

YOU HAVE 7 DAYS TO LIVE

Screenplay for a cinema feature

by
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2nd draft
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FADE IN

1. OUTSIDE COUNTRY HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

An ancient house, standing lonely in the middle of a deserted landscape in Northern Germany; lying there like a sleeping giant under the starry sky.

But something seems strange: All of the windows and doors have been nailed shut.

Text chart: ``1976``

The headlights of a car pierce the darkness. A car halts in the yard. Three MEN step out. One of them is wearing a police uniform. The men switch on their flashlights and look around.

MAN #1

How long has the house already been like this?

KARL LINDNER, a keen police officer in his late thirties, approaches the entrance door. He speaks in a calm, hoarse voice.

LINDNER

No idea. I haven't seen them in weeks.

Lindner makes himself a picture of the situation. He rings the doorbell. Nothing stirs inside the house. Then, he tries to get a look inside through one of the nailed-shut windows. Through the cracks, he can barely make out a faint pulsating light.

LINDNER

I haven't seen them in weeks.

The three men exchange looks.

With a heavy heart, Lindner makes his decision:

LINDNER

We're going in.

The third man fetches a crowbar and prepares to open the door with it.

2. ENTRANCE AREA / COUNTRY HOUSE - INT. / NIGHT

The house door breaks open with a loud crack.

On the floor below the mail slot, there are piles of mail and unread newspapers which the door pushes out of the way as it opens.

The three men cautiously enter. They look around. The hallway is as dark as night. Lindner tries the light switch - nothing. The only light comes from a TV-set running in the living room.

3. LIVING ROOM - INT. / NIGHT

The three of them enter the living room. Disgusted, the first man holds a handkerchief to his mouth.

MAN #1

Pooh, what a stench...

There is a massive armchair in the center of the room, in front of the television. - There seems to be someone sitting in it. In the darkness we cannot recognize who it is.

Lindner carefully steps closer.

The second man stops in front of a large, dark stain on the wall. He touches it, draws back his hand and inspects it - blood.

Lindner slowly walks around the armchair.

LINDNER

My God... Marlene...!

During the next flicker of light from the television, we recognize the corpse of a woman around forty years of age.

Suddenly, Lindner hears something behind him - breathing!

He turns around.

Indeed, hidden in the semi-darkness, there is the shadow of a figure squatting on the floor.

LINDNER

Frank... Hell, what happened in here?

Lindner carefully approaches the figure.

It is a man, FRANK KOSINSKI. He looks scrawny, all skin and bones, with a pale and hollow face. He doesn't pay the least attention to Lindner. Mesmerized, he just stares at the dead woman in the armchair.

The "first man" follows the direction the man is looking in and takes a careful look at the dead woman. Something seems to be irritating him.

MAN #1

Now that's really odd.

MAN #2

What? What is it?

MAN #1

I'd say she drowned...

Lindner leans over to the lethargic man in the shadows.

LINDNER

Frank...!?

He gently touches his shoulder. At the same moment, Kosinski seems to snap out of it.

He begins to scream in wild panic - loud, heartrending!

CUT TO:

4. TITLE SEQUENCE

A photo montage of corpses, preserved in the swamps over hundreds and thousands of years: children, old people, warriors, farmers with hair stained red from the humin acid, bony extremities and shriveled faces with skin that resembles an ancient landscape ...

... FADE TO:

5. LANDSCAPE OF SWAMPS IN NORTHERN GERMANY - EXT. / DAY

The structures of the corpses' skin fade into pictures of a vast landscape of heaths, forests and moors.

An expensive offroad vehicle is leading a sports car along a deserted country road. It's a wonderful late-summer's day. The two cars take a bend...

6. OUTSIDE COUNTRY HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

... into the driveway of the same old house. It lies peacefully in the afternoon sun. The gravel crunches underneath the tires.

A large moving truck is already parked outside.

Title chart: ``23 years later''

7. OFFROAD VEHICLE - INT. / DAY

Driving the Jeep is ELLEN STRAUB, an attractive, self-assured woman of approx. 30 years.

Asleep on the passenger's seat beside her is her husband MARTIN, who in no way resembles the cliché of the successful author - he has a rather boyish charisma and is a bit too attractive.

Ellen stops the car and takes out some house keys. She holds them right up to her sleeping husband's ear. Then, she shakes them. They tinkle.

ELLEN

(playful)

Sir, we have arrived at your residence.

Martin blinks and takes the keys.

MARTIN

Thank you, James.

The two of them step out of the car.

8. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

Also getting out of their sports car are PAUL - a dynamic looking man in his mid-forties - and his wife CLAUDIA. Despite their careful choice of casual dress, they still look like the epitome of snobbish city people.

They take a look around. Time has left its marks on the old house: Like an enchanted castle, it is camouflaged in waist-high grass and wildly ranking shrubs. Paul and Claudia exchange skeptic looks.

PAUL

Well, look here!

MARTIN

Ladies and gentlemen: The "Straub country-residence".

CLAUDIA

It looks more like the "Straub ruins".

PAUL

Welcome to the far end of the world.

Ellen contradicts.

ELLEN

The lap of nature. Where's your famous optimism?

Two REMOVAL MEN climb out of the truck. One of them is still chewing on his lunch. He points at his watch as he addresses Martin.

REMOVAL MAN
Lunch break is 'til one o'clock.

MARTIN
(sarcastic)
Sure, take your time.
(to Ellen)
They get a lunch break before they even start working.
Cool job.

Laughing, the four of them enter the house.

9. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / DAY

They step into the entrance area. The golden sunlight shines in stripes through the shutters. The house is old, monumental. One senses the centuries. A staircase leads upstairs, the rooms on the first floor are the kitchen and living room. A heavy wooden door opens to the cellar stairs.

MARTIN
The country residence offers everything the doctor ordered for a stressed author needs: fresh air, clean water and - most of all - absolute peace and quiet.

Paul walks upstairs. The staircase creaks.

PAUL
This wood is pretty decayed. Hope I don't land a floor lower.

ELLEN
Although it would give you a perfect opportunity to visit our new wine cellar.

CLAUDIA
How old is this shack, anyway?

ELLEN

Four hundred years. Come on, I'll
give you a tour of the museum...
(blinking an eye at Martin and
Paul)
...while our husbands already get
to work.

CUT TO:

10. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

Martin and Paul are lugging a heavy desk out of the truck. As
opposed to the two removal men, they are really working hard.

PAUL
Damn, this thing is heavy. Where do
you want to have it?

MARTIN
Tenth floor.

PAUL
Very funny.

CUT TO:

11. STUDY - INT. / DAY

Sweating, Martin and Paul are trying to push the desk through
the narrow door to the study. They are doing a pretty awkward
job of it.
Martin's hand brushes the door frame - a splinter.

MARTIN
Shit!

Martin draws back his hand. He's hurt.

PAUL
What's the matter?

Martin presses a handkerchief on the wound and has a closer
look at the door frame.
It is totally splintered, as if someone had forcefully broken
the door open!

MARTIN
Look at this. The lock is totally
demolished.

PAUL

I guess someone lost their key.
You did get your tetanus shots, I
hope?

Martin is still looking at the broken lock.

MARTIN

I mean, seriously: It is strange,
isn't it?

Paul puts it off. Only now does he have a better look around
the room.

PAUL

So what if it is. There hasn't
been anyone in this house for at
least ten years.

The study is covered with dust, the walls are stained and full
of cobwebs - blind, high arched windows. Single pieces of
furniture that the previous owner left behind in this spacious
room.

MARTIN

Twenty-three, to be exact.

PAUL

I wonder how you guys figure on
renovating this whole place. You
can afford to spend some money. If
I was you, I'd spare myself all the
hard work. Besides, didn't you
want to start writing again?

Martin suddenly seems lost in thought.

MARTIN

Yeah sure, I will. Give me a little
more time.

Paul gives him a downcast look.

PAUL

If you throw away your career, that
won't change anything either. Now
don't get me wrong, but I'm telling
you this as your friend: Your last
books were awful. The publishing
house isn't even sure whether to
extend your contract.

Martin takes the handkerchief from his wound and looks at it.

MARTIN

I don't care about my career right now, Paul. Ellen and I need to get our minds on other things, first. After everything we've been through.

12. KITCHEN - INT. / DAY

Ellen is dragging a moving carton full of dishes into the kitchen. It seems to be very heavy. Claudia hooks up a radio and switches it on. We hear a cheerful oldie (*Life could be a Dream*).

The song seems to bring back memories to Ellen: She stares at the radio.

(Transformation from radio to:)

13. DINING ROOM OF CITY APARTMENT - INT. / DAY

Flashback:

Ellen, Martin and their son THOMAS (8 years old) are joined at the breakfast table. The radio is on - it's playing the same tune.

The little boy is totally absorbed with his Game-boy.

Martin sets a bowl of cornflakes and fresh fruit on the table.

MARTIN

Here, partner: A breakfast for champions.

The little boy rolls his eyes and turns back to his Game-boy.

THOMAS

I can't right now! I'm about to break the high-score!

Ellen gets into the discussion.

ELLEN

You do that. But first, eat your breakfast, Tommi.

Now, Thomas reacts. He puts the Game-boy on the table. He continues the game with one hand, while he obediently shovels the breakfast cereal into his mouth with the other.

MARTIN

Goes to show again who's in command
around here.

Martin gives Ellen a playful pat on the behind and kisses her.

ELLEN

(joking)
Sometimes I get the feeling you
only love me for my body.

Martin grins.

MARTIN

Why else?

ELLEN

Come on, say it. You know...

Martin seems to know exactly what Ellen wants to hear.

MARTIN

Oh no, not again. I just said it
for you last week.

For a moment, the two of them stop paying attention to their
son. Suddenly, Thomas grabs his throat. He swallowed wrong.
He chokes without making a sound.

ELLEN

Say it anyway. Come on, how much
do you love me?

MARTIN

(quotes)
"With you, my life began
and with you shall it end..."

Ellen gives him her most beautiful smile. Martin responds with
a short kiss.

At the same time, they hear the Game-boy fall to the floor. It
immediately draws their attention to Thomas.

The little boy is desperately gasping for air. His face is
already starting to turn blue.

Martin runs to him.

MARTIN

Tommi, what's the matter?

He pats Thomas on the back, attempting to clear his throat.

ELLEN

What is it? What's wrong with him?

Thomas coughs, choking, but he can't get his throat clear. Martin recognizes the situation.

MARTIN

(yells)

This is serious! Quick, call emergency!

Ellen hurries to the phone.

Martin realizes that hitting Thomas' back is not doing any good. He uses his finger to try to get the swallowed piece out of his son's throat.

For Thomas, it is a battle against death.

Ellen has gotten through to the emergency line. She speaks into the phone with distress.

ELLEN

This is Straub. You have to come, fast! My son, he swallowed something... Quick, he's choking to death...

Martin's attempts at helping his son remain futile. Thomas is beginning to lose conscience.

Martin sweeps the table free of dishes in a single move and lays the little boy down flat. He reaches for a sharp fruit knife.

Ellen comes running.

ELLEN

What are you doing?

Martin holds the tip of the knife to the boy's throat. It's not easy, since his son is wildly kicking around himself.

MARTIN

I have to cut his windpipe...

ELLEN

(horrified)

You're not a doctor, you'll hurt him!

MARTIN

(screams)

What else should I do, damn it, he's dying!

Again, Martin prepares to cut - he holds the knife to the larynx. The boy's movements grow weaker.

ELLEN

Too high, you're way too far up...
you have to cut here...

She points at the spot below the larynx while holding her little son tight.

MARTIN

Ellen, move aside...

ELLEN

Oh God, Tommi...

Martin prepares to cut, but he can't - his trembling hand refuses to move. Endless seconds pass. The voices blur, like in a dream. The music playing on the radio seems to become louder and louder (*Life could be a Dream*).

ELLEN

What's the matter? Come on, cut...

Martin looks up at his wife. He can't do it.

CLAUDIA (O.S.)

Ellen!

14. KITCHEN - INT. / DAY

Ellen starts.

CLAUDIA

Ellen, are you alright?

Claudia has already started unpacking the carton.

Ellen quickly switches the radio off. She tries to act as if nothing happened.

ELLEN

I'm fine. I was just distracted
for a moment.

Claudia notices how upset her friend is and wants to put her arm around Ellen's shoulder. But just then, the removal men push their way past them with a cupboard.

Claudia drops the issue with a look of sympathy.

CUT TO:

15. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / DUSK

The old house is resting peacefully in the sunset. The last rays of sunlight paint the horizon orange. Warm light shines out through the windows of the house.

16. KITCHEN - INT. / NIGHT

The four friends are joined at the dinner table, surrounded by packing cartons. Their shadows are silhouetted outside the large window. Behind them lie the vast, lonely moors.

Martin opens himself a beer, raises it for a toast.

MARTIN

To our hard-working wives.

CLAUDIA

Don't rejoice too soon. The bill is already on it's way.

They toast with their bottles. Ellen takes herself a cigarette. Martin notices it with disapproval.

CLAUDIA

I still can't picture it: The two of you as country folk. I'm telling you, in six weeks you'll be back in the city.

PAUL

Hold it right there! I hate to play the big boss, but as Martin's publisher I can only say: Make the best of the peace and quiet, the fresh air and all that - and write a new masterpiece!

Ellen gives Martin a skeptical look - the moment of silence is almost too long.

MARTIN

First things first. Now it's our turn - just the two of us.

Martin's hand wanders over to Ellen's. She reacts a bit hesitantly at first, but then they hold each other tight.

CUT TO:

17. BATHROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen is taking a shower, washing off the dirt from a hard day's work.
The bathroom fills with steam.

Ellen turns off the water faucet and steps out of the shower cabin. She reaches for a towel and wraps it around herself.

Something catches her eye in the fogged-up mirror. There is a number, as if someone had used a finger to write it into the moisture: ``7''.

She wipes the mirror clean and looks at it.

FADE TO:

18. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

The following day:
A warm late-summer's morning. The house stands lonely in the rays of the rising sun. Occasional dew drops glitter in the grass.

19. BEDROOM - INT. / DAY

Ellen is asleep in her bed, despite the sun shining right in her face.

Martin enters the room with a tray loaded with breakfast delicacies. He holds it under Ellen's nose.

MARTIN

(acting gallant)

"Wake up, wake up, it's break of day." Paul and Claudia have already left, you sleepyhead.

Ellen hides under her blanket. Martin sets down the tray.

MARTIN

You're right. Forget about getting up. We'll have breakfast in bed.

Ellen resurfaces with a grin. She is still sleepy. Martin jumps into bed and crawls under the blanket.

ELLEN

How romantic!

He playfully burrows around under the blanket, making silly grunting sounds.
Ellen giggles. Suddenly, Martin sticks his head out.

ELLEN

(laughing)
Stop that!

MARTIN

(with a grunting voice)
You'll never get away from me!

He grabs her and pulls her under the blanket. Ellen screams, and laughs.

20. STUDY - INT. / DAY

Martin is working at his computer. Everything is still set up a bit provisionally. Only Martin's novels have already been sorted into a shelf, with 10 copies of "Cherry-red Tears" in front.

He is trying to write, but by the look on his face and his hesitant typing, we can tell that it's obviously not going so well.

Ellen carefully approaches him from behind, hugs him and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

ELLEN

So, how does it feel to be kissed
by two women?

MARTIN

They say it's fantastic. At least
that's what I read in a men's
magazine. So who are the two lucky
ones?

ELLEN

Me and the muse, of course. How is
your book coming along?

He grins and takes her in his arms.

MARTIN

Oh, the muse... we're still having
our differences. You know how it
is with women.

ELLEN

Well then, I guess I'd better leave
the two of you alone. But don't
forget...

Martin finishes her thought.

MARTIN

... we wanted to take some time out
for ourselves. I know. And I'll
only work a little while, I
promise.

Just as Ellen prepares to leave, she catches sight of an old
photograph lying on top of one of the cartons. She picks it up
and takes the dust off of it.

Under the dust, she finds an old black and white picture of a
couple with very earnest looks. The retouched, pitch-black
eyes give the photo a somewhat eerie touch.

All of a sudden, unexpectedly, the man on the photo turns his
head.

His dead eyes look straight at Ellen!

Startled, she drops the picture to the floor.

Martin spins around.

MARTIN

What's the matter?

Ellen hesitantly picks up the picture and looks at it again.
It was only her imagination. It is a normal, old black and
white photo.

ELLEN

(irritated)

Oh, nothing. Where did this
picture come from?

Martin turns back to his work.

MARTIN

I found it here. It's kind of
creepy, don't you think?

Ellen makes a face.

ELLEN

Yeah. It is, kind of.

She puts the picture back and leaves.

21. LIVING ROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen comes out of the kitchen and walks into the dark living
room. She is carrying some sandwiches on a tray.

The room is only lit by the flickering of the television set.
A spooky atmosphere.

In front of the TV is a large, old armchair (the same one from the opening sequence!). Ellen frowns. She slowly walks closer to it.

ELLEN

Martin?

Suddenly, Martin's voice comes from behind the armchair.

MARTIN

Damn!

Martin pounds his flat hand against the television. The screen shows no image, only snow.

Ellen sets down the tray.

ELLEN

What kind of a horrible thing is that?

MARTIN

It still worked in town.

ELLEN

I mean the armchair!

MARTIN

Oh, that was upstairs. A real antiquity! I think it's great.

Ellen instinctively feels appalled by the old piece of furniture.

ELLEN

I don't know.

Martin is still fighting with the TV-set, trying to find a channel.

ELLEN

Maybe the antenna's broken.

MARTIN

We're probably lucky that we even have running water and electricity!
Damned box!

He hits the TV with his fist.

Suddenly, everything is dark!

ELLEN

Hey... the fuse.

MARTIN

Oh, damnit!

He looks for a flashlight and switches it on.

ELLEN

Do you know where fuse box is?

MARTIN

In the cellar, I think.

Wait, I'll take care of it.

He leaves the room.

22. CELLAR - INT. / NIGHT

Martin opens the fuse box and shines inside with his flashlight: A moldy mess of half-corroded wires leading into various ancient switches. The entire construction makes a dangerous impression.

MARTIN

(talking to himself)

God, look at that...

The cellar seems even older than the house. It is a large, cold sandstone catacomb. Several pillars support the ceiling. The walls are clammy and cold.

Martin is standing in the darkness. Something approaches him from behind - slowly, threateningly.

Martin is looking for the blown fuse.

The thing comes closer. Finally, it grabs him.

ELLEN

Boo!

Martin spins around, startled.

MARTIN

Jesus Christ!

Ellen laughs.

ELLEN

I wanted to know what's taking you so long. You've been down here forever.

(looks around, shivering)
It sure is cold down here. We
certainly won't be needing a
freezer.

She catches sight of an old shelf loaded with all kinds of
strange old junk. The shelf looks old and rickety. Ellen
shakes at it, testing its stability.

ELLEN
We'll sure be sorting a bunch of
this stuff out.

Martin points to the fuse box.

MARTIN
Look at this! We'll have to fix
the whole wiring. This stuff is
dangerous as hell.

ELLEN
We'll call for someone from town
first thing in the morning.

MARTIN
Are you crazy? That costs a
fortune!

ELLEN
Do you have a better idea?

MARTIN
I'll do it myself.

ELLEN
You?

MARTIN
My father was an electrician.
Already forgot that?

ELLEN
My father was a pilot. And do I
know how to fly?

There's a lot more Ellen would like to say about this, but she
contends herself with a meaningful look.

ELLEN
Just do me a favor and don't get
yourself roasted!

Martin fumbles with one of the bigger switches, finally flips it to the other side. Click! The catacomb is lit: A lonely 40-Watt lamp dangling from the ceiling casts a dim light. Martin gives Ellen a triumphant smile.

CUT TO:

23. OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE DOOR - EXT. / NIGHT

Ellen is leaning against the door frame, dreamily gazing into the night. She is smoking a joint.

Martin steps up from behind and takes the hand-rolled "cigarette" out of her hand with a swift move. He tosses it away.

MARTIN

Hey, flower child, the sixties are over. And this stuff is hazardous to your health.

ELLEN

Yes, daddy.

She gives him a hasty kiss and walks to the car.

MARTIN

Where are you going?

ELLEN

Well, if you won't let me smoke grass, then at least I'll go get myself some cigarettes.

Ellen gets in the car and takes off.

Martin contemplatively watches her go.

MARTIN

That stuff is gonna end up killing you.

CUT TO:

24. COUNTRY ROAD / INSIDE CAR - EXT. / NIGHT

Ellen is behind the steering wheel. She lights up a cigarette as she drives down a lonely road. There is a small bridge in the distance.

Ellen slows down. She glances at a road sign.

Suddenly, her eyes widen. She takes a second look.

The road sign clearly reads:

``You have 6 days to live``

The shock hits her like a fist. It takes her a moment to react. Then, she slams her foot on the brake pedal.

The car halts with screeching tires. Ellen shifts into reverse gear and drives back. She stops by the sign.

She reads: ``Max. 6 t. Agricultural vehicles pass`` - a perfectly normal sign. Ellen is confused. How creepy. She continues on her way, feeling a bit sick to the stomach.

25. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

Ellen parks in front of the house and steps out of the car. She looks worn-out.

Martin has piled up all of the old furniture from the house. Ellen walks over to him.

ELLEN

What are you doing?

MARTIN

Making our very own solstice fire.

A match lights up. The stacked furniture quickly catches fire.

Only now does Martin notice the state his wife is in.

MARTIN

Is everything alright? Aren't you feeling well?

ELLEN

I just had a really strange experience.

Martin gives her a questioning look.

ELLEN

On an ordinary traffic sign, I
read...

Ellen interrupts her sentence. She's just too embarrassed to
say it.

ELLEN

Oh, nothing. I guess I just still
haven't recovered as well as I try
to make everyone believe.

Martin puts his arm around her and holds her close.

ELLEN

Maybe I should talk to Dr. Roth
about it.

MARTIN

Hey, take your time. You know time
heals better than any shrink ever
can.

Arm in arm, Ellen and Martin stand by the burning pile of
furniture, staring into the fire.

ELLEN

I have a funny feeling. Do you
think we'll get over all that's
happened?

MARTIN

We just have to make a new
beginning.

ELLEN

Cherry-red Tears.

MARTIN

What?

ELLEN

Cherry-red Tears, your first book.
I read it at least nine times. And
then I found out you were going to
attend some kind of book fair.

MARTIN

Not a book fair. I was signing
autographs in a department store.

ELLEN

I was so excited about meeting you.
Again and again, I kept getting in

the back of the line so I could be
the last to talk to you.

MARTIN

And two months later, we got
married. And all because of one
sentence:

(quotes)

"With you, my life began
and with you shall it end..."

This sentence strikes a chord within Ellen. It hardens her
heart.

ELLEN

Don't say that. Please.

A short moment of silence. Ellen's eyes well up with tears.

ELLEN

I miss Tommi so much.

MARTIN

So do I, believe me.

ELLEN

Do you really think anything can
ever be like it was before?

MARTIN

Maybe different. I don't know,
Ellen.

ELLEN

If we stand a chance at all, it's
only by sticking together.

Martin gives her a tender kiss. The fire casts a warming shine
on the two of them and the old house - in the loneliness of the
moors.

CUT TO:

26. KITCHEN - INT. / DAY

Ellen is wearing a paint-stained flannel shirt. She is busy
painting the kitchen walls.
The RADIO is playing in the background.

RADIOBROADCASTER

"... a very special day today.
Exceptionally hot, even for this

time of year. And all the windows
in my studio are already wide
open..."

Ellen isn't paying much attention to the radio. Suddenly, the
tone of the radiobroadcaster's voice gets a more penetrating
touch.

RADIOBROADCASTER

By the way, Ellen:

You have five days left to live.

Ellen freezes. She turns pale.

Then suddenly, a noise - someone is knocking on the window.

Ellen spins around and, startled, tips over a bowl. It smashes
on the floor.

Standing by the open window is Karl Lindner, a total stranger
to Ellen.

Obviously, he is much older now. His face is caved in, his
hair gray. However, his pleasant demeanor has stayed the same.

He realizes that he's startled her.

LINDNER

Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to scare
you.

For a moment, Ellen is at a loss for words. She looks back to
the radio, where the normal program is being continued.

RADIOBROADCASTER

"... and matching today's weather
it's time for some more of the
hottest music of the North..."

Ellen turns the radio off.

ELLEN

Hello. Can I help you?

LINDNER

Does this dog here belong to you?

Sitting next to him is a large mixed-breed with friendly eyes.

ELLEN

No, I've never seen him before.

LINDNER

You know, I saw him sitting outside
your gate... Oh, I'm sorry, I'm
forgetting my manners again! I

haven't even introduced myself yet.
Hi, my name's Lindner.
Karl Lindner.

He offers her his hand through the window.

ELLEN

Ellen Straub.

LINDNER

It's a pleasure. You're from the
city, right?

ELLEN

Do I look like it that much?

LINDNER

Village gossip. You're a real
attraction here.

Ellen is still shook up by the radio announcement, but
nevertheless tries to hold up a conversation.

ELLEN

You're from around here, aren't
you? There's something I've been
wondering about the whole time:
This house, why has it been empty
all these years? I mean, I doubt
if it was the price.

Lindner suddenly turns evasive and cool.

LINDNER

I guess it's too lonely for most
folks.

(glances at his watch)

It's time for me to get going. It's
been a pleasure meeting you.

ELLEN

Wait, won't you join me for a cup
of coffee?

He turns down the offer, a touch too vehemently.

LINDNER

No, thank you. I need to get back
home. My wife is waiting.

He leaves. Ellen contemplatively watches him go.

Martin enters the kitchen and puts his arms around her.

MARTIN

Who was that?

ELLEN

Someone from the village.

She turns around to face him.

ELLEN

Martin, there's something I...
uh... need to tell you about.

CUT TO:

27. LIVING ROOM - INT. / DAY

Martin is seated in the old armchair. Ellen across from him.
He is grinning.

MARTIN

Okay, now let me see if I've got
this straight. First you get
warnings from a road sign and then
from the weather forecast. Which
one of us two was the author again?

Ellen feels disappointed and misunderstood.

ELLEN

Martin, it's not funny!

MARTIN

You know, it's not always easy for
me, either. But at least I try not
to give in to each and every
neurosis.

Now he's got her angry.

ELLEN

Well, apparently it was a big
mistake to try talking to you.
Don't you remember what we promised
to each other? Honesty - trust!

MARTIN

Come on, this isn't about honesty.
You just need a good night's sleep.

The way you toss and turn all
night, even I hardly get any sleep.

Ellen realizes there is no use in discussing this any further.

ELLEN

Well, excuse me for having bothered
you with my problems.

She leaves the living room and walks out on Martin.

28. HALLWAY - INT. / DAY

Ellen is using a spatula to scratch the old-fashioned, yellowed wallpaper off of the walls. She is still upset, and really taking it out on the wallpaper.

Martin comes walking up the steps. He is carrying a plate full of small, deformed cakes.

MARTIN

For you.

He holds out the plate to her. Ellen throws a skeptical look at the mishap pastry. She won't be bribed this easily.

ELLEN

Now, what did I do to deserve this?

MARTIN

Come on, at least try one. It took
me two hours to make these.

Ellen goes back to scratching off the wallpaper. Martin changes his tactic.

MARTIN

What I really meant to say was: I'm
sorry. I'm a real bonehead
sometimes. But it's just that I'm
worried about you. I'm afraid you
might get carried away with
something like that.

Ellen interrupts her work and takes one of the cakes. She tastes it.

ELLEN

Tastes awful.

She grins. Martin returns a smile.

MARTIN

But baked with lots of love.

Martin helps himself to a small cake, too. He bites off a piece, and makes a sour face. Then, he takes Ellen's piece out of her hand.

MARTIN

I think I'd better get rid of this.
After all, I don't want to kill
you.

He turns to leave.

ELLEN

Martin...

Martin stops at the bottom of the staircase.

ELLEN

...Maybe you're right and I just
need to get some sleep. Don't
worry. I'll get settled in sooner
or later.

CUT TO:

29. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

The farmhouse lies in the loneliness of a starless night. Silhouettes of gnarled trees reach for the sky like black claws.

30. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

It's dark. An eerie silence fills the house.

Suddenly, there is a CHILD'S VOICE calling in the distance.

CHILD'S VOICE

Mommy...

31. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Martin and Ellen are asleep in their bed.

CHILD'S VOICE

Mommy!

Ellen wakes up out of her light slumber. She opens her eyes and looks around, searching.

ELLEN

Tommi...?

The voice clearly echoes through the house. (It sounds like Thomas' call before the accident.)

CHILD'S VOICE

Mommy...

Ellen silently sits up. She is wide awake. She tries to wake up Martin.

ELLEN

(whispering)

Martin... did you hear that?

No chance - Martin only mumbles a few unintelligible words and continues to sleep.

Ellen gets out of bed.

CUT TO:

32. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Almost mechanically, the child's calling repeats itself.

CHILD'S VOICE

Mommy...

Ellen carefully heads down the stairs, toward the entrance door. The voice seems to be coming from outside. Ellen opens the door, frightened.

33. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

The pale moonlight dips the landscape into a ghostly atmosphere. Ellen's eyes search through the darkness.

There! There is something in the distance. A child! The child is standing in the tall grass, looking toward Ellen.

ELLEN

Tommi?

She cannot believe her eyes.

It really is her little Thomas! He smiles. There is something about the way he moves that makes it look as if he's floating.

ELLEN

(louder)

Tommi!

The little boy laughs. He turns around and runs away in the grass; as if in play.

Ellen snaps out of her stiffness and chases after him.

The small figure slowly disappears in the increasingly tall grass.

34. FOREST IN THE MOORS - EXT. / NIGHT

Ellen is running farther and farther away from the house. She stops.

ELLEN

Tommi, wait!

But the little boy keeps running further.

Ellen follows him, but her path grows increasingly toilsome. Her feet sink deeper and deeper into the moor.

Now, the child is out of sight.

Ellen is devastated. She trips and falls to the ground. The swamp encloses her. Ellen fights against the marsh that she is sinking into deeper and deeper.

Suddenly, the little boy steps back out of the darkness. He stays a few feet away from Ellen. He smiles as he watches Ellen sink into the deadly swamp.

With a sudden jerk, an unknown force pulls her down into the moor. She is swallowed by the earth.

35. BEDROOM - INT. / DAY

Ellen abruptly wakes up from her NIGHTMARE!

She looks around herself. She is in her comfortable bedroom flooded with the warm rays of the morning sun. Martin's side of the bed is already empty.

Then, she hesitates. Something feels wrong. Ellen throws back her sheets. Horror - her bed is full of mud.

Ellen wants to scream. She barely manages to suppress it.

CUT TO:

36. STUDY / HALLWAY - INT. / DAY

Martin is sitting at his computer, busily typing. He seems to be making progress on his book.

In the background, Ellen hurries past the study. She is carrying the dirty sheets under her arm. Without looking up from the monitor, Martin calls through the open door:

MARTIN
So, did you sleep good?

37. KITCHEN - INT. / DAY

ELLEN
(calling to Martin)
Yeah... I have to go to town.

Ellen enters the kitchen. She hastily stuffs the bed-sheets into the washing machine.

ELLEN
Is there anything you need?

She turns the washing machine on and heads for the door.

38. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / DAY

Ellen is about to leave the house. The door is already open. In the entrance area, she finds the dog (that Lindner had previously discovered in their garden) sitting in front of the cellar door. Ellen pets him in passing.

ELLEN
(to the dog)
Hey, you're still here. I suppose
you like it here with us.

MARTIN (O.S.)
(calling from the study)

No, thanks. I have everything I need. Drive safely, you hear?

Ellen is already out the door. She pulls it shut behind her.

CUT TO:

39. CONSULTING ROOM OF PROF. ROTH - INT. / DAY

A pleasantly decorated consulting room. Standing by a window is PROF. ULRICH ROTH (Professor of Psychiatry), a distinguished man around 50 years of age.

PROF. ROTH

You see, there are various approaches to an explanation for what you are currently going through.

Ellen is hunched in a chair opposite of him.

Prof. Roth turns around to face her and takes a seat behind his desk. The leather chair creaks.

PROF. ROTH

One of the latest theories claim that at certain frequencies, air conditioners create an oscillation that can, in fact, cause hallucinations. They may also be due to the interior pressure of your eyes and so on and so forth. Personally I believe that all of this is nonsense. The loss of a child is a traumatic experience. Subconsciously, you may still be blaming yourself for it, and maybe now believe that your son should punish you...

Ellen impatiently cuts him short.

ELLEN

Listen, it's one thing to have a guilt complex. But I know the difference between when I'm overstrung and when I'm seeing things that are simply not there!

Besides, it only began after we moved!

PROF. ROTH

(hesitantly)

There is, of course, another possible explanation which I dearly hope is not the case.

Lost in thought, Prof. Roth taps his pen on his desktop.

ELLEN

And that is?

PROF. ROTH

A tumor - which could cause pressure on certain parts of the brain and, thus, influence your perception.

Ellen stares at him, shocked.

PROF. ROTH

Just to be on the safe side, I would like to have a few tests done.

CUT TO:

40. COMPUTER TOMOGRAPH - INT. / DAY

Ellen is lying on a stretcher, slowly being moved into the opening of the computer tomograph. She is wearing a pale-green hospital garment.
The penetrating sound of the machines - technical coldness.

41. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - INT. / DAY

Blood is filled into a cannula.

Ellen is sitting on a stretcher. The NURSE pulls the needle out of her arm.

DR. SCHLETH, a man who makes a somewhat lethargic impression, enters the room and fastens the tomograph shots in front of an illuminated surface on the wall.

DR. SCHLETH

Congratulations. You are definitely the healthiest person I've had in CT for years.

Ellen heaves a sigh of relief.

DR. SCHLETH

Dr. Roth gave me these for you.
Three times a day, after meals.

He hands her a box of tablets.

ELLEN

What is this?

DR. SCHLETH

Fluctin. A pretty strong
antidepressive... If you asked me,
I'd try to do without them first.

He takes a look into her health records.

DR. SCHLETH

You come from Goldmoor?

Ellen answers absent-mindedly.

ELLEN

We just moved there.

DR. SCHLETH

(by-the-way)

One time, when I was in college, we
examined a swamp corpse in
pathology. They had excavated it
there.

Now he has Ellen's attention.

DR. SCHLETH

Three or four thousand years old.
But I didn't deal with the subject
any more than necessary. You know,
I never liked pathology. Somehow,
I always felt it reduced humans to
something they are not.

Suddenly, Dr. Schleth's beeper goes off. He takes a quick
glance at it and turns to leave.

ELLEN

Dr. Schleth.

The doctor stops at the door.

ELLEN

What do you believe happens to a human after he dies?

The otherwise reserved Dr. Schleth suddenly seems very human.

DR. SCHLETH

You mean, do I believe in something like a soul?

He smiles mischievously.

DR. SCHLETH

I haven't seen one on any of my x-ray pictures, yet. But then again, what would x-rays know?

He turns around and walks out. Lost in thought, Ellen watches him leave.

42. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

Ellen steers the car into the driveway and climbs out. The dog runs to greet her, wagging its tail. Ellen kneels down in front of the dog and pets it.

ELLEN

Hey, girl! Here, I brought you something.

She takes a collar with a little bell on it out of her purse and puts it around the dog's neck.

ELLEN

Now all we need is a name for you. How about Clara - okay, then: Clara.

She walks to the house door. The dog follows her inside as if it were the most natural thing to do. The bell jingles.

43. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen enters the hallway. At the same time, Martin comes upstairs from the cellar.

ELLEN

Hi, love. Trouble with the fuses again?

Martin locks the door behind him.

MARTIN

It's a real mess. I think it'd be better for you not to go down there for a while. It's just too dangerous.

He drops the key for the cellar into his pocket. Ellen watches this with irritation. Martin's entire behavior seems odd.

Behind Ellen, the dog trots into the corridor.

MARTIN

Don't tell me you've made friends with that wandering flea circus?

ELLEN

Why not? She can guard the house. By the way, I gave her a name: Clara.

She pets the dog, not noticing the frown on Martin's face.

MARTIN

Where have you been all day?

ELLEN

I went to see Prof. Roth! You know, I had another one of those dreams last night. I saw Tommi!

Suddenly, the look on Martin's face softens again. He takes Ellen into his arms to comfort her.

MARTIN

Ellen... our Tommi is dead. And there's nothing we can do about it.

Ellen rests her head against his shoulder.

ELLEN

You know, Martin, since we moved to this house... sometimes I just get the feeling that the past is catching up to us again...

Martin interrupts her with unexpected ill temper and frees himself from the hug.

MARTIN

Oh! Now we're getting to the point! So all of a sudden, it's the house. Yesterday, it was a

road sign. And the first thing you do is go and run to "Dr. Freud"!

He heads for the study, leaving Ellen behind. Ellen calls after him:

ELLEN

But that's not the point!
What if all these things are somehow connected?

MARTIN

Oh, baloney. You should just hear yourself talk!

He treads up the staircase.

MARTIN

I'll be in the study, just in case you decide to get reasonable, after all.

Ellen watches him with consternation. She goes into the kitchen, worried.

44. KITCHEN - INT. / NIGHT

Lost in thought, Ellen takes out a cup and pours herself a cup of coffee from a thermos. She takes the pills that she got from Dr. Schleth out of her purse and studies them.

She looks out through the window, at the dreamlike landscape of the moors. There is a warm evening breeze.

Suddenly, Ellen's eyes focus on the reflection of her face in the window. She faintly discerns something strange on her forehead: "4"!

Startled, she touches her forehead. There is nothing on it.

When she takes a second look at her reflection, everything is normal again.

The dog trots up to Ellen, whining balefully.

ELLEN

(to the dog)
Either Martin is right or I am really starting to lose my mind...

For a moment, she considers taking one of the tablets. But then, she determinedly throws the whole package in the trash can.

CUT TO:

45. IN THE VILLAGE - EXT. / DAY

Ellen parks her car in the center of the nearby village. The small township is smothering in a humid summer's heat.

Ellen heads for a bookstore with Clara trotting in behind.

46. AT THE BOOKSTORE - INT. / DAY

Ellen enters the shop. It is unusually dark and quiet in here. She runs her fingers across the shelves, searching.

She passes by a stand with pocket books, also including several copies of "Cherry-red Tears" next to Stephen King's "Shining". She stops for a moment. Smiles.

Then, she finds the department for books on psychology. She pulls out a book titled "The Inner Child - The Ghosts of the Past". Leafs through it. She stops at a certain page:

ELLEN

(quietly reads to herself)
"...certain places arouse
recollections and links within
us..."

Suddenly, Ellen hears a voice behind her.

SALES LADY (O.S.)

First buy it, then read it!

Ellen looks up. The sales lady is standing in front of her: a skinny woman with small eyes suspiciously beaming at Ellen.

ELLEN

Yes, of course... I'll take it.

She places the book on the counter. All of a sudden, the sales lady has turned into the world's most friendly person. Ellen follows her to the cash register and gives her the book.

The sales lady skeptically eyes the psychology book while she notes the price.

Ellen puts the money on the counter and turns to leave the store, when the sales lady speaks up again.

SALES LADY

You're the wife of that author,
aren't you?

Ellen turns back to face her.

ELLEN

Martin Straub, yes.

SALES LADY

Used to write some nice books, your
husband. But that last one was
awful. A terrible book. Didn't
sell, either.

Ellen really can't think of an answer to that.

SALES LADY

I read it - violent trash. My
husband said so, too.

ELLEN

Well, I've got to get going...
'bye.

Ellen walks out of the shop. The sales lady keeps talking.
Her eyes are cold.

SALES LADY

(loud)

It's bad and it's violent. I don't
like that kind of stuff. Tell that
to your husband.

47. OUTSIDE BOOKSTORE - EXT. / DAY

Clara is still waiting in front of the bookstore when Ellen
comes back outside.

ELLEN

Come on, Clara. Let's get out of
here.

Just as she sets out for her car, she discovers Karl Lindner
and his wife. He seems to want to pass by her without saying
hello.

ELLEN

Mr. Lindner!

Lindner realizes he has no way out of this situation.

LINDNER

Oh, Mrs. Straub. May I introduce
you to my wife?

MRS. LINDNER

Just call me Elisabeth.

She seems like a truly honest person and very awake, despite
her advanced age. Ellen shakes hands with her.

ELLEN

Ellen.

MRS. LINDNER

You're doing fine, aren't you? I
mean... the two of you alone in
that house, so far out in the moor.

Lindner nudges his wife with his elbow.

ELLEN

In the moor? What do you mean by
that?

Mrs. Lindner wants to answer something, but her husband heads
her off.

LINDNER

Stop scaring people. Let's go.
We need to be on our way.

MRS. LINDNER

Excuse us. But do stop by for a
visit sometime! You are welcome
anytime.

Lindner manages a smile and leads his wife away by the arm.

LINDNER

Have a nice day.

As soon as they are out of hearing distance, Mrs. Lindner tells
her husband with obvious anger:

MRS. LINDNER

(quiet, reproachfully)
You didn't tell her!

LINDNER

We should leave the past alone.

MRS. LINDNER

Well, it will never leave us alone
as long as you ignore it.

Back to Ellen: She watches the two of them go for a moment.
Then, she gets into her car and drives off.

CUT TO:

48. STUDY - INT. / DUSK

Martin is in the study, working at his computer. He is in a writing frenzy, typing in the words like a madman. Ellen comes through the door. She is carrying the book about Goldmoor in her hand. At first, Martin does not react to her. He keeps on typing.

ELLEN

It seems to be going well for you.

Martin continues to type as he speaks.

MARTIN

Where have you been?

ELLEN

In the village. Look what I found.

She opens the book to a certain page and holds it under his nose.

Martin is annoyed for having to interrupt his work.

MARTIN

Psychology, huh? So, what side of
the rainbow are we on today?

Ellen points out a certain passage in the book.

ELLEN

(reads out loud)

"Events commonly interpreted as
haunting apparitions often result
from psychic disharmonies or
undigested traumatic ordeals..."

MARTIN

(impatient)

Ellen, what are you trying to
prove, anyway? That we've created
ourselves a ghost? Come on!

Ellen persistently tries to get through to him.

ELLEN

It's just a feeling. Don't you sense it, too?

MARTIN

What? What am I supposed to sense?

ELLEN

The house - Tommi - something just doesn't jive here...

Suddenly, Martin's voice gets disproportionately loud.

MARTIN

Now you go starting that again. We decided together, to build up something new here. I, for my part, am working on it very hard. But oddly, you seem to have changed your mind.

Ellen wants to reply something but just then, the doorbell RINGS.

MARTIN

Who's that?

ELLEN

I haven't the slightest idea.

When she sees that Martin does not intend to answer the door, Ellen goes downstairs herself.

49. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen opens the door. Standing in the doorway are Paul and Claudia, both in the best of moods.

PAUL AND CLAUDIA

Surprise!

Ellen hugs them, her mind still halfway on Martin.

ELLEN

Well, this really is a surprise!
Come on in!

Martin comes downstairs. He seems anything but pleased by the company.

Paul gives him a jovial pat on the shoulder.

PAUL

Hey, my man! How's the masterpiece coming along?

MARTIN

Not so bad, if I could get some peace and quiet around here.

Paul understands the side-swipe.

PAUL

Hey, hey, hey! Say no more until you've seen what we brought:

He puts a wide grin on his face. Ellen and Martin exchange quick looks. Paul pulls something out from behind his back.

PAUL

Scrabble!

CUT TO:

50. LIVING ROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Martin looks annoyed. The four friends are comfortably seated around the living room table. Each of them has a glass of wine.

While they play Scrabble, Paul tells a dirty story.

PAUL

God, you should've seen him! Elke Schneider enters the room and storms up to him. She is tremendous. Her breasts are so big that just recently, there was a discussion about whether they should be given country names of their own.

Laughter all around the table. Martin is the only one who is not delighted. But Ellen is clearly relieved by this moment of normality in the house.

ELLEN

Paul, you and your stories... I've really missed you!

Claudia looks around the living room. Apparently, she likes what she's seeing.

CLAUDIA

I'm impressed! You two have really gotten quite a bit done, already.

The sack with the Scrabble-letters is passed on to Ellen. She reaches inside.

ELLEN

What do you think? We worked our fingers to the bone and now, we're both about to have a nervous breakdown.

Ellen places the letters on the table in front of her and begins to shuffle them back and forth.

CLAUDIA

I really wouldn't have thought you two could stand it out here for this long. To tell the truth, we even have some bets going with a couple of people...

But Ellen isn't paying attention to Claudia's words any more. Terrified, she stares at her Scrabble-stones, which she has already put together. The letters form the words:

T-H-R-E-E--D-A-Y-S

Everyone is waiting for her to make her turn. Paul starts nagging.

PAUL

Well? Are you going to play?

Ellen feverishly gathers up her letter stones and throws them back into the sack. She shakes it with special thoroughness and draws anew.

ELLEN

I pass.

Paul is pleased. He puts down his word.

PAUL

Triple word score, that makes 72 points. Now what do you say to that, honey-bunny?

CLAUDIA

My hero.

They kiss.

Ellen lines up her newly drawn stones in front of herself again. Martin watches her.

Ellen cannot believe her eyes. Again, her letter combination spells out:

T-H-R-E-E--D-A-Y-S

This time, the others notice the look on Ellen's face, too.

CLAUDIA

Ellen, what's wrong?

It takes Ellen a moment to answer.

ELLEN

I just got exactly the same letters
for the second time.

She gives Martin a significant look and shows him her letter-board. This time, she has proof!

MARTIN

(sarcastically)

Oh, "three days". A new message!

He turns to Paul and Claudia.

MARTIN

Because - you know - Ellen is
receiving messages from road signs,
radio broadcasters and now from
Scrabble game stones.

He turns Ellen's letter-board around for the others to see.

Martin's reaction hits Ellen like a fist. She feels humiliated. She is at a loss for words.

MARTIN

And the best part is: She thinks
the messages are meant to announce
her death.

(makes a "spooky" noise)

Hooooo...

Claudia looks back and forth between Martin and Ellen. She realizes how serious the situation is. As opposed to Paul, who pulls out a news ARTICLE.

PAUL

Talk about spooky. Martin, do you
remember that splintered door to
the study? I guess there was more
to it than just a lost key.

The headline of the article reads: **"Murder in Goldmoor - Many questions remain unanswered"**.

ELLEN

Let me see that!

Ellen takes the article. The picture underneath shows Karl Lindner in police uniform, 23 years younger. Before she even has a chance to read the article, Martin grabs the newspaper out of her hands.

He crumples up the paper and angrily turns to Paul.

MARTIN

Just perfect, Paul! Well done!
Can't you tell that my wife is
upset enough already? And then you
come up with this kind of a story?!

Ellen has regained her composure. She is still outraged.

ELLEN

What do you think you're doing,
anyway? Now give me back that
article!

Martin shows no sign of reaction.

MARTIN

Ellen, I just don't want you to get
upset for no reason.

He tries to conciliate by putting his arm on her shoulder. But Ellen shakes him off.

ELLEN

(sarcastic)
How thoughtful of you!

An unpleasant moment of silence. Ellen looks at Claudia and Paul - she doesn't want to make a fool of herself.

ELLEN

Excuse me for a moment.

She storms out of the room.

Paul and Claudia both look a bit sheepish.

Martin holds the article to a candle and burns it in an ashtray.

MARTIN

She shouldn't be worrying about this stuff. Lately, she's been acting strange enough already.

51. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

Ellen is standing in front of the house. Lost in thought, she takes a drag from her cigarette. Claudia comes out of the house and joins her.

CLAUDIA

What's this going on between you two?

ELLEN

Oh, I don't know. I was hoping things would get better once we moved.

CLAUDIA

But nothing got any better?

Ellen's eyes wander over the vast landscape of moors which the darkness of the night has transformed into a surreal shadow painting.

ELLEN

Lately, Martin hasn't been his normal self. The work, the relocation...

CLAUDIA

You have to give him some time, Ellen. He's under enormous pressure right now. He hasn't written a single decent sentence since the accident.

Ellen takes a last long drag from her cigarette, throws it on the ground and puts it out with her foot.

ELLEN

Yes, I know. I try my best. It's just that... sometimes I wonder if we made a mistake by moving here.

52. LIVING ROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Martin and Paul are still seated opposite each other. A strange atmosphere. Paul is trying hard to keep up a conversation.

PAUL

So, work is going well, you say?

Martin makes a very calm impression. In the background, the dog is barking at the cellar door.

MARTIN

(calmly)

Yes. Splendid. I finally found a story that's both: thrilling and true to life.

Now, Clara starts to bark at the cellar door.

PAUL

I'm glad to hear that. You know...

Martin has a sudden outburst and yells:

MARTIN

(to the dog)

NOW SHUT UP, YOU STUPID BITCH !

Paul is all confused now. He throws a helpless look toward the entrance door.

PAUL

You know, I think I have to get up early in the morning. We ought to get going.

53. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Clara is still barking at the cellar door. Then, she starts to claw at the crack below the door, as if she had discovered something behind it.

CUT TO:

54. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

The next morning:

The house is enclosed in a light curtain of early morning fog. Everything seems oddly quiet. Not a single bird is chirping.

The calm before the storm.

55. BEDROOM - INT. / DAY

Ellen wakes up out of her light sleep. She looks around. Martin's side of the bed is empty and unused. Martin did not spend the night by her side.

CUT TO:

56. KITCHEN - INT. / DAY

Ellen enters the kitchen in her bathrobe. She puts on a pot of coffee. Martin comes in.

MARTIN

Hi, darling.

Ellen turns around to face him. She is terror-stricken.

His hands are covered with blood. He seems to be oblivious to it. In the best of moods, he walks to the kitchen sink while he continues to speak.

MARTIN

At last, I'm back on top! Seventy pages in one night! I'd say that just about breaks the record...

He starts washing his hands with meticulous care. The red-stained water runs into the drain.

Ellen closes her eyes and fights the panic welling up inside of her.

MARTIN

Ellen? Is everything alright?

She opens her eyes again. She takes a second look and sees that what she thought to be blood is only wall paint. She discovers a bucket with a paintbrush beside the kitchen door.

She tries to conceal her thoughts.

ELLEN

Oh, sure. I'm just a little... dizzy.

She hastily grabs the dog's food dish and fills it. - Simply to be doing something; anything.

ELLEN

I ought to give Clara something to eat.

Ellen goes outside.

57. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

Ellen carries the dish outside and starts searching for Clara.

ELLEN

Clara!

Nothing stirs.

ELLEN

Come here, Clara! I've got something yummy for you.

Then, she catches sight of something dark lying a bit away in the grass.

Ellen puts down the dog food and runs toward the spot.

There, lying in the tall grass she finds the dog. It's dead! It looks as if a wild animal had attacked Clara.

ELLEN

Oh, no!
(loud)
Martin!

She kneels down beside the animal's dead body.

ELLEN

(screams)
Martin!

Martin comes out of the house and stops at the door. He is calm - too calm.

MARTIN

What?

ELLEN

Look at this! The dog! She's dead!

Martin shows no reaction. He doesn't even seem to find it worth the trouble to go over to Ellen who is still kneeling in the grass.

MARTIN

She was old.

ELLEN

Old?! Come look at this! She has wounds. Wounds on her head. Like thrashes. Or bites.

MARTIN

Maybe an animal.

ELLEN

(furious)

An animal? What kind of animal?
A goddamned T-Rex, or what?

Martin is still apathetically standing in the doorway.

MARTIN

She spent a couple of pleasant days with us, and now she's dead. That's the way it is. I'm sorry. I have work to do.

He goes back inside.

Ellen watches him.

This very instant, she realizes that this is not the man she once married. She knows that the time has come to take up action.

CUT TO:

58. MOOR - EXT. / DAY

A short distance away from the house, Ellen has buried the dog. She sticks a small, self-built wooden crucifix into the soft earth.

She stands there for a moment. She looks over at the house. Silence. Loneliness.

Then, she hangs Clara's collar over the cross. The little bell jingles.

CUT TO:

59. COUNTRY ROAD - EXT. / DAY

Ellen speeds down the country road in her car. She passes the town sign of Goldmoor. She has a tense look on her face.

CUT TO:

60. IN FRONT OF LINDNER'S HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

Ellen rings the doorbell.

She is standing in front of Lindner's house. While she waits, she looks up and down the street. There is no one in sight. The entire village seems deserted.

Elisabeth Lindner opens the door. She doesn't seem very surprised to see Ellen.

MRS. LINDNER

Oh, Ellen! I've been wondering when you'd come. Why don't you step in.

ELLEN

Thank you.

Ellen enters the house.

61. HALLWAY IN LINDNER'S HOUSE - INT. / DAY

The hallway is dark. The wood-paneled walls are decorated with pictures and certificates from Karl Lindner's years as a police officer.

MRS. LINDNER

My husband is in his study in the back.

Mrs. Lindner leads Ellen through the corridor.

ELLEN

I really hate to bother him, but...

MRS. LINDNER

Oh no, no. You're not bothering him.

(she winks an eye)

He has lots of time since he's been retired.

CUT TO:

62. LINDNER'S STUDY - INT. / DAY

Ellen enters the spacious study. Lindner is seated in front of an easel, dexterously painting lines onto a canvas. He is working on a still life of flowers.

Without turning around to Ellen, he says:

LINDNER

Come in.

Ellen takes a look around the room. It is also furnished in dark colors, and there are dozens of oil paintings standing around the room. Every single one a still life of flowers.

ELLEN

You only draw flowers? A little unusual for a former policeman.

Lindner obstinately continues to work on his painting.

LINDNER

You know, after doing that job for so many years, you learn to appreciate the simple things in life. Flowers incorporate a beauty that I always missed in life. But certainly, you're not here to chat about my hobbies.

ELLEN

1976. What happened back then?

With a heavy heart, he puts down his paintbrush and turns to face Ellen.

LINDNER

Do yourself a favor: Don't ask.

ELLEN

I appreciate your concern, but we live in that house. I need to know what happened in there.

Lindner turns back to his painting and continues to draw. He seems introverted, as if he were talking to himself.

LINDNER

We found the wife about a week after she had died, hunched in her TV-chair. Her husband was sitting in front of her; the whole time, he sat in front of her dead body. A whole damn week. Her death certificate says that she drowned, and her husband was convicted, but

God alone knows what really happened back then.

Ellen is shocked. Still, she persists.

ELLEN

What made him do it?

Lindner doesn't answer.

ELLEN

That man, is he still alive? Where is he? Can I talk to him?

Lindner turns around to her again. This time, he looks determined.

LINDNER

Why don't you just leave the past alone and now go - please.

Ellen sees that it's no use. She turns to leave. But she stops at the door and turns back once more.

ELLEN

If there's one thing I've learned lately, it's that you can not run away from the past. Believe me.

She leaves the old policeman behind. Once alone, he lowers his eyes.

CUT TO:

63. IN FRONT OF LINDNER'S HOUSE - EXT. / DAY

Ellen leaves the house, reflective. Just as she heads through the gate, Mrs. Lindner catches up with her.

MRS. LINDNER

Ellen! Wait!

She hands Ellen a small note.

MRS. LINDNER

Frank Kosinski. Here's the address. Go see him. Ask him.

ELLEN

Thank you. Elisabeth, I didn't mean to...

Mrs. Lindner puts it off with a smile.

MRS. LINDNER

That's alright. Don't misunderstand my husband. It's only that he's already had enough problems with this case. And who would believe him if he told the truth?

ELLEN

But what is the truth?

MRS. LINDNER

I don't know all about what happened back then. But it always stood between me and my husband.

Ellen nods and leaves.

CUT TO:

64. PSYCHIATRY - EXT. / DAY

Ellen parks her car in front of the large, old building. She opens the heavy double doors of the entrance.

65. PSYCHIATRY - INT. / DAY

A long, wood-paneled hallway with small resting areas. Some of the elderly people are sitting around, others are playing cards or staring at a television - a strange atmosphere.

Ellen approaches a SOCIAL WORKER, who is pushing an OLD LADY through the hallway in a wheelchair. The old lady giggles, as if she were mentally disoriented.

ELLEN

Excuse me, I'm looking for Frank Kosinski.

The young man is of the silly, bored type.

SOCIAL WORKER

Kosinski...

(thinks for a moment)

Oh - you mean K.K.!

ELLEN

Sorry?

The social worker grins. He seems to think he's very funny.

SOCIAL WORKER

Killer-Kosinski, that's what they
call him around here. He did away
with his wife.

Now, the old lady joins in on the conversation.

OLD LADY

I'm so glad you finally came.
We've all been waiting for you.

She gently touches Ellen's hand. - The old lady seems to be
taking Ellen for someone else.

ELLEN

(softly, to the old lady)
You must be mistaking me.
(to the young man)
Where can I find the man?

SOCIAL WORKER

He's in the closed psychiatry. This
here's the open section. Go down
the hall, third door to the left.

ELLEN

Thank you.

The old lady keeps on persisting.

OLD LADY

Are you doing better yet?

Ellen is too preoccupied to worry about the old lady. She
leaves them with a quick nod and hurries on.

The social worker starts pushing the wheelchair forward again.
Walking away, Ellen still hears the old lady's voice.

OLD LADY

(to social worker)
Poor girl. She only has two more
days to live, you know.

Ellen stops. She turns on her heels and runs back.

She excitedly stops the wheelchair and leans over to the old
lady.

ELLEN

What was that? What did you say?

The old lady doesn't seem to recognize her any more.

OLD LADY

What do you want from me?

ELLEN

What you just said, about the two days...

OLD LADY

I didn't say anything!

Ellen looks at the social worker, hoping that he might help.

SOCIAL WORKER

I didn't hear anything. Sorry.

Ellen doubtfully looks back and forth between the two of them.

ELLEN

I'm sorry... I guess I was mistaken.

She quickly turns her back to this embarrassing situation and leaves.

66. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF KOSINSKI'S CELL - INT. / DAY

The MALE NURSE turns the key. Before opening the heavy door, he gives Ellen a questioning look.

NURSE

He has his clear moments every now and then. But I wouldn't get my hopes up high.

They both enter the cell.

67. KOSINSKI'S CELL - INT. / DAY

Frank Kosinski (approx. 70 years old now) is sitting at a desk. He is busy putting newspaper articles into clear plastic folders and carefully sorting them away.

Ellen enters the room. The nurse closes the door from inside and stays standing next to it.

The room looks more like an office archive than the cell of a closed psychiatric clinic. There are several shelves filled with neatly lined up files.

ELLEN

Mr. Kosinski?

The old man takes no notice of her. Ellen steps up to him, obviously feeling very uncomfortable about it.

ELLEN

Mr. Kosinski, my name is Ellen Straub. I live in your house out in Goldmoor... I mean, the house where you used to live. There are a few questions I would like to ask you.

Kosinski does not react. He seems so lost in his own world that he hasn't even registered her presence. He stubbornly continues sorting his papers.

ELLEN

Mr. Kosinski! Can you hear me?

She waves her hand in front of his face. No reaction. Ellen realizes that she'll have to come up with something else.

She walks to one of the shelves and pulls out a file titled ``1976''. Leafs through it. She finds the article that Paul had brought the other night. She lays it on the desk, right in front of Kosinski's nose.

ELLEN

1976 - What happened back then?
You...

Now, she has his attention. As if she had pushed the button of a tape recorder, Kosinski immediately begins to recite the article. He seems to know it by heart.

KOSINSKI

"October 4, 1976. To this day, the cold-blooded murder at the remote homestead continues to bring up questions. Investigations have shown no satisfactory results. As was announced by a police spokesman ..."

Ellen gives the nurse a questioning look.

NURSE

Never mind, it's his usual number.

ELLEN

Yes. That's right. What happened back then?

Although Kosinski has the news article right in front of him, he seems to be staring at the air. Ellen tests him by taking away the news report. Kosinski continues to recite.

KOSINSKI

"... another unsolved mystery is the question, why doors and windows had been nailed shut. The murder suspect and only witness is still in a state of mental derangement. ..."

Again, Ellen tries to interrupt him.

ELLEN

Okay, fine. I read that. It's written in the article. What I want to know is: What really happened back then?

Kosinski mechanically continues to speak. Absolutely inanimate.

KOSINSKI

"... Friends and family describe him as a friendly, reliable husband. He had been forced into closing his small trades business after bankruptcy. It is uncertain whether this might have been cause for marital dispute..."

Ellen realizes that she cannot get through to him with words. She finds a page on the desk that was torn out of a chronicle about Goldmoor.

ELLEN

August 17, 1869.

KOSINSKI

"August 17, 1869. A messenger found Mr. and Mrs. Eugen and Wilhelmine Meister dead in their house."

With both astonishment and dismay, Ellen listens to the old man's monotonous lecture.

KOSINSKI

"...The police constable in charge found no traces. The motive of the crime remains a mystery..."

Ellen turns to the nurse.

ELLEN

Could I please speak with him alone for a moment?

NURSE

Are you sure?

ELLEN

I'll be fine. Thank you.

The nurse leaves the cell with a frown.

Ellen takes Kosinski's chair and turns him around. She looks straight into his blank eyes.

ELLEN

I am starting to get the impression that all of this is some kind of bad joke: I'm seeing things that are not there, my own husband is becoming a total stranger and your old friend Lindner won't tell me what he knows. I have no idea what you're trying to prove with this performance of yours, but I am not leaving this room before I hear the truth.

No reaction. Kosinski continues to stare at nothing in particular.

Ellen gives up. Shaking her head, she turns to the door.

KOSINSKI

It's a grave.

Ellen freezes and looks back at Kosinski. She walks back over to him.

ELLEN

What?

Suddenly, Kosinski seems to have snapped out of his "autism". He is holding an old book in his hands. The book contains clippings, notes and among others, a page that seems to have been torn out of another book. It is an etching from the Middle Ages illustrating a man being pushed into the swamp by several villagers. Ellen reads the text underneath the illustration:

ELLEN

"...Execution in the moor..."

All of a sudden, Kosinski grabs Ellen and pulls her close. His eyes have a feverish glow.

KOSINSKI

The moor... it's one big grave.

CUT TO:

68. ENTRANCE AREA / HALLWAY - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen enters the hallway. She runs into Martin who is on his way up from the cellar. When he sees Ellen, he shuts the cellar door and puts the key into his pocket again. It seems as if he felt caught doing something.

ELLEN

(sarcastic)

Let me guess: Another short circuit?

MARTIN

Hi, darling.

Martin ignores her comment and starts to head up the stairs to his study.

ELLEN

What is going on down there, anyway? Why am I not supposed to go in the cellar?

Martin stops at the base of the stairway.

MARTIN

I told you: It's too dangerous. Besides, I have to work now.

He continues up the staircase. Ellen follows him.

ELLEN

Martin, we need to talk. I've done some research. This lovely house of ours has a history of murder cases.

Martin does not stop walking, but his eyes show alarm.

ELLEN

Anyone who ever lived in this house either quickly moved back out, or fell victim to strange accidents, or ended up killing each other.

69. STUDY - INT. / NIGHT

Martin sits down at his desk and immediately starts typing. Ellen won't give up so easy.

ELLEN

I know you don't believe me, but at least hear me out. Don't tell me you haven't noticed that we've been going through some strange changes since we moved here! We hardly talk to each other any more, you're writing like a madman and I'm having these visions.

Martin does not interrupt his work.

Ellen slams the articles from Kosinski on his keyboard.

ELLEN

Here, look at this! Did you know that our house is built right on a spot where during the Middle Ages people were executed? They simply threw the convicts into the moors, alive.

Martin shakes his head. He smiles and shoves the articles aside.

MARTIN

During the Middle Ages people were executed at every corner. What's your point?

ELLEN

This house, the whole damned area around here is one mass grave... Now you might call me crazy, but there is something negative about the place.

MARTIN

Okay, so the house has a history
and there might still be a couple
of corpses in the moors.

(mocking)

"There is something negative about
the place..." What the hell are
you trying to say? Come on! Spit
it out!

Ellen twists around.

ELLEN

It's like... a sickness! And it's
gotten into our heads.

Now Martin gets aggressive.

MARTIN

Will you finally cut it out? Just
in case you haven't noticed, I am
trying to write a book here. And
maybe - even with your birdbrains -
you can figure it's a pretty tough
job.
So why can't you just leave me
alone?

ELLEN

Damn it, look at you! Don't you
see what's happening with you? We
need to get out of here, don't you
understand? Out of this house!

Martin threatens her with his forefinger.

MARTIN

Now let me work!

Martin continues to write.

ELLEN

(hollers)
To hell with your damned work!

In a rash action, she suddenly pushes his computer monitor off
of the desk.

Martin jumps up from his chair. He grabs Ellen by the throat
and pushes her against the wall. Throbbing veins on his
forehead.

MARTIN

Don't you dare...

Ellen can hardly breathe. She is about to choke. Just in time, Martin lets go.

Ellen slides to the floor and gasps for air.

Martin doesn't seem to care. He sets the monitor back onto the table and gets back to work.

Ellen is deeply shocked. She drags herself out of the room.

Martin doesn't even deign to look up at her again.

70. HALLWAY - INT. / NIGHT

The door to the study falls shut behind Ellen.

Slowly, she sinks to her knees and starts to cry. Hopelessness and despair.

ELLEN

(sobbing)

Martin... oh my God... what's
happening to us...

The house is dead-silent. Only the sound of Martin typing on his computer keyboard in his study.

Suddenly, Ellen hears a noise - very quiet. It is the RINGING of a bell.

Ellen looks up.

There it is again, very clearly: It's the bell on the collar of the dead dog.

ELLEN

(quietly, to herself)

Clara...?

She stands up and heads for the staircase. Cautiously.

A shadow rushes through the entrance hall - the shadow of a dog.

Ellen sneaks down the steps. Her eyes scan the darkness.

71. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Again, the BELL RINGING. The shadow. The animal seems to have run into the cellar.

Now, Ellen notices that the door Martin had locked so carefully earlier, is open.

A dirty-yellow gleam shines into the hallway from below.

Ellen looks up - Martin seems to be working: His steady typing resounds throughout the house.

It takes Ellen all the courage she has, but finally she makes herself go into the cellar...

72. STUDY - INT. / NIGHT

Martin stops typing in mid-sentence. He looks up. There is a threatening gleam in his eyes...

73. CELLAR - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen carefully walks down the stairs to the cellar. It's cold. The single light bulb at the ceiling hardly sheds any light. An eerie and unsettling atmosphere.

No sign of the dog.

Ellen finds the fuse box. No difference - the wires are still hanging out of the wall, tangled up and rotten.

All of a sudden, there is a voice coming from behind Ellen.

THOMAS (O.S.)

Mommy...

Ellen spins around.

There's something in the darkness - a figure: Tommi!

Ellen freezes. Her eyes are glued to the little boy, whose figure melts together with the shadows. Like a tape recording, he repeats:

THOMAS

Mommy...

Ellen fights up against the image as if she knew that it is only a lie.

ELLEN

No...

The boy steps out of the shadow.

THOMAS

Mommy...

Ellen backs off.

ELLEN

My son is dead...

The little boy comes closer. Now, he is standing right in front of Ellen. He raises his hands as if he wanted to be hugged. Again, his sad voice repeats:

THOMAS

Mommy!

Finally, Ellen's heart wins over reason. She falls to her knees and takes the boy into her arms.

ELLEN

My God, Tommi.

Tears run down her cheeks. She holds the child close. But what she doesn't see: The boy's mean smile behind her back.

Suddenly, there is a strange transformation: Running through Ellen's fingers - little at first, but then more and more: mud!

Thomas' body has turned into liquid in her arms. Ellen is devastated.

Right before her eyes, the child dissolves into swamp mud. It drains away and disappears in the floor.

Time seems to stand still.

Suddenly, Ellen is grabbed by the hair and torn around. It's Martin! He stares at her resentfully.

MARTIN

Didn't I tell you not to go in the cellar?!

Ellen does not understand what's happening.

ELLEN

Martin, what-

MARTIN

It's simply too dangerous here!
But no, you always have to have it
your way.

She tries to squirm out of his grip - but it's no use. Martin drags her up the stairs.

MARTIN

You know what I have to do now,
and believe me: I don't enjoy
doing this.

ELLEN

Martin, damnit, what are you up to?
Let go of me!

74. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Martin mercilessly drags Ellen along behind him.

MARTIN

Of course you'll give me the blame
again. Like back then. Just a
tiny cut and he could still be
alive today - isn't that right,
Ellen?

ELLEN

What are you talking about-

Ellen tries to find a way to free herself. But she hardly
stands a chance against Martin's strength.

MARTIN

Enough of that! I know what I have
to do now.

Sliding by, Ellen bumps into a tool box. She gets hold of a
screwdriver.

Panic-stricken, she thrusts it in Martin's direction.

A scream of pain. He collapses. Bleeds.

Ellen tears herself loose and runs out of the house.

75. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE / CAR - EXT. / NIGHT

Ellen races to the car and jumps in behind the steering wheel.

Martin staggers out in pursuit of her. He is holding his
stomach.

Inside the car:

Ellen hastily crams out the car key. It slips out of her hand.

Martin is coming closer.

Inside the car:

Ellen gropes around in the darkness, trying to find the key.

Martin has almost reached the car.

Inside the car:

At last, Ellen has the key. She pushes it into the ignition, turns it around. The engine roars up.

Ellen careens off in the car. She brushes Martin. He spins away with a loud thud.

The car speeds off.

CUT TO:

76. CONSULTING ROOM OF PROF. ROTH - INT. / DAWN

Prof. Roth is in the middle of a conference with two INTERNS. The door flies open. Ellen storms into the room with tears in her eyes; she is totally frantic.

Her appearance surprises him.

PROF. ROTH

Mrs. Straub!

ELLEN

I've killed my husband!

PROF. ROTH

What?

ELLEN

I think I've killed him. Martin, my husband, I've killed him! That is, I'm not sure, but...

Prof. Roth immediately takes her arm and leads her to a sofa.

PROF. ROTH

Mrs. Straub! Now calm down first.

Ellen is totally distraught.

ELLEN

(hectic, loud)

It all went so fast. He was out of his mind and then all of sudden there was this screwdriver. I only

wanted to defend myself. You have
to call the police...

PROF. ROTH
We can do all of that later, but
first you need to calm down.

He stands up, fetches a glass of water and takes a tablet out
of a package.

PROF. ROTH
Here, take this.

Ellen takes the pill without a moment's hesitation and swallows
it with a drink of water.

ELLEN
I... I don't know which part of it
all really happened... It's all one
big nightmare...

Prof. Roth sees that she is not able to think clearly at the
moment.

PROF. ROTH
You are going to sleep for a little
while, now. And then, we'll talk
about it more calmly and sift
through all of this.

The tablet quickly begins to show an effect. In Ellen's eyes,
Prof. Roth's face gets blurry.

One of the interns speaks up.

INTERN
Should we inform the authorities?

Prof. Roth waves it off.

PROF. ROTH
Before everyone gets all nervous,
why don't you call her house.
Maybe that will clear things up.

Ellen only vaguely catches the last spoken sentences through a
curtain of haze. Then, she loses conscience.

FADE TO:

77. HOSPITAL ROOM - INT. / DAY

Ellen drowsily wakes up in a hospital room. She takes a careful look around herself. The room is surprisingly nice and pleasantly furnished.

78. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - INT. / DAY

There is a lot going on in the hospital corridor.
MALE and FEMALE NURSES busily take care of their duties.

A hand picks up a syringe and an ampoule from a trolley.

79. HOSPITAL ROOM - INT. / DAY

The door is opened.

Ellen barely manages to lift her head in order to see who the visitor is.

A man pulls a wheelchair inside with his back turned to her, and closes the door.

ELLEN

Professor Roth?

The man turns around: It's Martin!
He is wearing his best suit. He shows no signs of a wound.

Ellen wants to call for help, but Martin is already up next to her and holds her mouth shut with his hand.

MARTIN

Hello, darling. Are you feeling better?

He thrusts the syringe into her leg.

Ellen desperately searches for the emergency button for the nurses' room.

MARTIN

(whispers)

Shh... everything will be fine.
Tomorrow, it will all be over.
Just don't try to fight it.

Ellen has found the button, but the medication is faster: She doesn't have enough strength to push the button any more.

Her tired eyes blink and fall shut for a moment...

FADE TO:

80. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

... Ellen's eyes slowly open again. She wakes up to a loud HAMMERING noise.

Only now does she realize that she is lying on the planking of her own bed, with her hands and feet roped tight. Martin has put a gag in her mouth. He is standing by the window, nailing several large boards in front of it. He is so preoccupied with his work that he hasn't yet noticed that Ellen is awake. He quietly curses under his voice.

MARTIN

You stupid little bitch... think
you can toy around with people any
old way you like. But not me, no.

Ellen carefully tries to loosen the ropes. The sound catches Martin's attention. He turns around to her. He is still holding a nail in the corner of his mouth.

MARTIN

(sweetly)
Oh sweetheart, you're awake
already?

He takes the nail out of the corner of his mouth and opens his suit jacket. Underneath, we see his blood-soaked shirt. But he doesn't seem to feel any pain.

MARTIN

That really wasn't very nice of you
yesterday. I always thought you
loved me. You know, I bet any
other husband would be pretty upset
with you now.

He sits down on the bed next to her and begins to loosen her gag.

MARTIN

But I believe in our relationship.
What are such trifles compared to
that.

He takes the gag out of her mouth. Ellen's voice is shaking.

ELLEN

Martin, for heaven's sake, tie me
loose!

Martin seriously shakes his head.

MARTIN

Believe me, I'd really like to.
But I have the feeling you're not
ready yet.

Ellen lies there, totally helpless.

ELLEN

Ready? For what? This is crazy!
Don't you see what's going on here?

He moves closer to her, caresses her cheek.

MARTIN

The last day, Ellen. Today is the
last day. The circle is closing.

Ellen suddenly understands.

ELLEN

You knew!

Martin slowly leans over and kisses her. Ellen tries to turn
her head away, but Martin holds it tight. Barbaric - there is
nothing tender about this kiss.

MARTIN

Oh, Ellen. My sweet Ellen...
Of course I knew.

ELLEN

We loved each other once. Have you
forgotten that?

Martin seems bitter.

MARTIN

Oh, yeah? Did we really? Think
about it, Ellen...

Just then, the DOORBELL rings. They both look toward the door.
Quick as a flash, Martin presses his hand on Ellen's mouth, so
she cannot scream.

MARTIN

Are you expecting company?

81. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

Karl Lindner is standing at the door. He presses the doorbell
button. He is carrying one of his flower paintings under his
arm.

82. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Martin puts the gag back into Ellen's mouth.

MARTIN

Make yourself comfortable. I'll be right back.

He stands up and leaves the room.

Ellen hears him lock the door from outside. She immediately begins to tear at her ropes.

83. HALLWAY / ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

The doorbell RINGS again. While Martin runs downstairs, he buttons up his suit jacket again in order to conceal the blood stains.

He is still holding the hammer in his hand.

He walks to the door and opens it to Lindner.

LINDNER

Good evening. Karl Lindner. I'm a friend of your wife. Is she in?

84. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen is still tied to the bed. She faintly hears the two men's VOICES from downstairs.

She moves her head, trying to get rid of the gag - in vain.

Ellen screams, but only muffled sounds come out.

She doubles her efforts and tears at her ropes with all her might.

85. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE / ENTRANCE AREA - EXT. / NIGHT

Martin is standing across from Lindner. He gives him a friendly smile. He shows no apparent signs of the condition he is in.

MARTIN

Ellen is home. But she isn't feeling well. Can I give her a message?

Lindner takes the painting out from under his arm.

LINDNER

Oh, then I guess that makes my gift all the more appropriate. Maybe I'll just give it to her real quick and be on my way again.

Martin anxiously fingers the hammer in his hands.

MARTIN

Um, I don't think that's a good idea. She went to lie down. I think she's already asleep. She's been pretty busy lately and needs to rest.

86. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen realizes that there is no way she can untie herself. But slowly, she manages to loosen one of the bed planks that she is tied to - bit by tedious bit.

87. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE / ENTRANCE AREA - EXT. / NIGHT

Lindner peeks inside the house past Martin. He casually asks:

LINDNER

So, what's wrong with her?

Martin is still playing around with the hammer.

MARTIN

Just nerves. You know, the move and all that...

Lindner realizes that it's no use asking further. He hands over the picture.

LINDNER

Well, then. Would you please give this to her for me? Tell her, I'd like to talk to her when she's feeling better. And tell her I don't want to run away anymore. She'll understand what I mean.

MARTIN

Sure, I'll tell her.

The old policeman walks to his car and climbs inside.

Martin smiles and waves him good-bye.

88. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen has finally made it: She manages to disconnect the plank.
She quickly tears the gag out of her mouth and yells as loud as she can:

ELLEN

(screams)

Help! Help, I'm in here! Help me!

She listens if anyone heard her calling.

It's useless. Lindner has already started his car, and drives off. The sound of his car engine fades away in the distance.

Ellen is desperate.

89. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Martin heard Ellen's calling. He grins self-consciously and locks the house door. Then, he reaches for a board leaning against the wall. He takes a nail out of his pocket and starts to nail the door shut.

CUT TO:

90. LINDNER'S CAR / COUNTRY ROAD - EXT. / NIGHT

Karl Lindner is driving towards Goldmoor. He is lost in thought. Something about the whole situation seemed strange to him, but he can't put his finger on it.

He brakes and looks back toward the house once more (a moment of hope for Ellen).

But then, he shakes his head and steps on the gas pedal again.

The car drives off into the distance.

CUT TO:

91. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen gets rid of the rest of her ropes, immediately jumps up and races to the door.

She checks the door: it's locked. She peeks through the keyhole.

The key is sticking in the opposite side of the door. We hear Martin hammering downstairs.

Ellen has an idea - an ancient trick from childhood days. There is a book on the bedside table. She tears out a page and slides it underneath the door, below the door lock.

There is a can of nails on the floor which Martin left behind. Ellen takes out a nail and uses it to poke around in the keyhole.

She pushes the key out of the lock. The key falls to the floor, but it lands next to the sheet of paper.

Ellen pulls the book page in under the door - no key!

ELLEN

(quietly)

Damn.

She presses her face flat against the floor and looks underneath the door crack. There, on the other side, is the key.

Suddenly, the hammering stops.

Ellen holds her breath...

92. LIVING ROOM - INT. / NIGHT

...The living room windows are all nailed shut. Martin prepares to attach the last board. He reaches into his pocket - no more nails...!

93. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

...The box of nails is lying on the bedroom floor. Ellen senses that she is running out of time. She moves faster.

She pushes the book page under the door again and tries to maneuver it underneath the key...

94. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

...Martin comes out of the living room and heads for the hallway...

95. BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

...Ellen has it! She has managed to get the key on top of the sheet of paper. Carefully, she pulls it in under the door. She picks it up and pushes it into the lock...

96. HALLWAY - INT. / NIGHT

...Martin comes up the stairs. He heads for the bedroom. When he sees the open door, he stops.

He hesitates for a moment, looks around.

Then, he carefully approaches the door.

MARTIN

Is somebody trying to run away here?! Darling, I'm really disappointed. How can we ever have a trusting marriage if you keep running away from every conflict?

Martin has reached the bedroom door.

MARTIN

You little hardhead, I...

At that moment, the door slams into him. A loud crunch. The wooden door hits him right in the head. Martin is knocked to the floor.

Ellen comes running out of the bedroom. She has a wooden plank in her hands. She wants to make sure that the job is done right and clobbers Martin until he stops moving.

Then, she sprints to the staircase and runs down the steps.

97. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen runs to the barricaded house door. She shakes at the boards, but they are down tight. No matter how hard Ellen tries, it's impossible for her to loosen them.

Horrified, she searches for another way out. She runs to the living room door and looks inside the room...:

98. LIVING ROOM - INT. / NIGHT

...All of the windows are barricaded. There is no chance to escape!

99. HALLWAY - INT. / NIGHT

Martin regains conscience. His head is wounded and bleeding. He scrambles to his feet.

MARTIN

No matter what you do, Ellen...
you don't stand a chance. We're
not leaving this place anymore...

100. LIVING ROOM - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen looks around, helpless. We hear Martin's voice coming from upstairs.

MARTIN (O.S.)

... not today. Not tomorrow.
Never again!

She discovers the remote control for the TV. And gets an idea. She grabs it and runs out of the room.

101. KITCHEN - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen flees into the kitchen. The windows are all nailed shut here, too. Ellen's heart is beating up to her neck. She jerks open a drawer and takes out a big kitchen knife.

We hear Martin's footsteps coming down the staircase.

MARTIN (O.S.)

It's like you always wanted.
Us together. We'll make it through
anything, no matter how rotten the
situation is.

Ellen squats next to the door frame.

102. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Martin is walking down the last couple of steps. Out of the corner of his eyes, he notices the open kitchen door.

MARTIN

Have you ever wondered why it hasn't been working out between us since it all happened? I've asked myself that question. And you know what the answer to that is? It was never real. All just a big lie.

While he speaks, Martin slowly moves toward the kitchen.

103. KITCHEN - INT. / NIGHT

Martin has almost reached the kitchen. Quivering, Ellen pushes a button on the remote control...

104. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

...and the television jumps on in the living room, behind Martin. The loud NOISE startles him; he spins around.

Martin smiles and taps the hammer in the palm of his hand. Then, he heads towards the living room.

MARTIN

What you loved, was something totally different. The successful author, Martin Straub. "Mr. Cherry-red Tears" - you married a goddamned book.

Martin disappears in the living room.

105. KITCHEN - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen sees her chance, and takes it. She runs out of the kitchen...

106. ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

...and up the stairs.

Martin sprints out of the living room. He is after her.

107. HALLWAY - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen runs into the study. Martin is right on her heels...

108. STUDY - INT. / NIGHT

...Ellen slams the door shut behind her and locks it. She reaches for the telephone next to the computer.

CUT TO:

109. LINDNER'S BEDROOM - INT. / NIGHT

The lights are off in Lindner's bedroom. Karl is lying in bed with his eyes open, staring at the ceiling. His wife notices it.

MRS. LINDNER

You went to see the Straubs' today,
didn't you?

Lindner doesn't answer. The look in his eyes says it all.

MRS. LINDNER

I know you have something on your
mind. What is it?

He hesitates. Sighs. Finally, he says it:

LINDNER

I think it's starting again.
You know... there was something
peculiar. If only I knew...

MRS. LINDNER

Peculiar? You mean, like back
then?

LINDNER

Yes, something was...

Suddenly, it hits him.

LINDNER

My God, the hammer!

He jumps out of bed and into his clothes.

MRS. LINDNER

Hammer?

LINDNER

How could I fail to notice that!

- I have to go...

He hesitates, looks back at his wife.

LINDNER

I'm sorry, honey.

It is hard for Mrs. Lindner to let her husband go. But she understands.

MRS. LINDNER

Go ahead. I know you have to do this.

CUT TO:

110. STUDY - INT. / DAY

Ellen dials the emergency number for the police and races to the window. She looks down - it's quite a ways down, and at the bottom, hard stone pavement.

The phone RINGS at the other end of the line.

Martin rumbles against the door to the study. He is trying to get inside.

111. HALLWAY - INT. / NIGHT

Martin is standing in front of the closed door to the study, shaking the door handle. He listens.

MARTIN

Come on...

112. STUDY - INT. / NIGHT

Ellen still hasn't gotten through to the police.

MARTIN (O.S.)

... I know what you're up to. You don't think that's going to work, do you?

Ellen desperately looks around the room, searching for a way out. She catches sight of the activated computer. There is a text flickering on the slightly demolished monitor.

Finally, someone answers the phone at the police station.

TELEPHONE VOICE (O.S.)
Police headquarters, Webber...

Ellen excitedly speaks into the phone.

ELLEN
Ellen Straub here. You have to
help me...

113. HALLWAY / ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Martin runs down the stairs to the entrance area. He heads straight for the distributor box next to the cellar door. One well-aimed blow, and the gray telephone box is demolished.

114. STUDY - INT. / NIGHT

ELLEN
... please come right away! My
address is...

CLICK! The conversation is cut off. The line is dead.

But Ellen hardly notices it anymore. Her eyes are glued to the monitor. Something about it has drawn her full attention.

Her name is written on the monitor screen! Ellen begins to read in disbelief.

ELLEN
(reads)
"Ellen woke up from the sound of
the door. She barely managed to
raise her head in order to see who
the visitor might be. His back
turned to Ellen, the man pulled a
wheelchair into the hospital room.
When he turned around, she
recognized him with horror:
Martin!"

Ellen's eyes grow wider with every word she reads. The text abruptly stops here. Martin must have known everything! Her whole story, everything that happened to her, is described in his new novel.

ELLEN
What the hell...

From outside, we hear Martin's voice loud and clear. He finishes her sentence for her:

MARTIN

...is going on here?

Before Ellen has a chance to give the situation a thought, the door breaks open. The door frame splinters. Martin simply kicked the door in.

MARTIN

The final chapter will finish tonight. I bet you can't wait to find out how the story ends!

Ellen grabs the knife and backs away.

ELLEN

My God, Martin. I don't understand all this. How is it possible?

Slowly and threateningly, Martin comes closer. In his hands, the hammer.

MARTIN

Do you like my new book? A real page-turner, isn't it? I can just see the critics: Martin Straub is back! And better than ever.

Ellen is backed up against the wall. She raises the knife against him.

ELLEN

Stay where you are! Not one step closer!

Martin isn't fazed that easily.

MARTIN

You still don't understand, do you? Today is the last day. Your day, Ellen.

With this, he jumps up to her, quick as lightning. He grabs the knife by the blade and twists it out of Ellen's hand - without the slightest feeling of pain.

He firmly pulls Ellen towards the door. They pass by the desk with the computer. Ellen sees the electric cord for the computer on the floor.

With a swift move of her foot, she tears at the cable, pulling the computer off of the desk. It falls to the floor.

Martin screams in rage. For a second, he is distracted. Ellen takes the opportunity to tear herself loose.

115. HALLWAY / ENTRANCE AREA - INT. / NIGHT

Terrified, Ellen races down the stairs. She is looking for a way out.

Martin is close on her heels. In the entrance hall, he gets hold of her.

But Ellen manages to break loose again. But doing so, she slips. Falls.

And trips through the open cellar door...

116. CELLAR - INT. / NIGHT

... down the stairs.

Ellen crash-lands in brackish, brown water. The cellar is flooded ankle-deep with swamp water. It is seeping in through the crevices in the walls.

ELLEN

The moor...

Martin walks up to her, threateningly. Ellen scrambles to her feet. She is hurt. But Martin walks past her and steps into the center of the dark cellar.

Ellen glances back at the cellar door which is still open. Suddenly, an invisible force slams it shut.

MARTIN

I told you, there is no way out.
He won't let you go.

ELLEN

'HE'? Whom do you mean-

Instead of answering, he gently puts his finger on her mouth.

MARTIN

(quietly)
Shh. Don't you hear that?

She looks around.

Then she hears it: The room is filled with quiet WHISPERS, growing louder and louder - countless voices - the voices of children!

MARTIN

It's important - he knows the last chapter.

ELLEN

Your book - that's why you were always in the cellar!

Just then, a figure steps out of the darkness. It is their little son Thomas. Although he does not move his lips, he seems to be the source of the whispers. He stands next to Martin, who lays his arm around the boy's shoulder.

MARTIN

Now look at this young man: He supports me in what I do - quite the opposite of you.

Terrified, Ellen stares at Thomas. She watches a thin strand of mud flow out of the boy's shoulder, and - against the laws of gravity - it crawls up over Martin's hand. Martin does not seem to notice it.

MARTIN

You know, Tommi wants me to become the man I used to be.

ELLEN

(laughs bitterly)
...So he's dictating you a new bestseller? Whatever that is, it's not our son.

Martin leans down to the child's figure and brings his ear close to Thomas' mouth. The boy seems to be whispering something in his ear.

ELLEN

(sharply)
Martin, don't you understand? Tommi is dead! This... it knows our weaknesses and it's using them to bring us apart!

Martin stays leaned down to Thomas and listens. He throws a stealthy glance at Ellen.

MARTIN

I'm afraid he doesn't like you very much.

Martin smiles triumphantly. He reaches into the water and pulls out a metal pipe.

He threateningly moves closer to Ellen. She backs away, until she finds herself backed up against the wall.

Ellen looks around - there is no where to run. But she tries anyway. She wants to make a run for it.

But Martin is faster. He grabs hold of her. Ellen slips and lands in the water.

MARTIN

We've played this game long enough.

He mercilessly pushes Ellen's head under water. She tries to put up a fight, but she doesn't stand a chance.

MARTIN

How sad. Drowned, like all the others. But that's the way it's got to be in a real horror novel. I know what you're thinking: No happy end - it'll never sell. But to hell with commerce!

Ellen manages to fight her way above the water's surface. She gasps for air. Her eyes catch sight of the old shelf, crammed full with all sorts of junk, standing within reach of her feet.

ELLEN

It's lying, don't you see? This is all an illusion. It lied to us and to all of those who were here before us...

Martin's eyes are beaming with hate. He does not notice Ellen kicking for the shelf. It slightly tips forward, then back against the wall again.

MARTIN

I'll tell you what really was an illusion: Romantic family life, by the side of your successful author. Sorry if I wasn't able to live up to your high expectations, princess.

Ellen tries to get through to whatever is left of Martin.

ELLEN

It wasn't your fault, you hear!

Ellen gets another good kick against the shelf - it tips over and collapses over Martin's head. Ellen grabs the chance to free herself.

Martin furiously thrusts the shelf aside. There is an ugly wound on his forehead.

ELLEN

Tommi is dead, you hear!
But you and me, we're alive.

Again, Ellen is backed up against the wall. Martin steps up to her. He is still holding the metal pipe.

MARTIN

Be quiet.

Suddenly, he strikes her with the pipe. He grabs Ellen by the throat and pushes her against the wall.

ELLEN

I love you, Martin!

For a short moment, something seems to break inside of Martin. But then, he tightens his grip on her neck again. Ellen is dazed, but she is not afraid any more.

ELLEN

Then kill me, because... "With you,
my life began and with you shall it
end..."

All of a sudden, some of Martin's strength seems to fail. His look freezes. A single BLACK TEAR runs out of the corner of his eye.

Ellen grabs the metal pipe and shoves Martin away.

She jumps over to Thomas...

ELLEN

I love you! Don't let a lie come
between us! Look at this!

...and slashes the pipe at him.

The metal penetrates the figure's "body" and destroys the illusion: The facade of the little boy dissipates into mud. For a second, Ellen believes to have seen the hideous figure of a swamp corpse, but the creature instantly melts into the muddy water covering the cellar floor.

At this very instant, a loud roll of thunder echoes throughout the house.

Martin abruptly loses all of his strength. More and more liquid begins to flow out of his eyes. The strands of mud slither down his body like countless snakes and vanish into the swamp water.

The house begins to quake. More and more mud seeps in through the cracks. The cellar slowly floods. The walls quiver.

Ellen runs to the door: It is shut tight - there is no way out.

The moor is rising. Ellen grabs Martin, who is still unconscious and about to drown. She tries to wake him up.

ELLEN

Martin! We have to get out of here!

There is a sudden noise. Ellen jumps.

Something has started to move in the back corner of the cellar: A dark something arcs out of the water for a short moment. It isn't over, yet!

ELLEN

My God...

She vigorously tries to wake Martin, but he does not react.

The "thing" is coming closer. It languidly rolls forward. Its shape remains hidden underneath the water's surface.

Ellen feverishly searches for a way out. She notices the small cellar hatch.

The house quakes more violently; dust flakes down from the ceiling. Ellen realizes that the entire house is slowly sinking into the ground. And at the same time, the moor is rising dangerously high.

She grabs Martin by the shoulders. With all of her strength, she somehow manages to pull him up onto a pile of crates below the cellar hatch.

The black thing is coming closer. It rises up out of the moor.

Ellen tries to heave Martin outside through the hatch - but she is not strong enough. Still, she puts up a desperate fight against the odds.

The already small opening of the hatch is growing smaller and smaller: The tremendous foundations of the house are sinking deeper and deeper into the ground.

Suddenly, a hand reaches in through the hatch and grabs a hold of Martin.

Ellen starts. She looks outside. It's Lindner!

LINDNER

Hurry, we don't have much time!
Lift him up higher!

Ellen pushes Martin a little bit higher. Behind her, an amorphous, black mass is rising up out of the swamp water. Numerous strands of mud branch out of it and begin to grope for Ellen.

One of the "tentacles" wraps itself around Ellen's foot.

Ellen notices it, but can't do anything about it.

With one strong jerk, Lindner tugs Martin out of the cellar.

At the same time, Ellen loses hold on the crate. She is torn downward and disappears under water.

Lindner sticks his head in through the hatch.

LINDNER

(shouts)
Ellen!

A brief moment of hesitation - then the old policeman determinedly climbs down into the cellar. By now, the moor has risen almost to his waist.

Lindner wades through the thick liquid. The surface is smooth - no sign of Ellen.

Then, she suddenly dives back up, gasping for air.

Lindner immediately grabs her arm and helps her toward the hatch.

ELLEN

It's right behind me.

Lindner keeps calm.

LINDNER

Don't worry. It only has power
over us if we run away.

He helps Ellen up onto the crates. Carefully, she climbs out through the hatch. She hears Tommi's voice behind her.

THOMAS

Mommy...

She is tempted to look back. But Lindner stops her from doing it.

LINDNER

No. Don't look back.

THOMAS

Mommy...

The hatch, the last possible exit into freedom, is slowly shrinking to a narrow slit.

Ellen reaches out her hand to Lindner.

ELLEN

Come! Quick!

Lindner climbs onto the crates.

Again, the house quakes. Single bricks break out of the walls and ceiling.

Ellen's curiosity wins over reason. She takes a last look into the cellar.

There - in the dark back corner of the cellar - she sees shriveled figures with hollow eyes, watching the two of them in silence. Swamp corpses.

Lindner notices her horror, but still remains calm. He starts to climb out through the window hatch.

117. IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - EXT. / NIGHT

Once Lindner is safely outside, Ellen immediately rushes over to Martin.

ELLEN

Martin!

Martin seems to be regaining conscience. He opens his eyes.

Ellen wants to say something, but the thunder in the background suddenly swells up to an infernal noise.

Walls collapse, bricks and rubble crash down - the entire house is swallowed by the depths of the moor.

The three watch with open-mouthed horror.

Then, silence.

Ellen leans over to her husband.

Martin is still totally worn out. He moans.

MARTIN

Smog...

Ellen musters him, confused.

ELLEN

What?

MARTIN

I have a yearning for... smog,
cars and many, many people...
A real dirty... big city.
What do you think?

Ellen gently strokes his cheek.

ELLEN

You're back.

Martin's eyes are still glued to the spot where the house used to be. He is still a bit disoriented.

MARTIN

How did you get me out of there?

ELLEN

I wouldn't have made it by myself.

She looks at Lindner.

LINDNER

You were right: You can never run
away from the past. Especially if
it scares you.

Ellen nods her head.

Then, she turns back to Martin. They look at each other for a long moment. Then, she puts her arms around him and kisses him. It's all over now.

There's something else Ellen wants to say to Lindner. But when she turns around, she finds that he's already walked a bit away: He is going to his car.

ELLEN

Mr. Lindner!

The old policeman stops by his car.

ELLEN

Thank you.

Lindner smiles. Then, he steps into his car and drives away.

Ellen helps Martin to his feet.

ELLEN

Can you walk?

Martin is in pain, but brave.

MARTIN

No problem.

He takes a step, but then he flinches with pain. The movement hurt.

MARTIN

For God's sake, what happened to me?

ELLEN

You don't remember?

Martin shakes his head.

ELLEN

It's a long story.

Arm in arm, the two of them stagger to their car which is parked next to the entrance gate, the last remnant of the house.

They get into the car and drive off.

The car slowly vanishes in the distance, leaving behind the vast, swampy landscape where there was once a house.

FADE TO:

118. APARTMENT HOUSE IN THE CITY - EXT. / DAY

A beautiful old building, located by a park in the city. Ellen and Martin live in the penthouse.

Text chart: ``1 year later``

119. APARTMENT - INT. / DAY

Ellen is standing by the window, looking over the small city park. She looks happy.
Martin joins her at the window and hugs her.

MARTIN

What a sight: A few trees, a couple of ducks in the pond.
That's all the nature I need.

Ellen laughs. They are about to kiss, when suddenly the doorbell RINGS.

ELLEN

Are you expecting company?

Martin shrugs his shoulders and walks to the door. He opens it to Paul and Claudia.

PAUL AND CLAUDIA

Surprise!

Paul is carrying a package under his arm. He walks straight past Martin, to Ellen. Martin and Claudia follow him.

PAUL

This baby is a dream come true,
I tell ya! The third edition
within one year!

ELLEN

Wow! - Considering how it all came
about...

Paul tears open the box. It contains several copies of "You have 7 Days to Live". Above the title, it reads: Ellen and Martin Straub!

PAUL

You two are one hell of a team!
And as far as I'm concerned: In
case you plan on moving back to the
countryside, I'll be glad to lend a
hand.

Martin and Ellen trade looks.

MARTIN

Have you already told him about our
idea for the new novel?

Paul can't wait to find out.

PAUL

Yeah? What's it about?

Ellen grins ambiguously.

ELLEN

It's about this publisher who
constantly gets on his authors'
nerves.

Martin plays the ball back to her.

MARTIN

...until one day, he goes too far
and the two of them get really
mad...

120. APARTMENT HOUSE IN THE CITY - EXT. / DAY

We see the four of them standing behind the large window of Ellen and Martin's apartment. The camera pans farther and farther away from them, over the park.

They keep the joke running:

ELLEN

...and we mean: really mad!

The voices slowly fade with the camera's growing distance.

PAUL

Okay, okay, I get the message!
I was only trying to make a
suggestion, you know.

The camera travels further away... over the big city and it's ever-busy activities.

- THE END -