

THE MEDUSA

We find that sticker by *buddha* all the time.

ROSALIE

See! So there is-

THE MEDUSA

Hold on, grannie. That sticker's a lot of places. There isn't always a vine with it. You want my advice?

ROSALIE

No, I do no-

THE MEDUSA

Forget the vine. Burn your garden. End it your way. Cause either you consume, Buddha. Or it consumes you. Understand?

ROSALIE

No, I don't understand! I don't understand any of this! If this is what HiHo has become then I don't want to understand. I just want to know who's responsible for all this and what it has to do with me!

The Medusa exhales green smoke. Rosalie swats at it, CHOKING as it wraps around her.

THE MEDUSA

Are you really Rosalie Dill? Of the Dill Family?

ROSALIE

Haven't I already said so!

THE MEDUSA

No shit.

The smoke finally clears. Rosalie sees, or thinks she sees, one of The Medusa's braids move.

THE MEDUSA (CONT'D)

My abuelo and abuela worked in your family's mill. Lived in these cottages. Had to. Weren't allowed anywhere else in HiHo. Not their sort. Then one day, factory closed. Cottages too. Hasta levista, abuelos. Nowhere for you to work. Nowhere for you to go.

Rosalie sniffs.

ROSALIE

Well... well, I suppose we all have
our crosses to bear, don't we.

Out by the car, Angel takes his cellphone from his ear.

ANGEL

Angel hears they've found more!
More *Buddha*.

MARCO

*Angel hears! Buddha sees! Seize and
see, seize and see!*

The Medusa turns to Rosalie.

THE MEDUSA

Your ride is leaving, Rosalie Dill.
It can take you home, or it can
take you to Buddha. The Medusa's
already given her mind.

ROSALIE

Yes, she has, but *The Medusa* is a
drug-peddling child, and I'm quite
capable of making my own decisions,
thank you very much!

Rosalie stands. The Medusa offers her a JOINT and MATCHES.

THE MEDUSA

Fine then, if you're gonna ignore
The Medusa, take these. They'll
show you. When the time's right,
buddha will show you what you need
to see.

Rosalie considers the gift. To her own surprise, she takes it
and drops it into her handbag. Before she can change her
mind, she's walking away. She turns back.

ROSALIE

How do you kill it? The vine. I
can't seem to kill it.

The Medusa takes a final drag and grins.

THE MEDUSA

You gotta smoke it out.

ROSALIE

That is not an option.

Rosalie ducks through the fence. The Medusa SEIZES.

I/E. BEAT UP SEDAN/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

The sedan cruises along, a JINGLE playing on the radio.

JINGLE (RADIO)

Demolition needs done in a jiffy...

In the back seat, Rosalie studies her snake bite. It has a nauseating luster.

ANGEL

Silly lady, where are we going?

Angel and Marco watch her from the front seats. She closes her eyes. *Home or vine? Seize or see? Home or vine?*

ROSALIE

The vine.

Marco giggles. Angel nods.

ANGEL

Ok. But first, a stop. Angel has something he wants to show you.

DISSOLVE TO:

An abandoned HOMESTEAD BARN overgrown with creeping crawlers.

EXT. FOREST THICKET. DAY

Angel, Marco and Rosalie study the collapsing structures. Rosalie blinks confusedly. *Why are they here?* Angel points to the barn's dilapidated bay.

ANGEL

Does the silly lady know this place?

In the bay's cool darkness, FRAYED ROPE hangs from the rafters. Rosalie shakes her head.

ROSALIE

No, I...

She frowns. The rope sways in an unfelt wind. A distant memory bubbles forth.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Wait a second... I- Yes. A long
time ago. My family... a gathering.

Angel nods.

ANGEL
The silly lady has a sticker. Here
Angel first finds the same sticker.
No *Buddha* ever comes, but Angel
thinks the silly lady finds her
answers here anyway.

He gestures to the base of a fallen HISTORICAL MARKER where
the snake-and-flower sticker can be seen.

He and Marco prod one another and head back for the car.
Rosalie remains, bending towards the marker.

Most of its embossing has faded, but she can still make out a
few words... KUKKOO BARN... and... SHADOW.

She looks back to the bay. The blackness within it seems to
CREEP OUT TOWARDS HER. DRAWING HER IN...

Something BUZZES by her ear. A LADYBUG.

ROSALIE
You again?

She brushes the insect away, but the BUZZING doesn't stop.
She looks up. A DRONE hovers overhead.

Her eyebrows rise. She glances off through the trees and
finds SOMEONE STARING AT HER! She lets out a cry!

That someone HOBBLER AWAY. It's a hobble Rosalie recognizes.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
H-h-help! Help! HELP!

But it's too late. By the time Angel and Marco come trudging
through the brush, the man and the drone are gone.

ANGEL
Why is the silly lady yelling?

ROSALIE
It was him! The man by my mailbox.
He- he was here.

Rosalie points to where the man was standing. Marco giggles.

MARCOEM
Silly lady sees silly things.

ROSALIE
No- I- I...

But she falls silent. Angel and Marco have already turned away. And what can she do? Her proof is gone.

I/E. BACKSEAT. BEAT UP SEDAN/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

The sedan zips along. Rosalie mutters...

ROSALIE
I- I- He was- He was there. I...

She falls silent. *Is she going crazy?*

She glances out the rear window and nearly faints. A TRUCK with the SNAKE-AND-FLOWER EMBLEM follows them! She rubs her eyes and looks again. The truck is gone.

Her mouth hangs open. She shakes her head...

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Oh, Rosalie, pull it together. Who knows what's coming next.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE VINE. AN ENDLESS TANGLE OF IT...

EXT. ANTEBELLUM MANSION. BACKYARD. DAY

... consuming an ANTEBELLUM MANSION. The vine covers everything. The roof. The columned porches. The rusted, "cavalier spirit", black lawn jockey.

Beside a wire fence, Rosalie takes it all in. Her knees buckle. She hears SHOUTING. She looks to it.

Beyond the fence, A TEAM OF FIGURES dressed in ALL BLACK charges past cows and towards a distant FACTORY.

It's another SHORTHOOFF FEEDLOT. But who the figures are and what they're doing are of little concern to her right now.

EXT. FRONT OF ANTEBELLUM MANSION. DAY

Rosalie makes her way along the front walk. She stops beside a mailbox. The SNAKE-AND-FLOWER STICKER has been pasted to it. Right above a name. THE SAPPS.

She exhales sharply. Angel and Marco approach, their pockets stuffed with the vine.

ANGEL

What does the silly lady think?

ROSALIE

I don't- I don't- I...

Her eyes bug. Marco is squatting down beside a clump of green-leaved plants with long, tapering cone-shaped flowers.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

DON'T TOUCH THAT!

Marco looks up, dazed. Rosalie *ahems* and pats her hair and attempts a more dignified tone.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Stay away from that, please. I- I recognize that plant. It's the ragweed that killed my family's cotton.

MARCO

Ambrosia Anguisarcuma.

ROSALIE

I don't- What does that mean?

Marco smiles dopily. In sing-song...

MARCO

Ambrosia is ragweed/ Anguis is snake/ Arcum is bow/ A final "a", the name is made/ But Marco wonders/ Why that final "a?" / It does not flow/ Together, what do Bow plus a make?

Fireworks explode behind Rosalie's eyes.

ROSALIE

Boa.

Marco giggles. Rosalie tries to keep her composure.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
I- I'd like to leave now. *Please.*

I/E. BEAT UP SEDAN/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

Old estates flash by, desolate save for dinged mailboxes with names we've heard before... *Evergreen... Dickey-Birdsong...*

Rosalie watches them pass, her despair growing with each passing second.

EXT. DILL MANSION. PORCH. NIGHT

Angel hands Rosalie an old FLIP CELLPHONE.

ANGEL
If the silly lady should find where
Buddha comes from...

Rosalie snatches it from him and dashes inside.

INT. PARLOR. NIGHT

Rosalie flings open her photo album and finds the 1947 Spring Gala photo. Along the picture's bottom edge are printed the Gala attendees' names.

Rob. Dill, Ros. Dill, N. Dill... Then a few lines down... *J. Evergreen, T. Evergreen...*

Rosalie flips the page. Another year, another SPRING GALA. And there, at the bottom... *D. Dickey-Birdsong, P. Dickey-Birdsong, A. Sapp, L. Sapp...*

She drops the photo album. Her hands tremble.

CUT TO:

The rotary phone. Rosalie whispers into it...

ROSALIE
Preacher, I- I saw the land. The names. The Evergreens, the Dickey-Birdsongs, the Sapps. What happened to them? What happened to them?!

A long, staticky pause. *Is anyone even on the line?*

PREACHER HARDLY (PHONE)
They're gone, Rosalie. All gone.

ROSALIE
 Preacher, it's real. Boa is real.
 It's not what we thought. It's not
 the children. It's something older.
 Something... worse. Far, far worse.
 Preacher, does this mean I'm next?

PREACHER HARDLY (PHONE)
Rosalie, who-

The line suddenly goes dead.

ROSALIE
 Preacher Hardly?! PREACHER HARDLY?!

But Preacher Hardly isn't there. All Rosalie gets is static.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAY

The vine creeps up the handle of Rosalie's sheers. Along the fence, TEN COWS reach out their tongues to snag it.

INT. GRACIE'S CAR. PASSENGER'S SEAT. DAY [DRIVING]

Rosalie stares ahead, fingers white-knuckled around her handbag. Beside her, Gracie gives a concerned look.

DISSOLVE TO:

A SQUARE PATCH OF DIRT...

EXT. SAPP ESTATE. DAY

... where the Sapp Estate stood but yesterday. But now it's GONE. The mansion. The vine. Everything. ALL GONE.

Next to the Sapp Mailbox (*now sans its snake-and-flower sticker*) Rosalie looks on in disbelief, too stunned to speak.

Her eyes move to her companion. Gracie just shakes her head.

I/E. GRACIE'S CAR/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

Rosalie and Gracie ride in oppressive silence. Rosalie glances sidewise at Gracie, until, finally...

ROSALIE
 Grace, you- you must believe me. It-
 the vine was there. Just yesterday.
 (MORE)

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
And- and the estate. And the
sticker. And there was a- a *militia*-

Gracie cuts her off.

GRACIE
Rosalie, have you been taking your
pills? Like I asked.

ROSALIE
I- Yes. Yes, I have.

GRACIE
I don't think I believe you.

A BICENTENNIAL BANNER passes overhead. Rosalie cries out.

ROSALIE
Of course you don't! When have you
believed anything I've ever told
you!

GRACIE
All the time! What I don't believe
is skimble-scamble mumbo-jumbo
about snakes and stickers and
children speaking latin!

Gracie pounds on the car horn.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
For heaven's sake, where have you
been? Your garden is being
positively overrun by that vine.
And where are you? Off-

ROSALIE
Aha! So you admit the vine is real!

GRACIE
Of course it's real, Rosalie! A
very real vine. And nothing more.

Gracie HONKS again, scaring an elderly PEDESTRIAN who nearly
topples over. She mutters darkly...

GRACIE (CONT'D)
Truly nothing more. I uploaded a
photo of it to that Longshrub Smart
App under your name. The app
couldn't tell me a thing about it.

Rosalie wrings her wrinkled hands, miserable.

ROSALIE

But what about the ragweed, Grace?
It was there. You saw it. *Bow-a*.
That's what it translates to. *Bow-a*.

Gracie's lip trembles. Rosalie takes out the mailbox sticker.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Boa is watching. Yes, they have
been. They planted that ragweed in
my family's crops all those years
ago. They must've.

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, stop it!

ROSALIE

Even then they were after the
Dills! And now they're coming after
the rest of the old guard as well.
Preacher Hardly--poor Preacher
Hardly, I think he's gone--and the
Sapps. And I don't know why, but
people are missing!

GRACIE

Rosalie, please--

ROSALIE

They're coming for us and for my
garden and for everything we hold
dear in HiHo!

GRACIE

WELL, THEY'RE SURE DOING A POOR JOB
OF IT, AREN'T THEY!

Gracie's voice is very loud in the small car.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

This town is about to celebrate its
200th year! There's a new art
district. A new community theater.
The BiCentennial's beginning a
month's worth of festivities with a
Civil War reenactment! And there's
economy again! After all those poor
years after your family's downfall.
There's Longshrub and Shorthoof.

ROSALIE

My family-- That wasn't their-- They
did nothing but good for this town!

Gracie doesn't respond. She's shaking her head.

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, I really wish you
hadn't scheduled that town meeting.

Rosalie stares at the sticker in her hand. Gracie sighs.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

If I- I were to believe you... just
for an hour or two. If I were...
Then there'd be one place I'd go.
To try and find answers.

Rosalie snorts.

ROSALIE

Ha! What a hoot. I don't want your
help, Grace, and I don't need it.
No. Not at- not...

But she falls silent. Her hair's unkempt and she's scared.
She chokes down a gag. Then, hating every second of what
she's about to do, she looks to Gracie and nods.

EXT. HIHO TOWN LIBRARY. DAY

The library is a blasé, brick building with Dill Hibiscus
bushes out front. A TERRIFIED DOG--"Chivalry" from the wanted
posters--peeps its head out from one then scurries away.

GRACIE (PRE-LAP)

If we're going to find out anything
about this *Boa*, it'll be here.

INT. HIHO TOWN LIBRARY. AISLE. DAY

Gracie giddily fingers a dusty book. Beside her, Rosalie is
decidedly less enthused. She's just spotted the SNAKE-AND-
FLOWER STICKER pasted to a bookcase.

GRACIE

Oh, what fun this is! Us working
together. You know, as a member of
the Historical Society, I'm
privileged to certain *assess*- Ahem,
sorry. *Access*. And, as we've been
working with the Coalition for a
Better HiHo: Renewal and Advance-
Aha! Here it is.

INT. HIHO TOWN LIBRARY. TABLE. DAY

Gracie lays down the dusty book. Rosalie tugs at her silk glove, eyes working their way around the room.

GRACIE

Rosalie, may I see that sticker of yours?

ROSALIE

What for?

GRACIE

Please.

Rosalie harrumphs and takes the sticker from her handbag.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Yes, that's what I thought. The words at the bottom, I could've sworn I'd heard them before.

Gracie points to the open page. There are LYRICS there.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

They're from a song attributed to the former slaves at Dill Estate.

ROSALIE

(blushing)

That's... well... What does the song say? Does it mention Boa?

Gracie holds up the book and begins to read.

GRACIE

*One day...
I was in de garden*

ROSALIE

Grace, a garden!

GRACIE

Yes, yes, I know. Let me finish.

(beat)

*One day...
I was in de garden
When de Lord he spoke to me
Keep my flowers in de sun
'N free you'll someday be*

*But when he'd gone
A Shadow come
'N promised more
(MORE)*

GRACIE (CONT'D)
I agreed

I let the shade
Lay in the beds
'N prayed de Lord wud neber see

'N to my shame
Everlastin' shame!
Alone the Shade crept den
'N the Lord did see
O' cursed glen!
'N brought his wrath on me

Now here I toil
'Mong dis soil
Still waitin' on de day
When He'll return
'N say in earn
We're headed to de sea

Til den
I bend
'N wonder when
His sign my sight will see
The Shade will burn
'N in its turn
Dat garden'll cease to be

Gracie trails off into silence. Rosalie looks sick.

ROSALIE
It's there, Grace, in the song.
Someone is coming for the garden.
And all the way back then they
knew. I told you. I told you!

GRACIE
Rosalie, please, most likely the
song is about nothing more than
Original Sin in the Garden of Eden.
Though I admit, it is strange. Why
burn Eden? And who is this Shade?

A shiver runs down Rosalie's spine. *Is it just her, or does the library suddenly seem much darker?*

GRACIE (CONT'D)
You know, many slave songs had
hidden meanings so slave drivers
wouldn't understand their true
intent. But here, the song's very
clearly about a slave gaining his
freedom. Odd.
(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)
I suppose the question then becomes
who's coming back to free him? Or
her?

Gracie thinks a moment then sighs.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
Well there's nothing in there about
Boa, is there? I'll keep looking.

She disappears back amongst the bookshelves. Rosalie remains,
staring at the lyrics. One line GROWS IN HER VISION.

His sign my sight will see.

Something BUZZES by her ear. She swats at it. A HAND GRABS
HER SHOULDER. She screams. But it's only Gracie.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
Rosalie, it's me! It's me. You
must've fallen asleep.

Rosalie looks out the window. IT'S NIGHTTIME. She frowns.

ROSALIE
No, I- How did- Yes, you're right.

Gracie gives her an odd look. Rosalie curls her lip.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Is something wrong, Grace?

GRACIE
No, no, it's just... no, nothing.

Gracie plops a large stack of books down onto the table.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
Well, I've looked through every
book on HiHo's history. There's
nothing in any of them about a *Boa*.
Much less a Boa Constrictor.

ROSALIE
There must be something.

GRACIE
There isn't. I looked through
Sherman's Folly AKA the Battle of
HiHo. I looked through Nathanael
Dill and the Creeks. I looked
through everything of note in this
town's history. There's nothing.
(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Well there was *one* thing.

ROSALIE

What? What is it?

GRACIE

The ragweed. I discovered its creator. Johann Sprechenschlange. An 18th century German botanist. But he never had anything to do with HiHo. Nothing at all. I'm sorry, Rosalie.

ROSALIE

But- but, the sticker- No, there's- you have to check again!

GRACIE

There's nothing more to check! Clearly, someone in this town is having a big laugh at your expense. Maybe those children you've so endeared yourself to.

ROSALIE

No, that's- that's not true!

GRACIE

Look, I've humored this enough. We searched for Boa and we found nothing. It's time to go home.

ROSALIE

But, the vi-

GRACIE

I don't want to hear anymore about the vine. *It's time to go home!*

EXT. DILL MANSION. NIGHT

Rosalie climbs out of Gracie's car.

GRACIE

I'm still awaiting your answer regarding you coming to stay with Fred and I. Time is of the ess-

Rosalie slams the car door in her face.

INT. PARLOR. NIGHT

The record player warbles. Rosalie sits in her armchair, staring out at nothing. Her snake bite oozes PUS.

NARRATOR (RECORD)

From 1850 on, nothing of import occurred in the town. Nor the state at large. Not a thing. That is until 1870 when Nathanael's grandson, Henry, opened the region's first textile mill...

Out back, the vine covers half the garden. There are TWENTY COWS along the fence.

NARRATOR (RECORD) (CONT'D)

...out of which came Dill Rope, the strongest cotton rope south of the Mason-Dixon. Just perfect for hanging a-

The record skips and Rosalie's eyes dart to it. Beside the record player is a shadow. No, a SHADOW MAN! Darker than night. Blacker than black. Rosalie yelps...

ROSALIE

What are you? What do you want?!

The Shadow Man doesn't move and it doesn't speak. Rosalie falls from her seat, clawing at the ground.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Stay away! Do you hear me?! STAY AWAY! DO YOU HEAR ME?! DO YOU?!

Her eyes roll into the back of her head. The world goes dark.

BRRRRIINN>NNNGGGG!

Rosalie comes back to. She's sprawled on the ground. The shadow man is gone.

BRRRRRRRIIINN>NNNGGGG!

She clambers to her feet and snatches up the rattling phone.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Preacher Hardly, is that you? Do they have you? PREACHER HARDLY!

AUTOMATED VOICE

Rosalie Dill... this is an automated scheduling-

She smashes the receiver down. Then picks it back up and smashes it against the wall. She stands there panting, her mind verging on undone.

INT. SLIP N SLITHERS. DAY

Rosalie wanders around the empty playhouse. She peers into the ball pit.

INT. A VERY TIGHTLY PACKED HIHO PROTESTANT CHURCH. DAY

She walks along the pews. Ducks her head into the confessionals. But there's nothing and no one to see.

DISSOLVE TO:

Two toppling PLINTHS ringed with MARBLE DILL HIBISCUS. The graves of Robert and Natalie Dill.

EXT. OLD HIHO CEMETERY. DAY

Before them, Rosalie sways atop piles of long dead Hibiscus flowers. She lays a fresh one down. Clears her throat...

ROSALIE

Mother. Father. I- I know it has
been some time since I... I...

She stops, her voice choked. She stares off beyond the cemetery, finding another SHORTHOOFF FEEDLOT there. COWS stare at her with big wet eyes and stupid tongues. A gargled rasp escapes her lips.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Oh, mama. Papa. I'm sorry! I don't
know how to stop it! I don't know
where I can find answers! It's
taking over and I- I don't want it
to all end with me, but- but
there's nothing I can do. There's
nothing I can do. I- I'm sorry.

She turns away. Unable to bear the moment any longer.

She stalks from the graves, shoulders shaking. A gust of wind blows a Dill Hibiscus between her feet, tripping her. She tumbles to the ground, crying out.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
 Oh, won't you just leave me
 everyone! Won't everything just
 leave me-

Then the words die on her lips. On a gravestone she's just spotted the word, "BOA." *No, it can't be.*

Indeed it can. Etched into the marble is: *PROUD MEMBER OF BOA*. And the name above... *PHILIUS LONGSHRUB*.

CUT TO:

A DIRECTIONAL SIGN that reads LONGSHRUB PESTICIDES. Its arrow points to that sinister building twisting above nearby trees.

EXT. MAIN STREET. SIDEWALK. DAY

Rosalie trembles before the sign, her stockinged knees dirty. Her frock sweat-stained.

She grips her handbag. *Is she ready for this?* She takes a halting step. Then another. Her gait quickens. *She is!*

She glances sidewise at a display in an ELECTRONICS STORE and nearly has a heart attack. Garlanded by various drones, a monitor show BIRD'S EYE FOOTAGE of her working in her garden. Lettering flashes THE SHADOW'S GETTING CLOSER.

Her mouth drops open. She blinks. The footage is gone. Replaced by Xander Rednax...

XANDER REDNAX (TV)
*These modern scientists in their
 labs. Creating mutations to feed us
 with, infect us with, destroy us
 with in our homes. Say, I was
 recently in St. Petersburg...*

Rosalie pulls her flimsy jacket tighter about her and decides to ignore this latest assault on her sanity. Her resolve severely damaged, she straggles off towards Longshrub.

DISSOLVE TO:

The sinister building, LONGSHRUB PESTICIDES, curled up into the air like a coiled snake, resting at the edge of...

EXT. MUSCOGEE SWAMP. DAY

... where Rosalie studies it, peering at the tinted windows.

Something SPLASHES behind her. She shivers and glances back at the muggy morass.

She finds a LITTLE DOG sitting at the swamp's edge, its leash leading into some bushes.

She let's out a coo of pleasure. Then something WHOOSHES past her face and lodges into a tree beside her. A dart.

VOICE (O.S.)

You're a monster!

A MAN bursts from the undergrowth. Rosalie throws up her hands.

ROSALIE

AHHHHH!

But after a moment, she peeks open one eye. The man, the GAME WARDEN, is staring at her. He lowers his dart gun.

GAME WARDEN

'pologies, ma'am. I mistook you for something.

(re: Rosalie's gaudy,
sweat-smearred makeup)

Must've been your camouflage.

He spits a long, phlegmy loogie.

GAME WARDEN (CONT'D)

I'm hunting a monster, y'see. Most people don't even know it exists. Course most folks don't know squat is going on in their own backyards. Take ol' Muscogee Swamp here. People dump *things* in it. Big things. Things they don't want no more. I tell you, ma'am, there's a *monster* in this town. I were you, I wouldn't go round unarmed. No. I. Would. Not. Beware and be wary.

And with nary more a word he disappears back into the bushes.

ROSALIE

What things?! *Bodies?!*

But Rosalie's words are met by silence. She shivers and looks about her. She picks up a LARGE STICK, tests it, and, wielding it before her, approaches Longshrub.

INT. LONGSHRUB PESTICIDES. LOBBY. DAY

There's no one about. Eery music plays. A sign reads:

LONGSHRUB PESTICIDES, PROUD SPONSOR OF THE 2020 HIHO
BICENTENNIAL!

LONGSHRUB PESTICIDES, IF IT MOVES, WE KILL IT. NATURALLY!

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, you.

Rosalie whirls to the voice. It comes from behind a reception desk.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Down here.

She approaches the desk and pokes her stick down behind it...

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ouch!

She finds CINDY (25) huddled there with a laptop.

ROSALIE

Why on earth are you down there?

CINDY

Shh!

Cindy points to a security camera hanging from the ceiling.

CINDY (CONT'D)

They might be watching. *They might be listening.*

Rosalie's eyes pop.

ROSALIE

Who- *They?* *Boa?* Is that who's listening?

CINDY

I can't say. *In case they might be listening.* Now then, what's your business here today, Mrs...

ROSALIE

Oh, uh, *Ms.* Dill. And, I-

CINDY

Dill? Rosalie Dill?!

Cindy's hand darts to the desktop. Rosalie heaves...

ROSALIE

I- Yes! *How do you know that?!*

Cindy ignores her. She yanks an office telephone down into her lap. She dials a number. Beat. Someone picks up.

CINDY

Ms. Dill is here... yes *that*... uh
huh... uh huh... okay.

Click. The line goes dead. Cindy's head reappears.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Ma'am, Mr. Longshrub would like to
see you in his office.

Rosalie turns white as a sheet.

ROSALIE

Mr.- Mr. Longshrub?

CINDY

Uh-huh.

ROSALIE

O- *oh.* And, uh- Wh- where is he?

Cindy swings a portentous finger to a corridor leading from the lobby.

CINDY

All the way down. All the way up.

ROSALIE

All the way...

CINDY

... down. All the way up. And
ma'am... leave your stick.

Rosalie has forgotten all about her stick. She lets it clatter to the floor. Cindy beams.

CINDY (CONT'D)

All the way down. All the way up.

She ducks back beneath her desk. Naked and alone once more, Rosalie heads for the corridor.

INT. LONGSHRUB PESTICIDES. CORRIDOR. DAY

The corridor circles upwards and inwards like a conch shell. Rosalie dips her head into the rooms she passes. LONGSHRUB EMPLOYEES work on the floor, invisible to the cameras above.

FRAMED ADS line the corridor walls. Each displays a plant and asks, DOES LONGSHRUB KILL IT? Every ad has been checked YES.

One ad catches Rosalie's eye. It's for a plant called *Ilex Vomitoria*. Rosalie frowns. She's never heard of it before.

She reaches the end of the corridor. At its terminus is a GREEN DOOR with a Dill Hibiscus KNOCKER.

Her breath quickens. With a tremorous hand, she raises the knocker and lets it fall. The door creaks open. A voice calls out.

VOICE (O.S.)

Please. Enter.

So Rosalie does.

INT. EDWARD LONGSHRUB'S OFFICE. DAY

Rosalie enters paradise. Or more precisely, a botanical garden. There's cotton. Briars. Dill Hibiscus. Only the framed ads covering the walls remind her this is still an office.

A path leads to a desk. Behind it, a man smiles at her. This is EDWARD LONGSHRUB.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB

Welcome, Ms. Dill. *Welcome.*

Rosalie stares back at him. Speechless.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)

We need not whisper here. There are no cameras.

He gestures about. His words linger ominously. He settles down and gestures to a garden chair. Behind his head, on the wall, we notice a conspicuously EMPTY FRAME.

There's MOVEMENT in Rosalie's periphery. She looks to it. *The Shadow Man?* No, nothing. She smooths out her dress and sits.

ROSALIE

I- I am pleased by your office.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 Are you? Thank you. It was my
 intent to show HiHo in all it's
original wonder.

He smiles again. They sit in silence, appraising one another.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)
 So then. I am Edward Longshrub. And
 you are... Rosalie Dill. *Of the*
Dill Family. Your family and
 mine... quite a history, isn't it?

Rosalie's cheeks flush. There's MOVEMENT again at the edge of
 her vision. She ignores it, leaning forward in her seat.

ROSALIE
 So then you admit it. It's true.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 What is true?

ROSALIE
 You are BOA!

Edward's smile falters. He frowns. Grins again. Frowns.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 Madam, why do you mention BOA?

ROSALIE
 Because the sticker- my garden-
 because BOA HAS BEEN TRYING TO GET
 RID OF ME! THAT'S WHY!

Rosalie's words echo. Edward giggles.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 Ms. Dill, BOA isn't trying to get
 rid of you.

ROSALIE
 Yes- How do- YES THEY- YES YOU ARE!

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 The BOA I know, that my great-great
 grandfather, Philius, knew, was
 nothing more than a society of
 botanists. Botanists Of Arms.
 Botanists for Abolition. BOA.

Rosalie almost gags on her tongue.

ROSALIE
Botanists?! BOTANISTS?!

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 That's right. BOA was a battalion in General Sherman's army during his March to the Sea. It was they fought in the Battle of HiHo. I thought this was common knowledge.

ROSALIE
 No- no, that's not possible.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 Ms. Dill, I assure you it is.

ROSALIE
 But how is- What- Then why are they on my mailbox? And in my garden?

Edward cocks his head at her and shrugs.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 They aren't. BOA hasn't existed for over a century. Its members are all dead.

ROSALIE
 Dead. No, there must be- Someone still living- Yes...

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 Most perished in the battle. A few survived, but they are now long gone. They were a German, two Muscogee Indians, my great-grandfather, and an African-American man who'd once been enslaved in the town.

Rosalie slumps down. Her mind cooked. Edward gives a thoughtful *hmmph*.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)
 He actually came back to HiHo years later. The former slave. He was the one who told the others about Dill Hibiscus.

There's MOVEMENT once more. Not even in Rosalie's periphery this time. For a brief instance, in the shadows behind Edward, there's a PERSON. Then the person disappears.

Rosalie closes her eyes, just managing to mumble out...

ROSALIE
Dill Hibiscus?

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 Oh yes. BOA was intent on seeing the famed Dill Hibiscus. But General Sherman wanted to march straight to Savannah. So they broke off and headed south. There they were met by a local militia, WHOOPSI--White HiHo Organized OPposition & Social Infantry--which, if I'm not mistaken, was led by one of your ancestors. A battle was fought. BOA was defeated.

Rosalie's eyes are wet. *Another dead end.* It's too much to bear. Edward circles around his desk.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)
 But Ms. Dill, I did not ask you here for a history lesson. I thought you might be able to answer some of *my* questions.
 (beat)
 How on earth did you come upon that nasty vine?

Rosalie shoots up in her seat.

ROSALIE
 You know about- HOW DID YOU KNOW I KNEW ABOUT THE VINE?!

Edward gives her a miserable, hangdog look...

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
 Well, you see- I- Doggone it! Things just aren't the same no more! It's not *unethical* nowadays to delve into someone's private information. We saw a photo of that *thing* uploaded to our smart app and we dug into the account it was registered to. And, well, it was to *yours*. So tell me, Ms. Dill, how'd you come upon it? Was it those bastards Shorthoof? Did they put you up to it?

Rosalie lets out a half-snort, half-sob.

ROSALIE
 The cows?

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
That's right! *The cows!* Did they
help you steal it? Did they?

ROSALIE
No, I- Why does everyone think I
know anything? I don't! I DON'T!

Rosalie drops her head into her hands. Another PERSON has
just appeared. Edward sighs.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
I'm sorry, Ms. Dill. I didn't mean
to distress you.

He collapses back into his desk chair, glum.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)
It's just... we're at war with
those cloven-toe cowards. *Corporate*
war.

Rosalie looks back up. There's ANOTHER PERSON in her vision.
Except this one doesn't go away.

ROSALIE
Mr.- Mr. Longshrub, is- is there
someone else here?

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
Oh, don't worry about him. He's not
exactly *real.*

Edward stands and goes to a peach tree. From behind it, he
pulls out a CARDBOARD CUTOUT of Friendly Bobby. Friendly
Bobby's been given a glow up. Gone are his overalls. He holds
a PLANT and wears a sterling white medical gown.

ROSALIE
Is that Friendly Bobby?

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
It's Friendly Doctor Robert now. It
used to be we made chemical
fertilizers for this land sucked
dry by cotton. But folks just don't
want that anymore. Now they want
organic products. Organic
pesticides. And they want the
proper representation. We find
Friendly Doctor Robert is more
acceptable for this day and age.

Edward sighs.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)

We were about to release him and his new, all-natural ingredients, as well as our new slogan--"If it moves, we kill it. Naturally!"--when Shorthoof tweeted out *their* new slogan--"If it moos, we kill it. Organically!"

ROSALIE

What, uh- *Tweet*?

EDWARD LONGSHRUB

I don't have to tell you that really lit the powder keg. We accused Shorthoof of corporate espionage. They accused us of killing some of their calves. They hacked our security feeds. We sent a recon team over to one of their feedlots.

ROSALIE

It- it was you in that field?!

EDWARD LONGSHRUB

Oh yes, it was us. And we discovered things there. In their labs. And they say their new cow feed is *organic*.

Edward's eye flash behind his glasses.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)

It's what we call one big exposition dump.

(coughs)

Pardon me, *expulsion* dump. In the fertilizer biz, that's a massive amount of cow excrement. A *shit show*.

He stands and returns Friendly Doctor Robert back behind the tree. He sits back down.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)

Are you sure you don't know anything, Ms. Dill? We think Shorthoof's next move involves the BiCentennial. Rumor is their CEO's coming to town for the battle reenactment. *No one's ever seen him before*. And now he's coming in.

ROSALIE
Mr. Longshrub, I- I don't know!

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
Well, we'll be ready for them.
They've been training. But we've
been training too.

Edward's cheeks flush. Rosalie stares at her silk glove.
ANOTHER PERSON darts in and out of her vision.

ROSALIE
What does all this have to do with
the vine, Mr. Longshrub?

Edward pales.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
I- uh, well... Yes, yes, I suppose
you have a right to know.
(beat)
We, uh, did something very foolish,
Ms. Dill. In making our newest
pesticide. We created... *something*.

He rummages in his desk.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB (CONT'D)
We paired a ragweed with kudzu and
a, uh, *third species* and created
something our pesticides couldn't
kill. *The final plant*.

He holds up an UNFRAMED AD. On it is THE VINE. The box beside
it is unchecked. Rosalie gasps.

ROSALIE
It was you?! You created it?!

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
Yes, but we immediately realized
our mistake! We couldn't claim our
pesticides killed "anything that
moved," if we couldn't kill a
simple vine. But before we could
destroy it some, uh, disappeared.
We thought Shorthoof might've taken
it to use against us. We thought
you might've. But we don't know. We
don't know...

ROSALIE
Disappeared.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
Yes. That's right.

Rosalie squeezes her eyes shut as another PERSON materializes in the shadows.

ROSALIE
But it hasn't disappeared, Mr.
Longshrub. No. No, not at all...

EXT. LONGSHRUB PESTICIDES. DAY

Rosalie exits into the heat of the afternoon. By the swamp LONGSHRUB EMPLOYEES fumble through combat exercises.

INT. DILL MANSION. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Gracie's groceries rot on a countertop.

INT. PARLOR. NIGHT

Xander raves at us.

XANDER REDNAX (TV)
*This is it. The time to fight. The
time to win this war...*

In her armchair, Rosalie stares out at her garden, massaging her swollen hand. She lets out a forlorn cry...

ROSALIE
Oh, it's all too much! Boa
Battalion... the final plant...
mysterious CEOs... it's too much!

She weeps silently. Behind her, the PEOPLE flicker in and out. She straightens up, recomposing herself.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
No, Rosalie, you are fine. It- it
must be the cows. If- if they stole
the- Not the children. Not
Longshrub. The cows. You are fine.
Hold on. Hold on. Hold-

VOICE (PRE-LAP)

Ma'am!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GIFT SHOP. DAY

A WOMAN (TOUR GUIDE) waves in Rosalie's face.

WOMAN

Ma'am, can you hear me?

Rosalie blinks. *Where is she?*

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Ma'am, are you ready for the tour?

ROSALIE

Where- I- What- *The tour?*

EXT. SHORTHOOF FACTORY FEEDLOT. SHED. DAY

The tour guide leads Rosalie into the shadow of the Shorthoof shed. Rosalie gazes down the slope to Dill Estate below. The vine suffocates her garden and climbs up her mansion.

TOUR GUIDE

... Before Shorthoof arrived in HiHo, this land was used for cotton. In fact, inside this very shed is a perfectly preserved Munger System Gin...

She sniffs and tries to ignore the phantom figures at the edge of her vision. *Hold it together.*

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

... The Munger, an evolution of Eli Whitney's original cotton gin, was used to clean and package the cotton, all in one go. You see, at Shorthoof Industries we've always felt it important to *remember what's come before us.*

Her eyes narrow.

ROSALIE

And what of the family whose land this was? Do- do you remember them?

TOUR GUIDE

Oh yes, ma'am, we never forget. Follow me...

EXT. PASTURES. DAY

The tour guide shepherds Rosalie between bulbous bovines.

TOUR GUIDE

At Shorthoof, we're all about happy cows. No cages. No GMOs. And all our bovines are free-range. We like to think they'll roam the entirety of this town someday soon...

INT. MEAT PROCESSING FACTORY. DAY

The two of them gaze up at HUGE RACKS of BEEF.

TOUR GUIDE

Of course, at the end of the day, we are a meat processing plant. But our cows live joyful lives. Even at the end, when they're just seconds from their deaths, they simply have no clue what's about to happen to them. Then BLAM!...

Rosalie yelps. The tour guide laughs and takes the finger gun from her temple and grins.

EXT. SHORTHOOF FACTORY FEEDLOT. DAY

The tour guide steers Rosalie towards a SMALLER BUILDING. The snake-and-flower sticker has been pasted to it.

TOUR GUIDE

So, ma'am, do you have any questions?

Rosalie pauses. Collecting herself. *It will all be over soon.*

ROSALIE

Oh, Y- yes. I have questions.
(beat)
T- tell me about the vine.

The tour guide frowns at her.

TOUR GUIDE

The vine? We feed our cows legumes, if that's what you mean.

ROSALIE

No, I- Okay, BOA. What do you know about them?

TOUR GUIDE
Boa? Like the snake?

The tour guide is puzzled. Rosalie begins to panic.

ROSALIE
The Dills? What about their garden?
The vine- the vine in the garden...

TOUR GUIDE
Ma'am, are you alright?

Rosalie is shaking. The phantoms draw nearer.

ROSALIE
Yes, no, I'm- It's you. The cows...
the stolen vine... Longshrub.

TOUR GUIDE
Longshrub? What's your affiliation
with them? They *will be* held
responsible for what they've done.

ROSALIE
A-ha! You-re- you're going to make
them disappear!

TOUR GUIDE
What? No we're- Ma'am, are you sure
you're alright?

There's only one figure at the edge of Rosalie's vision now.
The Shadow Man.

ROSALIE
CEO... coming... closer. Disappear.
I- Get inside.

She stumbles towards the small building.

TOUR GUIDE
Ma'am, you aren't authorized to go
in there! That's our lab!

But this only fuels Rosalie. She barges through a door...

INT. LABORATORY. DAY

... and finds a meager space filled with SHABBY LOOKING
SCIENTISTS. Her face falls. The tour guide catches up.

TOUR GUIDE
Didn't you hear what I just-

But Rosalie is off again, lurching towards a door labeled DO NOT ENTER.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)
MA'AM, DO NOT GO IN-

She swings open the door and finds...

INT. ROOM. DAY

... a number of SHORTHOOOF EMPLOYEES engaged in the same clumsy combat exercises as their Longshrub counterparts.

INT. GIFT SHOP. DAY

The tour guide dumps a gift bag into Rosalie's handbag.

TOUR GUIDE
Thank you *soooo much* for coming. We
hope you learned something new.

EXT. DILL GARDEN. NIGHT

The vine covers the entirety of the garden. A few Dill Hibiscus flowers poke out like little white surrender flags.

INT. PARLOR. NIGHT

On the TV, Xander's face is beet red.

XANDER REDNAX (TV)
*We can't give up now! We can't
succumb to these evil forces!*

But in her armchair, Rosalie sits defeated. She stares at the Spring Gala photo, tears coming to her eyes.

ROSALIE
Mama, papa... BOA's won. I- I can't
do it anymore. I- I can't...

She drops her head into her chest and sobs. When she looks back up, the Shadow Man is across the room.

She doesn't fright. She doesn't scream. To our surprise, as it comes towards her, she rises to meet it, nose held high.

But, as the light is sucked from the room, she suddenly backs away.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
 Actually, on second thought, I'd
 like you to stop. Stop p-please.

But the Shadow Man does not.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
 I- I said stop! P-please! PLEASE!

Rosalie trips and lands hard on her back.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
 GET AWAY! YOU AREN'T REAL!

But her words do nothing. The Shadow Man is almost upon her. Just as it bends down... Rosalie's hand accidentally presses the TV REMOTE CONTROL and the channel is changed.

COMMERCIAL JINGLE (TV)(O.S.)
*For construction and demolition
 needs done in a jiffy/ Call Barry
 O. Aspen, he'll get them done
 ssssswiftly.*

Rosalie snaps her head to the TV. On the screen is the SNAKE-AND-FLOWER.

COMMERCIAL JINGLE (TV) (CONT'D)
*The snake and the flower that
 needn't introduction/ It's Barry O.
 Aspen of B.O.A. Construction.*

Her jaw drops. She doesn't even notice the Shadow Man's gone. BARRY O. ASPEN (60s), a bald black man, pops onscreen.

BARRY O. ASPEN (TV)
*Hey there! It's me, Barry O. Aspen!
 Urging you to come on down to B.O.A
 Construction.
 (re: the snake-and-flower)
 When our sign your sight does see/
 You're in for the best deal on land
 or ssssssssssssssssea.*

DISSOLVE TO:

Rosalie. Snobbish and determined. Her face made up and composed for the first time in days.

INT. BEAT UP SEDAN/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

Rosalie sits rigidly straight-backed as an ANSWERING MACHINE BEEPS.

ROSALIE (V.O.)
*Grace, it's Rosalie. I've
discovered the culprit behind the
vine in my garden. I'm headed now
to confront them and elicit an
admission of guilt.*

We move to her lap where Angel's RUSTED PISTOL lays.

ROSALIE (V.O.)
I shall return shortly.
(beat)
I'll expect your apologies then.

The message ends.

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD. DAY

Rosalie leans against the parked sedan's driver's side door and waves the pistol in Angel's face.

ROSALIE
Does this *thing*... even work?

Angel grins.

ANGEL
Angel finds it by that old barn. He
squeezes it but it doesn't go *blam*!

Marco giggles. Rosalie scowls. In the distance, we spot a sign for B.O.A. CONSTRUCTION silhouetted against the sky.

EXT. B.O.A. CONSTRUCTION. DAY

A MODULAR OFFICE sits at the edge of a large parking lot. The lot is filled with vehicles emblazoned with the snake-and-flower emblem.

From the lot's edge, Rosalie studies the site. She drops the pistol into her handbag and sneaks towards the office, avoiding the WORKERS lounging beside one of the vehicles.

She doesn't do a very good job of it. But the workers either don't see her or don't care. The same can't be said of the SECURITY CAMERA that FOLLOWS HER EVERY MOVE.

INT. ROOM. DAY

CCTV SCREENS show security footage from around the lot. One ZOOMS IN on Rosalie.

EXT. B.O.A. CONSTRUCTION. MODULAR OFFICE. DAY

Rosalie reaches the front steps and slips inside the black doors. They swoosh shut behind her like a tomb being sealed.

INT. B.O.A. CONSTRUCTION. RECEPTION AREA. DAY

The interior of B.O.A is dark and ominous. A phone RINGS. A SECURITY CAMERA trains in on Rosalie. She continues on.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY

She passes HAMSTER TUBING running maze-like along the walls. A FRIGHTENED HAMSTER watches her and scurries off.

Her FOOTSTEPS ECHO. She slips by an open office. A FRAZZLED REDHEAD looks up from a box of snake-and-flower stickers.

FRAZZLED REDHEAD

Who are you?

Rosalie ignores her. A third SECURITY CAMERA tracks her.

She reaches an office door with BARRY O. ASPEN stenciled onto pebbled glass. She tries the door handle. It's locked.

She takes out the pistol, raising it above her head to smash the glass. Then she notices another door at the end of the hall. It's RED and marked DO NOT ENTER. She inhales sharply.

She drops the gun back into her handbag. She tries this new door's handle. It's unlocked. Beat. She swings it open.

A MAW OF DARKNESS beckons her. A thin smile tugs at her lips. She steps inside.

INT. ROOM. DAY

CCTV SCREENS glow in a corner. Hamster tubing runs along the walls and ceilings. A LARGE SNAKE curls in a terrarium on a shelf, the tubing attached to the top of its cage.

As Rosalie's eyes adjust to the dark, she isn't attracted to any of that. Instead, she's drawn to the center of the room where THREE SHADOWY FIGURES sit.

MIDDLE FIGURE

Welcome, Rosalie Dill. I knew you'd find your way to me one day. Now that day has come.

She gasps.

ROSALIE
Who- who are you?

The figure tilts its head.

MIDDLE FIGURE
Do you really not- Isn't it
obvious? I'm Barry O. Aspen.

ROSALIE
... Oh.

The middle figure (Barry) snorts and gestures to the figure on his right.

BARRY O. ASPEN
Junior, get the lights.

The figure to his right rises and LIMPS to a light switch. Rosalie gasps again.

ROSALIE
YOU! It was you at my mailbox! It
was your tai- tain-

The lights flick on and illuminate... Barry O. Aspen, BARBIE O. ASPEN (40s), and BARRY "JUNIOR" O. ASPEN JR. (40s). Barbie wears a snake skin jacket over an ELECTRONICS STORE t-shirt. Junior has BITE MARKS on his face. Barry nods.

BARRY O. ASPEN
That's right, Ms. Dill. It was my
Junior at your mailbox. *My* sticker
in his hand. Following *my*
directions. Now, I suppose you're-

Barbie suddenly clears her throat. Barry rolls his eyes.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
In addition, it was my Barbie's,
uh, *convenient*, job at an
electronic goods store that got us
the discount on the drone that's
been following you from above.

Barbie glowers.

BARBIE
God, dad, you don't have to be such
a twat about it!

BARRY O. ASPEN
Barbie, it was 20% cheaper online!!

ROSALIE
WHY?!

Rosalie has crumpled into a seat.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Please. Enough. Just tell me why?
Why did you do it? Why me? Why?

Barbie looks to her father and nods. Barry unfurls himself from his chair and glides to the terrarium.

BARRY O. ASPEN
Well that's a rather long, twisty
answer, isn't it, Ms. Dill?

He taps at the terrarium. The snake raises its head. It's red and green and black.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
Tell me, have you heard the name
Robert Shade? Perhaps you know his
other moniker. The *Shadow*?

Rosalie shivers. She looks to the darkness in the corners.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
Robert was a slave on the Dill
Plantation. Your plantation. It was
his duty to make the Dill Garden
ready for the Spring Gala. One day,
whilst working, he was bitten by a
snake. This snake.

Rosalie exclaims and swings her gloved hand to the terrarium.

ROSALIE
That snake?

BARRY O. ASPEN
No, not- Not this *specific* snake!
This was 170 years ago! One of its
species. Their venom causes very
particular symptoms in humans.
Vomiting and hallucinations.

The snake snaps at his fingers.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
Robert saw his freedom in those
symptoms.

(MORE)

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
 He caught the snake and bottled its
 toxin. Then he poisoned his slave
 driver and made his escape.

Barry turns back to Rosalie, his tone suddenly mournful.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
 Yet, years later, he returned.

The gears turn in Rosalie's mind.

ROSALIE
 The BOA battalion!

BARRY O. ASPEN
 That's right, Ms. Dill. *The Shade
 will burn/ 'N in its turn/ Dat
 garden'll cease to be.* During
 Sherman's scorched earth campaign,
 Robert returned with the BOA
 battalion to free his fellow man.
 But his plans were thwarted. The
 battalion was defeated. He was
 forced once more to flee from HiHo.

Barry collects himself.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
 After the war, he returned a third
 time. He should not've, but he did.
 He couldn't help it. Here was his
 home. All he knew. He loved that
 which hated him. Like a sickness
 within him.

His voice lowers, a deadly whisper.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
 He settled here and one day his
 wife was beat in the dust of main
 street. Beat so that her child
 turnt stillborn. When Robert
 protested, a meeting was agreed
 upon. At Kukkoo Barn. There justice
 would be meted out.

In its cage, the snake flicks its tongue. Head bobbing.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
 But Robert had been had. When he
 arrived at Kukkoo Barn, he found no
 justice.

(MORE)

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
Only Dill Rope swinging from the
rafters and figures coming from the
shadows, and they strung him up
and...

Barry's voice breaks.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
I- I- No, I cannot speak it.
Barbie, tell her what they did.

Barbie goes to Rosalie and whispers in her ear. Rosalie
SCREAMS. Barry's eyes glitter.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
Now do you understand, Rosalie
Dill? Now do you understand why you
are here?

ROSALIE
No- I- No- Please no- No- He- he
was your- your ancestor?

BARRY O. ASPEN
HE WASN'T MY- Robert Shade is a
symbol of the misdeeds of this
town! Of the Dills! My family
worked your family's fields. My
great-grandparents were tenant
farmers wasting away on the lands
your cotton sucked dry. My parents
were servants in your family's
home. And now I'm here to tell you
I've won. I've risen from the ashes
your family made of this town.

JUNIOR
Tell her, dad.

BARRY O. ASPEN
Shut up, Junior.

BARBIE
Turn the knife, dad.

BARRY O. ASPEN
I am, Barbie.
(to Rosalie)
I am to be the one to see the Dills
wiped from this town. I am to see
the Shadow's mission finally
carried out.

Rosalie twists helplessly to and fro, looking from him to Junior to Barbie.

ROSALIE

But- but, that was all so long ago.
I just wanted to make Dill Estate a
landmark. You didn't have to plant
the vine. I- Why did you do that?

Barry barks thunderous laughter.

BARRY O. ASPEN

We didn't plant the vine in your
garden, Rosalie Dill.

The SHADOWS BEGIN TO MOVE. A vein pulses in Rosalie's forehead.

ROSALIE

Yes, you did. You're BOA.

BARRY O. ASPEN

We didn't. We are not.

ROSALIE

Yes, you did! Yes, you are! You're
BOA. You're the sticker. It's you.
IT'S YOU!!

Junior and Barbie are laughing too. People FLICKERING in and out of the shadows, closing in on Rosalie.

BARRY O. ASPEN

I am BOA, Ms. Dill! *Boa Construction*. But Boa Construction
doesn't plant vines. We get *calls*.

ROSALIE

Calls?

BARRY O. ASPEN

Telling us which houses to take
care of. Which houses to *demolish*.

ROSALIE

But- I- WHO CALLS?

Rosalie's whole body is shaking. Her knees knocking together.

BARRY O. ASPEN

Many people, Ms. Dill. About many
places. But sometimes people don't
give us their names.

(MORE)

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
I wouldn't tell you who called
about the Dill Estate, even if I
knew!

ROSALIE
Someone's called about-

Her eyes almost launch from her head.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
SOMEONE'S CALLED ABOUT DILL ESTATE?

There's FRANTIC SQUEALING from the wall. The snake has found
itself a hamster. It coils itself around the poor creature,
wrapping itself tighter and tighter. It's all too much. All
too much. Rosalie yanks the rusted pistol from her handbag.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
No! NO! Admit it! You! Behind
everything! Admit it! ADMIT IT!

The flickering people draw nearer. Barry cocks his head.

BARRY O. ASPEN
Are you really going to kill me,
Rosalie Dill? Do you actually think
I want to kill you?

The Shadow Man appears behind him. Rosalie raises her pistol
at it. Barry laughs.

BARRY O. ASPEN (CONT'D)
No, I seek my due in other ways!
Your garden's already dead! I've
seen what that vine can do. I'll be
coming for it soon!

Junior and Barbie sneak towards her...

ROSALIE
It was you. IT WAS YOU! Admit it!
PLEASE! PLEASE! ADMIT IT!!

BARRY O. ASPEN
Centuries of bloodshed and pain!
They must be repaid, Rosalie Dill!
THEY MUST BE REPAID!!!

Barry's voice and the squeals reach a crescendo. Junior and
Barbie leap for the gun and instinctively Rosalie PULLS THE
TRIGGER. BLAM!

The gun fires. Everyone freezes. The Aspens check to see if they've been hit. Then Barry spots BLOOD dripping from the terrarium. The hamster limps away. The snake is DEAD.

He lets out an anguished HOWL. Rosalie looks to the pistol in her hand. Horrified. She drops it. Off of her shocked look...

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. GRACIE'S CAR. HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

... Gracie. Mid-tirade.

GRACIE

A *gun*?! I couldn't believe it. When I got the call...

In the passenger seat, Rosalie twitches.

ROSALIE

Yes, a *call*. Someone calls.

A LADYBUG crawls up her arm. Now ANOTHER. Gracie rages on.

GRACIE

You're lucky Mr. Aspen isn't pressing charges! You're so irresponsible. So bullheaded. Nothing's changed since you were a child.

ROSALIE

Almost over. Just have to find- the call...

GRACIE

Some people *want* to be your friend, Rosalie. Some people *want* to help. To save you.

ROSALIE

Just... Hold... Hold on.

SOMEONE APPEARS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

GRACE!

Rosalie grabs at the steering wheel. The car veers and Gracie slams on the brakes and they come to a skidding halt.

GRACIE

ROSALIE, WHAT WAS THAT?!

ROSALIE

I- there was someone...

But Rosalie frowns. There's no longer anyone in the street. A THIRD LADYBUG buzzes by her face. She slaps at it.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Oh, these infernal bugs!

Gracie's eyes are wide.

GRACIE

Rosalie, I don't see any bugs.

ROSALIE

What are you- They're right...

But Rosalie falls silent. She can't find the ladybugs either.

Her and Gracie's eyes meet. Then Gracie plunges her hand into Rosalie's handbag. She removes the empty pill bottle.

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, no... No!

ROSALIE

I- Grace, you don't- don't understand!

GRACIE

I understand just fine! This has gone far enough! You're coming to stay with Fred and I. You're giving up this ludicrous chase!

ROSALIE

No! I'm not- I don't want- No!

GRACIE

You have a problem! You nearly killed us! You're seeing things!

ROSALIE

No, I'm - I'm not! I'm fine!

The two of them tussle in the front seat, Gracie clinging to Rosalie's dress as Rosalie struggles to escape out the door.

GRACIE

Rosalie, please! You need help. You're acting just like your mother! Just like Natalie!

Rosalie freezes, Gracie's words having their intended affect. She spies her reflection in the rearview mirror. Her skin hangs loose. Her hair is lank. Gracie's right. She looks just like her mother.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

You keep saying you're fine, but
you're not! You can't keep on like
this. You can't.

Rosalie collapses back into her seat. Outside, the world
GROWS DARK.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

We're going to get you better. We
are. This is over. This. Is. Over.

She looks out into the gathering abyss... and nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

GLOVED HANDS working the soil around some LILIES. Rosalie's.
She pauses to wipe sweat from her brow. She's in a garden...

EXT. GRACIE GOODWILL'S HOME. GARDEN. DAY

... but not her own. The garden is a smaller version of the
Dill garden. The resemblance doesn't feel coincidental.

Rosalie rubs at her snake bit hand and pulls back her glove.
The bite is healing, the swelling has gone down.

A SHADOW moves in her periphery. She snaps her head to it,
but it's just a tree. She sighs, her eyes alighting on some
RAGWEED.

GRACIE (O.S.)

How's it going out there?

Grace watches her from behind a screen door. Rosalie forces a
smile.

ROSALIE

Just lovely.

GRACIE

Yay! I'm glad to hear that!

Gracie disappears back inside. Rosalie scowls and returns to
the lilies. Poking from her pocket is the torn snake-and-
flower sticker.

INT. GRACIE GOODWILL'S HOME. LIVING ROOM. DAY

On the TV, RUPAUL sashays a runway. Rosalie and Fred watch from the couch. They have identical grilled cheese sandwiches on their laps. Fred scratches at his head.

FRED

D'you know where his penis goes?

Rosalie ignores him. Gracie enters with a pile of envelopes.

GRACIE

Rosalie, something's come for you
in the mail.

Rosalie ignores her as well.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I hope you don't mind, I've already
opened it.

She extends a folded piece of paper, gleeful.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Oh, Rosalie! It's an offer on Dill
Estate!

Rosalie scowls and tears the crust off her sandwich.

ROSALIE

I thought I told you, *Grace*, that
under no circumstances did I want
to sell Dill Mansion.

Gracie blushes. The paper droops.

GRACIE

I- No- Yes, you did. But I just
thought it couldn't hurt to, well,
pass the idea around town. It's
like I said, we need to get you out
of Dill Mansion as soon as
possible.

(beat)

But no- Yes, you're right. Maybe we
table that for today.

Gracie pouts and shuffles through a few more letters.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Oh, look at this! A postcard from
the Sapps.

That gets Rosalie's attention.

ROSALIE

A postcard from- Let me see that!

She snatches the postcard from Gracie's hand. On it is a GRUMPY COUPLE standing next to an old Civil War fort. Writing reads GREETINGS FROM SAVANNAH, THE SAPPS. Gracie giggles.

GRACIE

They must've retired there. Good to know they haven't *disappeared*.

Rosalie hands back the card, dejected.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

It's a shame they'll miss the Bicentennial. I can't believe the festivities begin tomorrow!

Gracie prances from the room. Rosalie clears her throat.

ROSALIE

Speaking of the, uh, BiCentennial, I- Well, I've been mulling things over, Grace.

GRACIE (O.S.)

Have you?

ROSALIE

Yes, I have. It's been a week now. And I feel, with the festivities here and my town hall meeting approaching, that it's only right that I return home and make a final attempt to scourge my garden of that vine once and-

Gracie returns, tut-tutting, TWO PILLS in her hand.

GRACIE

What have we decided about that word. *Vine*.

ROSALIE

You've decided I shouldn't use it.

GRACIE

Because...

ROSALIE

Because by using it I give power to the idea that there *is* something behind the vi- the word.

GRACIE

That's right. And I think we can agree that's no longer a good idea. Take your pills, please.

Gracie forces the pills into Rosalie's palm. She waits until Rosalie brings them to her lips.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Tonight's the opening of the new community theater. I thought we'd all go to see the show.

Rosalie opens her mouth to protest, but chokes on the pills. Gracie spins and strides once more from the room.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Be ready at 7pm sharp!

DISSOLVE TO:

A MARQUEE.

EXT. HIHO COMMUNITY THEATER. NIGHT

It reads BLOOD, BETRAYAL (AND)TEBELLUM: A SORDID RE-TELLING OF THE HISTORY OF HIHO, PRESENTED BY HIHO MIDDLE SCHOOL. Rosalie gapes up at it, scandalized. Gracie drags her inside.

INT. HIHO COMMUNITY THEATER. NIGHT

Hidden faces watch as Rosalie settles into her seat. Gracie hands her a PLAYBILL. She glances at it and gasps. The first name on the cast of characters is NATHANAEL DILL.

ROSALIE

What is this?!

GRACIE

Shush. You'll enjoy it.

ROSALIE

I didn't ask if I'd enjoy it. I...

She falls silent, suddenly aware of the WHISPERED VOICES around her. Talking. *About her?*

The lights dim. The crowd hushes. The curtains part, revealing...

NATHANAEL DILL (a rouged sixth grader) on a cart pulled by fake oxen. He stands and holds up a MAP. Then he plops down.

NATHANAEL

Lord above, I am lost! I should be
now admiring gold-crusted banks.
Instead I am mired here, in this
low brambly briar. Alas! A
thunderous thought strikes me. I am
no prospector! Tis a falsehood
perpetrated by posterity. I,
Nathanael Dill, am nothing but a
snake oil salesman!

The crowd JEERS. Rosalie's cheeks blaze.

ROSALIE

What is this abhorrent-

But Gracie waves her silent. A DILL HIBISCUS BUSH appears on
stage. Now painted sets of GRAZING COWS and RAMBLING LAND.

NATHANAEL

Behold, two men approach!

Two NATIVE AMERICANS (fourth graders, Muscogee and Seminole
themselves) enter stage. They are CETTO CATE and WAKV. They
address Nathanael.

CETTO CATE

Kind traveler, this land and these
cows are ours. Your kind calls us
Creek, but really we are Muscogee.

Rosalie frowns, mouthing the word. *Muscogee*.

WAKV

We are about to begin a
purification ceremony. We shall
imbibe the Black Drink, made of Il-
Ilex Vomi-Vomi-Vomitoria, and it
shall make us re-re...

Cetto Cate whispers the word in the struggling Wakv's ear.

WAKV (CONT'D)

Regurgitate! Then we will be shown
visions of the answers we seek.

CETTO CATE

Traveler, a decision weighs heavy
on our minds. Follow our people and
leave this land? Or continue our
war with the white man's thievery?
What say you? Will you join us?

Nathanael Dill ponders a moment then jumps from his cart.

NATHANAEL
I shall join you!

Cetto Cate and Wakv nod and exit stage. Nathanael watches them go. He picks a Hibiscus flower, his brow twisting.

NATHANAEL (CONT'D)
I am much taken by this land. More
so by its beautiful flower.

He removes a VIAL of liquid from his pocket.

NATHANAEL (CONT'D)
Among my wares I possess a native
poison. Methinks, a dastardly plan
I shall proceed to pilfer this
pretty plantation.

There are LOUD BOOS. Rosalie tears her playbill in half.

The stage lights go down and come back up. Nathanael, Cetto Cate and Wakv are seated at a campfire. Nathanael stands.

NATHANAEL (CONT'D)
My friends, before we begin, may I
examine your exotic liquid?

Cetto Cate nods. Nathanael goes to a BOWL suspended over the flames. He pretends to slip, slyly dumping the vial into it.

NATHANAEL (CONT'D)
Whoopsie!

Cetto Cate ignores him. He and Wakv take up the bowl. They drink. Seconds pass. They COLLAPSE.

NATHANAEL (CONT'D)
Providence!

Nathanael sprints off stage. The lights go down and come back up once more. Nathanael leads a POSSE armed with ROPE to the fire. Cetto Cate and Wakv are gone.

POSSE MEMBER
Where dem, uhm, uhm, in-in...

The posse member shoots a distressed look to the wings where his TEACHER gives him a reassuring nod.

... *injuns* be?

GASPS. Another POSSE MEMBER elbows his COMPANION.

POSSE MEMBER (CONT'D)
Say, what tribe d'yeh think it was?

COMPANION
(re: the cows)
Who knows, but they sure did *hoof*
it out of here!

The two laugh. Nathanael and the rest of the posse exit. The curtains close. Rosalie trembles with anger. A voice squeaks.

VOICE (O.S.)
Rosalie. Rosalie!

Preacher Hardly is crouched in the aisle beside her. His camouflage, peppered with ripped tickets and popcorn, is painted black. AS IS HIS FACE. Rosalie yelps.

ROSALIE
Preacher Hardly! I- Where have you
been? I thought- terrible things...

PREACHER HARDLY
Rosalie, I must speak to you at
once. At once! About *you know what*.

The preacher looks quite mad. Rosalie's furrows her brow. She glances back at Gracie.

ROSALIE
I- Preacher, no. I can't. Not
anymore. I'm done. I am.

PREACHER HARDLY
Rosalie, *please*. It's urgent. It's-
CHILDREN!

The preacher yelps and does a 40-yard dash back up the center aisle. Rosalie watches him go. Then she looks to her gloved hand. *Is she really done? Really?* After a moment, she sighs.

ROSALIE
Grace, I have to use the ladies
room. I'll return shortly.

She stands, glancing back at the play.

The DILL SLAVES are teaching Nathanael how to work a cotton gin. Among them is a SHADOWY FIGURE. Rosalie peers at it. *Is it another student?* She can't tell.

INT. THEATER LOBBY. NIGHT

Rosalie ducks behind a large STAND UP for the BiCentennial.
The preacher awaits her there, doing an anxious jig.

ROSALIE

So, preacher, what is it that's so urgent? It doesn't have anything to do with the play, does it? I thought it a tasteless performance. Nathanael Dill a snake oil salesman? And did you hear how they said, "*hoof* if out of here?"

The preacher's mouth wrenches with joy.

PREACHER HARDLY

Yes, Rosalie, I do have *proof*!

ROSALIE

Proof of- Oh, preacher, where have you been?! On the phone you just went silent. I thought-

But the preacher cuts her off, head bobbing excitedly.

PREACHER HARDLY

It may have to come to *violence*, Rosalie. It may! I've been at town hall, storming it! Demanding they see me. When we were on the phone, I saw *this*.

He thrusts something at her. It's a PETITION to return portions of HiHo to its original, indigenous peoples.

Rosalie frowns at it.

ROSALIE

What is this? I don't understand.

PREACHER HARDLY

It's war, Rosalie! First they came for our heritage. Now they're coming for the land beneath our feet! Haven't you been listening to Xander? It's time to fight back. At the battle reenactment, we shall!

ROSALIE

At the battle- Preacher, what in good heavens are you...

But Rosalie falls silent. A thought's popped up in her mind.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
You know, the Shorthoof CEO is coming to the reenactment. No one's ever seen him before.

PREACHER HARDLY
WHOOPSI must prevail! Rosalie, will you fight alongside me?

ROSALIE
Of course, that doesn't... just a coincidence really... But still...

Rosalie fishes in her pocket and removes the torn snake-and-flower sticker. She considers it. It's just a cheap, flimsy piece of plastic. Nothing more. She bends it in her fingers. *She could throw it out now.* It's nothing. Trash. And yet...

She hands it to the preacher.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Preacher, I never asked you at the playhouse... have you ever seen these lyrics before?

The preacher takes the torn sticker from her and reads. A warm smile creases his blackened face.

PREACHER HARDLY
Oh, yes, Rosalie. They're from a song sung in simpler times. I remember it well. I do. *Eli's song.*

Rosalie's eyes widen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GRACIE GOODWILL'S HOME. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Gracie moseys about, tidying up before bed. From the couch, Rosalie watches her.

GRACIE
... What a fun little show! I learned *so much*. At first, I thought, "it's children acting, it won't be *that* good." But it was!

ROSALIE
Mhm.

GRACIE

And the attention to period detail.
So historically accurate!

ROSALIE

Mhm.

GRACIE

And those cute little kiddies in
their cute little costumes! It was
just so good.

ROSALIE

I- uh, yes, I- I thought it was
very good too.

Gracie rolls her eyes.

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, do you always have to
be so pessi-

Then she stops dead in her tracks.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Hold on. What did you just say?

Rosalie gives her a polite smile.

ROSALIE

Thank you for taking me, *Gracie*.

Gracie's mouth just about hits the floor.

GRACIE

You- You used my proper name!

ROSALIE

Did I? Oh, yes, I suppose I did.

Beat. Then Gracie jumps for joy.

GRACIE

I knew it! I knew you'd get there!
I kept telling myself, "Gracie,
she'll see the light. Just keep at
it. Just keep going." And now you
have! You're the new and fully-
bloomed Rosalie! I can't believe
it! We just need to get rid of that
stuffy old mansion to make the
transition complete!

To our complete surprise, Rosalie nods along to this.

ROSALIE

I- I couldn't agree more, Gracie.
In fact, I was wondering if I might
take a look at that offer.

GRACIE

You- Of course!

Gracie races from the room, returning a moment later with the letter. Rosalie's smile thins.

ROSALIE

Alone, if you wouldn't mind.

GRACIE

Oh! Oh, of course! I- I'll just
talk to you tomorrow then. For the
beginning of the BiCentennial.
Goodnight, Rosalie!

Gracie pauses in the doorway, waiting for Rosalie to return her farewell. Rosalie doesn't. Gracie pouts and slinks away.

Rosalie's smile evaporates at once. She turns to the letter. It's now coupled with its envelope. We've seen this envelope before. It's BLACK-AND-WHITE. Spotted like a Holstein cow.

Rosalie unfolds the letter. It is indeed an offer on her estate. And there, at the bottom...

Please consider our proposal.

*We recommend you do,
Shorthoof Industries
Proud Member of B.O.A. (Bovine
Operations of America)*

The paper falls from her fingers. She grabs for her handbag, yanking out the SHORTHOOF GIFT BAG and dumping it out.

Her eyes lock on a replica of the LARGE SHED with SHORTHOOF INDUSTRIES PAINTED ON ITS SIDE. She leaps to her feet.

ROSALIE

*Eli's Song... Eli's cotton gin...
The Munger Gin... His sign my sight
will see. Yes, I've seen it all
these years! Up there on the hill,
staring down at me. Shorthoof! Two-
there were two Muscogee Indians in
the Boa Battalion... Two Muscogee
Indians to meet Nathanael... and
now- now one Shorthoof CEO.*

(MORE)

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

He's- he's not coming for the BiCentennial, is he? No- no... something- something darker. Something older... The decision, yes, the decision his ancestors couldn't give. To continue the war on the white man's thievery. He's coming to buy Dill Estate! To destroy it! To rectify, in my garden, HiHo's original sin. The land is going back, yes, it is!

Rosalie draws in a shuddering breath.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

From the very beginning! From the very beginning they've been set against me!

Her hands shake. Her lips twitch. She glances to her right and finds the Shadow Man standing there, reaching for her.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

NO, YOU CAN'T! I'VE TAKEN MY PILLS!

But it's too late, the darkness is upon her, and she's consumed by BLACKNESS.

GRACIE (PRE-LAP)

Rosalie. Rosalie!

FADE IN:

On a BICENTENNIAL BANNER flapping in the wind.

EXT. SHERMAN'S FOLLY FIELD. DAY

Rosalie blinks in the sudden light. She's standing beside in the middle of a packed field. Gracie and Fred are beside her. It's the battle reenactment. Citizens mill about in UNION and CONFEDERATE UNIFORMS. Fred is in his own UNION GRAYS.

GRACIE

You've been zonked all morning! Are you all right?

Rosalie nods dazedly. The sun burns above.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Oh, what a joy! The Goodwills and Dills enjoying things as friends.

A VOICE sounds over a LOUDSPEAKER.

LOUDSPEAKER
Testing. Testing.

GRACIE
They're about to announce the
beginning of the festivities! I
must get to the stage.

Gracie jounces away. The crowd packs in. Rosalie searches for
the stage but can't find it above the surrounding heads.

She spots Angel, Marco & The Medusa blowing green smoke from
a SMOKE MACHINE. They notice her and grin.

THE MEDUSA
Don't worry, grannie. It's not the
real thing. Not all of it!

She frowns and turns back to Fred. But Fred is gone.

ROSALIE
Fred?

VOICE (O.S.)
The monster must've gotten him.

She yelps. Standing beside her is the Game Warden.

GAME WARDEN
Can't you feel it, lady? It's
getting closer.

He's holding a leash in his hand. It's attached to a TODDLER.

LOUDSPEAKER
Beginning... HiHo Bicentennial...
Beginning... Something else...

VOICE (O.S.)
Was that that weird game warden?

Edward Longshrub is now to her right.

EDWARD LONGSHRUB
He's always stealing our dogs. Say,
have you seen the Shorthoof folks?
They're planning something, aren't
they? Doesn't matter. We're
trained. We're ready. We have a
plan of our own. I'll give you a
hint: fertilizer.

LOUDSPEAKER
Now... Shorthoof CEO...

There's APPLAUSE. Rosalie's eyes widen. She raises up on her tippy toes, straining to catch a glimpse of the CEO, but she still can't see a thing.

VOICE (O.S.)

Was that that weird Longshrub guy?

Edward is gone, replaced by the Shorthoof tour guide.

TOUR GUIDE

Was he telling you about their plan? Doesn't matter. We're trained. We're ready. We have a plan of our own. I'll give you a hint: cow shit.

GRACIE (O.S.)

Well aren't you just the social ladybug.

Gracie is back beside her. Rosalie yelps again.

ROSALIE

Grace, Fred is gone!

GRACIE

Gracie, Rosalie. I thought we got over that hump. And no he's not. He's right there.

Gracie points out to the field, where the CONFEDERATE and UNION forces have lined up opposite one another.

Some of the Union members aren't interested in their blue-clad enemy. They're facing one another, hurling insults back and forth. These the are Longshrub and Shorthoof factions. Among them, Edward Longshrub waves a large B.O.A. flag.

Rosalie twists back to Gracie.

ROSALIE

The Shorthoof CEO! You were on the stage! Did you see him? Is he an Indian?

GRACIE

Rosalie, that's not appropriate.

VOICE (O.S.)

This is it. This is our war.

Preacher Hardly stands behind Rosalie. He's in Confederate blues, old BLOOD STAINS dappling his uniform.

ROSALIE

Fine. Is he Native American?

GRACIE

I don't know why you're assuming it was a man.

ROSALIE

GRACE! WHAT DID HE LOOK LIKE?!

Rosalie shields herself from the sun. It's so bright out. TOO BRIGHT. Everything feels just a bit surreal.

GRACIE

He was tall and- oh, they're about to begin!

An anticipatory hush falls. Preacher Hardly unfurls a large CONFEDERATE FLAG. Then he charges towards the UNION forces.

PREACHER HARDLY

HERRRRRIII-

But he's drowned out by an AIRHORN and the cries of the two parties as they barrel towards one another. The Longshrub and Shorthoof blocs ignore the battle completely, turning instead on one another. Cow shit and fertilizer fly through the air.

Within seconds green smoke obscures everything. Then the smoke clears and Rosalie gasps.

A TALL MAN has appeared, dressed in a suit and tie with his back to her. He has long, dark hair. He charges off into the murk. Without a moment's thought, Rosalie charges after him.

GRACIE

Rosalie, where are you going?!

But Rosalie isn't listening. She hobbles along as fast as her arthritic joints allow. The green smoke swallows her up and the noise of the outside world disappears.

MOVING SHAPES dart across her vision. A handful of cow shit whizzes by her face. The tall man jumps in and out of sight.

VOICE (O.S.)

Rosalie Dill!

Barry O. Aspen lurches into view, raising his fist to whirl a big ol' cow turd at her. Then...

PREACHER HARDLY (O.S.)

-TTTTAAAAAAGGGGGEEEEEE.

Preacher Hardly tackles him. Rosalie hobbles on.

The tall man has vanished. She wipes sweat from her face. Suddenly she's out of the green haze.

The SUN IS SETTING. Ahead of her is the SHORTHOOFF FACTORY FEEDLOT. The Tall Man is at the Munger Gin shed.

ROSALIE

Excuse me!

The Tall Man ignores her and slips inside the shed. A few seconds later, Rosalie reaches the shed as well. She pauses.

Down the hill, she can see Dill Estate. It's nothing but vines. She ducks inside.

INT. MUNGER SYSTEM GIN SHED. LATE AFTERNOON

The Tall Man is nowhere to be found. The only thing inside is the MUNGER SYSTEM GIN. Rosalie circles it, searching for a doorway or an exit. But there isn't one.

Then she notices a RED HINGED PANEL in the side of the gin. She swings it open. A STAIRCASE descends into pitch black.

She considers it. Then she climbs down into the dark.

INT. HALLWAY. RESEARCH FACILITY. NIGHT

A hatch in the white paneled walls launches open and Rosalie tumbles out. She rights herself, taking in her surroundings.

The facility is sleek, ultra-modern. TWO SCIENTISTS in red-and-green lab coats pass down a perpendicular hallway. Rosalie sneaks after them.

SCIENTIST

Working very effectively... process almost complete.

The scientists reach a DOOR and punch in a code. The door swings open. Rosalie hustles down the hallway and manages to catch it right before it shuts.

She pauses there, bracing herself. Then she enters.

INT. RESEARCH LABORATORY. NIGHT

She's standing on a platform thirty feet in the air. Below her, a GREENHOUSE extends in perpetuity. VINES of all shapes and sizes curl around endless rows of trellises.

SCIENTISTS of diverse ethnicities bustle between the trellises, running experiments.

Hanging above them is a MASSIVE POSTER of an austere MUSCOGEE MAN. Rosalie gawks at it. Then she takes a step back and bumps into another SCIENTIST.

SCIENTIST

Hey! What are you doing here?

ROSALIE

I... I...

SCIENTIST

You shouldn't be- Wait, are you...

The question hangs in the air. Then the scientist leaps for an ALARM, and Rosalie rushes from the room.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT

RED and GREEN LIGHTS flash. Rosalie stumbles along.

ROSALIE

Quicker, Rosalie! Quicker!

YELLS. STOMPING FEET. Rosalie reaches the end of the hall and veers left. Her hands shake. She grabs her prescription bottle and gulps down two pills.

But the pills don't have their intended affect. As she glances wildly behind her, she spies the Shadow Man. She whips the bottle at it, swerving down another hallway.

She reaches the hatch. Tugs it open. Scurries up...

EXT. SHORTHOOF FEEDLOT FACTORY. NIGHT

... out the munger shed...

EXT. COW PASTURE. NIGHT

... and into the muddy field. SIRENS BLARE. SPOTLIGHTS swing over her. Rosalie darts past befuddled cows. Her shoes get stuck in the mud. She yanks her feet out and keeps going.

SHOUTS reach the open air.

Before her, the Dill Garden fence looms. She's gasping, doubled-over. She pulls herself up over fence and...

EXT. DILL GARDEN. NIGHT

... collapses onto a soft bedding of the vine. For a moment, she lies there, panting. Then she struggles to her feet and looks behind her. DISTANT FIGURES surge from the shed.

Her eyes swing past the TWENTY COWS along the fence and now to what's left of Dill Estate... but there's nothing left. Just vine. Covering everything.

Cow shit clings to her hair. Dirt streaks her face. She tries to cry but she's too tired for tears.

She sinks to the ground. *This is it, isn't it?* The end. Of the Dills. Of everything. She tries to compose herself.

ROSALIE

O- Okay. Okay. I'm- I'm ready. If I'm to die, I want it to be here.

The mob surges closer. She turns up her nose.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

I- I just hope it will be nice. Like- like a bright Spring day.

She stretches herself out on the ground, accepting, once and for all, her fate. SNAPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPP!

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

OWWWWW!!!!

She bolts upright. The MOUSE TRAP is closed over her fingers. She shakes it off, screaming...

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

WHY CAN'T ANYTHING, EVER-

She freezes. She's knocked over her handbag. The Medusa's matches have tumbled from it.

THE MEDUSA (V.O.)

End it your way...

She picks them up. *Yes, why not?* She takes out a match, twirling it in her fingers. *Why not end it her way?* Beat. She lights the match and drops it to the ground.

THE WORLD GOES UP IN FLAMES.

The cows gallop off. Green smoke mixes with black. Dill Garden becomes a hellish landscape.

The flames reach the bushes along the back fence. A charred Hibiscus flower drifts past Rosalie.

There's a RUSTLING. An ENORMOUS BOA CONSTRICTOR slithers from the bushes, a BABY CALF lodged in its mouth. It pauses to look at her. Then it's gone.

Rosalie reaches for her handbag and takes out the JOINT. Considering it. *Is she going to smoke it?*

No. She throws it away. A lady until the end. Then she coughs on the swirling smoke. Choking. Seizing. The world GOING BLACK around her.

VOICES.

VOICE (O.S.)

The truth is we can no longer compete, Robert. It all must go.

INT. DILL MANSION. STUDY. DAY [DREAM]

An ACCOUNTANT speaks with Robert Dill.

ACCOUNTANT

The mill. The land. All of it. *It all must go.*

There's a GASP off-screen. A tiny figure sprints away.

ROBERT DILL

Rosalie!

INT. DILL MANSION. HALLWAY. DAY [DREAM]

Young Rosalie's legs churn and tears stream down her face. She streaks towards a RED DOOR at the end of the hall.

YOUNG ROSALIE

You promised! YOU PROMISED!

The door flings open and she finds...

INT. DILL MANSION. BEDROOM. DAY [DREAM]

... Natalie Dill in bed. On death's door. Skin and bones.

YOUNG ROSALIE
YOU PROMISED ME! YOU PROMISED ME
IT'D BE MINE!

ROBERT DILL (O.S.)
Rosalie!

Green smoke fills the air. Rosalie spins and bolts away,
Natalie's screams echoing after her.

NATALIE DILL (O.S.)
Oh, Rosalie, GROW UP!

The hall tilts sideways and she's flung into...

EXT. DILL GARDEN. DAY [DREAM]

... where the little girl stands beside a GARDENER. The
gardener points to the flowers.

GARDENER
Gracie, what's that one called?

Young Rosalie clambers to her feet and snatches something
from the little girl's hands. It's the RAGWEED in a small
pot. She looks to the girl, aghast.

YOUNG ROSALIE
Was it you, Grace? Was it you?!

ROBERT DILL (O.S.)
Rosalie! ROSALIE!

Rosalie darts off again. The cotton fields loom ahead.
There's a GUNSHOT behind her. She whirls to find Robert
splayed on the ground, a pistol in his hand and a gun wound
in his temple.

NATALIE DILL (V.O.)
GROW UP!

The air is shaking. Rosalie finds herself amongst the cotton.

NATALIE DILL (V.O.)
GROOOOWWWW UPPPPP!!!

She transfigures, becoming a TWENTY YEAR OLD WOMAN before our
eyes. She looks back to the mansion, bitter and vengeful.
Then she begins to plant the ragweed amongst the cotton.

The smoke swirls thicker. Rosalie is choking. Gasping. Dying.

CUT TO:

A BLURRY POV. Someone drags us from the flames. Gracie.

GRACIE

Rosalie, can you hear me? Rosalie?
Rosalie!

EXT. FRONT OF DILL MANSION. NIGHT

Rosalie comes to in the grass beside her mailbox. Gracie is stooped over her, crying.

GRACIE

Thank god! Thank god!

She wraps Rosalie in a big hug. Rosalie's eyes dart to her backyard.

ROSALIE

Grace, the people! Where- where are they? They're coming for me.
They're coming for me!

GRACIE

Rosalie, there's no one. It's just me. Just me.

Gracie's right. The angry mob has disappeared.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

At the battle you just ran away.
Oh, Rosalie, what have you done?

The Dill Mansion roof quivers and with a resounding CRACK, collapses inward. Rosalie watches it tumble down, and as it does, the stark reality of its charred timbers crash upon her mind. Her home and her garden are truly no more.

All of a sudden, she's bawling. Crying the tears of a frightened, frustrated woman who's been fighting the world for a long, long time.

ROSALIE

Oh, Grace, I think I was the one who planted the ragweed all those years ago! I think it was me! I- I- Why did it all have to go away, Grace? No ever told me why. They never told me why. I just wanted to know why.

Gracie caresses Rosalie's head as she sobs.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

It's all moving away from the Dills, Grace. It is. And I- I just wanted people to see how beautiful it all was. I just wanted them to see. I- I used to be so happy.

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, Life doesn't give us answers. And the ones we do get never equal the wrongs we feel have been done to us. But we have to move on. We can't dwell in the past forever. It's a place of shadows and ghosts, and if we stay there long enough, we become one of them.

Rosalie snuffles. SIRENS sound in the distance. Rosalie looks to the darkness beyond the flames. From it, comes the Shadow Man. She watches it glide towards her and she turns to Grace.

ROSALIE

Grace, I've been seeing him.

GRACIE

Seeing who?

ROSALIE

The Shadow Man.

GRACIE

The Shadow- What- Hang on, what's this on your wrist?

Rosalie's glove has burned away. The THROBBING BITE MARK pulses beneath. Rosalie stares at the Shadow Man. She smiles.

ROSALIE

I've been seeing him. I've been seeing him...

DISSOLVE TO:

A LADYBUG CRAWLING ALONG A FLOWER STEM. But the ladybug doesn't look real. It's painted.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. DAY

Rosalie stares at the painting of the ladybug on the opposite wall, as a DOCTOR addresses her and Gracie. She looks a little different today. Gone is her outdated clothing. She now wears one of Gracie's floral tracksuits.

DOCTOR

... The snake's venom is a slow-acting neurotoxin. It attacks the brain and causes disorientation, hallucinations, even loss of motor-function. It's fortunate we caught this now. Soon the damage might've been irreversible...

INT. GRACE'S CAR. DAY [DRIVING]

Gracie jabbers on...

GRACIE

The deal on the estate should be done in a few days. The Shorthoof CEO himself called to say how excited he was. It turns out he's buying yours and the Sapps' lots. You never let me finish at the reenactment. He's a white man. Not Native American at all!

ROSALIE

Oh.

GRACIE

He was telling me they found spurs from that nasty vine in Longshrub's fertilizer! Apparently Shorthoof cows have been eating the vine and Longshrub's been using their droppings for its products. They've been accidentally spreading the vine the entire time. How wild!

Rosalie attempts a weak smile.

INT. NEW APARTMENT. DAY

A PROPERTY MANAGER leads Rosalie and Gracie through the freshly furbished space.

PROPERTY MANAGER

All new appliances, all new everything. Just perfect for a millennial such as yourself!

Gracie giggles. Rosalie studies the bare walls.

ROSALIE

Where's the telephone?

PROPERTY MANAGER
*The telephone? Oh, I see. A
landline. Yes, very funny. Imagine.*

Gracie pulls the property manager to the side.

GRACIE
Forgive her. It's been a big day.
She finally agreed to give up going
to a very important meeting this
morning. And she's never lived
outside of HiHo.

PROPERTY MANAGER
Poor creature! Now, if you're
interested, I can have you in here
in a couple day's time. The 18th.

Rosalie's ears perk up.

ROSALIE
The 18th?

She opens her mouth to reply, but before she can, Gracie
chimes in.

GRACIE
Perfect. We'll take it!

PROPERTY MANAGER
Wonderful! Just wonderful...

EXT. DOWNTOWN HIHO ARTS DISTRICT. DAY

An OFFICIAL snips the ceremonial ribbon for the HIHO ARTS
DISTRICT. A CROWD cheers. A MAN hugs Rosalie. It's the
transgender sales clerk from the supermarket. Rosalie
flinches, but allows the hug to happen. Gracie beams.

INT. GRACIE GOODWILL'S HOME. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Fred snoozes on the couch. Rosalie flips through channels.
She reaches public access and stops. There's Xander Rednax...

XANDER REDNAX (TV)
*But what if I'm right? What if
those faces we see out on the
streets? What if they're exactly
what we thought they always were?*

Gracie enters and sighs.

GRACIE

Oh, Rosalie, not this. Haven't you heard? Xander's a *Russian spy*. He's part of a group called Broadcasters Overseas & Abroad. He's been filming his shows in *Moscow*.

Rosalie frowns.

ROSALIE

Broadcasters Overseas & Abroad. B - O - A. BOA.

Gracie gives a nervous cough.

GRACIE

Oh, well, yes, I suppose. I, uh, hadn't thought of that.

But Rosalie just shrugs.

ROSALIE

How silly.

She changes the channel. Gracie grins.

GRACIE

A couple of days ago that would've sent you flying off the handle. I'm so proud of you!

ROSALIE

It's like you said, Gracie. You have to move on. You can't live in the past forever.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DILL ESTATE. DAY

Smoke still curls from Dill Estate's charred remains. Rosalie picks her way through them, toeing an item here. Bending over a memento there.

She takes the torn snake-and-flower sticker from her pocket. She lets it flutter away, watching it disappear into the sky.

She turns to the fence. A SINGLE COW remains. She shoos it away.

ROSALIE

Go on now. There's nothing left for you here.

The cow lows sadly and trots off. She turns to leave.

Beneath the crisped remains of her armchair, she spots the singed family photo album. She picks it up and brushes away the ashes. She finds her beloved Spring Gala picture.

EXT. OLD HIHO CEMETERY. DAY

Rosalie lays the photo at her parents' graves. Her eyes leak tears. She sniffs.

ROSALIE

Mama. Papa. I- I am here to bid you both farewell. I am leaving HiHo. Perhaps for good.

(beat)

I- I am sorry that The Dills had to end with me. I understand now that perhaps we were not all good for HiHo. And that perhaps, I may have had a hand in- in... But - but I tried my very best. I did.

The tears come quicker.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

I- I hope my failure did not disappoint you. Be-because I love you both very much. I do.

The tears turn to sobs. =

VOICE (O.S.)

Rosalie!

It's Preacher Hardly.

PREACHER HARDLY

You're alive! I'd heard... Dill Mansion razed to the ground. I thought they'd gotten you, those cabalistic carpetbaggers!

There's something different about the Preacher. As if out from under her cloak of paranoia, Rosalie is able to see him clearly for the first time. Gone is his spritely energy. What remains is a crotchety, backwards old man.

ROSALIE

Preacher, I would like you to leave me alone. I am through. THROUGH, PREACHER!

PREACHER HARDLY

Through?! But, Rosalie, what about BOA? What did you find out? Is it real?

ROSALIE

It doesn't matter if it's real or not. If it is. If it ever was.

PREACHER HARDLY

But- but you can't be through! Our heritage! It's under attack!

ROSALIE

Preacher, I. Am. Finished.

And with that, Rosalie strides from the cemetery.

She hears TRAP MUSIC. Out in the parking lot, The Medusa leans against her sedan.

THE MEDUSA

Hello, grannie.

EXT. HIHO TOWN PARK. PARK BENCH. DAY

Like Preacher Hardly, The Medusa is different. Gone are her braids and smoky prescience. Out from under Rosalie's prejudice-tinted glasses, she's just a run-of-the-mill, awkward, fifteen-year-old girl.

She and Rosalie sit side-by-side. She clears her throat.

THE MEDUSA

I heard what happened to you at Barry O. Aspen's. Grannie, the gun. Angel and Marco told me it didn't work. I mean, they just found it in the woods. It's not like they... They were wrong, but they didn't know... You know?

(beat)

That's why you fired it, right? Because you didn't think it worked?

Rosalie watches Angel chase Marco around a tree. The two of them wear manga tees and have a lot more acne than when we last saw them. She nods.

THE MEDUSA (CONT'D)

And your house. I heard what happened to it as well. I- I'm sorry, grannie.

(MORE)

THE MEDUSA (CONT'D)

That's what I wanted to tell you.
Angel and Marco are too.

ANGEL/MARCO

Angel's sorry! / Sorry, silly lady!

THE MEDUSA

We wanted to find out who made
Buddha, but we never wanted any of
that to happen. Buddha helps us,
you know. To- to *deal* with this
world. With being who we are in it.
I have- Well it doesn't matter.
It's all over now. We've given up
Buddha. Angel got grounded, and we
have SAT prep coming up, and I...
I'm sorry.

The Medusa falls silent. Rosalie gives her a prim smile.

ROSALIE

Thank you.

She looks out over the park. At the PARKGOERS with their
heads buried in their phones. At the TEENS vaping. At the POP
UP TENTS handing out leaflets for causes she doesn't know.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

You were right, you know. I
shouldn't have gone looking for the
vine. But I did and now I'm stuck
here. In this *world*. I don't
understand it.

Her gaze settles on a BI-RACIAL FAMILY holding a barbecue.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

It doesn't want me here. *They* don't
want me here.

THE MEDUSA

They?

ROSALIE

(re: the family)

They. Them. All of them. *You*.

The Medusa is quiet a moment. Then she stands.

THE MEDUSA

Oh, you silly lady.

She turns to leave.

ROSALIE

Wait! Don't go! I- I need your help. Everything's gone and I don't know what to do.

The Medusa turns back to her. She shakes her head.

THE MEDUSA

It isn't all gone, grannie. You're still here, aren't you? Nothing's gone until you are.

She marches away. Her words remain.

INT. GRACIE GOODWILL'S HOME. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

PACKING BOXES are stacked five high. Gracie sweeps up bits of packing tape and cardboard from the floor.

ROSALIE

Gracie...

Rosalie looks on from the couch. Gracie leans her broom and dustpan against the doorway.

GRACIE

Yes?

ROSALIE

There's something I wanted to tell you.

(beat)

I wanted to tell you that I'd like to find another home here. In HiHo.

Gracie groans.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

I- I've come to realize that just because the Dill Estate is gone, it doesn't mean that the Dill's legacy has to be as well! As long as I'm in HiHo, the Dill- the Dill world lives on.

But Gracie isn't to be convinced.

GRACIE

Rosalie, no! NO! We agreed you needed a fresh start. You agreed you'd sign Dill Estate over tomorrow!

(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

If you stay here you'll just fall back into old habits. You need to *get away*.

ROSALIE

But, Grace- *Gracie*, we- I can change! I have changed. Perhaps, the Dills, yes, perhaps we can recognize our wrongdoings and begin to heal the wounds we've-

GRACIE

Rosalie, it's too late! The wheels are already in motion. Tomorrow's the 18th.

ROSALIE

But-

GRACIE

IT'S TOO LATE! You are leaving tomorrow. And that is final. FINAL!

Gracie hurls a pillow across the room. Rosalie purses her lips and re-stacks her hands on her lap. The two of them stare daggers at one another. Neither's mind moved an inch.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN. MORNING

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS remove the "Welcome to HiHo" road sign.

EXT. GRACIE GOODWILL'S GARDEN. MORNING

Birds chirp. Bees buzz. Beside a Hibiscus Bush, Rosalie breathes in the fresh morning air. Transported back to Dill Garden in all its former splendor.

INT. BATHROOM. DAY

In a mirror, Rosalie applies garish red lipstick. She's back in her 50's Sunday best: a large, frilly hat, lace dress, silk gloves, and Dill Hibiscus broach pinned to her chest.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

GRACIE (O.S.)

Rosalie, we're leaving for the apartment soon. You must be back by four to sign over your property.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY

Rosalie exits out in the hall. Gracie's eyes widen.

GRACIE

Oh... That's, uh, quite an outfit.

Rosalie peers at her from beneath her frilly hat.

ROSALIE

Grace, I will not be accompanying you to the apartment today. Nor will I be signing over my property.

Gracie's jaw drops.

GRACIE

No- We- We agreed about this. We did. We agreed!

ROSALIE

You agreed. I did not. And I will not. I am staying in HiHo and that is that. Now if you'll excuse me...

She attempts to move past Gracie, but Gracie blocks her. Gracie looks terrified.

GRACIE

Where- where are you going?

ROSALIE

I have an appointment at town hall. I intend on keeping it.

GRACIE

No, you can't! You promised you wouldn't- I mean your garden's already gone, how could it even be a land- Rosalie, you can't!

ROSALIE

I very much indeed can.

GRACIE

No. NO! I- I forbid you!

ROSALIE

Forbid! Ha! How preposterous. Get out of my way, Grace.

GRACIE

Rosalie, please, please, I don't like this. I don't.

ROSALIE

And I find, Grace, that as much as
I try, I very much don't like you.

Rosalie worms her way past Gracie. As she strides for the front door Gracie tears after her. She levels a finger at Rosalie's back, her voice reverberating....

GRACIE

All I've ever done for you, Rosalie Dill, not once did you thank me. Not once! As a girl I wanted to be just like you. A Dill! But you were smug and self-centered and mean! Even so, through all these years I've tried to help you. Not because I saw the good in you. No! Because now I see there is no good in you! It's because I pity you, Rosalie Dill. That's right, I. Pity. You. This servant's daughter PITIES YOU! So enough is enough. If you want to go to your council meeting then go. GO! But don't think you'll be coming back here ever again. Don't you think that for one second!

Rosalie pauses in the doorway. Then, with a catty smile,...

ROSALIE

I could never have asked for more.

... she's gone.

I/E. BUS/HIHO. DAY [DRIVING]

Rosalie, posture perfect, hair immaculate, addresses the snake-and-flower sticker on the seat back before her.

ROSALIE

Good afternoon. I am Rosalie Dill.
Rosalie Dill... of the Dill family.

She pauses. The bus has turned down Main Street.

Barry O. Aspen emerges from the electronics store. Like Preacher Hardly and The Medusa before him, he's different. Just a pot-bellied old man. His eyes meet Rosalie's. He scowls and shuffles away.

Rosalie's face flashes with anger. Then she bites her lip and continues...

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

I am here today to represent my family. To represent this town.

(deep breath)

Today will be a new day in this town's history. A good day. Today, the Dills and HiHo will together as one move forwa-

SMASH CUT TO:

A CRANE rips Nathanael Dill's statue off of its plinth.

EXT. TOWN HALL. DAY

Rosalie watches as her ancestor's likeness is pulled up and far, far away.

INT. TOWN HALL. WAITING ROOM. DAY

Rosalie sits scrunched in a tiny chair, her early-morning energy replaced with a foul mood.

Across the room, a RECEPTIONIST talks quietly into a phone. Behind her, a HALLWAY leads to the council's chambers.

Rosalie stares down at a PAPER CUP in her hand. A brownish-black liquid swirls inside.

Her eyes move past a COFFEE MAKER to a PIN UP BOARD littered with PETITIONS. One calls for the HiHo High School Militiamen mascot to be changed. Another for the Dill Hibiscus to be replaced as the town's official flower.

Her scowl deepens.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Can I get you something else?

The receptionist is staring at her. She sniffs.

ROSALIE

No. Thank you.

The receptionist checks her wristwatch.

RECEPTIONIST

The council is running a few minutes behind. You may have to wait a teensy bit longer. I hope that isn't too much trouble.

ROSALIE

Why should it be? I arrived when expected. Why should the same standard be held to anyone else?

The receptionist giggles. Rosalie glowers and looks away. She finds yet another petition. But she's seen this one before.
Return portions of HiHo to its original, indigenous peoples.

RECEPTIONIST

I hear you were unwell.

The receptionist is giving her an odd, half-cocked smile.

ROSALIE

Yes, I was. How did-

RECEPTIONIST

Your friend called and told us. Are you better now?

ROSALIE

Yes. I am fine.

Rosalie returns her attention to the petition. *Are those photos of the textile mill? And the Evergreen and Dickey-Birdsong estates?* She takes a sip from the paper cup.

RECEPTIONIST

We were surprised.

Back to the receptionist. She's still wearing that odd smile.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

That you set up this appointment. Drawing attention to yourself like that. Most people in this town had forgotten all about the Dills. Yet here you are, even after Dill Garden is gone.

Rosalie gives a sniff. *How impertinent.*

ROSALIE

Yes, well, I- I've come to realize that perhaps it's important for the people of HiHo to know the past of this town. Even if all of it isn't beautiful. Even if some of it is... *unpleasant*. I thought that the Dill Estate might still pay testament to that. And that I might as well.

The receptionist beams.

RECEPTIONIST

That's wonderful, Ms. Dill!

Rosalie looks out the window. She can still see Nathanael Dill's icon dangling in the air. Her face clouds over.

ROSALIE

But now... Oh, now I'm not so sure.

RECEPTIONIST

No?

Her lips curl into an ugly sneer. Her skin crinkles up like an ancient accordion.

ROSALIE

No.

And now, like a snake shedding its fake skin, the true Rosalie, the one and only Rosalie, reveals herself...

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

How much more must *they* take from me?! Here I am, ready to turn over a new leaf. But still *they* want more! *They* want the Dills obliterated. *They* want my world destroyed. Oh perhaps they'll get it. But will HiHo be any better without us? Look out that window. What do you see? Morality betrotten. Decency disregarded. Filth and sin embraced, trumpeted as progress. Yes, progress! Not the foulness it is, the turning from God, from polite society, from things and people acting in their right place, in their right way, because that's how things are and that's how they should be. So the Dills didn't always do what was best for others. Aw fiddlesticks! HiHo used to know what it was, and it was the Jewel of Georgia for it! Now *they* try to tears us down. Remove us from the history books. Cross us from the maps. Confuse us with their- their *truths*. Oh, I've seen their *truths*. They're so- so ugly. I don't want to see them anymore! I don't! I want to go back. Back before I knew the answers! But people like you don't want that.

(MORE)

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

You want me to stay *here*. Well
here's a little secret. A little
conspiracy. There is no HiHo
without the Dills! We're one and
the same. We founded this town. We
birthed it. It will always be ours.
Forever. Forever! FOREVER!!!!

Her shrieks hang like a pall. The receptionist considers her.
Then she stands.

RECEPTIONIST

So be it, Ms. Dill.

She yanks back the curtains from a nearby window. Sunlight
floods in. Rosalie shields her eyes. IT'S SO BRIGHT OUT.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Are you enjoying your black drink?

Rosalie's eyes go wide. *Black drink*. She drops her cup to the
floor. She BURPS. Then again. She covers her mouth. Almost
retching.

EVERYTHING SEEMS A LITTLE TOO VIBRANT. A LITTLE TOO SURREAL.

Something flits past Rosalie's face. A LADYBUG. A BUZZER
SOUNDS. The receptionist makes her way around the counter.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

You know, Ms. Dill, there's long
been a sickness in this town.

The ladybug lands on the window. Rosalie stares at it.

ROSALIE

No, you- you- No, you can't be-

RECEPTIONIST

The thing with a sickness is that
it must be cut out. Or else it'll
spread. Like a weed.

THWACKKKK! The receptionist swings down a fly swatter and
obliterates the ladybug. She holds up the smeared entrails.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Do you see, Ms. Dill? Do you? This
town needs *proper representation*.

Rosalie stares at the smushed remains, an alarm bell ringing
somewhere in her befogged and befuddled mind.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
COBRA will see you now.

ROSALIE
C-Cobra?

RECEPTIONIST
Yes, Ms. Dill. C. O. B. H. R. A.
Council for a Better HiHo: Renewal
and Advancement. You asked for
them.

The receptionist gestures down the hallway.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Now they're ready to see you.

For the first time, Rosalie is staring down the hall. TWO LARGE DOORS - like barn bay doors - await her. The receptionist takes her hand and guides her down the hall. She WHISPERS in Rosalie's ear and Rosalie whelps and the doors open and blackness awaits and Rosalie enters into the...

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS. DAY

... where THREE FIGURES sit in silhouette behind a long table. One appears to be a policeman, and the other has a mail bag slung over his shoulder, and the third may be in a Longshrub outfit, but it's hard to tell. It's so dark.

MIDDLE FIGURE
We are here today to decide the
case of Ms. Rosalie Dill. Of the
Dill family.

Rosalie's mouth opens, but she can't seem to form words.

MIDDLE FIGURE (CONT'D)
Of Dill Garden and the Dill
Hibiscus. Of Dill Cotton and Dill
Rope.

ROSALIE
I-N-No-I-

MIDDLE FIGURE
Of Nathanael Dill then Henry Dill
then Robert and Natalie Dill too.
And finally, of the burned Dill
Mansion and ruined Dill Estate.

ROSALIE
Wh-what i-is-

MIDDLE FIGURE

Are you in fact, Ms. Rosalie Dill?
Of the Dill Family. Of all the
aforementioned.

Rosalie suddenly understands that she's supposed to speak, to
respond to this black figure.

ROSALIE

Y-yes. I-I am.

MIDDLE FIGURE

Ms. Dill, a decision has been
rendered.

ROSALIE

A decisi- But- I- No, this was
supposed to be- an assessor never-
there was never an- an-

From the edges of the room come SHADOWY FIGURES. Rosalie
squeezes her eyes shut, but they don't disappear. They're
real people! We recognize one of them. She wears a FLORAL
JUMPSUIT. Rosalie falls to the floor.

MIDDLE FIGURE

The facts have been heard. Your
fate decided.

Above Rosalie, a LONG, SNAKING THING lowers from the ceiling.
A banner? A noose? Rosalie whelps louder. The figures close
in.

ROSALIE

Please! I- I, please! No! NO!

MIDDLE FIGURE

So now we must hear it. Once and
for all. We must hear the judgement
of Rosalie Dill.

The figures close in. We PULL BACK. Out into the hall. The
middle figure draws itself up to speak, and just as we hear,
or think we hear, Rosalie scream, the chamber doors SLAM
SHUT, and we hear nothing more. We linger there for a little
while. Then, slowly, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN. DAY

Where a NEW ROAD SIGN welcomes us to MUSCOGEE BASIN, EST 2024. Someone's already drawn an "O" on it. It now reads, *Welcome to Muscogee BOAsin...*

A snake, a green-and-red snake, slithers through the underbrush and into the grass. In the distance, Muscogee Basin beckons, glistening in the warm Spring day.

FADE OUT.

THE END