

THE REACH

Screenplay
by

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Based on the short story *The Reach* by Stephen King

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A PAIR OF VIVID BLUE EYES

Frozen open. Silence. Blue as if part of a summer ocean in them. But this is not summer. It's the coldest winter day you can imagine.

The eyes - her eyes - stay open as if in wonder, but, we realize, are actually open in death.

Frozen, with tiny icicles, almost like tears, amid that crisscrossing of papery white eyelids of tremendous age - of a woman, once beautiful, now in her 90's. Now gone.

THE SAME PAIR OF EYES

For a moment, as still and unblinking as they were in their frozen state, but then --

VOICE (V.O.)

Do you love?

She blinks.

STELLA FLANDERS' alert blue eyes in her 95-YEAR-OLD face search for the source of this Voice.

But there's no one there.

SOUNDS come up - the banter of people arriving, exclamations of reunion...

INT. STELLA'S PORCH. GOAT ISLAND. SUMMER. DAY.

Stella, in her best navy-blue dress, sits in a rocker and looks out at the harbor before her. 8-year-old LONA, a blonde angel of a great-grandchild, leans on the rocker.

LONA

Gram, how come you never been across the Reach?

STELLA

Honey, I never saw any reason to go.

Her other great-grandchildren - sturdy TOMMY, 10, and little HAL, 6 - look at Stella, astonished. But Stella seems far away. She looks out at the glistening water.

STELLA

(as if speaking to no one)
The Reach was wider in those days.

TOMMY
 (to his mother)
 What does she mean, Mom?

LOIS, 35, Stella's grand-daughter, shakes her head. Hal, the 6-year-old, ponders this and finally asks:

HAL
 What *is* the Reach?

STELLA
 Why, it's right there.

Stella points to where the mouth of the harbor meets the gray surging waves and beyond it lies:

THE TOWN OF RACCOON HEAD ON THE MAINLAND.

Leafy trees, modest buildings and a white-steepled church stretch out on the land a mile across the water.

STELLA
 The Reach is what we call the water between here and the mainland.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOAT ISLAND. THAT MOMENT. DAY.

Several ISLANDERS climb a path up the hill to Stella Flanders' tidy wood-shingled house.

The people range from the very old to the very young, a kind of procession, bearing birthday presents.

FURTHER DOWN THE HILL

MISSY BOWIE, 30, four little ones scampering about, slams the door on a run-down house. She calls toward the dock:

MISSY
 Russell! We're gonna be late!

EXT. TOWN WHARF. GOAT ISLAND. DAY.

The path leads to the focal point of the Island, this simple working wharf, with only enough room for the two lobster boats that are tied up on either side of it now.

RUSSELL BOWIE, 25, in his orange rubber coveralls, and STEWIE MACCLELLAND, 25, climb out of their boats.

They head up from the wharf, still in their knee-high rubber fishing boots.

RUSSELL
(shouting to his wife)
Coming - Christ!

Russell catches up to Missy.

MISSY
You're wearing that?

RUSSELL
Didn't have time.

LITTLE GIRL
Daddy, you stink!

RUSSELL
Smell a' money, kid.

A BLACK METAL CODFISH WEATHERVANE

Swings atop the steeple of a white clapboard chapel.

The elderly minister, EWELL McCracken, exits and heads up the hill, gift in hand.

INT. STELLA'S HOUSE. HALLWAY. DAY.

HATTIE STODDARD, 70's, stout and bossy, and VERA SPRUCE, 70's, rail-thin, carefully carry a tremendous birthday cake into the kitchen and lower it onto the table.

CAKE LETTERING:

"Happy Birthday to Stella - 95 YEARS YOUNG!!"
Decorated with red lobsters, hand-drawn in frosting.

They start putting on the candles. A lot of them.

LIVING ROOM.

Little Lona presents her Great-Gram with her gift: her hand-made wreath of red flowers, on a tiny white pillow. She's obviously extremely proud of it.

STELLA'S PAPERY-WHITE, AGED HANDS

Take this pillow with its wreath. Hold it.

LONA

Put it on, Gram. It's your birthday
wreath.

A beat. Stella slowly places the pillow on a side table
next to her. She turns back to Lona.

STELLA

Later, dear. Later.

Disappointment flashes across the little girl's face.

INT. STELLA'S LIVING ROOM. DAY.

DAVID, Lois's husband, 40, clearly NOT an Islander, sets
up his large portable video projection screen.

FRED DINSMORE, a spry 92, in wire-rim glasses and a bow-
tie, watches closely. A camera around his neck.

An image flickers in and out on the screen.

DAVID

(muttering)

It worked this morning... just give me a
sec here.

Abruptly, an image of:

STELLA'S HUSBAND, BILL FLANDERS, ON THE SCREEN:

*In his late 50s - Tareyton behind his ear, grin on his
face. Bill's voice booms out:*

BILL ON VIDEO

(LOUD volume)

*SEE, LIKE CLOCKWORK, SHE'LL SWOOP RIGHT
DOWN AND...*

David fiddles with the volume. Startled, several people
in the room turn and look at the screen.

FRED DINSMORE

That was my first Kodak Super 8 with
sound!

DAVID

Sorry, everyone. Got it now.

ON SCREEN:

Bill, out on his boat, holds a spiny fish to the camera, he throws it high in the air.

BILL ON VIDEO

(normal volume)

...she'll grab this fish. This here's a sculpin, it floats. Now eagles are fearless, she'll come right for it.

Awkward pause - no eagle.

BILL ON VIDEO

(embarrassed)

...Then again sometimes she doesn't. Maybe she's camera shy, like me.

Bill cracks a smile and winks. The image shakes as Bill and the unseen cameraman laugh out loud on the screen.

IN THE LIVING ROOM:

Fred laughs at his own camerawork. People start to watch, and David steps back, proudly.

HOME VIDEO OF STELLA'S FAMILY ON THE SCREEN:

A home-edited patchwork of Stella, her husband Bill and their two children, Jane and Alden, spanning the decades in super 8, black and white, Kodachrome, early video.

A portrait of a lobstering family on Goat Island.

ON STELLA IN THE LIVING ROOM.

She glances at the screen, walking by.

DAVID

(still staring at the screen)

Stell? Whaddya think?

Dave turns and realizes - she isn't even there.

IN THE KITCHEN

The candles being lit. A sense of hurry, since keeping 95 candles all lit in time to reach Stella is a challenge.

INT. STELLA'S BATHROOM. DAY.

Stella spits a huge glob of bright red blood into the toilet. Coughing.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Outside, you can hear the laughter of children, voices chattering, music playing.

LOIS (O.S.)
Grandma? You all right in there?

Stella nods her head over the toilet bowl, but can't answer quite yet.

LOIS (O.S.)
Because the cake's almost ready!

Stella matter of factly flushes the toilet, then rinses her mouth, brushes her teeth.

STELLA
(through teeth)
Yes, Lois, dear, be right out.

She pats her face with a towel, glances at her own ancient reflection in the mirror.

She steels herself.

It's taking all of her energy to act this lively for everyone.

MOMENTS LATER:

The cake hoisted up by several folks, including Hattie.

HATTIE
Now!

And the entire room bursts into the happy birthday song.

DISSOLVE TO:

AERIAL VIEW, GOAT ISLAND. THAT MOMENT. MAGIC HOUR.

From high above, over the open water of the Reach.

Past the rocky shoreline.

Onto the entire stretch of island below.

Over the thirty or so Goat Island houses, gray-shingled or white clapboard arranged around...

...the long harbor.

Where a dozen lobster boats are moored.

DISSOLVE TO:

Now from only a hundred or so feet above the periphery of the village, where the last few guests hurry toward Stella's house.

The assembled company bellows "Happy Birthday to You" in a combined voice -

-not quite loud enough to drown out the STEADY GALE OF THE WIND.

EVERYONE
(singing)
Happy birthday to you...

DISSOLVE TO:

Gliding through wild grass and high reeds as the singing gets louder and louder.

PUSH THROUGH STELLA'S HOUSE:

An open window with its fluttering curtain.

Moving past all the GUESTS singing and staring at the cake making its way through the house.

EVERYONE
(singing)
Happy birthday to you...

Past Stella's son, ALDEN, late 50's, a big bear of a man, with thick glasses, who booms in, slightly off-key.

Moving at last right past:

STELLA

Lit by the 95 candles, all the smallest children wide-eyed around her, ready to blow them out.

EVERYONE
(singing loudly)
HAPPY BIRTHDAY dear Stelllllllaaaaaa!

And now the Happy Birthday song changes.

A subtle discord enters it. The chorus almost carried on the wind.

Only Stella hears this.

THE CAMERA STILL MOVING THROUGH THE HOUSE:

...past her, past all of her children and friends,
PUSHING OUT the window on the other side of the house...

DISSOLVE TO:

AND MOVING OVER THE ISLAND:

...high up, past the tiny cemetery, past Godlin's Pond,
and the wilder side of the island, covered in birch, dark
evergreen and rock.

Past the white LIGHTHOUSE that marks SLYDER'S POINT, the
eastern edge of the island, over its tallest cliffs.

And to the Atlantic beyond.

EVERYONE (V.O.)
HAPPY BIRTHDAY Tooo yooouuu....

Until the WIND drowns out the end of the song.

And the wind itself gives way to only the SEAGULL'S CRY,
the CLANG OF THE BELL-BUOY, and the CRASH OF THE WAVES.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STELLA'S LIVING ROOM. DUSK.

Shouts of "Make a wish, Gram!" Stella and all the little
ones blow in a fury of puffed-out cheeks.

WHOOSH! Sudden dimness, applause and cheers.

REFLECTED IN STELLA'S PIERCING EYES:

The last gleams of candle flicker out.

DARKNESS. DEAD SILENCE.

VOICE (V.O.)
Do you love?

Stella, startled, tries once again to locate the source
of this Voice, still masking her bewilderment.

Who was that? She sees, instead:

STELLA'S POV OVER THE CAKE:

A swarm of beaming faces, who are expecting her to smile.

...And so she does.

CUT TO:

INT. SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE, GOAT ISLAND CHURCH. DAY.

Next morning. Wheezing PIPE ORGAN MUSIC accompanies the Doxology. All Stella's family is there.

ALDEN bellows out the words by heart, by far the loudest in the congregation.

ALDEN

(booming voice)

"Praise father, son and Holy Ghost!"

And ends in his bellowed "Amen!"

Stella, her white hair gleaming in the morning light, listens to Ewell McCracken, the minister, at the pulpit.

MINISTER

...from Matthew, Chapter one, verse 1-14.

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Stella looks at the backs of the heads of her great-grandchildren. Lona, her blonde hair in ribbons, squirms in the pew before her.

MINISTER

Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar...

Gradually Stella's voice takes over the minister's.

STELLA (V.O.)

And Louis and Margaret Godlin begat Stella Godlin...

PAN AROUND the light-filled church...

STELLA (V.O.)
 ...Stella Godlin who became Stella
 Flanders; Bill and Stella Flanders begat
 Jane and Alden...

...to rest on Alden, his Bible open on his lap, awkward
 in white shirt and tie.

By now, Stella's voice overpowers the minister's.

STELLA (V.O.)
 ...and Jane Flanders became Jane
 Wakefield; Richard and Jane Wakefield
 begat Lois Wakefield...

Stella's gaze stops on Lois, sitting with her husband and
 the three squirming children.

STELLA (V.O.)
 ...who became Lois Perrault; David and
 Lois Perrault begat Tommy, Lona and Hal.

Stella smiles to herself at her private version of the
 reading.

Lona turns around, as if feeling Stella's gaze, and grins
 at her great-grandmother.

EXT. EDGE OF THE REACH. DAY.

The rocky shoreline on this summer's day.

A child runs by in a blur of freedom. Shoes off, ribbons
 gone, freed from the tyranny of the pulpit and pew.

STELLA (V.O.)
 These are your names, children. You are
 Godlin-Flanders-Wakefield-Perrault...

Stella sits on a chair brought to the rocks. Far beyond,
 out on the reach:

A GREEN BELL BUOY

bobs in the dark water, its TWO NOTES PEALING like a far-
 off monastery calling for prayer.

STELLA (V.O.)
 Your blood is in the stones of this
 island, and I stay here because the
 mainland is too far to reach.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN WHARF. GOAT ISLAND HARBOUR. LATE AFTERNOON.

Alden's in his lobster boat, "Starlight," at the landing.

He takes luggage and helps Lois, David and the three kids to the boat. Stella is getting goodbye hugs.

DAVID

Thought you never took her out on a Sunday, Alden?

ALDEN

Not for lobsterin.' But we gotta get you mainlanders back home.

About to go on the boat, Lona stops, turns to Stella.

LONA

Gram, you still haven't told me why you never been across the Reach.

Stella smiles at her.

STELLA

Why child, I've always had everything I needed right here on Goat.

Stella gathers the three children in her arms. Kissing their heads. Alden starts up the motor.

Hal, once again, ponders this deeply and has to ask:

HAL

(still puzzled)

You never wanted to go across, Gram? Ever?

Stella leans toward the little boy - as if ready to speak. The children wait expectantly.

But she doesn't answer them.

The children are waiting.

Stella closes her eyes.

CUT TO BLACK:

VOICE (V.O.)

Do you love?

Sunlight floods back as:

THOSE THREE GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN - on the boat.

Moving away from Stella. They wave, shouts of 'Happy birthday, Gram' as the boat leaves Goat Island for the mainland.

Stella looks out at the Reach, beyond Alden's boat, at the water itself.

FLECKS OF SUNLIGHT

glitter hypnotically on the rippling water.

VERY CLOSE ON STELLA'S EYES:

The reflected shimmering light from the water now dances on the cornea of Stella's eye. Sounds of summer recede.

This dance of light gradually slows and becomes a still, solid sheet of bright white in her eyes.

STELLA'S POV:

The Reach is frozen.

EXT. STELLA'S YARD. DAY. (PAST, 1955)

The snow lies white and strange, from the island shore to the mainland, on jagged slabs of frozen salt water.

STELLA, fifty-five years younger, is a slim, rugged 40; she looks out at the Reach through the steam of each exhale of her own breath.

She's bundled up against the extreme cold: handknit hat, scarf, thick coat over a wool skirt, knee-high boots.

She's by her clothesline, a wicker laundry basket at her feet on the snow. Hanging wet clothes. Or trying to.

The SNAP and FLAP of fabric in the stiff wind freezing as the wet clothes reach the air.

BILL (O.S.)

Stell! Come on! The Reach froze solid through! Come walk across with us!

Stella glances in her husband's direction. She picks up another shirt to hang.

Smiles prettily, shakes her head.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STELLA'S KITCHEN. DAY. (PRESENT)

A stretch of silence here, the silence in which 95-year-old Stella lives her current life.

She slowly clears Alden's breakfast dishes from the table.

Washing up the few dishes. Putting the plates and coffee cups in the dish rack to dry.

A sense of many such mornings like this one.

EXT. STELLA'S BACK PORCH. DAY.

Stella steps out onto the porch. Looks down.

A dead sparrow on the back stoop. She bends down ever so slowly, carefully. She holds the bird up by one foot.

STELLA

Frozen.

EXT. INCINERATOR. BACKYARD. DAY.

Stella carries the frozen bird to the old rusty incinerator. Drops it in. Shuts its door with a clang.

She steadies herself holding the door handle, dizzy from the exertion and the extreme cold.

Stella walks out further into her backyard toward the woodpile.

Under the cloudless sky, her blue shadow falls crisp and clean onto the snow.

She holds her mittened hand level at the height of her thigh --

CLOSE ON TALL GRASS

Her hand slices across the top of the wild tall grass.

The GRASS SNAPS in a neat row with a sound like BREAKING GLASS.

Stella is amazed.

She shakes her mitten free of the shards.

EXT. WOODPILE. DAY.

This is precisely where the old clothesline once was.

Stella lifts a few of the smallest split logs under her arm. Her labored breath in puffs of white.

'SNAP/FLAP' OF THE FREEZING LAUNDRY - AN AURAL MEMORY.

Unsure if she can lift another, Stella reaches for one last split log.

BILL'S VOICE

Stella?

His voice is not in her head - it's present, ringing in the crisp clear air.

The vapor of his breath can be seen as plainly as hers.

HIS SHADOW falls beside her, longer than hers but just as sharp and blue in the snow.

THE SHADOW OF HIS CAP twisted jauntily off to one side just as he wore it.

BILL'S VOICE

When you comin' across to the mainland?
Just for a lark. What do you say?

ON STELLA

She stifles a scream.

A GULL'S HARSH SCREECH sounds above her in that very instant, seeming to be her voice.

She slams her fist to her mouth.

Wheels around, the split logs clatter to the ground.

The SOUND and THE SHADOW OF GULLS fly over her. The shadows move on the snow, blue and fleeting.

The FLAPPING of their wings fades away.

...And Bill's shadow has vanished.

Silence.

Stella, still wary and stunned, turns her head to slowly search the yard.

There's no one there.

Just the dooryard sloping down the hill, with its wild white grass.

And beyond, clear-cut and somehow magnified, the Reach.

CUT TO:

INT. STELLA'S HOUSE. WINTER. DAY.

Stella pauses at her back doorway, still in her coat.

All appears normal: A marine radio on a shelf with maps, a few curling photographs, one of Bill in his red hat.

RADIO

"And weather today continues below zero for the seventh straight week, though reports that the Reach has frozen are premature..."

She stands still, waits. Goes to sit in her rocker.

Thinking. Remembering.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STELLA'S YARD. DAY. (PAST, 1955)

Bill grabs Stella by her wool plaid skirt.

BILL

Come on, Stell! It'll be fun.

Stella just smiles and we see how pretty she is.

She shakes her head, reaches down for a white shirt of Bill's and pins it up.

CUT TO:

A DREAM-LIKE REPEAT OF THIS MOMENT:

From Stella's POV, laughing. Bill in his snowshoes.

Bill pulls a Tareyton from behind his ear, lights it up. His friend and sternman BULL SYMES, 30s, yells to him.

BULL SYMES (O.S.)

(calling)

Flanders, let's go!

Bill looks at her from over his cigarette: as if to say: sure you're not coming? without saying it.

Stella shakes her head, one more time. Bill tips his cap, gallantly.

His long-billed red cap, a small break near the edge.

He winks.

Turns and goes.

CUT TO:

FURTHER OUT ON THE REACH (PAST, 1955)

Bill and Bull Symes, both on snowshoes, now well on their way to the mainland.

Bill turns around and waves both arms to her.

CLOSE ON STELLA

Stella waves back. But there's something beneath the smile on her face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STELLA'S KITCHEN. EVENING. (PRESENT)

Alden opens the door, realizes it's so cold inside he can see his breath.

Stella sits in the dim winter light. She's in her rocker in front of the unlit stove, wrapped in her wool afghan, with her boots and coat still on.

Alden switches on a light.

ALDEN

Ma? Ya forget how to light a match?

STELLA

Go on or I'll swat ya.

Alden looks at her with concern. Which she ignores.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD TO WHARF. GOAT ISLAND. DAY. (PRESENT)

Stella walks up her path with a bag of groceries from the General Store.

All else is quiet and motionless in the freezing February day.

Until a SNOWMOBILE zigs and zags expertly down the snow-covered road.

Stella turns and looks in the direction of the roaring snowmobile.

It careens around the wharf and lands on the frozen harbor, zooming out to the Reach.

The laughter of the two men on it echoing back to her. They wave.

She waves back, turns away.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE REACH. DAY.

Frozen, the Reach is nothing like a frozen lake. It looks more like ice floes in arrested motion.

Slabs of thick ice, frozen at angles to each other, as far as you can see.

The snowmobile lurches over these waves and shards - flying high.

Stewie drives, with Russell (the two sternmen we saw at the party) behind him, hanging onto Stewie's waist with one hand, a bottle of Apple-Zapple wine in the other.

EXT. FURTHER OUT ON THE REACH. DAY

RUSSELL shrieks as the snowmobile lands with a smack and slides wildly on the ice, careening. The men shout with crazy joy.

RUSSELL
Whhooooeeeeeeyyyy!!!

The Skiddoo flies through the air and slams onto the ice and -- a splitting CRACK!!

The ice breaks; the Skiddoo's back end goes in first.

And Russell slips down into opening chasm of black water too quickly to even speak.

Shivering, shuddering, Stewie drags himself onto the ice.

He looks up and sees Goat Island looking very far away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUSSELL'S FUNERAL PARTY. CHURCH HALL. NIGHT.

The wood fire glows. The entire island drinks Za-Rex and eats cream-cheese sandwiches.

Stewie, miserable, is on crutches, one leg bandaged at the stump of the ankle.

He lost his foot.

Ancient Fred Dinsmore in his bow-tie and wire-rims, Larry McKeen, 50s, the general store-owner, Alden, HAROLD SYMES - stand in one corner. Talk in low voices.

They glance at Stewie, or more specifically, try not to.

Especially not that leg.

ALDEN

Not gonna be much good on a boat.

LARRY MCKEEN

Maybe we can put him on repairs down on the dock?

HAROLD SYMES

He's too stupid to do repairs.

FRED DINSMORE

He could help out at the store?

The men all turn to Larry.

LARRY MCKEEN

But he's not too stupid to work in my store? Thanks.

Fred scowls at his son, GEORGE DINSMORE, late 60s, who hovers by the punch bowl, sneaking vodka from an inside flask.

FURTHER IN THE ROOM.

Stella, half- dozing by the wood-stove with her best friends - skinny Vera and sizable Hattie and SARAH HAVELOCK, another, somewhat younger, widow.

The very pregnant Missy sits with the minister and her four kids.

STELLA

She'll be crossing the Reach soon enough,
I guess.

SARAH

She'll move to Freeport or Lewiston and
go for a waitress.

Hattie nods, reaches for her knitting. Vera does, too.

HATTIE

Was it ever this cold before? Didn't the
Reach freeze over for real once, Stell?

STELLA

Yep. Bull Symes and my own man walked
across to Dorritt's Tavern on the Head,
had each of them a shot of whiskey and
walked back. Wanted me to go with.

Sarah, Vera and Hattie stare at her, the firelight
undulating on their faces.

VERA

They did?

SARAH

(astonished)
And you didn't go?

Hattie and Vera have abruptly stopped knitting.

STELLA

No, I didn't.

HATTIE

Why not?

STELLA

(snapping)
It was washday.

At this precise moment, Missy breaks into loud SOBS.

Vera, Hattie and Sarah swivel in Missy's direction and see:

MISSY AND THE MINISTER

On a bench, the minister trying to comfort her.

Stella looks in the same direction and sees:

Missy and the minister and...

BILL FLANDERS.

Sitting next to them. Looking RIGHT AT STELLA.

The Bill of 1955, handsome in his red-and-black-checked jacket, red hat cocked to one side.

A Tareyton tucked behind his ear.

ALL SOUND STOPS.

Though everyone's actions carry on: Missy weeps, the minister says something comforting, the men talk.

STELLA's heartbeat becomes the soundtrack. BaBUM, baBUM.

Then that heartbeat STOPS.

Now she hears Bill speak, though his mouth doesn't move. The Bill she's seeing just keeps looking at her, smiling.

BILL FLANDERS (V.O.)
(that Maine accent)
We're waitin' on you, Stell. You come on
across and see the mainland. You won't
need snowshoes this year.

Silence.

Stella makes a noise, but a knot POPS in the wood stove - and the SOUNDS of the gathering come back up.

Stella drags her eyes away from where Bill sits in order to see if Vera, Hattie or Sarah sees what she sees.

But they don't.

The three women are still looking at Missy Bowie.

SARAH
Poor thing.

HATTIE

Ha! Missy's well shut of that good-for-nothing. Little more than a tramp for pay, that man.

Trying to be nonchalant, Stella turns back to look at her late husband Bill --

BACK TO THE BENCH.

And Bill is gone.

On the far side of the room, Alden nudges George Dinsmore, passed out on a chair by the punch bowl.

HATTIE, VERA AND SARAH

now peer at Stella. Worried.

CUT TO:

INT. ALDEN'S BEDROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Alden, soundly sleeping, snores evenly in his bed.

But across the narrow hallway...

INT. STELLA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Stella sits up in bed, bolt awake.

She's under her faded green puzzle-quilt, staring into the night sky through the window.

She can hear Alden's snoring from the room next door.

CUT TO:

We plunge through a dark crack in the ice:

EXT. BELOW THE ICE. THE REACH. NIGHT.

Perfect quiet. Lobsters crawl in deep blue, through now-harmless traps on the bottom, old wooden ones and one metal, codfish swim by...

THE UNDERWATER BODY OF RUSSELL BOWIE

... Twisting, seemingly dancing, in the currents. A wooden lobster boat, its name faded beyond reading, rests on the ocean floor.

INT. STELLA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

The wind gusts, rattling the storm window. Stella turns on her side, huddles under the quilt.

Her eyes are open. Stares at her window.

VOICES like a chorus of music come in and out on the wind. And then they're gone.

The storm window rattles, the music vanishes.

Stella pulls up her quilt and tries to sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE REACH. SOME WEEKS LATER. DAY.

The snow has frozen to a firm, glittery crust between the harbor and the mainland, like a sheep's meadow.

Several men are out on the Reach, checking the hull of a lobster boat that has frozen right into the harbor.

ALDEN (O.S.)

I told Norm to haul his boat in like the rest of us. Now look at him.

INT. STELLA'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Alden's looking out the window toward the Reach with binoculars in his hand. Stella clears breakfast.

ALDEN

Look, Ma. Reach froze solid.

He hands the binoculars to Stella.

THROUGH BINOCULARS

The binocular image swoops and shifts, Stella finds...

GEORGE DINSMORE

- actually his bottle, taking a swig. She moves to frame in his unshaven face.

STELLA

There's George walkin' back. Another bender.

BINOCULARS POV:

Through its lenses she sees, hugely magnified, the cross atop the steeple of the Congo Church.

She scans the frozen Reach.

AND THERE'S BILL.

Waving his red hat. With that gesture to join him.

ALDEN (O.S.)

Ma?

Stella startles; puts down the binoculars. Turns.

ALDEN

Me and Harley Blood are gonna rehang that storm door for Missy Bowie.

STELLA

That's good of you, son.

The FRONT DOOR CLOSES, and Stella picks up the binoculars and looks again - but no BILL.

In that instant:

THE MARINE RADIO PLAYS A 1940'S BIG BAND DANCE NUMBER

Over the music comes a familiar voice.

BILL'S VOICE ON RADIO

Hey, Stella? We'll go steppin'. What do you say? Time's a'wastin'.

The window has fogged over with his words. Stella stops still. Sees the vapor on the window.

STELLA

You know what I say, Bill?

(loudly)

I say enough is enough. Leave me alone. You hear me? Stop this now.

She marches across the kitchen floor. Snaps off the radio.

Above the abrupt silence, she hears:

THE DISTINCT SOUND OF A MAN SOBBING.

STELLA

Alden?

IN THE DARK HALLWAY.

Stella slowly opens the bathroom door.

She sees nothing. No one. A small bathroom, a bathtub with a pastel shower curtain drawn shut.

But even more distinctly, she hears:

A grown man WEEPING, ALMOST CHOKING.

She moves to the bathtub and sweeps the curtain aside.

AND THE SOBBING CEASES.

Nothing behind the curtain.

As quickly as her feet will carry her, Stella makes it to the toilet.

A SURGE OF BLOOD SPILLS OUT OF HER MOUTH, AND ANOTHER.

It takes all of Stella's strength to remain on her feet.

She stares, horrified, at the blood.

Finally, shakily flushing the toilet.

She rinses her mouth in the sink. Grips the edge of the porcelain. She steadies herself. Stands up straight.

She looks in the mirror.

...AND THERE'S BILL.

Directly behind her in the dim light.

Still gripping the sink, Stella looks at him, the two of them staring at each other into the mirror.

He's 63, now, the age he was when he died, and he doesn't smile at all.

Their eyes meet.

He turns away and moves out of sight down the shadowy hall back toward the kitchen.

Stella can't move from where she stands at the sink.

CLICK. The radio comes back on in the kitchen. The SAME SWING DANCE NUMBER roars to its conclusion.

After which, the usual Coast Guard report jolts back on.

COAST GUARD ON RADIO
Coastal areas above Winter Harbor are
frozen solid, incidentally for the first
time since 1958, as the...

ON STELLA

Stella now stares toward the empty kitchen.

STELLA
Okay, Bill.

A DRAWER SLIDES OPEN.

Wool socks. Long underwear. Stella pulls them out.

MIRROR IN ALDEN'S BEDROOM

The waist of the long underwear comes up to just below
her breasts.

Stella chuckles at her silly reflection. Pulls the red
shirt over her head. It's almost down to her knees.

ENTRY WAY.

Stella, bundled up in her coat and red scarf, notices
Alden's neon-orange fleece-lined hat with ear-flaps.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Wearing Alden's hat, Stella checks the old wood-burning
stove and closes the draft nearly all the way.

STELLA
(under her breath)
He'd burn an extra quarter cord a winter
without me.

CUT TO:

Stella, still in her coat, sits in her rocker with a
piece of yellowing stationery.

She searches for the words. And writes:

STELLA (V.O.)
Dear Alden, I borrowed your hat.
(Sighs. Pauses.)
Son...

INT. STELLA'S DOORWAY. DAY.

*

The door closes behind her.

STELLA (V.O.)
 ...Since the first day of winter, I've
 been seeing your father.

EXT. GOAT ISLAND. DAY.

Stella walks, bundled up, down the road.

Beside each house, a lobster boat is hoisted up two feet
 off the ground for the winter. Their names painted in
 primary colors: *MONA MARY, YES DEAR, NEPTUNE'S DREAM.*

STELLA (V.O.)
 (her voice trailing off)
 It's got me wondering about a few
 things...

She walks past a lobstering shed with hand-blown, six-
 paned glass, rusted locks, snowed in.

And everywhere: stacked metal lobster traps, ubiquitous
 rectangles of gray mesh, by the hundreds.

EXT. ABANDONED WHARF. DAY.

Stella looks right and left, the wind blowing her dress
 out behind her like a flag.

She sits on its edge with a small grunt. Her boots dangle
 just above the ice.

Almost as if she can't take that one small step.

And then she does.

FADE TO WHITE:

SOUND FIRST.

Crunch, tiny thudding sound, CRUNCH, tiny thud, CRUNCH,
 tiny thud.

This is the sound her feet make as Stella sets out
 methodically toward the other side.

Her boots sink a little with each step.

The frozen Reach glitters before her.

Goat Island receding at a trudging pace behind her.

STELLA (V.O.)
 Never seen the island from here. I could
 turn around and look.

CRUNCH, tiny thud. CRUNCH, tiny thud.

STELLA
 (muttering)
 But I don't think my heart could bear it.

With her 95-year-old frailty emphasized by Alden's oversized hat, Stella heads off.

CLOSE ON STELLA'S SHOULDER.

A GLOVED HAND TAPS IT. TAP TAP TAP.

Alden is behind her. Tapping her on the shoulder.

ALDEN
 Ma?

She looks over her shoulder.

STELLA
 Alden?

But he's not there.

Baffled, she returns to her walking, face forward.

Then she feels it again.

Tap tap tap.

*

She turns again, and this time, when we see her:

CUT TO:

EXT. STELLA'S GARDEN. DAY. (PAST, 1957)

Stella, in her early 40s, kneels in her vegetable garden, pulling potatoes out of the ground. YOUNG ALDEN, 5, taps her on the shoulder.

YOUNG ALDEN
 Ma?

Stella doesn't turn around, keeps working.

STELLA

Alden, I'm working, if you want to help
you can look for weeds.

YOUNG ALDEN

But, Ma, look.

Stella turns in the direction Alden is pointing. She quickly stands, brushing the dirt from her hands, to better see:

EXT. HORIZON OVER ATLANTIC. DAY.

Black thunderhead clouds on the horizon silently billow with flashes of lightning. Stella stands dead still.

STELLA

Oh, Lord.

EXT. DANCER (TOMMY FRANE'S BOAT). OPEN OCEAN. DAY.

Two full wooden lobster traps are hauled onto the deck by TOMMY FRANE, 40s, and his sternman CARL ABERSHAM, 30s.

The men look at each other, pure triumph in their eyes.

CARL

Needed a day like this one. Hallelujah!

Carl shoves his hands in one trap and starts plucking out the dozen lobsters squirming inside it.

TOMMY

Whoa! Careful in there. You're liable to get your dick-beaters snapped right off!

CARL

My whah?

Tommy wiggles his fingers in the air.

TOMMY

These. Same as you use to play the flute.

Carl cracks up.

CARL

Trombone, buddy. That's what I play.

Carl shoves the now-empty trap back into the water.

EXT. INFINITY (BILL'S BOAT). OPEN OCEAN. THAT MOMENT.

The patch of black clouds draw in fast.

Bull Symes finishes hauling up a wooden trap by hand, this one also full of lobsters.

Bill, 40s, noticing this weather, is at the radio.

BILL
(into mic)
What the hell is that streak of crap I'm
lookin' at, Gerd? Over.

GERD (O.S.)
(on radio)
Hold tight, Infinity, over. Better head
in, Bill, don't look pretty.

BILL
(into mic)
Oh, you reckon?! Thanks for your sagely
words o'wisdom, Coast Guard!

Bill guns the engine. Bull empties the last trap.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE. DAY.

GERD HENREID, 40s, the keeper of the light, wearing his white Coast Guard cap, is at his marine radio.

RADIO
Goat Island Light. This is Coast Guard
Weather Station. That off shore squall
had a sudden change of direction. We've
just coded it as a Class A Noreaster,
'fraid she's heading your way.

GERD
Copy, Coast Guard. Over. ...Christ
Almighty!

Gerd switches channels on the radio.

EXT. DANCER. DAY.

Tommy and Carl momentarily stand completely still as an unmanned line whips through the winch.

They look up at the dark, threatening skies right above them. Cloud to ground lightning rips the sky.

TOMMY

Where the hell'd you come from, you son
of a whore?

CARL

Jesus, how'd we miss that?

Tommy pounces on the throttle. Carl ties everything down
in sight.

EXT. WOODS, GOAT ISLAND. DAY.

Stella runs through the woods. The thick pine trees rush
by her. Her breath getting ragged.

EXT. INFINITY. DAY.

Bill, cigarette dangling in his mouth, whips the boat
around a shoal of jagged rocks in an attempt to outrun
the storm.

The sea is starting to heave with high, wide swells.

The bait barrel falls sideways and splits open, spilling
grey, slimy herring all over the deck.

Bull Symes slips on this and goes sprawling.

Suddenly Bill's hat is ripped off his head, goes skidding
into the herring.

CUT TO:

EXT. SLYDER'S POINT. DAY.

THE LOBSTERMEN'S WIVES stand on the lighthouse bluffs in
the storm.

Wind and rain on their faces.

Faint orange of the sunset on the horizon line behind
them, but black, thundering clouds everywhere else.

Alongside Stella is her best friend, ANNABELLE FRANE, 40,
wife of Tommy Frane on the Dancer. And MARY SYMES, 30s,
the wife of Bill's sternman, Bull, among others.

The women share binoculars, straining to see where their
men's boats are on the rough sea.

Their dresses and wet hair whipping in the wind and rain.

In the far distance, a barely-discernable lobster boat comes lurching on the roiling sea.

One woman gasps with relief.

ISLAND WOMAN

I see him.

She bites her lip rather than burst into tears of relief in front of the other women. These are tough ladies.

ISLAND WOMAN

(handing over the binoculars)

Annie, Stell - girls...

She runs off through the woods.

Another lobster boat rounds the cove.

One by one, the women's faces break in relief as they spot their man's boat.

As each boat appears, they turn and run as fast as they can from Slyder's Point to meet them in the harbor.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SLYDER'S POINT. DUSK.

Annabelle, Stella and Mary Symes are the only three women standing on the point. The storm has abated by now.

There's that sense of aftermath, of everything still dripping from the storm. The women face the sea and the last bit of light in the sky.

Annabelle openly weeps, tears pouring down her face.

ANNABELLE

(repeating, like a mantra)

I can't live without him. I can't.

(turning to Stella)

I can't.

Stella keeps her eyes on the horizon. She doesn't weep.

STELLA

'Course you can.

Annabelle stares at Stella, stunned out of crying by Stella's cold logic.

The lighthouse keeper, Gerd, walks up with a flashlight.

GERD
Nothin' yet, Stell.

He hands Stella the flashlight. They stand, looking out at the empty sea.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOAT ISLAND. NIGHT.

The whole of the island -- every man, woman and child -- scour the shore, carrying oil lanterns and flashlights.

Stella and Annabelle search some distance apart, in yellow rain slickers, pointing flashlights on the large, black rocks of the shoreline.

The bell buoy clangs.

EXT. ROCKY SHORE, GOAT ISLAND. NIGHT.

Stella has moved away from the others. Behind her, bits of yellow lantern light in ones and twos and threes bob along in the distance.

A glimmer in the sand and rock.

A shape...

Stella moves forward. She sees:

A flash of human flesh.

Stella runs, splashing through the tide, sliding on rocks, nearly falling. Now she sees that it's:

A HAND...

red-scraped and stiff, open, half buried in the sand. The water lapping over it.

Stella drops to her knees. Lowers her lantern.

Her lantern outlines a man's body half-covered with sand. A patch of seaweed over the face.

She shoves the seaweed aside. It's... is it?

It's Annabelle's husband, Tommy Frane, dead.

Stella's profound relief instantly churns with her best friend's worst nightmare.

Without turning away, Stella shouts.

STELLA
ANNIE!! ANNABELLE!

Stella stands, holds up her lantern.

CUT TO:

WIDE OF THE SHORELINE

The other LIGHTS stop where they are. Then converge,
coming toward Stella.

One of them is fastest. Annabelle's.

Annabelle races toward her.

Stella catches Annabelle full force in her arms.
Annabelle's lantern swings, falls sideways on the rock.

Annabelle sinks down, weeping, and Stella holds her all
the way to the water, where Annabelle sobs over her
husband's body.

The fallen light hitting them.

Stella glances up, her eyes searching. Still no Bill.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WHARF. NIGHT.

The silhouettes of two men climb out from their boat.

And walk down the pier.

Bill, exhausted, looks up and sees Stella. He's drenched,
Stella's mud-streaked.

She and Bill do not run to each other. She stands and
waits for him.

Bill walks up.

BILL
You okay?

He looks at her; sees the fear still not quite ready to
leave her face.

STELLA
Dancer went down.

They both turn and walk up the hill to the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE REACH. DAY. (PRESENT)

Out on the ice, Stella stops walking.

STELLA'S POV OF THE TOWN

Which is closer than she's ever seen it, even through Alden's binoculars.

STELLA (V.O.)
It's so near. It's right here.

She walks a few more steps.

STELLA (V.O.)
Why, I could have a drink at Dorritt's
Tavern - just like Bill did.

She scans the townscape.

STELLA (V.O.)
If I drank.

She resumes her trudging through the snow.

STELLA
(muttering)
And if it hadn't burned down in 1958.

Just then a car goes by on the mainland. Then a van, in the opposite direction. Then another car.

Stella is struck by a reality she always knew in theory but had never seen in person: the mainland is attached to the whole country. All of it.

STELLA (V.O.)
They can go anywhere they want. Imagine.
Boston. New York.
(a pause)
Augusta.

She stares, transfixed by the nearness of the mainland.

BILL's voice comes into this.

BILL (O.S.)
The moon! I can't believe it!

Stella takes in the cross on top of the Congo Church,
which stands out against the cloudy sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CODFISH WEATHERVANE. DAY. (PAST, 1969)

The black fish on the church roof. A summer's blue sky,
the island's brisk breeze. Bill, 50s, straddles the
church roof.

BILL
(to himself)
We're gonna have a man on the moon before
we have a television on this stinkin'
island!

Bill struggles to attach an enormous, clumsy metal TV
aerial next to the weathervane.

BILL
(shouting)
I almost got it.

BIG GEORGE, Sarah's husband, mid-20s, holds the ladder at
the side of the church.

BIG GEORGE
Whaddya mean almost?

INT. CHURCH HALL. DAY.

TV STATIC

ALDEN, now a lanky 18, with thick glasses in black rims
held on his head by an elastic strap, watches a
television that's set up in front of rows of benches.

He's with some children, and an intrigued, pipe-smoking
OLD SYMES, 70's.

OLD SYMES
That's better, tell him that's better.

Alden calls out the door.

ALDEN
Okay, Pop, that's better! We're getting
something.

Alden kneels in front of the TV, flipping the dial over its twelve channels - all of which have static.

ALDEN

How many channels are we supposed to get?

ISLAND CHILD

We only need one.

CUT TO:

INT. STELLA'S KITCHEN. DAY. (PAST, 1969)

JANE FLANDERS, Stella's only daughter, 25, with long, straight hair, helps make sandwiches - lobster, of course - with Stella, early 50s, in the sunny kitchen.

Jane and Stella methodically crack the red lobster shells, yank the lobster meat out and toss it into a large mixing bowl.

STELLA

Hard to believe there was a time when lobsters were poor man's food. Your grandmother would always keep a pot of stew on the stove for us and when..

JANE

..and when the minister would come callin' she'd hide it in the pantry, yeah, yeah, I know that one by heart.

She tosses the shells into a waiting garbage pail and automatically starts on the next lobster.

STELLA

Guess you know it all now, don't you? Big city girl.

JANE

Wish I did.

STELLA

Big of you to say so.

JANE

Not like I have the slightest idea what my grandmother was really like, anyway.

Jane has stopped and stares off, as if able to see her grandmother out the window.

STELLA

Hardest worker you ever saw.

Jane snaps back to work. Another lobster. CRACK!

JANE

Yeah, but do you miss her?

STELLA

I don't think about it. Don't let those buns burn, Jane, 'cause-

JANE

I'm not letting them burn!

(hesitant)

Did she help you when I came around?

STELLA

When she could, I s'pose. Hard for her by then being sick and all -- you know, we got no backup for forty lobster rolls-

JANE

Oh GOD!

Jane opens the oven and pulls out a large rack of toasted hot dog rolls.

STELLA

Okay. All right. Calm down.

JANE

We were - *I was* thinking of having you out to visit us for Thanksgiving this year.

Jane carries the tray of rolls to the kitchen table, almost as if they were the Thanksgiving turkey itself.

STELLA

(absently)

Oh. Well, thank you, dear. We'll see. Why don't you stir in the whole jar of mayonnaise? It's in the fridge door and I'll finish all these onions.

Stella takes a knife and chops several onions.

JANE

All those onions and not a tear, I'll bet. You never cry. I've never seen you cry, not once.

STELLA

That's enough from you. There are people on this island who - well, if I don't look after them, on a holiday, who will?

JANE

Oh, yes. Of course. Of course.

STELLA

Yes, 'of course.' You wouldn't understand. You have a short memory. Because you -

JANE

'Cause I'm not one of you.

Stella tosses in the onions in the bowl and mixes everything together.

STELLA

I didn't say it, you did.

Stella nods her head toward the rolls, and Jane opens the rolls. Stella drops lobster salad in each one.

JANE

You may as well have said it.

STELLA

You left.

JANE

It wouldn't kill you to come see me some time. I'll pay for your --

STELLA

(cutting her off)

Don't talk like I'm a pauper!

A beat, while Stella fills the last of the rolls.

STELLA

Let's finish up.

JANE

Oh, I'm finished.

Jane's put all the sandwiches on a large platter. Stella covers them in Saran wrap.

STELLA

You could have stayed with us. Wouldn't have killed you. Now look at you.

INT. CHURCH HALL. DUSK.

Everyone from the Island gathered around the TV, which keeps going in and out as Walter Cronkite narrates the impending moon landing.

People look up as Jane and Stella come in. Stella puts the sandwiches on a table alongside blueberry pies.

People help themselves to the lobster rolls.

A HUGE SHOUT comes up from near the TV.

ALDEN

Pop?? We lost the picture again!

Bill scurries outside to fix it.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH HALL. NIGHT.

Jane talks to SARAH (who is also Jane's age). Her mother - Annabelle Frane, the former bombshell - is now a 50-something grandmother, and holds Sarah's NEWBORN BABY.

SARAH

Oh my God, Janie! When are you due?

JANE

March 13th.

ANNABELLE

Honey, that's the most wonderful news!
Your mother didn't say a word about it.

JANE

She doesn't know yet.

ALL THREE WOMEN

know instantly what a staggering breach of mother-daughter intimacy this is.

Jane has told friends about her pregnancy before she told her own mother.

Reflexively, Sarah, Annabelle and Jane glance furtively across the room at Stella, who's busy putting out sandwiches.

ANNABELLE
(covering the awkwardness)
She will, soon enough.

Jane darts another glance over at Stella.

BIG GEORGE
Got any names picked out yet?

The great news of Jane's pregnancy ripples through the room.

The television suddenly comes back on. People clap.

ON TV: THE START OF THE ICONIC MOON LANDING

Which proceeds, actually, at a glacial pace, as the Eagle oh so slowly approaches the moon's surface.

Bill rushes back in. A hush falls over the room.

The hissing of the DISTORTED AUDIO of the astronauts and Houston communicating fills the hall.

This is some moments before the flag is actually planted or the famous words said.

Stella stands against the far wall, with the worst possible view of the TV.

Old Man Symes walks by Stella.

OLD MAN SYMES
Congratulations, Gramma! Exciting news!

Stella blanches. She quickly looks to:

POV of JANE:

Where Sarah's husband, Big George, is patting Jane's still-flat tummy. Annabelle and Sarah, baby on lap, chatter happily.

ISLANDER
Shush! They're almost there!

SOMEONE ELSE
Turn off the lights!

The lights switch off. Everyone watches in the darkness.

ON STELLA

Staring at Jane. She's devastated to get this news this way. Which was surely Jane's intent.

THE LUNAR LANDING ON TV

The lunar module on screen. It lands drunkenly on the moon's surface. Dust whirls.

WALTER CRONKITE (V.O.)

And now we're just waiting for the lunar module to open - there it is, I think it's starting to open... we can see Neil Armstrong's helmet there...

The flicker of the black and white set illuminates the islanders' rapt faces: young, old, people we know by now, people we don't.

Fred Dinsmore, 50s, wire-rim glasses and bow-tie, is filming the TV on his own super-8 camera on a tripod.

Jane, holding Sarah's baby, turns deliberately back to where Stella just was.

But Stella's not there.

EXT. CHURCH HILLSIDE. NIGHT.

The island lies as still as always. The MOON gleams on the harbor.

Jane looks out the church door and sees:

Stella, off on the hill, looking at the real moon.

At that SAME moment, APPLAUSE sounds from inside.

CROWD (O.S.)

There they are! They made it!

Stella stands motionless, framed by the moonlight rippling on the harbor, looking at the moon.

Stella feels Jane's stare, turns, meets her gaze steadily. Stella doesn't move toward Jane. Jane doesn't move toward Stella.

Jane shuts the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REACH. DAY. (PRESENT)

A snowflake skirls in front of Stella's eyes.

Then another. A third.

It's snowing lightly. The sun vanishes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAINLAND. DAY.

The mainland is now sporadically obscured by a gauzy curtain that almost clears and then vanishes again.

Stella walks through the expanse of shifting white.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE REACH. LATER IN DAY.

The snow comes harder, falling heavily over Stella and making her steps slower, deeper into snow.

STELLA'S POV - RACCOON HEAD

The main street dims, dims... until the street's entirely gone.

She can still see the spire of the Congo church. The cross on it. The bright yellow and black sign which reads:

"STANTON'S BAIT & BOAT"

But this is definitely a snowstorm now. The blowing wind becomes panting, breathing, grunting.

BILL (V.O.)

I gotta go, Stell! I gotta find Mary Dodge. I can't do this by myself!

STELLA (V.O.)

NOOO! Don't you leave me here alone, Bill Flanders, don't you dare.

BILL

Okay, okay, okay...

CUT TO:

INT. STELLA'S BEDROOM. DAWN. (PAST, 1945)

Two kerosene lamps light the scene. The wind blows against the windows.

30-year-old Bill's face, covered with sweat, his hands reaching out. Stella YELLS. Her hair matted with sweat, knees up on the bed. Red-faced, exhausted.

BILL

....That's it, that's it, Stell, old girl
- you got it, her head's right there -
it's right there -

STELLA

It's been right there for an hour!!

BILL

No, honey - no, you got it - got it - got
it -

Stella lets out a SCREAM - bloodcurdling. Bill gasps.

BILL

It's out - the head- our baby - Stell -
you did it - did it -

Bill baffled, only the baby's head is out. Stella still panting, worn out.

BILL

Stell - Stell, I think there's one more
push here-

STELLA

I can't! I can't. This is how I know the
Lord Almighty must be a man, because he
made US have the babies!

Bill starts to look panicked.

BILL

It's halfway in and halfway out - you
have to push! - it can't stay there!

STELLA

I can't! I'm tired -

Bill realizes Stella's losing it. Another contraction is coming.

STELLA

No - never mind - yes - okay - come on,
come ON!

BILL

Here we go - great, great -- PUSH PUSH
PUSH!

She pushes, eyes scrunched shut, and out comes the baby.
Blood, liquid sloshing onto his hands, the bed.

Bill holds the baby up, still with her umbilical cord
attached. The baby squalls.

BILL

It's a baby girl! A baby girl! Oh, Stell,
oh - oh -

He quickly deposits the slippery, blood-covered baby in
Stella's arms and bolts to the bathroom.

Where we can hear him THROWING UP.

Stella puts a white cotton blanket on the naked child.
Wipes the infant's eyes, her nose, free of liquid.

Stella looks at her baby. From the bathroom, comes the
unmistakable sound of:

SOBBING... Bill's.

Bill leans on the edge of the sink, bawling his eyes out,

An exhausted Stella gazes at his quivering back, wipes a
strand of dripping hair from her eyes.

The baby starts wailing. Stella fumbles with her breast,
nudges her nipple into the baby's mouth - the baby flails
for a moment, then latches on with a force that makes
Stella wince.

STELLA'S POV:

Bill's strong back, shaking in sobs, through the open
bathroom door.

STELLA (V.O.)

Cryin' like a woman with a particularly
bad case of the monthlies. Big old
lobsterman.

The SOBS of Bill morph instantly and seamlessly into:

DISSOLVE TO:

THE WIND SOBS AND HOWLS ACROSS THE REACH. (PRESENT)

As the snow falls more and more thickly and the weather worsens.

And Stella's view of Raccoon Head dims even further.

The buildings of the town start to vanish, by degrees, in what is turning into a blizzard.

Stella looks up and sees the steeple of the Congo Church - which is white itself - get lost in the clouds and snow around it.

Only its CROSS can be seen, as if floating above the mainland.

And now, as STELLA blinks and peers at it:

THE CONGO CHURCH'S CROSS DISAPPEARS INTO WHITENESS.

STELLA (V.O.)
Gone. Like a false dream.

She looks for that yellow and black sign to materialize out of the flying membranes of snowfall.

STELLA (V.O.)
Is that it? That yellow bit - there?

Stella peers, holding her hand over her eyes to keep the snowflakes away.

The sign for "Stanton's Bait and Boat" hovers shapelessly in the snow... and disappears entirely.

Stella keeps walking, but now she's in a world that is totally without color, a gray-white dream of snow.

The sound of her boots muffled entirely.

Complete whiteness.

She keeps walking.

STELLA (V.O.)
I could turn around now. See the Goat all covered in snow.

She almost turns. But still walking.

STELLA (V.O.)
'Cause I do need to get my bearings here.

Finally she turns around.

It's not there.

Snow. There's only snow.

Blowing all around her, in sheets.

STELLA

Gone.

Her tracks go back, lose definition until only the faint half-circles of her heels can be seen, and then nothing.

Nothing at all.

STELLA (V.O.)

It's a whiteout.

Stella, slowly, thoughtfully, turns, trudging forward.

She sinks in the drifts, five inches deep, with each step.

STELLA

(talking outloud to herself)

You got to be careful, Stella, or you'll never get to the mainland.

Bill's voice joins Stella's.

STELLA/BILL'S VOICE

You'll just walk around in a big circle until you're worn out and then you'll freeze to death out here.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS. GOAT ISLAND. DAY. (PAST, 1942)

Spring. A deserted woods.

Bill's in uniform, late 20s, and Stella, mid-20s, in her prettiest dress.

They walk side by side, the pine trees tall and lush, brilliant green moss lining the floor of the woods.

Bill turns and touches her leg.

BILL

Try it. Limp.

She tries limping. He smiles at her. Stella limps, tries to favor her left leg.

STELLA
And why should I do this?

BILL
Because you're lost in the woods.
Otherwise that smart leg -- the right leg
- would begin to lead you...

Stella nods. He stands behind her now, with both his hands on her, one on each slim hip.

BILL
And then you'd walk in a circle and not even realize it until you came around to your backtrail again.

Stella turns around -- and is startled by how close she abruptly is to Bill. But Bill isn't.

BILL
I want you to marry me, Stell.

Stella, dumfounded, says nothing.

BILL
Right now. Tonight.

STELLA
Tonight?

BILL
There's no time for a ring - so while I was on the mainland...

He gets down on one knee and pulls out a ring from his back pocket, in a romantic flourish.

BILL
I drove home and got Mom's.

Tadah! He holds out the ring in his hand, with a big smile.

Deafening silence. THE CLANG OF THE BELL BUOY in the distance is the only sound.

BILL
(starting to riff; this is not the response he was expecting)
(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

There's a judge down on Route One, he's marrying guys that are shipping out, he's open 24 hours, he'll marry us and then we'll have a day before I have to go.

(pause)

And a night.

Stella still doesn't say anything. The bell buoy clangs in the silence between them.

BILL

Hear that? That's our wedding bell.

Stella can't speak.

BILL

So what do you say?

Bill keeps looking at her. His face starting to fall.

BILL

Stella?

The ocean waves roar in the near distance.

BILL

(anxious now)

I know it ain't much but -

But Stella suddenly seems far away...

HER MEMORY: A FLASH of running, the sun flitting past through these same pines, the harsh panting of a child charging through these woods as fast as she can...

BILL

Do you need a few minutes?

Stella snaps back to the present.

STELLA

No.

BILL

No, you don't need a few minutes or...
no?

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN WHARF. LATE IN THAT DAY.

The lobster boat *DANCER*, now brand new, waits dockside.

TOMMY FRANE, 20s, also in uniform, hugs friends and family from the island.

Fred Dinsmore, even as a gawky kid in his 20's, in wire-rim glasses and bow-tie, films this on a 16mm camera.

Bill and Stella, both in a private confusion of love and indecision, stand on the crowded town wharf.

Bill having finally run out of words and Stella still not finding any.

Bill holds up the ring, which they hold between them - in reality, as if they don't want to let go of each other.

He tries to hand the ring to Stella...

- and suddenly ANNABELLE, 20s, the island bombshell in an off-the-shoulder yellow dress, comes tearing out to the wharf with a suitcase.

She bumps Stella and Bill as she throws herself into Tommy's arms, planting a big wet kiss on him. They hop on the boat.

And the ring drops between the cracks of the planks and falls into the water below.

Bill and Stella kneel down to see it drop into the water.

Annabelle's kissing Tommy again and doesn't even notice... The boat starts up.

TOMMY

(around Annabelle's kisses)
Bill! Stella! whatcha waiting for?

Bill leaps up and jumps on the parting boat.

EXT/INT. LOBSTER BOAT. DAY

As *Dancer* pulls away, Tommy's got Annabelle wrapped around him.

He emerges from her embrace long enough to ask:

TOMMY

(to Bill)
So? No go?

BILL

(befuddled)
I think I just got engaged to the harbor.

And everyone laughs.

ON THE WHARF

Stella watches the boat pull out...

Bill waves. She stands there, still stunned.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOWN WHARF, HARBOR. SUNSET. (PAST, 1942)

The boat has left, everyone's gone. The tide has swept out, dramatically lower, leaving every wharf exposed.

Stella is underneath the wharf. Her big rubber fishing boots underneath her pretty dress, which is now hitched up on the waistband.

She sees a lobster claw, an old bait pouch, a scurrying crab...

A glitter. Under a wave. No, it's broken glass. A seven-up bottle.

And then...

The ring.

Her hand plunges into the water and she pulls out the ring.

ON THE WHARF

The sun slips in a deep pink behind the horizon line of the sea.

And underneath the wharf, standing ankle-deep in the outgoing tide, stands Stella, her hair now damp, her dress wet, holding the ring up and close to her, in palpable relief.

The last rays of setting sun make the ring sparkle.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE REACH. DAY. (PRESENT)

This is a blizzard.

Stella tries to heed young Bill's advice from six decades before.

She limps with the right leg, steps with the left. One foot sinks into the snow. She drags it along. Then picks up the other foot - pushes it into the snow.

Then drags that first leg along again.

Step, drag. Step, drag.

Slower.

And slower.

Stella is no more than a tiny speck against the horizon when we hear the piping voice of her great-grandson Hal.

HAL (V.O.)

You never wanted to go across, Gram?
Never??

STELLA

Children, we always watched out for our own. We had to, for the Reach was wider in those days, and when the wind roared and the surf pounded and the dark came early, why, we felt very small. No more than dust motes in the mind of God...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GOAT ISLAND CHURCH. DAY. (PAST, 1972)

The whole congregation is joined in a hymn. Stella and Bill, in their 50s, sit with 20-year-old Alden.

STELLA (V.O.)

...so it was natural for us to join hands, one with the other.

A few men with no families stand quietly, awkwardly, in the back row.

Among them, DANIELS, 35, an outsider - wiry, sunburned, oddly handsome - carries a tune sweetly in a crisp tenor.

CONGREGATION

(singing)

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.

Two younger women take notice, and giggle conspiratorially.

Stella turns back from her pew and takes Daniels in for a full beat.

EXT. ROAD. GOAT ISLAND. DAY.

GERTRUDE SYMES, 8, with freckles and wild black hair, along with APRIL, also 8, and a third friend walk home from school.

They tease each other, laughing as they amble down a back road beside the thick woods.

They pass an old house where a pair of legs in greasy coveralls stretch out from under the engine block of an ancient pickup truck.

The man whistles a tune which echoes under the engine block. "Breathe on Me..."

FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD:

The houses are much farther apart, the woods darker in the late afternoon light.

The girls play a skipping rope game as they walk along the road.

GERTRUDE

No, it's your turn. I went and then April went and now it's your turn.

April stops in her tracks and looks ahead.

Daniels, the man from church - now in greasy coveralls - emerges from the woods near the girls.

The girls stop skipping rope. Fall silent, watching him.

Daniels bends down and seems to pick up a playing card from the road. He approaches the girls.

DANIELS

Well look here. I'll be darned. It's a card on one side, and a picture of a little doggie on the other side.

He moves until he's close enough to hand it to them.

DANIELS

Hold out your hand and I'll give it to you. Go on.

Reluctantly, Gert steps forward, she reaches out.

Daniels hands her a playing card with a puppy on the back.

DANIELS

And lookie here.

He reaches behind Gert's ear and pulls out another card. His hand brushes her ear as he brings out the card.

REVEAL: HE'S MISSING TWO FINGERS.

The little girls recoil and exchange looks.

DANIELS

Say, I know where there's a whole deck with a different lil' doggie on each one.

APRIL

You do? Can I have one too?

Daniels moves back into the woods, behind a clump of fallen trees. His gaze takes in the road, to make sure no one else is looking.

DANIELS

Here they are! Come on... I'll show 'em to you, but you'll have to do something for me.

EXT. SYMES HOUSE, GOAT ISLAND VILLAGE. DAY.

Stella and MARY SYMES, 40, stand a good fifty feet apart as they draw out a long, tangled fishing line.

MARY SYMES

Untangle, Stella, Untangle.

STELLA

I am *untangling*. We're just *untangling* in two different directions.

Mary looks up suddenly from the rope.

Her daughter, Gertrude and the two other little girls walk slowly up to the women.

It's clear that something is very, very wrong. April's face is streaked with tears.

When she sees her mother, Gertrude breaks from the others and runs to her.

Mary Symes kneels, hugging Gertrude, then pulling back, looking her up and down.

MARY SYMES
Did he hurt you??

Gert shakes her head, and Mary Symes pulls the girl in for another desperate hug.

Mary's eyes meet Stella's, who's standing on the wharf, tangled line in her hands.

MARY SYMES
(to Stella)
The bastard.

Stella moves quickly to the two other little girls.

STELLA
Who?

MARY SYMES
You know the one.

Stella does.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD. DUSK.

A dozen ISLAND MEN, bearing flashlights walk up to Stella's house.

INT. STELLA'S LIVING ROOM. DUSK.

Bill stands at the front window, watching the men coming up the way.

BILL
Alden? Ready?

Stella sits near Alden. She gets up, stands next to Bill

STELLA
(under her breath)
I don't want him to go.

BILL
Yeah, well, he's going.

Bill picks up a metal boat-hook, a foot long of thick, curved metal, its wooden handle broken off at three feet.

BILL
 (looks pointedly at Stella)
 All the men are going.

The men's voices coming up the walk. Stella leans in, whispers urgently to Bill.

STELLA
 Don't make him do this, Bill. They'll understand. He's not like you. He's just -

Thru the window, the flashlights get closer... KNOCK on the door.

BILL
 (to Alden)
 Now we're tellin' him the engine's out and we gotta get her off the rocks. Okay?

Stella remains silent.

ALDEN
 I got it, Pa.

Bill reaches for his coat, looks back at Alden.

ANOTHER KNOCK. Bill opens the door. Men we recognize stand in the doorway: Rev. McCracken, Bull Symes, Big George. Daniels is with them.

BILL
 Hello. Pastor. How are you?

MCCRACKEN
 Just fine, Bill. Just fine.

SYMES
 (putting on their act)
 Little Mariner's lost her engine up at Slyder's Point. Could use some help.

BILL
 Sure thing.
 (he turns)
 Alden?

Alden, basically docile and clueless, turns to Stella.

ALDEN
 You want me to stay here with you, Ma?

Stella looks between her son and her husband.

STELLA

No, go on, son.

He follows his father out the door.

It shuts behind them.

Stella watches them go. The voices and flashlights fade out in the distance.

EXT. SLYDER'S CLIFF, BY THE LIGHTHOUSE. DUSK.

The men walk along the cliff in single file until they get to a bluff with a sudden drop.

Ragged clouds with the last of the light in them on the horizon.

The LIGHTHOUSE BEAM sweeps across them..

Now we see that Daniels is among them. Daniels peers over the cliff. Looking for this stranded boat.

DANIELS

Little Mariner, you say?

And turns to the others, a bit puzzled.

DANIELS

I don't see her.

Big George stubs out his smoke.

BIG GEORGE

Yeah, Daniels. We thought that we'd stop off and play a game of cards. Got a deck? Do you?

Daniels begins to realize what's up.

LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S POV:

Gerd Henried watches the men on the cliff. And starts to draw the blind on the tower window.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE. THAT MOMENT.

Daniels sees the blind shut. It's very quiet.

DANIELS

What's all this, anyhow?

Two of the men grab for him, but he slithers away.

Bill drops the boat hook, grabs Daniels by the collar and holds him.

The men move in on Daniels. Taking swings at him.
Connecting.

Daniels cries out. His hand reaches up - with the two fingers.

CLOSE ON ALDEN

Alden's eyelids flutter at the repeated sound of several muffled thuds.

Unseen by the others, Bull Symes picks up the dropped boat hook. And with his huge fist, Bull brings the hook down on Daniels' head with a gruesome crack.

Daniels sinks to the ground without a sound.

Everyone stops. Frozen.

Daniels is clearly dead.

Bill is the first to move. He lifts Daniels' lifeless body by the shoulders.

BILL

Get his legs.

The Minister and the other men move to help. Everyone but Alden.

Bill glances to Alden; Alden's horror is unmistakable. He stares at his father, shattered.

Bill looks away, ashamed, covered in blood, and the men carry Daniels to the cliff.

The men, one by one, peer over the edge of the cliff.

The LIGHTHOUSE light sweeps past them. The bell buoy CLANGS.

EXT. SLYDER'S POINT. TWILIGHT.

Daniels lies at the bottom of the cliff; the rocks point out of the surf like the fangs of a dragon that drowned with its mouth open.

The surf washes over his deformed hand.

The cards, strewn across the rocks, float out to sea.

THE ROW OF ISLAND MEN...

...stare in disbelief. The camera pans across their stunned faces, landing at last on the Minister, revealing that we are now...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY. DUSK.

...at Daniel's graveside burial, the next day. The tiny plot is on the outskirts of the village.

THE VERY SAME MEN

The camera travelling past them at the same speed.

Wives and family now next to them. Mary Symes and Bull Symes clutching each other.

Heads bowed - just as they were bowed down to see Daniels at the bottom of the cliff.

MINISTER

...though not a Mainer, Daniels had been a hard worker and a good help even though he was two fingers shy on his right hand. May God have mercy on his soul.

Bill and Stella stand with Alden.

MINISTER

Yea, though I walk through the valley of death...

Alden stares at the minister. Still in total, complete shock and disbelief.

MINISTER

I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

Stella and Mary Symes connect across the grave.

MINISTER

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

In the silence, the distant pounding of the Atlantic, the omnipresent buoy bell, the wind.

Slowly, people move away, walking home, in twos and threes, not meeting each other's eyes.

Until only Alden, Stella and Bill remain.

Stella gestures to Bill to move along with the others. He does, glancing back, guilt-ridden, to his wife and motionless son.

Stella reaches her hand to touch Alden's shoulder.

STELLA

Alden?

ALDEN

(muttering, whispers)
The Lord is... The Lord... is my
shepherd? Is the Lord my... no, no.

STELLA

It's okay, son.

Stella stays by his side, but Alden doesn't move.

STELLA

Come on, now. Come on home.

CLOSE ON STELLA

Her guilt on her face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE REACH. TWILIGHT. (PRESENT)

The wind whips Stella's white hair under the hat.

ON HER 95-YEAR-OLD FACE

the exact same expression on her aged face.

She remembers.

STELLA (V.O.)

Alden never took the boat out on a Sunday
again.

She pulls down on the ear flaps of Alden's hat, as the wind seems like it's about to blow it right off her head.

She staggers on. The sky over Raccoon Head is an ominous slate-gray. The color of lead.

STELLA

Be dark soon.

As indeed it shall.

Dark means she's going to freeze to death.

Stella stops for a moment in the snow. Around her, nothing but whirling gray-white snow.

STELLA

I should be there by now.

She pulls the cap down tighter. She coughs again. She sways a little uncertainly in the wind.

Then she shores up her frail self. Takes a breath.

And starts her fake limp through the snowdrifts, now nearly to her knee.

Trying to stay on course.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE REACH IN WHITE-OUT. DUSK. (PRESENT)

The WIND SCREAMS now. Stella's tracks are hardly visible in the snow:

One clear footprint.

And one dragged along.

Another clear footprint.

Another dragged along - this pattern of prints in the snow...

Until we reach Stella, who keeps trying to limp on her right leg to stay on course.

Stella leans into the wind. She is hardly moving.

The snow is flying horizontally against her hunched frame; and she's still gripping Alden's cap by both ears.

A WALL OF WIND. IT ENVELOPS HER.

THUNK!!

Stella collides with something enormous and so solid she goes reeling backwards.

STELLA

What??

Her eyes travel up the ominous shape, looming before her in the snow.

IT'S THE BUOY

It juts fourteen feet up at a drunken angle, frozen solid in the Reach.

Its rounded metal base, usually submerged in the water, now thrusts four or five feet up on the surface of the ice, having been pushed up by the jagged ice floes.

Icicles hang like stalactites, tilted over the snow, holding the bell with its iron ringer. Frozen silent.

Until the buoy seems like a perverse green sculpture in the middle of a white vast nowhere.

It towers over her.

Stella stares at it. Its utter familiarity is shocking; its displacement overwhelming.

She touches it with her gloved hand.

A beat.

STELLA

I've gone wrong. Wrong direction.

High decibel gales gust past her.

STELLA

So it's two miles back.

She looks behind her, into the snow pelting past her face. The sky as white and lowering as a loss of memory.

STELLA

But that's only if I knew which direction to go in -

Stella glances right to left. Back and forth.

No idea.

Exhausted, she buckles at her knees, slumping against the base of the buoy.

Until she's sitting on the snow, the buoy base supporting her back.

UNDER THE BUOY

The searing shriek of the wind drops a little.

STELLA

I could just stay here.

She looks around, under this little bit of protection from the blizzard. Curls her knees up to her chin.

STELLA

Sit here. Just for a moment. I'm tired.

She closes her eyes for a moment, then opens them. Blinks.

STELLA (V.O.)

And the Reach -- it's much further than I thought.

Her eyes flutter and shut again. Her head slowly drops to one side.

The snow almost instantly starts to pile up on her shoulders, Alden's hat, her arms, her knees, her boot tops.

She doesn't move.

Doesn't move.

Doesn't.

Move.

SHOUTING VOICE

RUN, STELL! RUN LIKE HELL!

Her eyes flutter open abruptly. She sits up. She shakes her head, and snow comes showering off the hat.

She clambers to her feet.

Shaking the snow off the rest of her. She moves, but not quickly, in the direction of this voice.

She stops, wracked with a sudden cough from the effort.

She spits up blood.

It's bright red on the white snow.

She rights herself, wipes her mouth, takes a few steps.

Stops abruptly in shock.

THERE'S ANOTHER LARGE DROP OF BLOOD IN FRONT OF HER.
Red against white. Fresh blood.

Takes a few more steps.

There's another spot of blood.

She stops again.

Stella looks up. More drops of blood...

The drops of blood form a trail...

More and more blood, until it ends in...

A SHADOWY FIGURE

Silhouetted. Ten feet away. Standing in a pool of blood-drenched snow.

CLOSE ON

A man's hand, blood running off it in a steady stream.

SMASH CUT TO:

THE HORRIFIED GAZE OF STELLA'S YOUNG BLUE EYES

She's twelve, with long blonde braids, standing, unable to move, in her white work dress and apron.

EXT. ROCKY SHORE. GOAT ISLAND. DAY. (PAST, 1927)

Pine forest at the water's rocky edge, on the wild side of the island.

Blood drips from the dangling left wrist and pours down the hand of her father LOUIS GODLIN, mid-30s.

He drops the hatchet in his right hand, grabs his left wrist with his right arm. The spruce branch he'd been chopping for a new trap dropped at his feet.

A wheelbarrow filled with spruce branches next to him. A half-made wooden lobster trap on the ground.

Stella turns her head and screams toward where her brother, DEAN, 16, is halfway up a spruce pine, lopping off more branches.

STELLA
 (as loud as she can)
 DEAN!! GET DOWN HERE. PAPA'S HURT REAL
 BAD.

Dean shinnies down the tree and runs along the rocky beach, stumbling as he goes.

Louis sinks to his knees, getting pale. Stella's at her father's side, she rips off her apron.

LOUIS
 This is what we get for tradin' cod
 fishing for lobstering!

She tears the apron in half, wraps his wrist in it. It's instantly drenched in blood.

LOUIS
 Give me four good men and a schooner over
 a million God-Forsaken BUGTRAPS!!

STELLA
 Calm down, Papa - don't talk.

LOUIS
 I'm losin' blood fast. Take my belt off,
 Stell. Tie off my arm.

She does. Her dress is soaked with blood in mere moments.

Dean runs up. Stella turns over the wheelbarrow, dumping a heap of branches. She picks up her father by the arms.

Dean is paralyzed by the sight.

STELLA
 Dean! Don't just stand there! Help me.

Dean snaps out of it and jumps to.

They both lift him up.

STELLA
 (grunting with effort)
 You'll wheel him down to the wharf. Take
 the timber road - I'll run ahead, so
 we'll have a skiff ready.

They finally get him in the wheelbarrow - Stella's face and arms are smeared with her father's blood.

STELLA

Give your shirt, the blood's soaking
right through - Papa? PAPA!?

Louis is starting to pass out. She slaps him to wake him.

Dean tears off his shirt.

Stella rips it into strips. She wraps them around the
dripping wrist.

STELLA

Wind's blowing, Pop, you'll get to the
mainland in no time.

Dean takes the handles of the wheelbarrow and lifts it
up, Stella helping him.

DEAN

I got him - just go!

Their father is already bleary-eyed from blood loss.

LOUIS

(muttering)

Tell your mother I'll be stitched up
proper and back for dinner...

Stella takes off. Dean struggles to get the wheelbarrow
onto the path in the woods.

DEAN

RUN, STELLA! RUN LIKE HELL!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PINE WOODS. MOMENTS LATER.

The blur of the forest as young Stella races past.
Slipping on the mossy wet undergrowth, righting herself,
jumping over rocks and fallen logs.

The sound of Stella's breath, heavier, heavier.

The sun skidding at her speed through the branches.

Branches scratch her face and hands. She pushes them
away.

Stella, gasping for breath, her hair disheveled, bursts
out of the woods and tears down to the harbor.

EXT. THE WHARF, GOAT ISLAND. DAY.

The 1927 wharf and surrounding harbor are far more crowded than in the present. Thronged with sailing vessels, one-man lobster skiffs, barges, workers and fishermen. And far more people working the docks.

Stella's shouting as she careens onto the wharf.

STELLA

(shouting)

Ezra, Jack, come quick!! A skiff - get a skiff ready - Papa's chopped his hand, he's losing blood -

EZRA and JACK, two stout fishermen, drop what they're doing and jump into action.

EZRA

Git your breath, child -

STELLA

(between heaving breaths)

No - can't - gotta get Pop stitched up, get him -- (gasping)... to the mainland.

Jack jumps in a small sailing vessel and preps the rigging.

JACK

Where is he?

STELLA

He's comin' - he's comin.' Dean's bringin' him -

More people run to Stella on the wharf; men and woman rushing out from their front doors.

WOMAN

Stella, my Lord, you're a sight.

The Woman tries to wipe off her face, but Stella swats her away.

STELLA

(frantic)

I'm all right, I'm fine! Where is he?

Chaos, noise, gulls calling...

At last Dean emerges from the timber road with Louis ahead of him. Sweat pours down his face.

Several others rush to grab the wheelbarrow with Louis in it and run it out onto the wharf.

Dean and Stella run alongside him.

The men push the wheelbarrow with Louis down the gangplank to the waiting skiff.

Ezra lifts Louis and all of them help slide the by-now severely weakened man to Jack, waiting in the skiff.

EZRA
FISHING LINE! ZACHARY, thickest line you see! I need to tie his arm off proper.

Dean hops on the skiff. He pushes Jack aside.

DEAN
I'm takin' him.

JACK
'Fraid no one's takin' him now, Dean. Not 'til this current stops churning.

EZRA
We gotta wait out the tide.

STELLA
Wait?! What do you mean *wait*?

JACK
Half an hour. We'll get our four strongest rowers in a dory. He'll be on The mainland in no time at all.

DEAN
No! We leave now!

STELLA
We've got to go! Look at him! He's all white now, he's turnin' blue --

Zachary tosses Ezra the fishing line and Ezra deftly whips up a tourniquet on Louis' arm with fishing line and burlap.

JACK
You know what The Reach is at this hour. It's ebb tide. It can't be *crossed*.

DEAN
It's slowing! I can see it! I'm going. He's my father, I'm takin' him across.

The men hop off as Dean, streaked with blood and dirt, his chest bare, pushes off. The sail fills with wind.

Tears pour down Dean's face.

SOUND DROPS OUT...

Stella reaches out to touch her father - but her fingertips only brush the edge of the boat.

She's terribly shaken.

But she doesn't cry.

Jack looks at Stella, then to the other men. Gestures to them as he gets in his dory.

JACK
(shouting to Dean)
We'll be right behind you, Dean. Fellas,
let's go!

Shaking their heads at the futility of it, they nonetheless clamber in. They push off.

JACK
Hold down the wharf for us, Stella.

She runs to the very end of the wharf.

EXT. THE REACH. DAY.

Dean's skiff appears to cut the rush of the current. The sail is full. Dean's going at top speed.

The dory is right there behind him. The four men, already utterly exhausted, row furiously.

Dean turns his head to see:

Behind the boats, a row of pine trees - completely static.

Both boats are nearly STANDING STILL.

All efforts are futile, against this tide.

OVERHEAD VIEW OF THE DECK OF THE SMALL SKIFF.

Louis lies motionless on the floor of the sailboat, in a churning pool of blood and sea water.

He's looking straight up at the sky. At us.

It is his dying moment.

EXT. REACH - THAT MOMENT

In the near distance, the skiff and the dory turn slowly around in defeat. They head back toward Goat Island.

The small figure of Dean hunched over his father's body.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

STELLA

At edge of the wharf with her back to us, against the blue, as the boats return.

She knows what this means.

She stares across The Reach.

DISSOLVE TO:

SWIRLING WHITENESS.

We're looking at nothing but white, only to realize we're still in motion...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

PULLING BACK:

through the snow...

...past 95-year-old Stella, her back to us.

...Until she's seen from the behind in precisely the same way we just saw the child Stella on the wharf.

The frail, old woman clearly reliving that moment from her girlhood.

She can hardly walk now, in the snow. Lurches, nearly off balance, but rights herself.

AND BACK FURTHER

As her slight body uncertainly, painfully slowly, staggers by mere inches, forward. Lifts one foot. Then another. Stops.

Lifts one foot. Another, until she disappears into the twilight grey of the white-out.

BILL (V.O.)
I can live forever.

And we move back further until this gray becomes:

THE SILVER-GRAY OF AN X-RAY PHOTOGRAPH

Taped to a window.

As we pull back even further still, we see that they are pictures of two lungs with cancer...

And behind them is The Reach.

COUGHING. A two-pack-a-day smoker's hacking cough.

REVEAL:

INT. BILL AND STELLA'S LIVING ROOM - 1975 - DAY

Stella and Bill solemnly survey these X-rays from their two separate chairs.

BILL
Forever is what he says... But I gotta live like a nun on her knees for the rest of my life. No smokin', no drinkin' -

Bill reaches for his pack of Tareyton's.

BILL
No *smokin'*, for Christ's sake.

He pulls out a cigarette.

STELLA
Or else...?

BILL
That spot there on the left kills me.

STELLA
The fancy doctor with the Corvette?

Bill puts the cigarette in his mouth.

BILL
He knows what he knows and I know what I know.

STELLA
And what would that be, Surgeon General
Flanders?

He takes out a classic gleaming metal Zippo lighter.

BILL
Doesn't much matter what I do.

Stella gives Bill a long look.

She wants to tell him to quit, to have strength and even
a little faith.

His eyes on hers. Both of them framed by the X-rays on
the window.

STELLA
It's your life.

Bill flips the lighter in the air, like it was a coin.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF THE SPINNING ZIPPO LIGHTER:

In its reflection, The Reach.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE REACH. TWILIGHT. (PRESENT)

A DEAFENING ROAR of wind. Dark gray swirls.

Out of which the smudge of orange that is Stella in
Alden's bright orange cap, comes in and out of sight.

Her head down against the wind.

Her breath comes in short gasps now. She's having trouble
breathing.

The gray snow blurs. The gasps grown louder and become...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STELLA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. (PAST, 1977)

Two years later. Looking directly down on their double
bed...

An emaciated Bill.

His breath comes in painful wheezes. The lamp is turned low.

He has lost all his hair; he's at that point where he looks like a concentration camp victim.

Hooked up to a home oxygen system.

The entire bedroom has been completely converted to a hospice-level sick room.

Stella, 60, wipes his forehead with a damp cloth.

His labored breathing gets slower. Slower.

BILL
(a rasp)
Stell.

His eyes searching out hers.

A tiny motion of his head.

A beat.

His hand reaches for her.

Stella takes off her shoes and climbs into the bed with him. She takes his hand and holds it.

His breath comes in rasps. He closes his eyes.

His breath slows.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE REACH. TWILIGHT. (PRESENT)

Stella's breath in the same rasps. She gulps the air. Slower. Slower.

Stella finds herself in twilight of this heavy snowstorm.

The wind whips Stella's white hair. She staggers.

And tumbles into the snow. She's on all fours. She looks surprised that this has happened.

A beat.

It takes all her strength to get back to her feet.

But she does.

She stands swaying, barely able to remain upright in the wind.

INT. BEDROOM. EVENING. (PAST, 1977)

Stella watches her dying husband, still lying next to him. Wide awake.

His breathing is more and more labored. He sleeps.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER.

In the same position. Bill's breath now reduced to a faint slow wheeze.

But now Stella has dozed off.

DISSOLVE TO:

DREAM/MEMORY: STELLA'S BEDROOM. DAWN. (PAST, 1945)

Stella, the young, new mother, in bed, having just given birth, looks up from the newborn in her arms.

She sees Bill's strong back, shaking in sobs, through the bathroom door.

But without hearing the sobs. Only the dying Bill's halting, rasping breath continues.

BILL (O.S.)
(another rasp; loud)
Stell...

The sound of his breath stops. The rasp is silent.

CUT TO:

INT. STELLA'S BEDROOM. DAWN. (PAST, 1977)

Stella sleeps, her head falling to her chest, Bill's head in her lap in the same way the baby was in her lap in her memory.

She wakes up.

Bill has died while she slept.

Stella looks at him. His eyes are open.

She strokes his white hair. Shuts his eyes.

And doesn't cry.

A BLINDING FLASH of light and the sound of a DOOR being shoved open.

CUT TO:

INT. DORRITT'S TAVERN - PAST, 1955 - DAY

The open door floods the windowless, smoke-filled room with unexpected sunlight and a view of ice and sky.

The Regulars at the bar turn slowly and blink at BILL FLANDERS and BULL SYMES, who stand framed in the doorway, silhouetted in the blinding light.

BILL

Who's gonna have a drink with two men who just walked on water?

Loud cheers. Back slapping, taking off their coats and snowshoes, toasting with their beers. The bartender, T.D. DORRITT, shouts over the hubbub.

T.D. DORRITT

Is one of you sad sacks gonna stand these fellas a round or you just gonna clap your hands like a bunch a' seals?

Laughs. Whiskies all around, the clink of upraised glasses. Bill raises his glass - CLINK!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. DORRITT'S TAVERN. NIGHT. (PAST, 1958)

As seen through BINOCULARS:

Crashing in an explosion of embers and ash.

To the astonishment and dismay of The Regulars, who have arms flung around each other, passing a whiskey bottle back and forth -

Some sing, some cry.

The ash flies into the night sky and becomes...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE REACH. TWILIGHT. (PRESENT)

... Snowflakes coming straight down.

This is STELLA'S POV. Because the camera turns to show:

OVERHEAD SHOT OF STELLA

... as she lies, arms outstretched on each side, like a child making an angel in the snow, and stares straight up into the sky.

She doesn't move. For a moment.

But her hand reaches up. Brushes the snow from her face. She sits up.

Pushes herself up, one knee at a time.

She kneels in the snow. Lifts one leg. Rests. Then the other.

Stands. Sways. Steps one step...

The ROAR diminishes, the rush of oncoming snowflakes which surrounds her blurs into one grayish haze, which...

DISSOLVES TO:

Fog. The sound of softly lapping waves, and a splash of an oar in the water...

EXT. FOG ON SLYDER'S POINT. DAY. (PAST, 1977)

Stella, about 60, rows a skiff through a dense bank of fog.

A loud and sombre FOG HORN moans through the dead calm.

Unnerved, Stella stops to take in the eerie absence of any sign of life.

The boat hits a pebbled beach with a thud. Stella hops out and pulls the rowboat up on the shore.

She slips the line through a rusted metal ring driven into a giant rock.

EXT. WEATHERED LIGHTKEEPER'S HOUSE. DAY.

Stella walks past a spare, unkempt garden. She carries a few small parcels, a pie and a canvas bag.

It's a beautiful evening; the fog has cleared. She finds herself drawn to the edge of the cliff.

Where Daniels was killed and where she once waited for Bill to return from the stormy sea.

EXT. SLYDER'S POINT. TWILIGHT.

Stella stands at the edge and looks BELOW out to the sea.

A lobster boat chugs through the fog, with a lone LOBSTERMAN on its deck. He hauls up a lobster trap by hand.

In the other direction...

A BEAUTIFUL WOODEN SCHOONER

Glides past. WEALTHY PEOPLE who summer in Maine drink martinis on its deck, laughter spilling out.

In Stella's girlhood, these schooners were the working boats, not the pleasure boats.

She watches these two ways of life on the Maine coast in the setting sun.

The two boats pass each other. One hardly aware of the other.

INT. LIGHTKEEPER'S COTTAGE. TWILIGHT.

Stella enters the kitchen, holding her packages.

STELLA
Hey, Gerd...?

No response.

She walks to a rounded stucco wall in the kitchen. This is the adjoining lighthouse tower.

An old round nautical metal door with a wheel on it. The kind one might expect to find on an old ship.

Stella pushes the door open. Steps over its threshold.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE. TWILIGHT.

A grinding power tool echoes through the dark hall beyond. It's the entrance to the tower.

STELLA
GERD? HEY, GERD!

The grinding ceases. The voice of the lighthouse keeper, Gerd, booms down a spiral staircase.

GERD (V.O.)
WHO'S THAT?

STELLA
(yelling back up the stairs)
IT'S ME, STELLA.

Gerd peers down the spiral staircase.

STELLA
Got a pie for you, Gerd, and a stack of letters.

GERD
If it's another blueberry pie, I'd rather eat the letters.

Stella starts to climb up the spiral staircase.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIGHTHOUSE LAMP ROOM. EVENING.

An octagonal, entirely glass room, fifteen feet in diameter, which houses the massive bulb.

Stella is sitting on a crate, reading a letter, in the cramped space of the walk-way around the lamp.

While Gerd finishes up his repairs on the intricately lensed lamp. His hands covered with grease.

STELLA
(reading)
"...looks like we'll be gathering the whole family and shipping them down to Florida for Christmas this year. Our thoughts are with you as ever, Gerd. Your brother, Max."
(flipping the letter)
Gosh, his penmanship is awful.

GERD

Runs in the family. Any island gossip?

STELLA

I got no interest whatsoever in Goat Island gossip.

GERD

I know. That's why they made you postmistress.

Stella pulls out another letter.

STELLA

Next one's from your bosses at the Coast Guard.

GERD

That so?

STELLA

Looks official.

The FOG HORN reverberates over the water.

GERD

They always do. Don't let it fool you.

She opens the envelope and takes out the letter.

STELLA

(reading)

"DATE as military entry U.S.C.G. Light Keeper Gerd Henreid, It is with regret that we must inform you that after one hundred and forty years of fully manned operation, the last thirty eight of which have been under your charge, Goat Island Light...

Gerd stops what he's doing and slowly wipes the grease from his hands.

Stella wordlessly hands him the letter.

Gerd reads on, muttering.

GERD

(reading)

"...on this date, you are to vacate the premises and report to Coast Guard Headquarters. Portland, Maine.

(he sighs)

(MORE)

GERD (CONT'D)
 ...at which point Goat Island Light will
 be inspected and refitted for
 automation."

A moment, while both of them take this in.

STELLA
 They say anything else?

GERD
 (bitter)
 ... duty, gratitude. Usual claptrap.

He lets the letter drop to the ground. Another silence
 between them.

STELLA
 Gerd. I'm so sorry.

GERD
 I saw it coming. We been down to three
 manned lights in the whole state for
 years now.

He walks to the window.

GERD
 It was just a matter of when.

The foghorn sounds again.

GERD
 Been holding my breath so long waitin'
 for it to happen, I think I forgot how to
 breathe. Isn't that funny?

STELLA
 They don't understand.

GERD
 None of it has meant a goddamned thing.
 Lived and worked my whole life on this
 rock ...and for what?

Stella doesn't answer. Gerd turns to her.

GERD
 For what?

Beat.

STELLA
 Be dark soon.

GERD

Yes. Yes, I s'pose it will.

Gerd throws a giant switch and a powerful beam cuts through the foggy evening light.

He flips a release mechanism at the base of the lamp.

With loud creaks and groans, the massive light begins its slow circle around the tower.

Gerd sits down across from Stella. They sit there in silence as the light makes its full turn.

STELLA

My mother used to say 'All the difference in the world is between work and want.' I believe that to my very soul. She'd say 'It's better to plow deep than wide.' You've plowed deep, Gerd.

Reflections blur, shift.

GERD

I ran this light my whole life. For what, Stella?

The light sweeps by. Gerd is still looking at Stella. Waiting.

STELLA

I can sit here all night with you, if you want. That I can do. We stand by our own, Gerd, and you're one of us. But don't ask me what it's all for 'cause I can't tell you.

(pause)

A life doesn't mean - anything. Not yours. Not mine. Not anyone's.

Gerd looks to Stella with profound sadness, emptiness in his eyes.

GERD

So that's the way you see things? Do you...?

The beam of light sweeps over Stella. Darkness.

And then over Gerd.

Darkness.

Their reflections play on the panes of glass.

And then the beam lights Stella...

Darkness.

The beam lights where Gerd was... but no one's there.

Darkness.

The beam lights Stella...

And sweeps around the empty lamp room.

SHE'S ALONE.

STELLA

Gerd??

And exactly where Gerd was, across the room, the beam lights:

THE CHILD STELLA

Her white dress and apron covered with blood. Then she slips into darkness as the light sweeps past.

So sudden it's almost as if we didn't see it.

And then...

The light sweeps around on Stella's horrified face...

Darkness.

Back on the child STELLA, even closer, her braids disheveled.

She looks directly into grown Stella's disbelieving eyes.

YOUNG STELLA

(to Stella, a whisper)

Do you love?

Stella bolts.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE. LIGHTHOUSE. NIGHT.

Stella runs in a blur down the spiral staircase...

And down...

And down...

It's much further down than it was up. Another flight.
And another. And another.

Stella is finally on the ground floor.

It takes her full weight and all of her strength to pull
the round metal door open.

She pulls on it. Harder.

The round door flies open.

Wind and snow gust in through the open door.

SHE'S BACK ON THE REACH.

She's 95 again. Back in the blizzard. No trace of the
lighthouse.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE REACH. WHITE-OUT. (PRESENT)

The ROAR of wind, like a thousand screams, is now
UNBEARABLE.

And Stella - her wrinkled, near century-old face
contorted with the effort to keep going -

- is just not making any forward motion at all.

Like the skiff in the riptide.

She just. Can't. Move.

But Stella does not stop her struggle against the storm.

STELLA
(shouting over the wind)
I did. I DID LOVE.

She takes one step.

The wind ROARS - and now lifts...

ALDEN'S NEON-ORANGE CAP

...right off her head and it goes flying through the snow-
laden air.

She lunges for it - but it's too late. The wind dances
the cap easily out of her hands.

The bright orange hat appears only for a moment, flips over and over into the darkening gray.

It strikes the snow, rolls, rises again and is gone.

CLOSE ON STELLA

Now her white hair flies around her head freely. Wildly.

She does not flinch.

STELLA

I loved the only way I knew how.

Stella looks through a shifting veil of snow. Something red hovers.

A SCREAM OF WIND subsides into a gentle whisper.

Colors move in the snow: red, black, dark green, lighter green...

BILL (O.S.)

It's all right, Stella, you can wear mine.

These colors resolve themselves into a red flannel jacket with a flapping collar, flannel pants, and green boots.

IT'S BILL.

He holds out his red hat to her in a gesture that's almost absurd in its courtliness.

Stella looks at him, amazed. Wind still silently blowing her white hair every which way.

STELLA

Bill?

BILL

'Course.

Stella steps toward him. Her exhausted legs wobble in the wind.. She starts to tip over -

And Bill is there to catch her in his arms.

Bill supports her, and puts his red hat firmly on her head.

Stella searches his face. Bill, at 40, with slight crow's feet by his blue eyes.

STELLA
Is it really you?

Snow falls on his shoulders, his checked hunting jacket,
on his tousled hair.

BILL
It's me.
(gesturing)
It's all of us.

Other figures emerge from the snowy night.

The crew of the *Dancer*: Tommy Frane, whole and young, in
uniform, and Carl, Tommy's sternman aboard *Dancer*.

And behind those two...

STELLA
Annie?

From the whirl of white emerges...

ANNABELLE IN HER YELLOW DRESS

Her hair, a soft, dark auburn, blows long in the wind.
The snow swirls around her shoulderless yellow dress, but
Annabelle doesn't seem to mind.

STELLA
Annabelle? I can't believe it's you.

Stella embraces her old friend.

ANNABELLE
We're almost there now, dear.

Annabelle takes her arm, falls into step beside her.

ANNABELLE
Just a little bit further.

RUSSELL BOWIE, who looks bewildered, as if unused to this
state of things.

By now, a DOZEN OTHER RECOGNIZABLE FIGURES from Stella's
past emerge from snow so thick that it's become like a
mist...

Three PENOBSCOT NATIVE AMERICANS walk laterally across
the community of Goat Island Ghosts, seemingly oblivious
to them.

But as they pass, one turns to look at Stella.

Opens his mouth. A sound emerges.

Low and resonant. Ancient.

CUT TO:

MEMORY: TOWN WHARF. (PAST, 1942)

The vibrant young Stella picks the ring up from the harbor floor. She holds it in the air.

And slips it on her finger.

CUT TO BLACK:

MEMORY: STELLA'S FRONT DOOR. DAY. (PAST, 1944)

Stella is carried by Bill, in uniform, as a young bride across the threshold of the front door. Laughing.

CUT TO BLACK:

MEMORY: ROAD FROM CEMETERY. (EVENING, 1968)

The ashen-faced 20-year-old Alden and Stella walking down the hill from the cemetery. From Daniel's funeral.

And now Stella takes Alden's hand.

CUT TO BLACK:

STELLA BLINKS. Black. And then:

MEMORY: HILLSIDE BY CHURCH. (PAST, 1969)

Stella rubs Jane's shoulders, who stands in front of her on the hill, staring at the moonlight on the harbour.

She pulls a lock of hair back behind Jane's ear.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE REACH - THAT MOMENT.

Looking at her husband now, Stella's eyes are filled undeniably with pure love.

STELLA
Yes, I will.

CUT TO:

BLACK. Then:

MEMORY: WHARF, GOAT ISLAND. (PAST, 1927)

Young Stella stands at the end of the wharf while her dying father vanishes in the reach.

Tears stream down her face.

STELLA (V.O.)
Yes, I did.

REACH. THAT MOMENT.

ON STELLA:

Tears stream down her aged face, exactly as they did on the Young Stella - making us see the little girl inside the 95-year-old face.

STELLA
(whispering)
Yes. I do.

Bill points into the distance.

BILL
Look, Stella.

EXT. ROCKS OF RACCOON HEAD RISING UP FROM SNOW. NIGHT.

The cliffs directly to the left of the town of Raccoon Head come into view.

BILL
You've crossed the Reach.

STELLA
I have?
(she looks around)
I'm not lost. I'm here.

Black rocks rising out of the gloom like the splintered prows of many ships.

BILL
Take my hand.

She does.

STELLA

Is it - ?

BILL

Time? I guess so. But it don't hurt. At least I never heard so. All that's before.

He smiles.

Stella gazes at his young happy smile. She's abruptly radiant with smiles and tears.

All the tears she had never wept.

EXT. CLIFFS. NIGHT.

VOICES start up behind her, singing, and Stella turns her head to see:

The Dead of Goat Island behind her, surrounding her, heading to the fissured rock.

Her HEARTBEAT thrums louder... LOUDER... LOUDER.

Then it stops.

ON STELLA

Her tears freeze and glitter. She looks up and up, a look of pure wonder on her face...

Their VOICES RISE in an eerie, magnificent crescendo...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE ENTIRE FACE OF THE MAINLAND CLIFF. DAWN.

We sense, rather than see, in the increased light, in the absence of falling snow, in the quieting of the scream of the wind:

It's the next day. The sun is shining. The storm is gone.

FADE IN:

A PAIR OF VIVID BLUE EYES...

Frozen open. Silence.

The eyes - Stella's eyes - are open as if in wonder.

But for a beat too long.

We wait for a blink, a motion, a tilt of the head -

But there's nothing.

The eyes are actually frozen open in death.

The tiny icicles, her frozen tears, glitter like crystal in the sun.

A woman, once beautiful, now in her 90's. Now gone.

EXT. RACCOON HEAD. DAY.

An OLDER MAN, out early, walking his dog.

He stops, astonished, in his tracks.

Drifts of snow everywhere. One car goes by on the road in the near distance. Then another.

The Congo church steeple and its cross against a blue sky. The low roar of a snow plow.

AS IF FROM STELLA'S POV:

The Older Man with his dog is staring, shocked, right at her.

He walks in, closer. Closer. Peering at her.

And another Townsperson Then another.

EXT. THE REACH IN FRONT OF RACCOON HEAD - DAY

The small cluster of Townspeople stand there.

A Penobscot Native American zips up his leather coat and talks on a cell phone.

A snowmobiler stops. Someone else puts a cell phone to their ear.

STELLA FROZEN ON FISSURED ROCK

Following their raised eyes: seven feet up...

Where the body of Stella is seated like an ancient Queen on the icy jagged rock, which supports her like a throne of stone and glass.

The look of wonder radiant on her face.

And on her head, she wears:

BILL'S RED HAT.

CUT TO:

A whirling RED light flashes, and glances off the ice.

An emergency vehicle pulls up to the crowd, driving on the ice.

Her eyes reflect its red lights, which:

DISSOLVE TO:

THE RED HAT REFLECTED IN ALDEN'S GLASSES.

It's being handed to him.

More townspeople have gathered around.

Alden stares down at the hat incredulous. He's unable to speak or even comprehend what's before his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. STELLA'S KITCHEN. SOME DAYS LATER.

Alden clears his own breakfast dishes from the table.

He absently reaches to turn on the Marine radio. And sees, underneath it, neatly folded, Stella's letter.

He pulls it out, unfolds it. Begins to read.

STELLA (V.O.)
Son, since the first day of winter...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GOAT ISLAND HARBOR. SUMMER. DAY.

A beautiful, windswept day, just close enough to summer to be truly tantalizing.

Everything blue.

STELLA (V.O.)
 ...I've been seeing your father and he
 says dying isn't so bad...

EXT. 'STARLIGHT' LOBSTER BOAT. WILD SIDE OF ISLAND. DAY.

Alden, aboard *Starlight* in his bright orange weather-
 alls,

STELLA (V.O.)
 ...at least I think that's it.

He's hauling traps. Emptying them, baiting them, dropping
 them back into the water.

EXT. WILD EDGE OF ISLAND. DAY.

Alden steering the boat, searches the forest on the rocky
 coast.

STELLA (V.O.)
 It's got me wondering about a few things.

A bald eagle nests atop a pine tree...

Alden puts the boat in neutral.

He reaches into his bait barrel and finds a fat sculpin,
 a bloated, spiny fish.

He goes to the edge of the boat. Tosses the sculpin high
 in the air...

THE EAGLE

Soars out over the water, swoops down...

Dives into the water, nabs the fish in his talons...

And flies back up into the sky over the island.

INT. ALDEN'S BOAT. THAT MOMENT.

In the middle of Alden's dashboard hangs:

BILL'S RED HAT.

Alden runs his thumb over the broken visor as he steers.

STELLA (V.O.)
Do the dead sing?

EXT. GOAT ISLAND. DAY.

We pull away from the boat and rise above the island...

STELLA (V.O.)
Do they love the living?

The wind seems to sing with almost human voices.

And Alden almost seems to hear them.

Sometimes, to Alden, it seemed they did both.

- and then we fly up, as if with the eagle -

literally, to a birds-eye view of Goat Island...

...of the house where Stella Flanders lived

...the wharf, the harbor...

Until we reach the buoy.

And then the sea. Only the sea and sky.

THE END