

The Adventures of Elizabeth Crowne: Pilot

By

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"The Adventures of Elizabeth Crowne"

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TEASER

TITLE CARD: THE BERKSHIRES, 1912

CUT TO:

1 INT. CELLAR - MORNING

1

A MATCH flares in the darkness. The flame flickers, illuminating the face of ELIZABETH CROWNE.

She is 21, anxious, with DARK HAIR covered by a WOOL HAT. She wears GLOVES and her BREATH is visible in the chill air. She lights a CANDLE, and the glow intensifies.

Elizabeth descends a rickety STAIRCASE. The old STEPS creek beneath her heavy BOOTS. Elizabeth wears a THICK COAT and WOOL DRESS, and a weathered LEATHER SATCHEL is slung around her shoulder. As she moves, Elizabeth winces with each step.

She arrives at the bottom of the staircase. The FLOOR is composed a PACKED EARTH, and Elizabeth crosses to the middle of the chamber. There, she casts light on a dusty WORKBENCH.

Elizabeth leans into the workbench, its surface cluttered with BEAKERS, TEST TUBES, a BUNSEN BURNER, and CORKSCREW TUBES that connect one vessel to the next. The glass is coated in DUST, and a blueish RESIDUE coats the insides.

Behind Elizabeth, at the top of the stairs, the DOORWAY is open, a rectangle of light. A FIGURE steps into the doorway, silhouetted and silent.

Elizabeth does not seem to notice the figure's presence. She crouches by the workbench and sees several METAL TANKS. They are scratched and dusty and topped with WHEEL VALVES. FADED LABELS are pasted to the sides. Elizabeth brushes away the GRIME with her gloved thumb. She mouths the word "helium," but doesn't say it aloud. Elizabeth's eyes widen. She looks around, seeming to realize something. Above her, the figure, ABNER, calls down to her.

ABNER

Elizabeth! There's someone here!

Elizabeth doesn't respond. She looks increasingly excited, stunned.

She turns back to the top of the workbench, where she sees HANDWRITTEN PAPERS scattered on the old PLANKS. Elizabeth spreads the papers, flips through them, speed-reading the ink-smearred notes.

(CONTINUED)

ABNER (CONT.)

Elizabeth, come on! We gotta go,  
now!

Elizabeth continues to rifle through the papers. Frantic, she gathers them up in a bundle. She tries to hold the papers to her chest, but some slip away and fall to the floor. She turns, ready to run back up the stairs.

Elizabeth looks up, only to see the CELLAR DOOR closing.

The door slams shut. Everything goes dark.

ACT 1

TITLE CARD: "FOUR DAYS EARLIER"

CUT TO:

2

INT. DR. O'MALLEY'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

2

In the dark CLOSET, a SKELETON hangs from a MOBILE STAND. The CLOSET DOOR opens, and DR. O'MALLEY wheels the skeleton into the light.

O'MALLEY

Now I'd like to show you something  
really interesting.

O'Malley is a trim Irish physician, mid-30s, with bookish SPECTACLES and an ARGYLE VEST and TIE beneath his LAB COAT. He has youthful verve. He pushes the skeleton across the tiled CLASSROOM FLOOR, the WHEELS squeaking at the bottom of the stand.

Rows of MEDICAL STUDENTS sit at DESKS, ANATOMY BOOKS open. The students are young men, well coiffed, wearing WHITE LAB COATS, and they dutifully hold FOUNTAIN PENS over NOTEBOOKS.

O'Malley stops in the middle of the room. The skeleton is human, but strange-looking: Its SKULL has a large TUMOR-LIKE BUBBLE, and the RIBCAGE looks overgrown and melted.

O'MALLEY

Now then, what do you think?

The students recoil. They whisper to each other, visibly disturbed by the sight. One student, ROYCE, pointed half-heartedly.

(CONTINUED)

ROYCE

Is it...

O'MALLEY

Yes? Speak up, m'lad.

ROYCE

Was it... a fire?

O'MALLEY

Ah, a very good idea. But not correct.

The other students chuckle. Royce looks down, embarrassed.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

Now, now, it's a fine guess. But despite appearances, bone does not liquefy.

Another STUDENT raises his hand.

ALBERT

Some kind of tumor? In his brain, I mean?

O'Malley paces back and forth in front of the students.

O'MALLEY

Another splendid theory. But another illusion, I'm afraid.

(Gestures to skull)

A tumor would not distend the skull, like so. Anyone else?

O'Malley scans the classroom. Students look away, avoiding eye-contact. O'Malley grins.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

Miss Crowne...

All students turn their heads, toward the back of the room.

Seated in the rear, Elizabeth slouches at her DESK, scribbling in her NOTEBOOK with a PENCIL. She looks detached from the world around her, but she glances up at O'Malley.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

Any bright ideas?

Slowly, Elizabeth straightens in her seat. She sets down her pencil and clears her throat.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH

I'm not sure...

Students start to titter. They cover their smiles with cupped hands, amused by her ignorance. But then Elizabeth continues.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

...exactly. But if I had to make a bet, I'd say it's M.O.P.

The students' expressions change. They furrow their brows, confused. Some start flipping through their books, trying to find "M.O.P." in their indices. O'Malley is nonplussed.

O'MALLEY

Would you care to elaborate, Miss Crowne?

Students look from one to the other, confused.

ELIZABETH

It's just a guess.

O'MALLEY

I dare say, your peers are not as well versed in acronyms.

ELIZABETH

(Sighing)

It stands for myositis ossificans progressive. Very rare, I hear. The muscle tissue ossifies. Essentially - your muscle turns to bone. Parts of your skeleton enlarge, until they crush your organs. The patient dies of suffocation.

(Leaning back, shrugging)

But I don't know for sure.

Again, students crinkle their noses in disgust. They exchange glances, uncertain what to say.

ABNER, Elizabeth's only friend, sits at his desk. He doesn't look back at Elizabeth, but he smiles knowingly.

ALBERT

That's... repulsive.

Some student smirk at this. O'Malley surveys their reactions, seemingly unmoved.

(CONTINUED)

O'MALLEY

It is at that. And it sounds too strange to be true. I trust no one here has seen what Miss Crowne describes?

Students shake their heads.

ROYCE

So it must be something else.

O'MALLEY

(Smiles)

Not at all. And let this be a lesson: In science, uncanny doesn't mean untrue. Strange as it sounds, this poor fellow had flesh that turned to bone. It is quite rare. There is no cure. But on the bright side - Miss Crowne, your prognosis is exactly right.

Students stir, astonished. Elizabeth offers a meager grimace, uncertain how she should respond.

3

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - MORNING

3

CHURCH BELLS RING in the background, signaling the change of the hour. STUDENTS file into an echoey stone corridor, chatting, carrying BOOKS.

ROYCE and the ALBERT walk side-by-side. Albert looks annoyed.

ALBERT

What a show off.

ROYCE

Well, she has a lot to show off.

STUDENT

But why? Why does a midwife need to know about M.O... whatever it was.

ROYCE

Is she going to be a midwife?

STUDENT

What else would she be? She's too uppity to be a nurse.

(CONTINUED)

They continue walking down the corridor, unaware that ELIZABETH is walking close behind them, clutching her NOTEBOOK, overhearing. She frowns, looking desolated by their comments.

She looks up, through a large window.

4

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

4

The lens slowly focuses on a FLOCK OF GEESE, flying in V-formation through the sky, just beyond a TREE's branches. The flock is viewed through a pair of BINOCULARS.

Elizabeth looks through the binoculars. She wears a DARK COAT, WOOL HAT, and LEATHER GLOVES. She studies the geese, transfixed.

The woods are cold and colorless. The ground is covered in a thick layer of FALLEN LEAVES, and Elizabeth props herself on a FALLEN TREE.

ABNER  
(Calling distantly)  
Elizabeth!

Elizabeth lowers the binoculars. She blows warm breath into her gloves as ABNER approaches behind her.

Abner wears a MASSIVE CHECKERED COAT and a furry "USHANKA" HAT. He's gawky but fit, and he bumbles down a TRAIL toward Elizabeth, hands embedded in his pockets.

ABNER  
(Shivering)  
There you are.

ELIZABETH  
Here I am.

ABNER  
Sorry. Practice ran late.

Elizabeth returns to her binoculars.

ELIZABETH  
I never know why you come, anyway.  
Aren't you ornithophobic?

ABNER  
Uh... if that's a fear of birds...

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH

It is.

ABNER

Right, well... I'm getting over it.  
How long have you been out here?

ELIZABETH

Just since class.

ABNER

Oh, yeah, speaking of which - I  
think you really impressed that new  
professor. That Dr. O'Mall-

Elizabeth starts waving frantically.

ELIZABETH

SHH! SHHH!

Abner freezes. He looks up, cluelessly watching the leafless  
canopy.

ABNER

(Whispering)

What is it?

ELIZABETH

(Whispering excitedly)

Take a gander!

Elizabeth whirls around and hands the binoculars to Abner.  
He takes up the same position on the fallen tree.

ABNER

Where am I looking?

ELIZABETH

Up, between the two birches.

ABNER

Are those the white ones?

ELIZABETH

Yes, city boy.

Abner looks up at her sardonically.

ABNER

Who are you calling city boy?  
Aren't you from Pittsburgh?

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH

Look!

Abner returns to the binoculars.

ABNER

I... uh... OH!

Through the lenses, Abner can see a CARDINAL perching on a branch.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Is that a... robin?

ELIZABETH

Cardinal. You can tell by the sharp angle of his head.

ABNER

How... how do you know it's male?

ELIZABETH

I've been at this awhile.

5 EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON, LATER

5

Abner and Elizabeth walk down the TRAIL. They are bundled up, hands in pockets, clearly both cold.

ABNER

You could just study birds, you know.

ELIZABETH

Ha! Some career that would be.

ABNER

You'd like it more than medicine.

ELIZABETH

At this point, I'd like a tooth pulled more than medicine.

ABNER

I don't know how you haven't quit yet.

ELIZABETH

Well - maybe you should try being the first woman ever accepted to St. Luke's Medical Academy. And then tell me how easy it is to just drop out.

(CONTINUED)

ABNER

Point taken. But hey, only a year to go.

ELIZABETH

A year and five months.

ABNER

But who's counting, right?

Elizabeth smirks. She nudges Abner playfully.

ELIZABETH

You look like a walrus.

ABNER

Well, it's cold.

ELIZABETH

Lord knows how you survived Brooklyn winters.

ABNER

It's colder up here. And anyway, I work up a sweat on the court. It makes everything chillier.

They approach a small STONE BRIDGE, which arches over a GARGLING BROOK. Elizabeth walks to the apex, then leans against the cragged masonry.

ABNER (CONT'D)

Did you see anything else?

ELIZABETH

Birds?

ABNER

Yeah.

ELIZABETH

Some crows. Some geese. Nothing to write home about. Most of the good ones have migrated.

Abner ponders this. He looks increasingly uneasy.

ABNER

You never saw... I don't know... a really big bird, did you?

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH  
Like a hawk?

ABNER  
Or maybe a... I don't know. An ostrich?

ELIZABETH  
(Smirks)  
In Massachusetts?

Abner looks troubled. He doesn't return her smile. He takes a long breath. Elizabeth frowns.

ABNER  
You're right. It's stupid.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
What's on your mind, Abner?

ABNER  
Oh, nothing. Just... seeing things.  
I'll see you later?

Abner abruptly walks away, down the trail.

ELIZABETH  
Where are you going?

ABNER  
Oh, I just... I oughta finish those chemistry problems. Before Ms. Greyson's class. See you there?

ELIZABETH  
(Despondent)  
Sure thing.

Abner disappears into the trees.

Elizabeth is alone again, in the stillness of the woods.

6 INT. CONVENT - MORNING

6

This is the interior of Majella's Abbey, a convent located about 20 miles from St. Luke's Medical Academy, although none of this is yet evident.

NUN #1 shuffles down a LONG CORRIDOR. She is older, wearing a traditional HABIT, and her expression is spiritually content.

(CONTINUED)

The BLEACHED PLASTER WALLS are plain and unadorned. In the distance, down the corridor, various NUNS are congregating, headed to morning prayer. All the DOORS along the corridor appear to be open. NUN #1 pay them no mind.

She ambles past a CLOSED DOOR. After walking a little ways, she stops, backs up to the door, and examines it. She looks confused.

NUN #1 knocks gently on the door.

NUN #1  
Sister Margaret?

She looks around, then presses her ear against the door. She knocks again.

NUN #1 (CONT'D)  
Sister Margaret? It's time for  
morning prayer.

NUN #2 approaches. She is also older, content-looking. She notices NUN #1.

NUN #2  
Is everything all right?

NUN #1  
I'm not sure. You haven't seen  
Sister Margaret?

NUN #2  
Not this morning, no.

NUN #1  
How strange. She's such an early  
bird.

7

INT. SISTER MARGARET'S CELL - MORNING

7

The cell is small and simple, composed of the same blank PLASTER WALLS. A CRUCIFIX hangs from a NAIL.

As the two Nuns continue to talk, barely audible from beyond the closed door, SISTER MARGARET is visible in bed.

NUN #2  
Do you think she's ill?

NUN #1  
Maybe. The grip's been going  
around.

(CONTINUED)

NUN #2

Oh, yes. The Lord preserve us.

NUN #1

Shall I knock again?

NUN #2

Might as well.

NUN #1

Sister Margaret? Can you hear me?

Sister Margaret?

Sister Margaret is dressed in a simple NIGHT GOWN. Her body lies limp under a mess of BLANKETS. Her head is hidden beneath a PILLOW. Her arm dangles in the air, lifeless.

act 2

8

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

8

MS. GREYSON scrawls chemistry formulae across a BLACKBOARD. She is in her late 30s, wearing a BLACK VELVETEEN DRESS, her hair pinned up. She has the vestments of a school marm, but she is strikingly attractive. She wields the chalk with a feisty energy.

GREYSON

Two, H-two-oh... plus two-A... plus  
- L, in this instance, equals  
light, C indicates chloroplasts...  
equals... two, A-H-two, plus O-  
two... and that balances the  
equation.

(Looks lovingly at board)

It's all about balance.

As she writes, RILEY keeps glancing at the corner of the room. Riley is a freckled ginger with bright RED HAIR.

A large CERAMIC VESSEL, white and smooth, stands on a WORK BENCH. Riley tries to focus on the board, but he can't help but wonder what it is.

Greyson turns to face the dozen STUDENTS of her chemistry class, all sitting at DESKS, scribbling down everything she has written. She notices Riley staring at the object.

GREYSON

Mr. Childers?

(CONTINUED)

Riley is startled. He suddenly looks down, at his NOTES, and pretends to write.

Greyson approaches, slowly, almost seductively, and places a hand on her hip.

GREYSON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Childers.

RILEY  
Yes, Ms. Greyson?

GREYSON  
I have the distinct impression that something...  
(Glances at vessel)  
...is distracting you?

RILEY  
Oh, no, Miss Greyson.

GREYSON  
(Amused)  
No?

RILEY  
(Uncomfortably)  
Well... I guess I was curious about... um... that is...

GREYSON  
The apparatus. In the corner.

RILEY  
Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Greyson smiles conspiratorially. She saunters slowly to the blackboard and sets down her chalk. She moves to the INSTRUCTOR'S TABLE at the front of the room.

GREYSON  
Well, then. Let me tear us away from this... riveting entertainment...

She gestures at the jumble of formulae on the blackboard. Some students smile, realizing she is joking.

GREYSON (CONT'D)  
...and ask you - what is this thing, do you think?

As she says this, Ms. Greyson lifts herself up on the table and sits down, laying one foot over the other, her legs swinging.

The students crane their necks to look at the vessel. No one speaks.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

Has anyone seen one of these before?

Elizabeth sits in the back. She slouches, as before, and chews her pencil.

DALTON sits up front. He's youthful and provincial-looking, too earnest for his own good. He raises his hand.

DALTON

I have, Ms. Greyson.

GREYSON

Mr. Dalton... do tell. What are we looking at?

DALTON

It's a Revigator, ma'am.

Students shift in their seats. They look confused. Some of them mouth the word "Revigator."

GREYSON

Now that's a fancy name. What does it do?

DALTON

(Clearing throat)

It's for health, ma'am.

GREYSON

Is it? How so?

DALTON

Well... there's radium in the liner. You're supposed to fill it up over night, and it radiates the water... and... well... you drink it, ma'am.

GREYSON

Do I?

Dalton looks confused, but other students smile, amused by his growing discomfort.

(CONTINUED)

DALTON

Well, not you. But... my aunt has one.

GREYSON

Ah! Your aunt.

DALTON

It helps her arthritis.

Elizabeth rolls her eyes and shakes her head. Like a hawk, Ms. Greyson zeroes in on Elizabeth.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

Miss Crowne... you look like you have an opinion on the matter.

Abner tenses in his seat. This time, he turns around to look at Elizabeth, wondering what she'll say.

Again, Elizabeth straightens. Ms. Greyson stares intensely at Elizabeth.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

Penny for your thoughts, Miss Crowne?

ELIZABETH

(Shrugging)

I'm sure I don't know.

GREYSON

You're sure you don't know.

Greyson slips down from the table. She moves slowly, intensely, across the room, toward the Revigator. She speaks in a dramatic, almost thespian manner.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

Because you haven't tested it. You have no evidence. No subjects. You have no information. These are the tools of science. Without them, how could you know?

(Pause)

And yet - I think you have an educated guess. An... instinct. Would that be so, Miss Crowne?

ELIZABETH

I suppose I do.

(CONTINUED)

GREYSON

Well, then?

Elizabeth closes her notebook and sets her pencil down. She clasps her hands on her desk, showing an unprecedented confidence and resolve.

ELIZABETH

My instincts tell me... that it's a sham.

Students murmur among themselves. Others are petrified with surprise.

Greyson folds her arms. Her expression is inscrutable.

Elizabeth hesitates, but she continues.

ELIZABETH

Radium is a dangerous element. It's known to cause burns and lesions. The water contains lead and arsenic - which everyone knows are toxic.

Dalton looks at Elizabeth, blushing.

DALTON

Well, it worked for my aunt.

ELIZABETH

I don't think it did.

DALTON

Pardon me?

ELIZABETH

No, pardon me. But I think the effect was a placebo. She believed she would feel better, so she did. But the chemistry is nonsense. It's quackery. And... if I were her doctor, I'd slap some sense into her.

DALTON

Well, you're not her doctor, are you? Or anyone else's.

ELIZABETH

(Glaring)

I guess we're even, then.

Students are paralyzed with tension. No one knows where to look.

(CONTINUED)

A STUDENT drops a PENCIL. He reluctantly reaches down and picks it up, then returns to a stiff sitting position.

Greyson stands next to the Revigator. She looks at Elizabeth, gazing at her with a silent intensity. Then, suddenly, she grins.

GREYSON

Well, I suppose we know what not to give Miss Crowne for Christmas.

Slowly, everyone realizes she is joking again, and they begin to chuckle. The tension lifts.

Dalton smiles. He no longer looks indignant, or even upset. He looks only embarrassed by his outburst.

Even Elizabeth smiles. She looks up - and sees that Greyson is grinning at her, with a coy approval.

CHURCH BELLS ring in the distance.

9

EXT. CONVENT GARDEN - MORNING

9

CHURCH BELLS ring above the CONVENT ROOFTOPS, then go silent.

SISTER MARY stands in a convent garden, beneath a STORMY SKY. She stands in front of a HIGH STONE WALL, a pair of HEDGE TRIMMERS in her hands. She faces a BLANKET OF IVY, pruning away bits of BROWN LEAVES and SCRAGGLY VINES.

Sister Mary is old and wrinkled. She wears the customary HABIT, as well as BIFOCALS. She concentrates on her work, pausing to wipe sweat from her brow.

There is an ambiguous SOUND - perhaps a twig snapping.

Sister Mary turns. She sees only the garden, with its barren brown FLOWER BEDS, long retired for the winter. There is a WHEELBARROW, a RAKE leaning against the wall, and other random GARDENING EQUIPMENT scattered around.

Sister Mary shrugs off the sound, then continues with her work.

There is another SOUND.

This time Sister Mary looks worried. She turns toward the flower beds, taking a few cautious steps. A cool BREEZE rustles the fringes of her habit, but otherwise there is no sound, no movement. She looks suspicious, frightened.

Sister Mary turns around.

(CONTINUED)

A PITCHFORK impales her. Each tine cuts smoothly through the dark fabric.

Sister Mary jolts. She tries to scream, but she has no voice. She looks up at her assailant. Her eyes widen with recognition, horror. But it is too late; she slumps over.

The BREEZE picks up. LEAVES swirl around the fallen body of Sister Mary, the bloodied pitchfork lying next to her.

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ACT 3

10

INT. O'MALLEY'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

10

An ORNATE KNIFE is unsheathed. It slices into something white - which is apparently an ENVELOPE.

Dr. O'MALLEY sits at his DESK with a SMALL PILE OF MAIL. He sets down his elegant LETTER OPENER and unfolds a LETTER. He examines it quickly, then shakes his head.

His office is small and spare. A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH hangs from the wall, an urban landscape of downtown Dublin. PAPERS and BOOKS are stacked on his desk and on the floor.

O'Malley flips through several other envelopes, looking more and more annoyed. Finally he examines the last piece of mail. He purses his lips; something is clearly missing.

O'Malley moves his TYPEWRITER to the middle of the desk. He slips a piece of FRESH PAPER into the machine and scrolls it into place.

He lights his PIPE with a MATCH, puffing smoke into the air. He gazes at the typewriter, looking preoccupied.

There is a knock at the door.

O'Malley looks up. Ms. Greyson is standing in the doorway.

O'MALLEY

Ms. Greyson.

O'Malley pushes the WHEELED CHAIR backward, moving as if to stand.

GREYSON

Oh, don't stand up. I was just in to ask a favor.

(CONTINUED)

O'MALLEY

Yes. Surely. How can I help you?

GREYSON

I was wondering... if you happen to have a slide rule?

O'MALLEY

I do, in fact!

O'Malley pushes back in his chair, then opens his desk drawers, rooting around inside.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

Somewhere in here...

GREYSON

I hope it's not a bother.

O'MALLEY

Oh, not at all. Happy to help. If I can find it...

Greyson examines the office, looking intrigued by its lack of decor.

GREYSON

Settling in, I see.

O'MALLEY

Oh... gradually.

GREYSON

Well, it's your first semester, isn't it?

O'MALLEY

It is.

Greyson gestures to the photograph.

GREYSON

Is that... Dublin?

O'Malley pauses to glance at the photo.

O'MALLEY

Ah, yes. Grafton Street. I misspent much of my youth there.

GREYSON

I've never been.

(CONTINUED)

O'MALLEY

To Dublin? You ought to.

(Winces)

Perhaps when things calm down a bit.

(Triumphantly)

There, you are!

O'Malley draws a SLIDE RULE into the light. It's elegant and well-used, made out of polished wood. Greyson steps forward and accepts it.

GREYSON

That's quite the work of art.

O'MALLEY

Oh. Yes. It was a gift, actually.

GREYSON

Is there a story?

O'MALLEY

(With a cryptic smile)

Isn't there always?

GREYSON

I left mine at home.

O'MALLEY

Ah. You don't live on campus?

GREYSON

No. I have a cottage down the road.

O'MALLEY

Ah.

GREYSON

I hitch a ride with the milk man. Have you met Mr. Wyles yet?

O'MALLEY

Not yet. I'm still - acclimating.

GREYSON

Well, you should. He's delivered milk to my family since I was a girl.

O'MALLEY

You grew up here, then?

(CONTINUED)

GREYSON  
 (Self-consciously)  
 Uh... yes. Yes, I did. In  
 Castleboro.

O'MALLEY  
 Lovely town.

GREYSON  
 (Forcing a smile)  
 It certainly can be.  
 (Waving slide rule)  
 Thank you. I'll bring it back.

O'MALLEY  
 No hurry.

Greyson flashes a final smile and leaves the room.

O'Malley continues to smile in a genial way, until Ms. Greyson disappears, and then the smile vanishes.

He returns to his typewriter, sighs deeply, and raises his fingers to the keyboard.

He types: "TEDDY, URGENT. PLEASE RESPOND."

O'Malley leans back in his chair, rips the paper out of the typewriter, and starts to fold it.

11 INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

11

Elizabeth sits at a STUDY TABLE, with TEXTBOOKS spread all around here. ANATOMICAL DRAWINGS and other DIAGRAMS are visible, along with PAPERS and NOTES. Elizabeth is clearly accustomed to referencing several different books simultaneously.

But Elizabeth looks disinterested. She leans on one hand, then sips from a COFFEE MUG.

At last, she takes out a PENCIL and PIECE OF NOTEBOOK PAPER and writes.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)  
 Dear Mom and Dad...

Elizabeth pauses, then gazes at the ceiling. She resumes writing.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)  
 I hope you're both splendid. My  
 third year has started well enough,  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH (V.O.) (cont'd)  
and I am continuing to earn high  
marks...

Elizabeth has barely finished writing before she crumples the paper in her fist. She crumples it so thoroughly that it becomes a tiny wad. She looks at it with a revolted, exhausted expression.

She takes out another piece of paper and begins again.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)  
Dear Mom and Dad: Everything is  
fine enough. I've made one friend  
in three years, so if I stay for  
six years, I may double that  
number...

Again, Elizabeth crumples the piece of paper.

She begins to write a third letter.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)  
Dear Mom and Dad: I don't know who  
I thought would be impressed,  
studying medicine, but I'm certain  
that no one here is...

She crumples.

She begins again.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)  
If I wanted to live at arm's length  
from the rest of humanity, I would  
have stayed in high school...

She crumples.

Elizabeth looks up. She notices something.

Slowly, she stands up from the table and moves across the room, to a GLOBE, positioned on a METAL AXIS. She spins the globe, then smiles lovingly. As the globe slows, she continues to guide it with her fingers, passing over nations and capitals.

Elizabeth starts a final letter.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)  
Dear Mom and Dad: The world is so  
vast. I think about its enormity  
all the time, day and night. So

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH (V.O.) (cont'd)  
many people, cities, mysteries to  
unearth, wilderness to cross. I lie  
awake at night and think: What am I  
doing here - when there is so much  
life to be lived? I want to make  
you proud. You've given me so much  
to live up to. But there are so  
many things I feel I want to do,  
places to explore. I-

A figure appears, looming over Elizabeth.

Sensing his presence, Elizabeth covers her note with her  
elbow.

She looks up to see Riley, carrying a load of books.

RILEY  
Excuse me?

Elizabeth blinks, uncertain how to respond.

RILEY (CONT.)  
I'm sorry to ask, but... you don't  
still have the washroom key, do  
you?

Elizabeth scans her books, and then she sees a KEY, attached  
to a WOOD BLOCK, lying among her effects. She snatches it  
and hands it awkwardly to Riley.

RILEY (CONT.)  
Great, thank you.  
(Points the paper)  
Writing a letter?

ELIZABETH  
Not to you.

Riley grimaces, then backs away, toward the washroom.

Elizabeth thrusts the letter into a hardback book, then  
gathers her things. She hurriedly stuffs everything into her  
satchel, which she throws over her shoulder. She strides  
stiffly out of the room.

The area is now empty.

A Male Figure enters. He wears a THICK WOOL COAT and  
PENNYLOAFERS. His hands are covered in WOOL GLOVES.

He reaches down and picks up one of the balled-up notes. He unfolds the garbled paper and begins to read Elizabeth's chicken-scratch writing.

12

EXT. ACADEMY QUAD - DUSK

12

A GROUP OF MED STUDENTS plays football in the BROWN GRASS of the QUAD. They wear basic ATHLETIC WEAR, which has been muddied from their play. They line up in formation and toss the BALL to each other, and there is light tackling.

The sun is setting over the rooftops of St. Luke's Medical Academy. The sky is a patchwork of orange and violet clouds. The figures in the quad are silhouetted in the gathering darkness.

Two MED STUDENTS stand on the sidelines, wearing REGULAR CLOTHES. One smokes a PIPE while the other stands by, arms folded.

In the background, the Med Students notice Elizabeth walking quietly across the quad, unaccompanied and unobserved.

STUDENT #1

Three years. I've never heard her say a word.

STUDENT #2

Really? She knew every answer in anatomy class.

STUDENT #1

(Sniffs)

I'd like to study her anatomy.

STUDENT #2

Forget it. I've seen ice boxes less frigid.

STUDENT #1

Too bad for her.

13

INT. DORMITORY - DUSK

13

Elizabeth walks slowly down an empty hallway. She reaches a DOOR, then stops. She looks at ROYCE, who is sitting on a BENCH, furiously polishing his BLACK SHOE. He is dressed nicely, in a SUIT and FROCK COAT. His hair is oiled and combed back.

Royce aggressively rubs POLISH into his leather dress shoe. He looks anxious, single-minded, and doesn't notice Elizabeth approaching. He glances up, then closes his eyes, startled.

(CONTINUED)

ROYCE  
Oh, for God's sakes.

He puts down the shoe and holds a hand over his chest.

ROYCE (CONT'D)  
I didn't think there was anyone here.

ELIZABETH  
Neither did I.

ROYCE  
What are you doing here?

ELIZABETH  
This is the women's dormitory.

ROYCE  
It is?

ELIZABETH  
Yes. All four rooms of it.

ROYCE  
I didn't even know there was a...

ELIZABETH  
There wasn't. Not till I showed up.

ROYCE  
Really? Are you the first? I mean... you know that for sure?

ELIZABETH  
I've never been surer of anything.  
(Pointing)  
Is there a cotillion I should know about?

ROYCE  
(Bashfully)  
Oh... the getup. I, um... I'm hitting the town. With Albert. And some of the boys. I gather someone's father was dumb enough to loan us a car. So we'll be headed into Castleboro.

ELIZABETH  
(Unimpressed)  
Oh. Castleboro.

(CONTINUED)

ROYCE

Yeah, well, we'll take what we can get.

ELIZABETH

Well, don't do anything Fatty Arbuckle wouldn't do.

She turns toward her door.

ROYCE

You could come. If you want.

Elizabeth pauses. She ponders this. Her expression seems maudlin, but almost tempted by the offer. Then she grimaces.

ELIZABETH

I don't think it's my cup of tea.

ROYCE

What is your cup of tea, Miss Crowne?

Again, Elizabeth seems moved by the question. She smiles distantly.

ELIZABETH

Honestly?

ROYCE

Why not? I doubt I'll ever hear your voice again, outside of class. So, honestly: What's Elizabeth Crowne's cup of tea?

ELIZABETH

I don't think I know yet. But I know I haven't found it.

(Sighs)

Good night.

Royce struggles to put on his polished shoe. He ties the shoestrings as he speaks.

ROYCE

You're quite the puzzle, Elizabeth.

(Beat)

One day, I'd like to meet the man who ends up solving you.

ELIZABETH

You don't solve people, Royce. They solve themselves.

(CONTINUED)

ROYCE  
 (Chuckling)  
 That's funny. I don't think you've  
 ever said my name before.

ELIZABETH  
 I don't think anyone here has ever  
 asked me a question before. So I  
 guess it's a night full of  
 surprises.  
 (Mustering a smile)  
 Welcome surprises, I suppose.

Royce stands up, smoothing out his coat.

ROYCE  
 How do I look?

ELIZABETH  
 Like an impending hangover. Behave  
 yourself.

Royce smiles, salutes Elizabeth, and strides off.

Elizabeth takes out her SKELETON KEY. Just as she tries to  
 slide it into the LOCK, the key falls, tinkling on the  
 floor. Elizabeth looks at it with weary eyes. Finally she  
 sighs, bends over, and picks it up.

CUT TO:

14 INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - DUSK 14

Elizabeth's room is a stifling mess. CLOTHES are strewn on  
 the floor, as well as CRUMPLED PAPERS. Her SATCHEL slips  
 from her shoulder and thumps against the mangy RUG.

Elizabeth goes to the WINDOW. She cracks it open, and cool  
 air seeps in, rustling her hair. She gazes outside, at  
 a FULL MOON.

CUT TO:

15 INT. LIBRARY - EVENING 15

RILEY sits at a STUDY CARREL in the empty library. He looks  
 exhausted, and his hair is disheveled from too much  
 studying.

He draws a CIGARETTE CASE from his JACKET POCKET, then taps  
 a CIGARETTE against the tin. He looks around and sticks the  
 cigarette in his lips. He stands up, heading outside.

CUT TO:

16 INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT 16

Elizabeth flops onto her bed. She gazes up at the ceiling, looking tired and introspective. She stretches her arms, then lets them fall against the mattress.

Then she notices something: Her hand feels beneath the TOP SHEET. She turns onto her side, feeling the strange, papery texture beneath.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. OUTSIDE LIBRARY - NIGHT 17

Riley descends the library steps, cigarette clenched in his teeth, and he strikes a MATCH against a MATCHBOX. He lights, then tosses the matchstick away. He exhales long and hard. He cracks his neck.

CUT TO:

18 INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT 18

Elizabeth pulls back the top sheet. She uncovers SCRAPS OF NEWSPAPER, and a HANDWRITTEN NOTE.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. OUTSIDE LIBRARY - NIGHT 19

Riley slowly looks up.

He notices something, far above him. He squints, unable to make it out. Riley's eyes widen. He looks astonished, then fearful.

CUT TO:

20 INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT 20

Elizabeth goes to her LAMP. She spreads out the FIRST NEWSPAPER CLIPPING. The text is eerily backlit by the lamp's glow.

The headline reads: "SECOND NUN FOUND DEAD AT CONVENT."

Elizabeth's eyes widen. She has a strange expression - not disturbed, but fascinated.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. OUTSIDE LIBRARY - NIGHT 21

Riley backs away from whatever he's seen. He charges up the stairs, but he trips on the way. He is terrified, now. He bumbles toward the LIBRARY DOORS, then clumsily forces his way inside.

CUT TO:

22 INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT 22

Elizabeth examines the handwritten note. In an elegant script, it reads: "TOMORROW NIGHT. BELL TOWER. 9 P.M."

Elizabeth stares intensely at the note. Then, wryly, she smiles.

SMASH TO BLACK.

---

ACT 4

23 EXT. ST. LUKE'S MEDICAL ACADEMY - DAWN 23

The SUN rises over the ROOFTOPS of St. Luke's Medical Academy. In the distance, wooded hills roll into the distance, the leafless branches layered in morning mist.

A FLOCK OF CROWS takes wing, rising into the hazy air.

A LONG DIRT ROAD extends into the distance, and MR. SMITH, a farmer, rides his HORSE AND BUGGY.

24 EXT. ACADEMY GATE - DAWN 24

The HORSE AND BUGGY arrive at the gate. The vehicle is simple and weathered, and there are MILK PALES stacked in the back.

MR. SMITH sits in front, heavily bearded and wearing OVERALLS, a THICK COAT, and a WOOL CAP.

MS. GREYSON steps out, carrying an attaché case. She is dressed, as usual, in a fetching version of a school marm's outfit, as well as a DARK FLORAL HAT.

MS. GREYSON  
Thank you, Mr. Smith.

She reaches up and hands Mr. Smith a PENNY. The man nods humbly, gathers his REINS, and urges the horses onward.

CHURCH BELLS ring, signaling the hour.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

EXTENDED MONTAGE:

25 INT. WASHROOM - MORNING 25

Elizabeth turns the HANDLE in the SHOWER. Water pours of over her as she lathers herself.

Out of the shower, she is dressed and adjusts her DRESS in the MIRROR.

She takes a moment to assess herself. She cocks an eyebrow, trying to look cool and sophisticated.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. QUAD - MORNING 26

Elizabeth marches across the grass, as MED STUDENTS march in every direction. They are all wearing their WHITE LAB COATS, gathered in groups, talking.

Elizabeth cuts through the crowd with noticeable purpose, her SACHEL swinging at her side.

CUT TO:

27 INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING 27

DR. O'MALLEY teaches. ANATOMICAL DIAGRAMS are arranged vertically on EASELS. O'Malley points to different parts of the muscle with a POINTER.

Elizabeth sits in the middle of the classroom, not the back, as before. She scrawls a NOTE, folds it carefully, and hands it to ABNER, who is seated next to her.

Abner is surprised by the note, and he seems anxious to open it while Dr. O'Malley is lecturing. But he reluctantly unfolds the tiny paper.

It reads: "CAN YOU MEET TONIGHT?"

He bites his lip, looks around, and then writes a reply. He hurriedly hands a SECOND NOTE back to Elizabeth. She unfolds it.

It reads: "PRACTICE."

Elizabeth rolls her eyes.

O'Malley continues to lecture, seemingly oblivious to their correspondence.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

28 INT. MAILROOM - NOON 28

Elizabeth goes into the mailroom, where rows of MAILBOXES are lined against the wall. She is hurriedly eating a SANDWICH, which she stuffs into her mouth as she scans the ornately numbered grids.

She takes out her KEY and opens the TINY DOOR, but there is nothing inside. She frowns.

CUT TO:

29 INT. MR. GREYSON'S CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON 29

Ms. Greyson writes elaborate chemical formulae across the blackboard, as before.

A POCKET WATCH lies on ROYCE'S DESK, flipped open.

Elizabeth looks away from her notes, craning her neck to see what time it is.

Royce looks up. He notices Elizabeth glancing at his desk. He smiles.

Elizabeth grimaces back, then retreats back into her work.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON 30

Elizabeth scans the trees with her binoculars. She lowers them, then sighs.

She looks toward the horizon.

The sun is dipping low.

She bites her lip, the excitement growing. She heads back down the trail, toward campus.

CUT TO:

31 INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - DUSK 31

Elizabeth sits on her bed, in her dorm room, fully dressed and ready to go.

In her lap is a PLATE with some HALF-EATEN DINNER. Absently, she raises a FORK of NONDESCRIPT FOOD to her mouth.

(CONTINUED)

She looks at her TYPEWRITER, which is planted firmly in the middle of her desk. A nearly blank sheet of paper has only the words: "DEAR MOM AND DAD,".

Elizabeth sighs.

She glances at a CLOCK on her DRESSER.

The face reads 7:48.

Elizabeth sets the plate to her side, smooths out her dress, and closes her eyes. She sits there a moment, thinking.

Then her eyes open.

END OF MONTAGE

32

INT. BASKETBALL COURT - EVENING

32

The basketball court is dark, except for a couple of dim ELECTRIC LAMPS hanging from the ceiling, directly over the NET and BACKBOARD, which are fastened directly to the wall.

Abner plays one-on-one with FRANKIE. Frankie is a fit-looking young player. They are both dressed in period ATHLETIC OUTFITS. Abner dribbles the BALL, which is made of leather and has stitches on one side.

Suddenly Abner feints and maneuvers around Frankie. He advances gracefully across the court, then tosses the ball, sinking it.

Frankie chases the ball, sweat dripping from his face. He takes it to the edge of the court, and Abner follows. Frankie tries to get past his opponent, but Abner wrests the ball away and gains control. He charges across the court and shoots; the ball swishes a second time.

Throughout, Abner looks confident and impressive. He is a natural athlete, and he plays with intense focus.

Frankie starts to chuckle.

FRANKIE

Shucks. I'll say it again, Ab -  
you're wasting your time in the  
sticks.

Abner smiles modestly at this, then bends over, resting his hands on his knees.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKIE (CONT.)

You should be trying out for the  
Celtics.

ABNER

Ha! If only.

FRANKIE

I'm serious. You're good enough.  
Anybody can see that.

ABNER

Maybe one-on-one.

FRANKIE

You're too humble. That's your  
problem.

(Looking up)

Say, doll, what do you think?

Abner looks confused. He glances around the court.

Beyond the light, in the shadowy BLEACHERS, Elizabeth is  
seated. She stands up and begins to walk down the STEPS,  
toward the light.

FRANKIE (CONT.)

You think he's got the stuff? Maybe  
he could go pro?

ELIZABETH

Looks like an expert to me.

Frankie smacks Abner on the shoulder.

FRANKIE

See?

He runs toward the exit.

Abney goes to a BENCH and picks up a TOWEL. His confidence  
has deflated; he looks shy and self-effacing again. He dabs  
the SWEAT from his neck and forehead.

Elizabeth saunters over to him. She wears her coat and  
satchel.

ELIZABETH

You never told me you were good.

ABNER

I'd say you never asked, but... I  
doubt you follow basketball.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH  
Solid theory.

Abner drapes the towel over his neck and looks at Elizabeth.

ABNER  
If I didn't know better, I'd say  
you look fertrakht.

ELIZABETH  
You say the sweetest things.

ABNER  
It means thoughtful.

ELIZABETH  
Well, I guess you don't know  
better, because I'm very much  
fertrakht.

ABNER  
You all right? Anything I can do?

ELIZABETH  
(Smiles)  
So glad you asked. You can come  
with me to the bell tower.

ABNER  
The bell tower? The one in the  
chapel?

ELIZABETH  
More like above the chapel, but  
yes.

ABNER  
What's up there?

ELIZABETH  
I don't know. Which is why I want  
you along.

ABNER  
When?

ELIZABETH  
Nine o'clock. So you have just  
enough time to shower and change.

ABNER  
I... don't know. I have an exam  
tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH  
 (Chiding)  
 Abner.

Abner sighs. He turns abruptly and heads for the SHOWERS. He turns again toward Elizabeth, walking backward.

ABNER  
 I'm not gonna regret this, am I?

ELIZABETH  
 Have you ever regretted spending  
 time with me?

ABNER  
 (To himself)  
 Not yet.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. FRONT OF CHAPEL - NIGHT

33

Elizabeth and Abner cross the lawn, headed toward the chapel. The structure is old and stately, with STEPS leading to the LARGE OAK DOOR.

ABNER  
 So who left the note?

ELIZABETH  
 I don't know.

ABNER  
 And they were - what again?  
 Newspaper clippings?

ELIZABETH  
 Precisely.

ABNER  
 What about?

ELIZABETH  
 Have you ever heard of Majella's  
 Abbey?

ABNER  
 Uh... maybe? Is that nearby?

ELIZABETH  
 About twenty miles off, yes.

(CONTINUED)

ABNER  
Some kind of convent?

ELIZABETH  
That's the one.

ABNER  
So what happened?

Elizabeth stops before the door. She takes a long breath.

ELIZABETH  
Murder.

Elizabeth turns toward the doors and ascends the steps. She grasps the handle.

ABNER  
Murder?! What are you getting us  
into?

ELIZABETH  
Ssh!

CUT TO:

34 INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

34

Abner and Elizabeth enter the chapel. There are two rows of WOODEN PEWS, extending toward the ALTAR. Elizabeth moves along the dark periphery, until she finds a DOOR. She opens it, revealing a SPIRAL STAIRCASE.

CUT TO:

35 INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE - NIGHT

35

Elizabeth leads the way up the steps, Abner close behind. They circle the stairs, which appear rickety, old, and dusty. There are no windows, and the passageway is dark.

ABNER  
(Whispering)  
But what if it's a trick? Or... I  
don't know...

ELIZABETH  
No harm, no foul.

ABNER  
Yeah, but what if-

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH

Ssh!

Elizabeth has reached the top of the staircase. Above them, RAYS OF LIGHT shine through the BOARDS of a TRAP DOOR.

CUT TO:

36 INT. BELL TOWER ATTIC - NIGHT 36

Elizabeth pushes the door upward. She peers through the slim opening, at the FLOOR of an ATTIC.

She sees a FIGURE sitting in a CHAIR next to an OLD BARREL. The figure is male, sitting cross-legged with a pair of PENNYLOAFERS.

Elizabeth looks up. She pushes the trap door higher, revealing herself.

Abner pops up behind her. His eyes instantly widen with shock.

ABNER

Dr. O'Malley?

ACT 5

37 INT. BELL TOWER ATTIC - NIGHT 37

Professor O'Malley sits in the chair. He inserts a LIT MATCH into a PIPE, and puffs profusely.

O'MALLEY

Miss Crowne, so glad you could join me.

O'Malley douses the match and raises an eyebrow at Abner.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

Mr. Cohen, isn't it?

ABNER

(Bashfully)

Uh, yes, sir. Uh, professor.

O'MALLEY

I'm sure Miss Crowne appreciates your moral support, but you needn't linger.

(CONTINUED)

Elizabeth has come out of the stairwell and stands to her full height in the attic. She glances at Abner.

ELIZABETH  
It's fine, Abner. Thank you for  
escorting me.

Abner glances at one, then the other.

ABNER  
Are you sure?

Elizabeth scrutinizes O'Malley.

ELIZABETH  
Am I sure?

O'Malley smiles, amused at their mutual concern.

O'MALLEY  
If Miss Crowne doesn't knock on  
your door at 7 o'clock tomorrow  
morn, you may ring the police in  
town. Agreed?

ABNER  
(Uncertainly)  
Uh... all right. Goodnight,  
Elizabeth!

Elizabeth nods at him, distracted, as the trap door falls back into place, leaving Elizabeth and Dr. O'Malley alone in the cramped attic.

Elizabeth notices a SECOND CHAIR, as well as a TEA SET sitting atop the barrel. O'Malley puffs his pipe, then takes the TEAPOT and pours into two CERAMIC CUPS.

Elizabeth seats herself, sets down the satchel, and raises the cup.

ELIZABETH  
Sláinte.

O'MALLEY  
(Smiling)  
And cheers to you.

Elizabeth doesn't sip. She just assesses the professor.

ELIZABETH  
If you're enlisting me in the  
Fenian cause, you should not I'm  
not the least bit Irish.

O'Malley chuckles and gingerly sips his tea.

O'MALLEY  
What did you think of those  
clippings?

ELIZABETH  
Morose.

O'MALLEY  
Murder usually is. But were you not  
intrigued?

ELIZABETH  
What do you think intrigued me?

O'MALLEY  
Let's review the facts.

CUT TO:

38 INT. CONVENT CORRIDOR - MORNING

38

Resuming the scene from before: A pair of MEDICS, dressed in WHITE UNIFORMS, step out of SISTER MARGARET's cell, toting a STRETCHER between them. The BODY of Sister Margaret lies beneath a SHEET.

The NUNS stand in the corridor, watching the Medics at work. Many are openly weeping, others look morose.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)  
Sister Margaret dies. Strangulated,  
in her bed. The door is locked.  
There's way in but the window. Yet  
the cell is on the second story. No  
trees. No ladder. Not even a closet  
to hide in.

CUT TO:

39 INT. CHAPEL ATTIC - NIGHT

39

Elizabeth listens. Her expression is peculiar, as if trying to contain her fascination.

ELIZABETH  
Someone else had a key.

O'Malley nods at this.

(CONTINUED)

O'MALLEY

Possible, but unlikely. Consider us convinced there is no second key. Now the second murder...

ELIZABETH

The garden.

O'MALLEY

Indeed. The garden.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. CONVENT GARDEN - MORNING

40

As before, the convent garden is dreary and grey. A WEATHERED WOOD DOOR opens, and a pair of NUNS enter. One of them screams.

SISTER MARY lies on the ground, stiff and pale, her eyes wide open with terror.

The Nuns run over to her, wailing. They shake Sister Mary, trying uselessly to wake her.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)

Sister Mary, dead in the garden. Run through with a pitchfork. Yet the walls are high and smooth. Again, no witnesses.

CUT TO:

41 INT. CHAPEL ATTIC - NIGHT

41

Elizabeth lifts the teacup to her lips.

ELIZABETH

I don't suppose it was suicide. But two murders isn't enough to see a pattern.

Elizabeth sips. O'Malley grimaces.

O'MALLEY

You're right. So let's examine the third.

Elizabeth gags on her tea. She sets down the cup.

ELIZABETH

The third?

(CONTINUED)

O'MALLEY  
Just last night.

CUT TO:

42 INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S STUDY - NIGHT 42

The MOTHER SUPERIOR, an elder woman with BIFOCALS, sits at a LARGE TABLE, writing a LETTER. PAPERS are spread out, and a SINGLE CANDLE burns in a simple CANDLESTICK. She is alone in the chamber, a dark space with PLASTER WALLS. She wears a SHAWL over her HABIT.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)  
The nuns are afraid, now. The  
Mother Superior hides herself in  
her study.

CUT TO:

43 INT. CONVENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT 43

Just outside the study, a STRONG NUN sits in her ROCKING CHAIR. She is thick-bodied and capable-looking, also dressed in a HABIT.

She is knitting with a YARN and a PAIR OF NEEDLES.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)  
The door is guarded, day and night.  
And there is only one door. On the  
fourth story of the convent's  
tallest tower, where could the  
Mother Superior be safer?

Next to the Strong Nun is an small end-table; on the table lies a HATCHET.

44 INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S STUDY - NIGHT 44

The Mother Superior is writing, but then she hears a strange sound. She looks up, alarmed. She rises slowly from her chair, afraid, looking for a way to flee.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)  
And yet...

45 INT. CONVENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

45

The Strong Nun hears a noise inside the study. The Mother Superior's shouts, but her voice is muffled by the door.

The Strong Nun stands up. She grabs the hatchet, then goes to the door.

STRONG NUN  
Reverend Mother? REVEREND MOTHER?

The Strong Nun reaches into her habit, fumbling for her keys.

The commotion grows louder behind the door. The Mother Superior is now screaming for her life. There is a crash of a chair falling over.

The Strong Nun finally finds a RING OF KEYS. She flips through each key, trying to remember which one unlocks the study door.

Suddenly, there is a final scream, which quickly goes silent.

STRONG NUN (CONT.)  
Reverend Mother?

The Strong Nun finally pushes the key into the lock. She twists and pushes her way through.

Other Nuns have emerged in the corridor, scampering toward the study.

CUT TO:

46 INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S STUDY - NIGHT

46

Inside, the papers are scattered on the floor. The candlestick is knocked over, and the candle lies sideways on the table.

Wet FOOTPRINTS show where the Mother Superior was dragged across the floor, toward the OPEN WINDOW. The THICK DRAPES rustle in the breeze.

The Strong Nun goes to the window, followed by other Nuns. They arrive at the WINDOW SILL and look out, then down.

Far below, in the STONE COURT, the Mother Superior lies on the ground, her body shattered from the fall.

Nuns run to her, shrieking in horror. They surround her body and crouch low, while others run to fetch help.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH (V.O.)  
No balcony? No fire escape?

O'MALLEY (V.O.)  
None at all. Only a straight drop  
to the ground.

CUT TO:

47 INT. CHAPEL ATTIC - NIGHT

47

Elizabeth can no longer hide her interest. She listens intently. The teacup is empty.

O'Malley taps his pipe against a WOOD BEAM, and TOBACCO ASH drifts to the floor.

O'MALLEY  
I have a theory.

ELIZABETH  
I'm sure you do.

O'MALLEY  
Not about the murders. About you.

Elizabeth recoils. She turns stony again, as if bracing herself. She folds her arms.

ELIZABETH  
Oh?

O'MALLEY  
I think you're fond of medicine. We all see you have a talent for it. But I doubt you see yourself as a physician.

Elizabeth shifts uncomfortably.

ELIZABETH  
(Defensive)  
What makes you say that?

O'MALLEY  
Picture it: Thirty years in some dowdy hospital. The endless cycle of patients. Delivering babies - one screaming mum after the next. Men who barely look at you, because, to them, you're only a nurse.

(CONTINUED)

Elizabeth looks away. She is clearly discomfited by this prediction.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

(Leaning forward)

I do not doubt your skill. I duller man might think you shy. But I don't see a girl who's timid. I see a girl who's bored. Because she's wasting her time in classrooms, when she could do so much more.

Elizabeth looks startled by these words. She swallows hard.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

And if I'm right, I'd gladly seek your help.

ELIZABETH

But... why me?

CUT TO:

48 INT. CELLAR - EVENING

48

In the same cellar as before, beakers and chemistry bottles are scattered on the roughshod table. But unlike before, the BUNSEN BURNER is fired up, and LIQUIDS are bubbling inside the glass vessels.

The canisters, which had been dormant before, are switched on, and hoses connect them to the chemistry set. The sound of hissing gas is heard, as well as boiling liquid.

A FIGURE appears. Hands in RUBBER GLOVES handle the equipment. They switch off the gas, then turn down the flame.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)

I'll tell you, Elizabeth, I promise. When the time is right.

The rubber gloves are removed, revealing feminine hands.

The Figure picks up a HYPODERMIC NEEDLE.

The Figure rolls a BLACK SLEEVE up a pale arm.

A CLOTH STRIP is wrapped and tied around the bicep, near the crook of the arm.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

But where would I even start? If  
the police can't find the culprit,  
how am I supposed to?

The Figure drives the needle into her vein. At first, a CLOUD OF BLOOD fills the VIAL, but with the push of a thumb, the BLUE-TINTED SERUM is injected into the Figure's arm.

The needle is removed and set down.

The Figure leans back in her chair. The face of Ms. Greyson comes into view. She looks placid and thoughtful.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)

Ah... you needn't find the culprit.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

No? Why not?

CUT TO:

49 EXT. WOODS - EVENING

49

Ms. Greyson is outside now, wearing her BLACK VELVETEEN DRESS and a HEAVY WOOL COAT. She also wears a PICTURE HAT, but the WIDE BRIM is tied up at the sides, like an Australian rifleman's hat.

She starts to run. She moves quickly through the woods, her heeled boots light on the pebbles and layers of fallen leaves.

O'MALLEY (V.O.)

Because I already know who it is.  
The question isn't who. It's not  
even why. What I want to know is -  
how?

Ms. Greyson leaps into the air. For a moment, it looks like she's jumping high, but then she keeps ascending, into the darkness, out of sight.

CUT TO:

50 INT. CHAPEL ATTIC - NIGHT

50

O'Malley now crosses his arms. He assesses Elizabeth, who looks overwhelmed by the deluge from information.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

So now, you must decide. Are you an  
aspiring physician... or would you  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

O'MALLEY (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
like to be something more?  
Something that few, on the Earth,  
have ever been?  
(Leaning in)  
Who IS Elizabeth Crowne?

Elizabeth looks up, defiant, resolute.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF PILOT.