

CADENCE

a play for the stage & screen in 5 acts

written by

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Logline: “A teen’s loved ones try to make sense of her disappearance, following her implication in a series of unsolved ritualistic killings.”

Synopsis: Using emotional testimonials and vivid dramatizations, a documentarian pieces together the details of a teen’s disappearance in the wake of an unsolved murder spree that left several dead, and a community in mourning.

Cast of Characters

<u>Cadence / Amy Weaver</u> :	An ambitious 16-year-old Christian girl / her mother (20s).
<u>Elias Weaver</u> :	Cadence’s father (40s); a troubled non-believer with secrets.
<u>Seth Harper</u> :	A 16-year-old Christian boy, and Cadence’s jealous boyfriend.
<u>Ariel White</u> :	A 17-year-old atheist and Cadence’s bestie.
<u>Iris DeStephano</u> :	A 19-year-old cult member; manager at Hot Topic.
<u>Joe Wilder</u> :	A 22-year-old punk musician / local social media icon.
<u>Keith Whitney</u> :	An obsessive Christian Demonologist in his 50s.
<u>Heather Kauffman</u> :	A curious, but skeptical documentarian.
<u>Demons</u> :	Three faceless shadows (ancient).

SETTING

4 sets for the stage (dramatizations of the recent past):

(SCENES #2,4, 6, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 26)

- Cadence’s bedroom (DAY / NIGHT)
- River Ridge Cemetery (in the aisles -- NIGHT)
- Condemned farmhouse bedroom (NIGHT)
- Hospital room (NIGHT)

5 sets for the film sequences (present day testimonials):

(SCENES #1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25)

- Church (DAY)
- River Ridge Road (NIGHT)
- Cadence’s bedroom (DAY)
- Occult museum (DAY or NIGHT)
- River Ridge Cemetery (DAY)

ACT I

FADE IN:

1. INT. OCCULT MUSEUM - NIGHT

Creepy books and religious artifacts decorate the room.

KEITH (54) wears all black and some silver jewelry with arcane designs. He holds an old, weathered leather journal in his hands and looks at an O.S. interviewer, HEATHER.

KEITH

Cadence Weaver's story is an important one. It needs to be brought to light for all to see because, the closer we get to the end of days, the more you'll see ... cases like this one.

SUPER: "KEITH WHITNEY -- CHRISTIAN DEMONOLOGIST"

KEITH

Take note, because it's a sign of things to come. I know how crazy that sounds. I see that look on your face -- I've sat where you're sitting. And since I started fighting the proverbial *good fight*, I've been labeled a fanatic in nearly every religious circle under the sun.

He subconsciously rubs the leather binding on his book.

KEITH

I've come to terms with that. This is what my life is now. It's my purpose ... to show the world what's really going on, and to say, be ready. Be. Ready. And, to put simply, Cadence Weaver was not.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 2SETTING

CADENCE'S BEDROOM: a twin bed, a nightstand, and a few unicorn knickknacks. A religious painting hangs near the bed.

AT RISE

LOUD SCREAM. Harsh light comes from the depths of Hell as CADENCE sits up in her bed, fearfully. A beam of light reveals a SHADOW PERSON behind her ... then *another* ... then *another*. WHISPERS and MOANS FADE UP, as do SLOW BREATHING and DISSONANT LAUGHS. A DEEP GROWL and the sound of RAGING FIRE intensifies.

CADENCE

Leave me alone! Go away!

DEMON (V.O.)

(in Cadence's voice, but deeper)

Go away!

CADENCE

What do you want from me?!

(ALL GOES SILENT. Light fades, except for the one directly over Cadence. A tense INFRASOUND DEEP BASS RUMBLING fades in.)

(The unseen *Shadow People* shake the bed violently.)

DEMON (V.O.)

(Doubled, deep and evil:)

Your soul.

(Horrific laugh.)

(The *Shadow People* try to drag her out of bed -- she resists. The lights cut out, then dimly fade up, Cadence is alone, in silence. She catches her breath and lays back down. BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

FADE IN:

3. INT. WEAVER RESIDENCE - CADENCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A teen girl's room with unicorn knickknacks and religious books. ELIAS (40s), seated, looks at Heather, O.S.

SUPER: "ELIAS WEAVER -- CADENCE'S FATHER"

ELIAS

I don't know when it all started, but ... I'd say I first noticed changes around her sixteenth birthday -- that was early October. She wasn't acting like herself. She was suddenly tired all the time, and that wasn't Cadence. Cadence was an over-achiever. She put a hundred percent into everything she did. College prep classes, extra *curriculars*, and she volunteered with the church every weekend.

INSERT: CERTIFICATES AND TROPHIES OF SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT

ELIAS

She was always busy, so when she started falling behind, I just thought she was burnt out. But, she wasn't trying to catch up; she just fell further behind. I took her to the doctor when it started, but she refused to go back. She shut me out.

Elias frowns.

ELIAS

Cadence used to tell me everything, whether it was about boys, or school ... questions about her mom. I told her everything, too ... I told her what was safe to tell her. Anyway, I thought I needed to give her some space. In hindsight, I should have watched her closer.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 4**SETTING**

CADENCE'S ROOM: bed, nightstand, unicorn knickknacks.

AT RISE

Sunny morning. Cadence sleeps hard as ELIAS, carrying a ceramic unicorn, knocks on her door and pokes his head in.

ELIAS

Cadence. Hey. Sweetheart, it's after ten.

(He enters and approaches the bed.)

Cade?

(He gently rocks her awake.)

CADENCE

(Groaning, she rolls over to face him.)

What time is it?

ELIAS

It's almost ten thirty. We need to hurry. Are you okay?

CADENCE

I'm fine. But, I feel like I just fell asleep. Ten more minutes?

ELIAS

Honey, your meeting with the Point Loma rep is at eleven, so we gotta hurry. Come on.

(He pulls the covers off, grabs her by an arm and a leg, and playfully attempts to drag her out of bed -- she SCREAMS.)

ELIAS

... Cade?

CADENCE

Sorry. It just reminded me ...

ELIAS

Honey ... did something happen last night?

CADENCE

No. We just hung out with Ariel's new friend ... Iris. We just played games and stuff.

(Elias gives her a "dad" look.)

CADENCE

That's it, I swear. I was in bed by eleven -- honest.

ELIAS

Were you drinking?

CADENCE

No! I'm just a little shaken up. I had a bad nightmare and couldn't get back to sleep. It was so bad -- like, I woke up, and my heart was pounding. I thought I was going to die.

(Elias puts his hand to her forehead.)

ELIAS

I'm not surprised. You've been running yourself ragged for two months!

CADENCE

I have to. Opportunity waits for no girl.

ELIAS

Do you want to talk about it? Your *dream*?

CADENCE

I don't really remember it, but, whatever it was ... I know I didn't want to go back.

ELIAS

It's probably about going to school out of state. It's a sign you should stay *here*.

CADENCE

Dad!

ELIAS

Worth a shot.

CADENCE

(suddenly serious)

Hey, dad? Don't freak out, but ... I had a seizure last night. But, it was just a little one.

(Elias's eyes grow wide with concern.)

CADENCE

No, it wasn't drugs, or anything. I promise. I think it's just the stress of not sleeping.

ELIAS

I'm making you an appointment as soon as we get home. No arguments.

(Cadence nods, sheepishly.)

ELIAS

Oh, I almost forgot. I saw this at the flea market. One for your collection.
(He hands her the unicorn. She smiles.)

CADENCE

Awww. Thanks, dad. I love it!

ELIAS

Good. Now, let's go so you can start the process of abandoning your old man.

(He tussles her hair and leaves.)

CADENCE

(laughing)

Stop!

(She sets the unicorn on the nightstand.
A second later, it flies off and shatters
on the floor. She stares in disbelief.)

ELIAS

(retuning)

You okay? I heard --

(He looks at the unicorn, confused.)

CADENCE

Dad ...

ELIAS

(teasing)

... You know, if you didn't like it, you could've just said so.

CADENCE

I'm so sorry. I tried to pick it up with dead hands ... I'll glue it back together tonight.

ELIAS

You sure you're okay?

CADENCE

Mhmm.

(Elias nods and leaves. Cadence scans
the room, paranoid. BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

FADE IN:

5. INT. CHURCH - DAY

SETH (16), in his Sunday best, sits in the empty church.

SETH

I first met Cadence in youth group, when we were ten, but we didn't start dating until last year. We were just starting to get serious.

SUPER: "SETH HARPER -- CADENCE'S BOYFRIEND"

SETH

We shared a lot of the same morals and beliefs, so I was really surprised she wanted to go to River Ridge; I think Ariel pressured her, because we weren't into that stuff.

HEATHER (O.S.)

What *stuff*?

SETH

I dunno. It's supposed to be this haunted road kids go to around Halloween. Ariel's friend was gonna give us a tour or something.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Iris?

SETH

Yeah. So, I went, too. To protect her. They took us to the cemetery.

HEATHER (O.S.)

... What happened in the cemetery?

SETH

Like I told the police many times, I don't know what happened. And what I think happened doesn't make sense ... it only makes me look guilty when I say it.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 6SETTING

RIVER RIDGE CEMETERY. Fog fills the graveyard (in the aisles -- each audience member represents a headstone).

AT RISE

Carrying a flashlight and a large bag, IRIS leads Ariel, Cadence, and SETH onto a grassy knoll (on THE APRON).

IRIS

There's a lot of dark energy on this land. Some legends talk about an abandoned farmhouse where cults performed human sacrifices just on the other side of the cemetery. All that pain -- all that death -- it manifests in places like this.

(Iris stops and looks around.)

Here's a good spot.

(She sits, turns off the flashlight, and pulls a spirit board out of her bag.)

CADENCE

Wait ... we're playing here?

(Iris gives her a "duh" look. She takes a candle out of her bag and lights it with her book of matches. She closes her eyes and whispers to herself.)

SETH

(to Cadence)

You're not supposed to do this in a cemetery. Maybe we should just go.

ARIEL

See, Cadence? Every time you bring him, he ruins everything.

(Seth looks at Cadence and motions to Ariel in a "told you so" sort of way. Cadence sighs.)

CADENCE

Ariel?

(She wanders a few feet away from the others; Ariel joins her.)

CADENCE

This is exactly what he's talking about. Why can't you be nice to him? He's my boyfriend.

ARIEL

And I thought I was your *best* friend. But I feel like the more time you spend with him -- we're growing apart, Cade. Don't you see it? Seth limits you, and that's fine, if that's what you want, but I'm trying to make *new* friends, and I don't need him limiting me, too!

CADENCE

Ariel, I'm sorry ... I didn't know you felt that way.

(Ariel crosses her arms.)

CADENCE

Okay. I'll work on that, but would you please at least *try* to get along with him? For me?

(Ariel studies her for a moment, then shrugs. They hug and rejoin the group.)

IRIS

I cast a protection. We should be good. You ready?

ARIEL

Cadence?

(They look to her for an answer.)

CADENCE

Yeah. Sure.

SETH

Wait -- you want to *stay*?

CADENCE

We can stay for a little while. It's just a game, right?

ARIEL

Yeah. Like when we played Bloody Mary at Orchestra Camp.

CADENCE

(laughing)

You mean *tried* to. We never said it a third time!

ARIEL

Yeah, well, same concept anyway.

IRIS

This is no game. This is a tool -- a key that opens a doorway to the spirit realm. I assure you, whatever comes through that gate has no intention of playing *games*.

(Cadence frowns, takes a step back ...)

ARIEL

(noticing Cadence's fear)

She's kidding. It's made by Hasbro, we bought it at work --

IRIS

-- If you're not going to take this seriously, we can just leave right now. Otherwise, I'd appreciate it if you'd respect my beliefs, and all of the spirits we summon tonight.

(The others become serious.)

IRIS

You said you wanted to know what really happened on River Ridge Road. Well, the only ones who know the truth literally died to find out. You want answers? You ask those who were there when it happened. And *this* is how you ask.

ARIEL

Okay ... sorry Iris.

CADENCE

... We meant no disrespect.

IRIS

(touching the planchette, smugly)

Let's begin.

SETH

(to Cadence)

You sure you want to do this? You don't have to ...

(Cadence looks at Seth with a frown,
then at Ariel's reassuring smile.)

CADENCE

(to Seth)

No. It's fine. Really.

(to all)

So, who goes first?

IRIS

(condescending)

... We all go at the same time.

ARIEL

Like this.

(Ariel puts her fingers on the planchette.
The others follow suit.)

ARIEL

And, now we ask it questions.

(The planchette travels the board.)

IRIS

Spirits of River Ridge, we invite you to our circle. If one or more are with us, say hello.

(The planchette drifts to "Hello.")

ARIEL

Oh shit!

SETH

It said hello ...

IRIS

Quiet, everyone.

(to the sky)

A sincere welcome to all who are present. Who, may I ask, has joined us this night?

(The planchette spells out words:)

ARIEL

Y ... O ... U ...

(The planchette swirls about, aimlessly.)

SETH

You? Obviously. Is he confused, or just stupid?

(The planchette swirls faster.)

IRIS

Shut up! You're pissing it off!

IRIS

(she squints at the board)

It's still here, but it doesn't want to talk to me. It wants ...

(Iris' eyes drift to Cadence and widen.)

IRIS

... You.

CADENCE

... Me?

ARIEL

(to Cadence)

Go on. Ask it something.

CADENCE

I don't know what to say ... like ...

(The planchette slows.)

Okay. Hi. Um ... why are you here with us?

(The planchette starts to spell out ...)

ARIEL

C ... A ... D ... E ...

CADENCE

Oh really funny, guys!

(Cadence takes her fingers off the
planchette and jumps up.)

IRIS

Don't break the circle!

CADENCE

What does it matter? Someone was totally pushing it.

IRIS

Nobody was *pushing it*.

(Cadence looks at Ariel, then Seth --
they both shake their heads, wide-eyed.
Everyone unhands the planchette.)

IRIS

But, very well. *You* lead the conversation.

ARIEL

You're not supposed to play alone ...

IRIS

We're protected, remember? Go on, Cadence.

(Cadence looks from face to face. She clears her throat, sits back down, and places her fingers on the planchette.)

CADENCE

Is ... is there something you want to tell us?

(The planchette swirls and spells ...)

CADENCE

P ... O ... O ... R ... J ... O ...

(A LOW RUMBLING fades up.)

SETH

Poor Joe? Who's Joe?

ARIEL

Jealous much?

(Seth glares at Ariel. The RUMBLING GROWS LOUDER. Cadence shrinks back from the planchette and screams. The RUMBLING STOPS.)

SETH

Cadence!

ARIEL

Shit! Are you okay?

(Cadence breathes heavily, never taking her eyes off the board.)

CADENCE

Did you hear what it said?

(looking at her friends)

Did you hear what it said?!

SETH

No.

ARIEL

I didn't hear anything, Cade.

CADENCE

I don't want to play anymore.

(Iris blows out the candle and stands up.)

IRIS

Fair enough. There are plenty of other games we can play in a cemetery. Like ... tag!

(She taps Ariel's forehead and races away.)

ARIEL

Oh, Hell no!

(Ariel chases after her.)

SETH

Hey ... you okay?

CADENCE

No. I'm really kind of freaked out right now. Can we go?

SETH

Sure ...

(He hugs Cadence. She squirms away.)

SETH

Cadence ... what's wrong?

CADENCE

Nothing. I just have a big day tomorrow, so I should get some sleep. I'm meeting with someone from Point Loma in the morning ...

SETH

Point Loma? You decided to go, and you didn't tell me?

CADENCE

No ... I haven't decided yet. Not, you know ... *officially* ...

SETH

Am I just a distraction to you?

CADENCE

... What?

SETH

What are we even doing? You won't have sex with me, you want to go to school across the country, and now you won't even touch me?! It was like pulling teeth just getting you to let me come tonight!

CADENCE

You know we can't have sex. It's a sin till we're married, and I'm just not ready to think about that yet. Deep down, you know I'm right, and -- why are you doing this? Why do you always have to put me in this position? You know I care about you!

(Seth clenches his quivering fist, stands tensely in front of her, and slowly calms his breathing. He relaxes his hand and starts walking away. He stops.)

SETH

He'd forgive us for having sex, you know.
(He resumes his walk.)

CADENCE

Where are you going?

SETH

To take a leak.

(Seth wanders over the hill.)

(Cadence turns away.)

CADENCE

(loud, to Seth)

You know, it's not like I haven't thought about it. You know I'm curious. Maybe I even want to do it, too. But I don't think we're mature enough to know what we want, and I don't want to make a mistake we'd both regret.

(She shudders, as invisible hands touch her shoulders.)

Oh! You scared me. Your hands are cold. Gave me chills.

(sigh)

Seth ... you mean so much to me. And, just because I want to go to Point Loma, it doesn't necessarily mean I want to break up. I just don't want you to feel chained to me when you start meeting other people. It's not fair to you. It's not fair to either one of us. Please don't be mad ... hey -- that kind of hurts ...

(The RUMBLING SOUND FADES IN again. Cadence reaches to her throat to pry the invisible hands away.)

CADENCE

(choking)

Seth -- hurting me -- let go --

(Seth zips up and returns, oblivious to Cadence's predicament.)

CADENCE

(choking)

-- Seth -- *choking* me --

(The RUMBLING CEASES. The *presence* is gone. Cadence coughs and rubs her throbbing throat. She turns to see Seth approaching and backs away.)

SETH

... Cadence?

CADENCE

Stay away from me!

SETH

What's wrong? ... Cadence?

(Cadence freezes up. Her body twists and writhes into unnatural positions. She has a brief seizure, then falls.)

SETH

Cadence!

(He runs to her, turns her on her side.)

Help! Someone help us!

(Iris chases Ariel toward the hill. They stop giggling when they see Seth standing over Cadence. The girls look at Seth fearfully. Seth returns the stare, then eyes Cadence. BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

ACT II

FADE IN:

7. INT. RIVER RIDGE CEMETERY - DAY

ARIEL (17) sits in the grass playing with a flower.

SUPER: "ARIEL WHITE -- CADENCE'S BEST FRIEND"

ARIEL

Okay, look at the facts. One, they were together for a year and she had no intention of having sex with him.

Ariel yanks a flower pedal.

ARIEL

Two, she was going to school in California next year, which means that three -- though not a fact, but heavily insinuated -- she was probably going to break up with him!

(deep breath)

When I found them, Cadence was on the grass, seizing, and Seth was standing over her. Tell me that's not suspicious!

HEATHER (O.S.)

Are you saying you think Seth did something to her?

ARIEL

I think she broke it off, and he didn't take it well. Seth was jealous. He was abusive. ... I think he tried to force himself on her. She was so withdrawn after that. Her glow was gone. Her *innocence*. Cadence used to smile all the time -- it was contagious. She was the most charismatic person I'd ever met. It's what made me ... *fall* for her in the first place.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 8**SETTING**

CADENCE'S BEDROOM: it's a mess -- disorganized and unkempt. The unicorn ceramic is on the nightstand, still in pieces.

AT RISE

Cadence sits on the edge of her bed, but slouched, as though being suspended by the invisible strings of an invisible puppeteer. Her hair, in her face, is disheveled, and her breathing is slow and steady. She stares, unblinking ...

(Ariel enters with a notebook.)

ARIEL

Hey, Cade. How are you feeling?

(Cadence ignores her.)

ARIEL

I brought your homework for Miss Chandler's class. I'll just set it ...

(She sets it on the nightstand. She examines a piece of ceramic, returns it.)

Seriously, now does someone go from four years perfect attendance to missing a whole week of school? I guess you've earned it ...

(She looks at Cadence, takes a breath, and brushes Cadence's hair back to see her emotionless face. She frowns.)

I heard the doctors said everything was okay. Like, aside from the seizure.

(Cadence ignores her.)

ARIEL

Do you want to talk about what happened? ... With Seth? They didn't find ... anything, but if he hurt you, I swear to G--

(Cadence twitches, ever so slightly. Ariel jumps a bit, startled by the reaction.)

ARIEL

... Cade?

(Cadence is frozen again.)

ARIEL

(clears her throat)

There are resources. If you don't want to talk to me, we can call someone ...

CADENCE

(unmoving, quietly)

Is that what *you* did?

ARIEL

... Huh?

CADENCE

Did you call someone when your step dad took your virginity by the lake?

(Ariel wells up.)

ARIEL

How ...

(broken)

I never told you about that. I never told anyone --

CADENCE

-- He was drinking a six pack one night, after everyone went to bed. You came downstairs for a glass of water.

(Ariel sobs.)

ARIEL

Don't --

CADENCE

-- He asked if you wanted to go outside and watch the stars with him. You said yes. You were so excited.

ARIEL

Please don't, Cadence -- don't say it --

CADENCE

-- And, when you reached the lake, and he offered you a *taste* --

ARIEL

-- Stop it!

CADENCE

-- You felt so special. You were bonding. It was going to be your little secret --

ARIEL

-- Stop it, Cadence!

CADENCE

Remember the constellation you focused on when it happened? Virgo. Ironic, isn't it?

ARIEL

Shut up!

CADENCE

You think about that constellation every time, don't you? Or, at least you did before you started thinking about *me*. And now, you're all kinds of fucked up, aren't you?

ARIEL

(bawling)

... *Cadence* ...

CADENCE

You'll never heal, Ariel. That's why nobody wants you. Not me. Men. Women. Hell, your step dad won't even touch you anymore, will he?

(Ariel heads to the door and stops. She turns around, emotional.)

ARIEL

I know you're angry. This should've never happened to you, but it did. We all deal with it in our own way. You want to take it out on me? It's not okay, but -- whatever. Sometimes we say things we don't mean -- I get it, it hurts -- but I forgive you. I'm your best friend, and I'm not going to let you go through this alone.

(Ariel sits beside her on the bed.)

ARIEL

Cadence ... I *love* you.

(She tries to initiate a hug. Cadence snaps to life and yanks her to the mattress by her hair with seemingly superhuman strength -- their faces are inches apart.)

CADENCE

Is this what you want?

ARIEL

No! What are you doing?

CADENCE

Liar! It's what you've always wanted!

(Cadence slowly, subtly inhales her essence and slithers over Ariel's face with her own like a snake.)

ARIEL

Cadence!

(Cadence licks Ariel's cheek slowly, savoring her fear. She BITES her neck.)

(Ariel SCREAMS.)

(Cadence throws her to the floor.)

(Ariel escapes the bedroom.)

(Cadence sits up and examines her body as though using it for the first time. It contorts -- with CRACKING NOISES -- into strange positions, as though being manipulated by an unseen puppeteer, though her face never changes.

(Her body returns to normal, as though the puppeteer has clipped his puppet's strings. Cadence settles into the same catatonic state as before.)

(THE RUMBLE FADES BACK IN. It STOPS abruptly.)

CADENCE

(glib)

Poor Joe.

(BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

FADE IN:

9. INT. CHURCH - DAY

Seth sits at the end of his pew, avoiding eye contact.

SETH

Cadence avoided me for a week after the cemetery. Probably because of Ariel's *lies*.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Why would she lie?

SETH

Because she's jealous. Cadence and I are very spiritual. Our souls are connected, and Ariel hates that. I could never hurt Cadence. I loved her. That night at the cemetery, sure, we fought. I didn't like how Ariel treated me, and I got jealous. The whole Point Loma thing came up again. I got upset -- I yelled, but, I didn't do what she said I did!

He catches his breath.

SETH

After that, I ran off. I do that sometimes, if I feel like I'm losing control, but, when I came back to apologize, she said I choked her. I swear I didn't, but then, she had a seizure. I tried calling her every day after that, but she didn't answer, so I prayed. A few days later, I sent her a text asking if she'd talk to our pastor with me. She responded that night -- she asked me to meet her in the cemetery. She said she had something to tell me, about whatever was going on with her, but she made me promise I wouldn't tell anyone ...

FADE OUT.

SCENE 10**SETTING**

RIVER RIDGE CEMETERY: FOGGY, DARK, and COLD.

AT RISE

Cadence sits on the grassy knoll (facing upstage) in the pitch black cemetery. She becomes illuminated when:

(Seth shines his flashlight in search of
Cadence. His beam finds her ...)

CADENCE

(monotonous)

Poor Joe ... poor Joe ... poor Joe ...

SETH

Cadence?

(Cadence stiffens up.)

SETH

I'm so glad you're okay. I missed you so much. Thank you for giving me a chance to --
(he stops walking.)

(Cadence stands up, still facing away ...)

SETH

... Cadence?

(He touches her -- she jerks away.)

SETH

I'm sorry about that night. I shouldn't have yelled ...

CADENCE

You did more than yell, Seth. You really *hurt* me.

SETH

What are you talking about? ... Ariel's lying! Whatever she said -- I didn't touch you!

CADENCE

Yes, you did, Seth. You cut me deep! Can't you see that?!

(Cadence turns around to reveal fifty or so razor blade cuts on her arms, and a bloody razor blade still in hand.)

SETH

Oh my f--

(his beam trembles as he backs away.)

Why did you do this?! ... Come on -- we have to get you to a hospital.

(He moves closer. An unseen force grounds him. He struggles, but he's pinned. The beam shines on her face.)

CADENCE

First, you forced yourself on me, and now you've lured me back here to mutilate me?

(Cadence rips strands of her hair out.)

SETH

Cadence -- I would never do those things! I love you!

CADENCE

That's a shame. Love is *blinding*.

(She takes the razor and slowly inches it towards her eyeball ...)

SETH

Stop! Don't do this! We'll go to the pastor -- he can help!

(Cadence stops and eyes him, furiously.)

SETH

That's the answer, isn't it? Cadence -- pray with me!

(Cadence's face morphs into a scowl.)

SETH

Our Father, Who art in Heaven --

(Cadence chokes him with her foot.)

SETH

(firmly)

-- *Hallowed be -- thy name --*

(Cadence's face softens in a moment of clarity -- she tosses the razor away.)

CADENCE

Seth ... help ... me!

(She crumbles to her knees.)

(Seth coughs, drops the flashlight -- facing her -- and rolls out of harm's way. He races into the night.)

CADENCE

Don't go ... please, don't go ...

(Someone approaches from behind her.)

CADENCE

... Seth? ... Who's there?

(Iris leans in to whisper.)

IRIS

We're ready for you. Come now. It's time.

CADENCE

(crying, defiant)

Iris? I'm not going anywhere with you! ... You did this to me!

IRIS

Oh, I wasn't talking to *you*.

(Cadence breathes hard, a face of fear.)

(THE RUMBLE FADES IN, HITS A CRESCENDO.)

(Cadence's face morphs into the personification of darkness. Her breathing slows -- almost non-existent.)

IRIS

Yes. *There* you are. There you are.

(BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

ACT III

FADE IN:

11. INT. WEAVER RESIDENCE - CADENCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Elias looks at Heather (O.S.), distraught.

ELIAS

Seth's call woke me up around three-thirty that night. He was frantic. I couldn't understand a word he was saying, except for *Cadence*, and *the cemetery*. I called the police immediately. They found Cadence's ... they found her *blood*, but no body. They questioned everybody -- me, Seth, friends, teachers -- everyone was a suspect.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Did you ever suspect Seth?

ELIAS

(deep breath)

There was no sign that he tried to --
(shaking his head)

I never approved of Seth for my daughter, but I've known that kid since he was in diapers. No. Seth wouldn't do this. But, the police drilled the *both* of us. The doctor told them Cadence had become a *visibly withdrawn teenager with signs of psychological trauma*. They suspected the worst, and, you know ... they always go after the parents and the boyfriend first ...

(sigh)

Well, the next day, they found her. Only, the way they found her only raised more questions than answers ...

FADE OUT:

12. OVER BLACK

SUPER: "THE FOLLOWING VIDEO WAS LIVE STREAMED APPROXIMATELY TWO HOURS BEFORE CADENCE WAS FOUND NEAR AN ABANDONED FARMHOUSE."

SUPER: "DUE TO AN ARSON FIRE THAT WOULD OCCUR THAT NIGHT, THE FOLLOWING MEDIA IS THE ONLY KNOWN EVIDENCE TO EXIST REGARDING WHAT WOULD COME TO BE KNOWN AS THE RIVER RIDGE MASSACRE."

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

13. INT./EXT. JOE'S CAR - NIGHT

JOE (22) checks his mohawk in his recording cell phone.

JOE

(to himself)

Sexy as hell, mutha fugga.

(to the phone)

We on? 'Sup, everybody? Wilder of *The Joker's Wilder* here, broadcasting live from the creepy, *supposedly* haunted, River Ridge Road.

He makes exaggerated ghost noises.

JOE

Yeah, it's all bullshit, but I'm meeting up with this chick that's all about it. She wants to give me a tour and tell me all the crazy shit that happens here. And you know ya boy. I tend to make things *Wilder*.

He wiggles his eyebrows lustfully and nods.

JOE

She's running late, though. Damn, I hope she doesn't flake.

Joe takes a look outside his window.

JOE

That would suck. I just met her on Myspace yesterday, and she didn't hit me back today.

He glares at the camera.

JOE

Yes, Myspace. You shut the fuck up about it. That's where the music's at. I'm bringin' it back, yo.

Joe lights up.

JOE

Oh -- don't forget -- our new E.P. drops Saturday, and we're playing at the Gothic on Halloween. Get your tickets at *The-Joker's-Wilder-dot-com*. It's gonna be sick, son!

He makes the "horns" gesture with his hand, tongue out. His phone vibrates. He looks at "us" intently.

JOE

Whoa -- hold up. That's her.
(reading)
She said to meet her by the farmhouse.

Joe looks around. He gets out of the car and walks ...

JOE

(melodically, under his breath)
Ya boy's gonna get some.

He trudges a bit further.

JOE

It's hella foggy.

He stops, squints through the fog.

JOE
(yelling out)
Iris? Hey. I'm --

Joe turns the phone to see IRIS (19), cloaked, and watching him through the fog.

IRIS
Right on time.

She sees his phone recording her.

IRIS
(seemingly offended)
What are you doing?!

He looks at his phone.

JOE
Oh, this? I was just making a little
video for the fans ... why?

Joe looks around -- the camera catches two hooded/robed figures behind him.

JOE
Who are they? What is this?

They attack Joe. The phone hits the ground, allowing us only a glimpse of the ambush.

JOE
Hey, what the f--

He grunts as he's taken down.

JOE
Get off me! Help! Help!

His pleas are muffled by his captors.

Iris' hand snatches the phone --

CUT TO BLACK.

SCENE 14**SETTING**

CONDEMNED FARMHOUSE: messy, overturned bedroom. A sickly green light flickers above. Windows (UPSTAGE) are bloody and boarded up. The "door" is DOWNSTAGE. There are bloody symbols and objects scattered around the room.

AT RISE

JOE wakes up in the middle of the floor. Cadence is, unbeknownst to him, curled up in a shadowy corner like a spider. Her cuts have begun to scab over.

(Joe wakes up, groans, and holds his head. He bolts up with a start.)

JOE

What the hell ... ?!

(He looks around, tries the "door", circles around, and pounds on the wall.)

JOE

Hey -- let me out of here! Do you know who I am?!

(He clutches his head -- still tender. He yells through the boarded up window:)

JOE

Hello? Can anyone hear me? I need help! I've been kidnapped ...

(to himself)

... Or *some*thin'.

CADENCE

No one can hear you.

(Joe jumps, shocked. He turns to the shadowy corner and creeps towards it.)

JOE

Shit! ... Who's there?

(Cadence remains still.)

JOE

(looking around)

... And, where are we?

CADENCE

We're in an abandoned farmhouse, miles from anything.

(Joe turns around and scans the room.)

(Cadence unfolds herself and walks,
disjointed, towards him.)

JOE

How long have you been here?

(Cadence stops behind him and “settles.”
He turns to see her and winces.)

JOE

Shit -- what did they do to you?

(She stares at him, emotionless ...)

JOE

Do you know who's keeping us here? What do they want?

(Cadence stares ...)

JOE

... Okay ... well, look, I have a big show on Sunday, so I ain't stayin' here. Have you ever heard of the band, *The Joker's Wilder*? Well, that's me. I'm *Joker Joe Wilder*. If you help me get out of here, I'll comp you a ticket. Whadda ya say?

(Cadence doesn't even blink.)

JOE

A'ight, you had your chance.

(He tries to pry the boards off the
window.)

CADENCE

(suddenly animated)

Wait -- don't go! I'm scared.

JOE

Don't be scared. We're gonna get out of here. I'm not dying in a farmhouse. Hear me?

CADENCE

(dry)

It's true. You *won't*.

JOE

Damn right. So, let's go --

CADENCE

-- I don't want to give up, but ... I'm just so tired. I try to pray, but it won't let me. It won't let me sleep. It won't let me eat. And, it says things -- *terrible* things. It --

CADENCE

(whispering)

-- It shows me things. I can't tell what's real. It makes me do things I don't want to do ...

(she looks at her cuts and breaks down)

Oh god, what have I done? I just want it to be over, but I can't let go ... I can't let it in ...

JOE

Fuck, man. They really did a number on you.

(The "door" UNLOCKS and slowly
CREAKS OPEN.)

(Joe and Cadence look DOWNSTAGE.)

JOE

Come on.

CADENCE

No! We can't leave! That's what it wants. See? We can't --

(She clings to Joe. He breaks her grip,
heads to the "door," and peeks out.)

CADENCE

We can't go out there --

JOE

Shh!

(Joe listens carefully ...)

I don't hear anything. It's dead silent. Come on, we have to move.

CADENCE

No!

(Joe grabs her and drags her out.
BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

FADE IN:

15. EXT. RIVER RIDGE CEMETERY - DAY

Ariel fidgets with razor blade scars on her wrist.

ARIEL

Iris was my manager at Hot Topic. I think I was drawn to her 'cause she got into really dark stuff, and I found that ... intriguing.

She lights up a cigarette.

ARIEL

She told me about this group called Smolder Club. They were misfits who studied alternative religions. I joined because I was lonely. I was afraid to be around Cadence at the time. My feelings got pretty intense, so ... yeah. Anyway, she took me to a party at the abandoned farmhouse one night. It was chill; we mostly just smoked and read poetry. Then, a couple weeks later, this kid Mason joined. He said he was sixteen but acted older. Like, he was really charming, but so charming it was unsettling. He said he could see things, like Daniel, in the Bible. He said he had visions of the end of the world, and only he could decipher them. He showed us things, like spells, and alchemy. He knew his shit. One time, we conjured a demon in his mirror. Or, maybe we were just really stoned. I think that's the worst part -- like, who can really say? After that, Mason became Smolder Club's leader. They practically worshiped him.

HEATHER (O.S.)

But, not you?

Ariel shakes her head.

ARIEL

I was more afraid of him than anything. They were talking about sacrificing things ... *living* ones.

HEATHER (O.S.)

People?

ARIEL

People, animals -- it just got way too real, so I quit going. I'd hang out with Iris, but not Smolder Club.

HEATHER (O.S.)

How did Cadence get involved?

ARIEL

She was never *involved*. But when I started getting distant, she started getting closer to Seth. Fucked with my head. So, I thought, maybe if she saw me getting close to someone else, she'd get jealous, too. When Iris invited me to the cemetery, I invited Cadence. You know the rest.

HEATHER (O.S.)

... Did Smolder Club take Cadence?

ARIEL

We'll never know for sure. Everyone in that farmhouse died in the fire.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Even Mason?

Ariel shrugs, as though to say "obviously," and looks away.

HEATHER (O.S.)

If Mason had visions, why didn't he predict the fire? Why didn't he predict that Cadence would escape?

ARIEL

Because she *didn't*.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 16**SETTING**

RIVER RIDGE CEMETERY: FOGGY, DARK, and COLD.

AT RISE

Joe drags Cadence through the aisles towards the stage apron.

CADENCE

No! We have to go back -- it's not safe!

(She pulls away, falls to the ground, and buries her head in her hands. She sobs.)

JOE

Get up! It's just a little further ...

(Joe peeks over the hill.)

JOE

Shit! They took my car!

(He stops to catch his breath, almost doubling over.)

JOE

This was just supposed to be a joke, to promote the show on Halloween. Fuck this *Creepy Pasta* bullshit. I knew that Iris chick was too good to be true.

(Cadence's cries become laughter.)

(Joe faces her.)

(Cadence pulls out Iris' book of matches. She lights one and watches it burn. She blows it out.)

JOE

Just what about this is so funny to you?

(Cadence burns another match. She watches ... blows it out.)

JOE

Huh? Do you wanna die here? They're gonna come after us!

CADENCE

They're dead.

(She lights another match, blows it out.)

JOE

They're not dead -- they had us locked up in an abandoned farmhouse for fuck's sake, and they're probably not done with us, so get up!

CADENCE

(playfully lyrical)

Noooooooo. They're *dead*.

JOE

Whatever!

(he reaches down to collect her ...)

Let's just go, before --

(Like lightning, Cadence reaches out and SNAPS Joe's neck.)

(Joe falls dead before her. She plays with his hair, gently, and smiles.)

(THE RUMBLE FADES IN.)

(Cadence gets the matchbook and lights another match.)

CADENCE

(deeper voice)

Poor Joe.

(She blows out the match and stops -- she tenses up)

(A LOUD EXHALE IS HEARD.
Cadence faints and lands beside her prey.)

(BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

ACT IV

FADE IN:

17. INT. OCCULT MUSEUM - NIGHT

Keith looks at Heather (O.S.).

KEITH

I first became aware of Cadence on the news. It was chaos; they found that poor girl in the cemetery, in a coma, with a man -- dead -- in her arms. How does that even happen?

Keith makes a "mind blown" gesture.

KEITH

And then, there was the fire at the farmhouse just down the road where an alleged teenage cult was also dead, and presumed murdered -- all on the very same night! The details were sketchy at best -- first, they thought it was a mass suicide, like the Heaven's Gate cult in the late nineties. Then, they said it was a multiple homicide caused by arson. Nobody knew what was going on. The only thing that was clear to me was that this tragedy -- this entire chain of events -- was surrounded by a darkness that not many could see, and I needed to intervene.

He taps his Bible for clarification.

KEITH

I sought out Cadence's father, Elias. It was absolutely imperative that I had his blessing and participation in Cadence's intervention. The afflicted tend to respond better to loved ones. In Cadence's case, it was crucial.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 18**SETTING**

HOSPITAL ROOM: modern, a few machines, and a bed.

AT RISE

Cadence, in a hospital gown, lays comatose in the bed. Elias paces back and forth in front of it.

(KEITH enters from stage left and sets his medical bag down.)

KEITH

Hi ... Mr. Weaver?

ELIAS

Elias ... can I help you?

KEITH

I'm Keith Whitney. We spoke on the phone yesterday ...

ELIAS

Sorry. I've spoken to a lot of people since ...
(he looks at Cadence.)

KEITH

I completely understand.

ELIAS

You couldn't possibly. Remind me again -- you're a spiritual healer of some sort?

KEITH

Not exactly ...

(He leads him DOWNSTAGE, away from the bed.)

(LIGHTS FADE OUT over Cadence.)

KEITH

Mr. Weaver -- Elias, before the incident in the cemetery, can you recall any behavioral shifts in your interactions with Cadence?

ELIAS

No. Not *shifts*, anyway. She was taking on a lot of stress with school, and she had a seizure from exhaustion, but aside from that, she was just a little tired and cranky.

KEITH

(thoughtful)

I see ...

ELIAS

Why do you ask?

KEITH

I have reason to believe your daughter may be under a dark influence.

ELIAS

Isn't every teenager?

KEITH

No -- what I mean to say is ... I have reason to believe Cadence is suffering from an affliction of a spiritual nature. That is, I believe your daughter may be possessed by one or more demonic entities.

(Elias grins, as though he's heard a joke.
Then, his face hardens into a scowl, as
though he's just been insulted.)

ELIAS

I'm sorry, who did you say you were? Because, if you're a comedian, you're not funny.

KEITH

Keith Whitney. I'm a Christian Demonologist, certified by the Center for Research and Investigative Studies and New Life Ministry Church. The Michigan Division. I saw what happened on the news, and came because I've seen something like it before --

ELIAS

-- What do you want, Mister Whitney?

KEITH

The reason I'm here is to intervene. There was a ritualistic sacrifice that left half a cult dead, a fire that killed the other half, and your daughter -- who was covered in self-inflicted cuts -- was found alive, and otherwise unharmed, at the epicenter.

ELIAS

What makes you think her cuts were self-inflicted?

KEITH

I told you. I've seen this before.

ELIAS

So, what then? You call the Bishop and order an old priest and a young priest and have yourself a good, old fashioned exorcism?

KEITH

(sigh)

I understand this is a lot to take in, but I ask that you please keep an open mind. For *her*?

(Elias gives him a "*by all means, please continue*" hand gesture.)

KEITH

To answer your question, only Catholic exorcisms require permission from the bishop. As a Christian demonologist, I need only the name of The Father.

ELIAS

(glib)

My mistake.

KEITH

I understand your skepticism, but what does your heart tell you? Is any of this rational?

(Elias looks him in the eye. He looks away and shakes his head.)

KEITH

Is there anything Cadence may have done to expose herself, spiritually?

(Elias takes a deep breath. He softens.)

ELIAS

Nothing I can think of.

KEITH

Would she have told anyone else, if she had?

ELIAS

Cadence is a good girl -- a good Christian girl. She tells me everything. I have no idea how this could have happened. I used to worry that she --

(He stops, shudders.)

KEITH

What is it?

ELIAS

My wife said something when Cadence was born.
(He looks toward the bed.)

(A SEPIA-TONED LIGHT FADES UP
over AMY. She lays in bed, sweaty,
grunting, and about to give birth ...)

ELIAS

I never repeated what she said to anyone.

(Elias approaches Amy; LIGHTS FADE
OUT over Keith.)

(Amy cries out in agony.)

AMY

No. No! I'll do anything, please!

ELIAS

See, Amy and I had a really hard time conceiving. We prayed on it, and prayed on it, and then one day, she was just pregnant. We said Cadence was our little miracle. What else could she be, when three different doctors told us it was physically impossible.

(He stands over her, sadly.)

The pregnancy was going smoothly, until one night when Amy started ... bleeding.

(He kneels down by the bed.)

They called it Placental Abruption. It's an incredibly rare condition where the placenta detaches too soon. It can be deadly to both mother and child. Well, they were able to save Cadence, but Amy ...

(Amy screams in agony.)

ELIAS

They couldn't stop the bleeding. I think she knew what that meant, but, she wouldn't give up on Cadence. And then, moments before the baby came, Amy sat up, and she said ...

(Amy sits up, suffering.)

AMY

(to an unseen being)

No! That wasn't the deal! Please! ... I'll do *anything*!

(Amy relaxes a bit.)

Yes. Please, just ... save her ...

(Her face becomes peaceful.)

Yes ... thank you.

(Amy smiles, settles back into the bed,
and drifts off.)

(A NEWBORN'S CRY is heard.)

(Elias returns to Keith, whose LIGHTS
FADE UP as Amy's LIGHTS FADE
OUT.)

ELIAS

And then she was gone. She smiled sweetly and drifted off, just as Cadence took her first breath.

KEITH

Why do you think she was pleading with God that night?

ELIAS

I don't know. To tell you the truth, now, after everything ... I'm not certain that she *was*.

(Keith studies the heartbroken Elias.)

KEITH

Regardless of how we got here, we're here. Be strong, Elias. The battle has just begun.

ELIAS

But, why does *she* have to fight it? Why *her*?

KEITH

I don't know. Her innocence, perhaps. We'll never know for sure. The best we can do is pray and fight to get her back.

(They look back over their shoulders and
the comatose Cadence.)

ELIAS

Great. But, what happens to *her* in the meantime?

KEITH

As long as she's still in there, she's fighting, too. But, beyond that, I can't possibly begin to imagine what she's going through.

(BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

SCENE 19**SETTING**

CADENCE'S MIND / HOSPITAL ROOM: same as before, except a spotlight falls on Cadence, and FIERY RED LIGHT fills in her surroundings.

AT RISE

Cadence clings to her blanket in the hospital bed. The Shadow People tear and claw at her. They try to pull her limbs from her body. She struggles and fights her way free ...

(INAUDIBLE WHISPERS and DARK LAUGHTER echo throughout the room.)

DEMON (V.O.)

(in Cadence's voice)

They're all going to die, you know. Everyone you love --

CADENCE

Leave them alone!

DEMON (V.O.)

(in Cadence's voice)

They hate you now!

CADENCE

No! You're lying!

(Voices overlap and echo through Cadence's hell.)

ELIAS (V.O.)

Give in, Cadence.

SETH (V.O.)

You're so ugly inside.

ARIEL (V.O.)

You killed those people!

CADENCE

I didn't kill anybody! You did! You made me do things --

AMY (V.O.)

-- You killed your own mother, Cadence. It's your fault that everyone you love dies.

CADENCE

No! It wasn't my fault!

AMY (V.O.)

You need to kill them all. Elias. Seth. Ariel. If you don't --

DEMON (V.O.)

-- *I will.*

CADENCE

Please leave them alone! They didn't do anything!

(to herself)

I have to stop this ...

(She sits up, clasps her hands together,
and prays.)

CADENCE

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name --

(The shadow people aggressively grab
Cadence and pin her to the bed.)

DEMON (V.O.)

He can't help you! You belong to us now. You're *one of us*. Say it!

CADENCE

Never! Let me go!

DEMON (V.O.)

Say it or they die! Starting with ... *Eliassss*.

CADENCE

No!

(BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

SCENE 20**SETTING**

HOSPITAL ROOM: Back to normal; bed, machines, normal lighting on Elias and Keith.

AT RISE

Cadence is still in bed. Elias and Keith speak DOWNSTAGE, facing away from her.

(The RUMBLING FADES IN.)

(A LIGHT over Cadence FADES UP.)

ELIAS

What if you're wrong about this?

(The demon, in Cadence's body, sits up, stretches her jaw, and contorts her body as though emerging from a cocoon.)

KEITH

I pray that I am. Unfortunately, I can't know for sure until Cadence wakes up.

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

Speak. Of. *The devil*.

ELIAS

Cadence ...

(Elias moves to approach her; Keith stops him.)

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

No no no no no no. Try again.

(Elias opens his medical bag and pulls out a vial of Holy Water.)

KEITH

I don't believe we've had the pleasure. I'm Keith Whitney.

(Keith cautiously approaches Cadence.)

KEITH

Maybe you've heard of me in your circles?

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

Maybe you've heard of me in yours.

KEITH

Perhaps. What's your name?

(Cadence smiles -- you tricky dog -- and sways her index finger back and forth in a "no-no" gesture.)

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

Don't worry. You'll scream it soon enough.

(She flicks her tongue seductively at Keith.)

ELIAS

What are you waiting for? Help her!

(Keith puts up a hand to calm Elias, and clenches his jaw, nervously.)

KEITH

I want to speak with Cadence.

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

You'll never find her.

KEITH

Where is she?

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

You'll see her in Hell.

ELIAS

I don't believe that. Cadence would never give up. God comes first in her life.

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

But not yours, right, Daddy?

(Elias takes a step back, shocked.)

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

You haven't had faith in anything but Irish Whiskey since the night you let Amy die.

KEITH

Don't listen to it.

(Elias composes himself and stares at
Cadence with grim determination.)

KEITH

(sigh)

I'm convinced. We're going to begin the ritual, immediately.

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

Admit it! You've hated me ever since. You've blamed me for her death every day since I was born!

ELIAS

No -- it's not true!

(Keith un-spouts the Holy Water. He
raises it ...)

KEITH

Fallen one! I command you! Release this child in the name of --

CADENCE

(her own voice, sweetly)

-- *Daddy?*

(Keith stops and squints at Cadence,
suspiciously.)

ELIAS

Cadence?

CADENCE

Daddy, I'm sorry! Help me! Please!

(Elias hurries to Cadence, tears streaming from his face.)

KEITH

Elias, don't --

(Cadence's face morphs into a wicked scowl. She grips Elias by the throat with superhuman strength and prepares to crush his larynx.)

(Keith rushes to free Elias from Cadence's grip. EVERYONE FREEZES.)

(The HOSPITAL LIGHTING FADES OUT; The HELLISH, LOW-ANGLE LIGHTING FADES IN.)

(Cadence's face returns to normal, though fearful.)

(The *Shadow People* swarm in from STAGE LEFT and STAGE RIGHT and surround Cadence.)

(Cadence grunts and tries to pry her fingers off of Elias' throat with her other hand, but is unable to do so.)

CADENCE

(to the sky)

Stop it! Let him go!

DEMON (V.O.)

Make a choice, Cadence. Give in! Or we kill you both!

CADENCE

Dad ...

(Cadence sobs and goes limp, save her "*strangling*" arm.)

He dies then!

DEMON (V.O.)

No!

CADENCE

Then submit!

DEMON (V.O.)

Submit!

ARIEL (V.O.)

Submit!

SETH (V.O.)

Submit, honey. It's okay. It's what your mother would want.

ELIAS (V.O.)

Dad ...

CADENCE

(Cadence's demonic grip tightens. Her other hand grabs her wrist to pull it free, but it's no use ...)

CADENCE

(broken)

No! ... I submit!

(The Shadow People exit STAGE LEFT and STAGE RIGHT.)

(The HELLISH LIGHT fades out, returning the hospital room back to normal.)

(Cadence's sinister sneer returns as everyone else RETURNS TO MOTION.)

CADENCE

(Demon's voice, growling)

Mmmmine.

(Cadence releases Elias; he falls to the floor, unconscious.)

(Keith splashes Cadence with Holy Water. She winces and HOWLS in pain.)

KEITH

Release her!

(Cadence lets out a demonic laugh.)

CADENCE

(Demon's voice)

Too late.

(Cadence nods. Keith is flung to the ground by an unseen force.)

(Cadence jumps out of bed and scrambles STAGE RIGHT until she's out of view.)

KEITH

Elias ... she's heading for the window -- stop her!

(A WINDOW SHATTERS as Cadence makes her escape.)

(Keith pulls himself off of the ground and limps STAGE RIGHT to peek out the window.)

KEITH

Cadence.

(bowing his head)

God help us all.

(BLACKOUT.)

END SCENE

ACT V

FADE IN:

21. INT. WEAVER RESIDENCE - CADENCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Elias wipes his tears and composes himself.

ELIAS

That ... that wasn't my little girl.
In that hospital room, that was not
Cadence. It looked like her, but
whatever it was ... it wasn't even
human. You explain how she jumped
out a four story window and
didn't ...

(shaking head)

There was no body. No blood. No
witnesses. It was just ... gone. And
it took Cadence with it.

CUT TO:

22. INT. CHURCH - DAY

Seth looks sadly at Heather (O.S.).

SETH

I had a dream about her the night
she ... jumped. It wasn't that thing
in the cemetery; it was *her*. She
was sad, and, like, *cold*, but ... it
comforted me. She just stood in
front of my bed and watched me. She
didn't say a word, and I couldn't --
I was paralyzed. She just stood
there and watched me for a long
time, and then, after a while, I
woke up. I know it sounds crazy,
but ... I could still smell her. It
felt like she'd been in the room,
not even two minutes before.

HEATHER (O.S.)

What do you think it means?

SETH

It means she's okay She's in heaven
now.

Seth stares into the camera, a face of sheer heartbreak.

CUT TO:

23. EXT. RIVER RIDGE CEMETERY - DAY

Ariel sets a flower on the tombstone beside her.

ARIEL

Do I think she's alive?

She crosses her arms, offended.

ARIEL

I mean, how could she be?

She looks at the tombstone.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Keith Whitney believes that somebody
may have helped Cadence escape the
farmhouse, and may even be harboring
her *now*.

ARIEL

But, who? Smolder Club died in that
farmhouse. Iris, Mason -- everyone.

HEATHER (O.S.)

The coroner has yet to confirm the
identities of the bodies found at
the crime scene.

ARIEL

Regardless, they're all dead, just
like Cadence.

(to Heather)

No. It's time to stop looking and
let Cadence rest in peace.

CUT TO:

24. INT. ELIAS' HOUSE - CADENCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Elias looks at Heather, O.S., sadly.

ELIAS

When I watch the news at night, I'm looking for my baby girl. As if, somehow, they'd report it on the news before they reported it to me.

Elias shrugs.

ELIAS

Sometimes a body turns up. In a dumpster, or a river. It's tragic, no matter who it is, but, my first instinct is to ask, *is that my Cadence?* And when it's not, my second question is -- did my little girl do that to someone? Did she do that to another living person? Is she capable?

He wipes his eyes.

ELIAS

And ... I don't have an answer. All I can do is pray. Funny how that works. When I lost my wife, I lost my hope, my faith -- everything. I was angry ... and hurt. I was devastated. But when I lost my daughter, I found my faith again. I saw the evil that consumed her, but instead of breaking me, it gave me hope, because I realized that, if the devil exists, then ...

He becomes emotional and points to the sky.

ELIAS

I don't care what the detectives think, or the reporters, or social media, or anyone else for that matter. My daughter is alive. My baby girl is out there somewhere, and she needs help.

Elias glances at the camera.

ELIAS

She's not what people say she is.
You'll see. We just have to find
her.

HEATHER (O.S.)

... But, how do you know?

ELIAS

Here's the thing. Whatever she did
in the end, no matter what, I know
it was for the right reasons. For
me, and Seth ... for her loved ones.
It was a sacrifice. Our whole faith
was built around a similar selfless,
redemptive act, and I refuse to
believe that someone can make a
noble sacrifice like that and be
damned to hell for all eternity.

He taps his Bible.

ELIAS

That's not what we believe.

(to the camera)

Cadence. If you're out there, if
you're watching ... come home.

(sobs)

We can beat this. Just come home.

CUT TO:

25. INT. OCCULT MUSEUM - NIGHT

Keith looks sternly at Heather (O.S.).

KEITH

Miracles do happen. It's easy for
someone who hasn't personally
experienced the darkness and the
divine to dismiss the possibility
that all of this is real. And that's
sad, because it happens everyday.

He flips through photos and scraps of paper in his journal.

KEITH

The detectives would have you believe that Cadence is *gone*. That she made it to the lake or the woods and was too weak to carry on. But I don't accept that. She's alive, and she's out there somewhere. She needs help. Somebody knows where she is -- I believe this in my heart -- someone's lying. They know exactly where she is, and that puts them in danger, too.

He finds two photos of Cadence. He displays the first one: Cadence, healthy, and smiling, holds a flower in the park.

KEITH

See, when a demon possesses you, its intention is not to kill you. It wants to corrupt everything about you that's pure and good.

INSERT: PHOTOS OF A SMILING CADENCE, PRIOR TO POSSESSION.

KEITH

It'll wear you down. Weaken you. Abuse you and starve you. It lies. It hurts you and those you care about to cause you the most soul-crushing pain -- all just to break your spirit, and theirs. That's how it wins, that's how it takes over. That's what happened to Cadence Weaver.

HEATHER (O.S.)

You said you believe someone is helping Cadence. Where could she be?

KEITH

That's the *sixty-four thousand dollar question* isn't it? The truth is, she could be anywhere. Living on the streets. In an alley or under a bridge. She'll blend in ... for now.

KEITH

See, evil waits for you where you feel safest. It's in your house. Your bedroom. Your car. It's everywhere. As kids, we were afraid of monsters hiding in the closet, or under the bed, and, as we grew up, we forgot about them. But *they* never forgot about *us*.

Keith becomes grim.

KEITH

When you feel that cold chill in the dark -- that is the beast, hunting you, looking for any opportunity to strike. It wants to corrupt you, to separate you from God. Whatever you fear, it knows. The trick is to have no fear, but to have faith, instead. Don't let that evil into your mind or your heart, because once it gets a foothold, it goes for your soul next, and it's relentless.

HEATHER (O.S.)

But, if Cadence is possessed, why wipe out the Smolder Club? Why let us believe she's dead?

KEITH

Doesn't make sense, does it? Well, that's exactly the point. The greatest trick the devil ever plays is convincing us he doesn't exist. That's why it's so important we find Cadence. She's a living soul, she's one of God's children, but she's also proof. She's living, breathing proof that good and evil exist. They're at war, and our souls are the battle field. So, I guess, the biggest question right now is ... *'where's Cadence?'*"

FADE OUT.

SCENE 26

SETTING

THE AISLES, among the audience.

AT RISE

Cadence stands alone, flailing her arms at the crowd, wildly.

(A FAST STROBE LIGHT TURNS ON
BENEATH CADENCE.)

(Cadence SCREAMS bloody murder!)

(WHISPERS, DISSONANT LAUGHS,
and A DEEP GROWL INTENSIFY.)

(*Shadow People* crawl through the
crowd and torment patrons.)

(BLACKOUT.)

END OF PLAY