

STORYTELLER

by

Erin Maher & Kay Reindl

Writer's Draft
August 25, 2003

TEASER

EXT. ASHBLESS MUSEUM - EVENING

Establishing. The kind of place that, though once some wealthy person's residence, looks as if it were built to be a museum. A sign reads THE ASHBLESS MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY.

MADISON (V.O.)

All of us are storytellers.

INT. ASHBLESS MUSEUM - THEATRE

A small, comfortable THEATRE. A large AUDIENCE listens to

MADISON ELLIS

20s, intense and smart. You want to listen to Madison. She's winding up a lecture, and she's got the audience in the palm of her hand.

MADISON

Before people passed urban legends around via e-mail, before we stood around the water cooler to re-tell each other last night's episode of "Friends", before we even had a written language and expressed ourselves by painting on cave walls...

She leans towards the attentive crowd.

MADISON (CONT'D)

We were storytellers. And one of the stories we like to tell best is the Grail story. From King Arthur to Monty Python to Indiana Jones, we've been sending our heroes on Grail quests for a very long time.

People in the audience nod. Madison smiles.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Throughout the evening, we've talked about the fact that we don't know what the Grail is, exactly. Maybe it was the cup Christ used at the Last Supper. Maybe it was a stone, or a magical sphere, or a bloodline, or a piece of secret knowledge. We find clues to the Grail's location in star charts, in stained-glass windows, in the legendary and probably apocryphal "Bloody Book". We're not sure if the Grail even exists.

She smiles at the audience, who hang on her every word.

MADISON (CONT'D)

But we keep passing along the legend. Because even in our supposedly mundane, humdrum lives, we crave mysteries and legends. We lust after the Loch Ness monster and Bigfoot. And deep down inside, we hope those enigmas remain unexplained. We hope the Grail stays hidden, lost in history, an unsolved mystery.

She pauses, and smiles.

MADISON (CONT'D)

In other words... a story. Thank you all for coming...

The audience applauds and rises. People gather their things, put on their coats, head for the exits. A few people move towards Madison. One woman in particular, an elderly Frenchwoman named BERNADETTE, comes anxiously forward, clutching her handbag tightly.

BERNADETTE

Dr. Ellis --

Madison turns.

BERNADETTE (CONT'D)

I have a story. About a horrible thing that happened to my father. The things you talked about... you may be able to explain something.

VICTORIA (O.S.)

Madison! I want to talk to you --

Madison turns toward VICTORIA DAVIS, the museum curator, who's striding towards her. She's followed by ALYSSA JUAREZ (20s), Madison's research assistant. Madison smiles at Bernadette.

MADISON

I'm sorry. My boss --

BERNADETTE

I can wait? It is very important. I have waited too long already.

Bernadette seems frail, as if she's about to collapse. Madison hesitates, then nods.

MADISON

My office is on the second floor. 237. I'll be there in a few minutes.

BERNADETTE

Thank you.

As Bernadette moves away, Victoria slams to a halt in front of Madison. Alyssa gives Madison a "watch it!" Look.

VICTORIA

Your lecture was supposed to be about the historical search for the Grail. I fail to see why you found it necessary to drag Bigfoot and the Loch Ness monster into it.

MADISON

I was trying to equate the Grail story with the kind of tabloid stuff people read today --

VICTORIA

We do not have an audience of *tabloid readers*. Neither do we need to insult them by telling them their lives are... I believe your words were "humdrum" and "mundane".

MADISON

I was telling them they're *not* humdrum or mundane!

VICTORIA

Next time, your presentation will follow a more rigid structure.

MADISON

Meaning?

VICTORIA

You will write an outline, which I will approve and you will follow. Without digression.

Victoria storms off. Alyssa looks at Madison.

ALYSSA

Well. I thought it was da shiznit.

MADISON

Damn. I told some poor woman to go to my office...

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madison, followed by Alyssa, rushes towards her office.

MADISON

I wish I'd had time to get into the idea that the Tarot is actually a sort of graphic version of the search for the Grail --

Madison stops short. Her office DOOR is blowing open, shut. Open, shut. Tentatively, Madison pushes it open.

The office is messy, with books and files strewn everywhere. The art on the walls ranges from a reproduction of Rosetti's The Annunciation to a movie poster of "The Company of Wolves".

What stops Madison is the WIND, which blows through the newly-broken WINDOW. There are a few shards of glass on the floor but obviously, the window was broken from the inside out. Madison steps closer. There's BLOOD on the broken window shards. Madison looks down. Her eyes widen, horrified.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Call security. Now.

Alyssa vanishes. Madison leans out further, transfixed by the scene below.

MADISON'S P.O.V.

On the pavement three stories below, Bernadette lies, bloodied and clearly quite dead...

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. MUSEUM - NIGHT

Police cars are parked haphazardly around the building.

EXT. MADISON'S OFFICE

There's YELLOW TAPE roping off Madison's office. Inside, COPS dust for prints and take photos.

Alyssa, clearly shaken, leans against the wall as DETECTIVE COOPER talks to Madison. Beside Madison is DR. VICTORIA DAVIS (40s, severe), the museum's head curator. Victoria looks peeved at the chaos in her usually ordered world.

DETECTIVE COOPER

Her name was Bernadette duBois. You don't know what she wanted?

MADISON

She said something about her father, but that's all.

DETECTIVE COOPER

So no idea why she'd decide to take a header through your office window?

MADISON

Do you have to put it like that?

DETECTIVE COOPER

This is my third body today. Any finesse I had took a dive about seven hours ago.

(beat)

You said she was upset. Maybe she changed her mind about waiting.

MADISON

So she hurled herself out the window? And don't suicides usually *open* the window before diving through?

VICTORIA

Really, Madison. If the detective feels it's suicide --

DETECTIVE COOPER

That's my instinct. Based on the victim's state of mind and the manner of death -- I mean, people don't usually throw other people out windows --

MADISON

Actually, there are plenty of examples of defenestration throughout --

VICTORIA

Madison.

Madison folds her arms and stops talking.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Is there anything else, or may Dr. Ellis and Miss Juarez go home?

DETECTIVE COOPER

Yeah, we're about through here.

He shoots a look at Madison as if expecting trouble.

DETECTIVE COOPER (CONT'D)

But stay available.

Madison grabs a briefcase from her desk and leaves. She doesn't notice the edge of a WHITE ENVELOPE sticking out of her briefcase, as if someone has hastily shoved it inside...

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Madison shops at Ikea, but she knows what to do with what she's got. The apartment is slightly cluttered but homey. Madison puts her briefcase down, then stops as she notices the WHITE ENVELOPE sticking out of the briefcase. She pulls it out. "DR. MADISON ELLIS" is scrawled on the envelope.

Madison opens the envelope. She slides out a PHOTOGRAPH.

CLOSE ON PHOTOGRAPH

It's a black and white photo, worn and badly creased, as if it's been folded many times. The photo shows a DEAD SOLDIER. He's wearing an SS UNIFORM and he's BLINDFOLDED. Against the backdrop of what looks like a TENT, he's hung UPSIDE DOWN by one foot. His hands dangle to the ground. Smearred across the tent in what looks like BLOOD... a DOUBLE-BARRED CROSS with FOUR LETTERS surrounding it: I.A.A.T.

MADISON

Flips the photo over.

CLOSE ON BACK OF PHOTOGRAPH

On the back of the photo is scrawled "France. April, 1945."

MADISON

Stares down at the photo.

MADISON

The Hanged Man...

She looks ahead, lost in thought. We PRELAP:

ALYSSA (O.S.)
 You think this is some kind of weird
 Tarot serial killer thing?

INT. MADISON'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Alyssa looks up from the photograph, which is pinned to a board over Madison's desk. Next to it is pinned a page printed out from the internet: a representation of THE HANGED MAN tarot card. The man in the photograph is clearly posed to look like the Hanged Man of the Tarot.

Madison's sitting at her computer, Googling like crazy, looking for references. We see the words "THE HANGED MAN. NAZI ARTIFACTS. FRANCE." She looks back at Alyssa.

ALYSSA
 Like those crazy snipers who left a
 Tarot card when they shot somebody?

MADISON
 No. If this is what I think it is,
 this is about the Grail.

There's a knock on the open door. PHILIP, the geeky researcher, stands there, reverently holding an elderly-looking leather-bound BOOK.

PHILIP
 Dr. Ellis? I've got the Poe diary.
 It's not supposed to leave the museum,
 but since it's for your father I'll
 make an exception as long as nobody
 finds out.

MADISON
 (distracted)
 Thanks, Philip.

Philip puts the book down and looks over, curious.

PHILIP
 Who's the dead guy?

MADISON
 Bernadette -- the woman who died
 here last night -- said something
 horrible happened to her father.
 I'd guess this is it. I think I
 know why he was killed. And maybe...
 why Bernadette was killed, too.

Madison opens a cabinet drawer and pulls out a folder. It's labeled BLOODY BOOK, THE. Alyssa glances down at the label.

ALYSSA

The Bloody Book? You talked about that last night. Something to do with the Grail?

MADISON

Right. It's rumored to hold the secret of the location of the Holy Grail. Unfortunately... the Book is cursed. Anyone who possesses it is doomed to die. It's like the Hope Diamond of medieval Europe.

(beat)

The last time the book was mentioned was in France, towards the end of the Second World War...

As Madison moves into her story, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRANCE, 1945 - NIGHT

Pitch black dark, except for the ORANGE GLOW of oil lamps and a fire. As our eyes adjust, we SEE

MEN

Silhouetted against the light.

A PICK AX

Slams into the ground.

The CAMERA FADES to black, and as Madison talks...

MADISON (V.O.)

You'd think that, with Germany *this close* to losing the war, they'd have better things to do than dig for mysterious artifacts. But they became more focused, more determined.

...we SMASH IN on a CAVE. TORCHES flicker. MEN dig. We ZOOM IN on the face of a MAN, dressed in SS uniform, who watches greedily: THE MAN FROM THE PHOTOGRAPH.

MADISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Whatever they were looking for, they were frantic to find it before they were driven out of France. And, that night, they got lucky...

A GLOVED HAND

Wrenches a filthy cloth-covered OBJECT from the ground.

MATCH CUT TO:

THE OBJECT

The cloth falls away. Underneath: a dusty, jewel-encrusted BOX covered in ancient ALCHEMICAL SYMBOLS.

A HAND

lifts the lid. We catch a glimpse of BRITTLE, ancient-looking PAPER. For a moment, an illuminated WOMAN'S FACE seems to look straight into the camera. Then...

THE BOX

Falls, forgotten, empty, to the ground. We ZOOM INTO the blackness of the empty box. The SCREEN goes dark.

MADISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Anyway, that's how it seemed at first.
The Book -- if that's actually what
they found -- was in their hands for
only a few hours. Later that night...

A bloodcurdling SCREAM rips through the darkness. SMASH TO

THE BOX

On the ground, forgotten. There's a sudden SPLASH OF COLOR. Dark RED, dripping into the box... then, quick glimpses of

A HAND

motionless, dripping BLOOD.

A FACE

upside down. Blindfolded.

WE PULL RAPIDLY BACK to see

THE SS OFFICER

Hanging from one foot, clearly dead, a KNIFE in his chest, BLOOD dripping, slowly filling the box. The image FREEZES, becomes grainy. The COLOR is suddenly, rapidly DRAINED from the image, becoming the

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH

that lies on Madison's desk.

MADISON

Stares at the photo, then looks at her captive audience.

MADISON (CONT'D)

It was only a legend. But now I may have proof of a ritualistic murder. The arrangement of the body was obviously a deliberate recreation of the Hanged Man card of the Tarot. And since the Tarot is a retelling of the Grail story, and the Bloody Book supposedly tells the location of the Grail... well, there are just too many Grail references here for this to be about anything else.

ALYSSA

This murder was so bizarre... how was it kept secret?

MADISON

Because whomever was doing the looking and the killing was all *about* secrecy.

ALYSSA

And that "whomever" is...?

MADISON

Somebody who was after the same thing the Nazis were.

(points at the cross)

The cross is clearly indicative of a secret society -- though not one I've run across before --

PHILIP

So you're saying that some secret society nobody's ever heard of murdered a guy over some mythical book about the mythical Holy Grail?

MADISON

Bernadette duBois' death certainly isn't a myth or an invention.

(beat)

Bernadette kept this photo for fifty years... and when she finally decided to tell her story, she became the story's latest victim.

They all look at each other, creeped out.

MADISON (CONT'D)

If I'd just talked to her after the lecture... or gotten here quicker... Maybe she'd still be alive. At the very least, I owe it to her to find out what really happened.

Madison stares back at the board, figuring out her next move.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Philip. Nazi reparations. I need to know what was recovered at that dig, and who it went to.

The door BANGS open. Everybody jumps. Victoria stands in the doorway, clearly ticked off.

MADISON (CONT'D)

For the love of God, Victoria --

PHILIP

I'll get that for you ASAP, Dr. Ellis.

He scurries off, edging around Victoria.

VICTORIA

Your proposal was supposed to be on my desk this morning.

ALYSSA

I've got some photocopying to do.

Alyssa scurries out. Madison glares after her. Traitor.

MADISON

With the events of last night --

VICTORIA

Your proposal should have been on my desk *before* the events of last night. But since it wasn't, and since I do have to start worrying about publicity, I'd love to hear about the theme you've decided upon.

Madison starts improvising like crazy.

MADISON

Well, I've been finding that many stories I've been researching have their roots in sources that coincide with -- you won't believe it -- several Renaissance artists.

VICTORIA

We have a rather large gallery, waiting to be filled with some sort of non-static exhibit that will engage people in a meaningful way.

MADISON

Non-static storytelling. Gotcha.

VICTORIA

Please don't tell me you've hired a Renaissance minstrel with a lute.

MADISON

Ummm... would that no-minstrels rule
cover mimes as well?

VICTORIA

A proposal. In writing. On my desk
by tomorrow evening.

And she's gone. Madison stares after her for a moment, then
turns back to her file. Victoria is already forgotten.

EXT. ELLIS HOUSE - EVENING

A large, welcoming-looking suburban house.

INT. ELLIS HOUSE

Madison, carrying the book, enters a brightly lit kitchen.
Her mother, CAROLYN, sits at the table, examining several
color pictures that lie on the table before her. Madison's
older sister AUDREY is cooking, while Audrey's daughter
BRIANNA (10) tries to set the table around Carolyn's photos.

CAROLYN

Brianna, honey, don't put cutlery
down on top of Lady Jane --

Brianna looks up and sees Madison. She drops the knives and
forks in a heap and flings herself at her favorite aunt.

BRIANNA

Madison! Is that book for me?

MADISON

No, this priceless book is for your
grandfather. For God's sake, don't
get chocolate or jelly or anything
on it. Hey, Sis.

Audrey nods at her. There's clearly not a lot of love lost
between the sisters. Brianna tugs at Madison's arm.

BRIANNA

Madison, I got an "A" on my project!
Mrs. Morrissey read it out loud in
front of the whole class. She didn't
read anybody else's paper out loud --

MADISON

That's fantastic!

BRIANNA

Yeah! All the other kids were really
jealous.

AUDREY

Brianna, that attitude won't win you many friends.

BRIANNA

Those kids are friends with whoever brings the most colors of *hopscotch chalk* to school. Besides, they didn't deserve to have their papers read out loud. They all wrote papers about robots and ponies and Barbies. My paper was *academic*, with footnotes, like Madison's. It was about how stories from long ago change but we still tell them. Like the story about alligators in the sewers was made up in 1935 but people still tell it and think it's true now...

Audrey shoots a look at Madison. She speaks lightly, but there's clearly a little bitterness behind her words.

AUDREY

Great. You've sucked my daughter into your insular little world.

Madison grins at Audrey, then turns to Brianna.

MADISON

Brianna. Friends are just as important as academic success.

BRIANNA

Whatever.

AUDREY

Bree, finish setting the table.

Brianna goes back to work. Madison looks at Audrey.

MADISON

What? You're right. I told her friends were important.

AUDREY

She's my daughter. Not yours.

This is clearly an old argument. Madison, not eager to pursue it, turns to her mom, who's still examining the book covers.

MADISON

Mom, are these your cover choices?

Carolyn nods. Madison leans down to look.

CLOSE ON BOOK COVERS

Various maidens wearing various shades of wafty material gaze adoringly up at various knights.

MADISON

points at one of the covers.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I like the red-haired maiden. She has a come-hither look that would explain how she managed to ascend to England's throne, yet she's demure enough to suggest why she didn't hold on to it.

CAROLYN

Lady Jane Grey didn't have red hair.

RANDALL (O.S.)

As if historical authenticity is important to your readers.

Carolyn and Madison look up. RANDALL ELLIS, an imposing looking man, moves into the room, clearly looking for something in an absent-minded way. Carolyn smiles.

CAROLYN

The history in my books is accurate --

RANDALL

Carolyn. Please. Lady Jane Grey did not swap bodies with a twenty-first century time traveler --

CAROLYN

But if she had, the time traveler would have found things exactly as I describe them in this book.

Madison hands her dad the book.

RANDALL

What's this?

MADISON

The Poe diary you asked for, smuggled out at great personal risk.

RANDALL

Ah. Yes. Are you staying for dinner?

MADISON

Not tonight. I just had something I wanted to run by you. Got a minute?

RANDALL

Of course. Let's talk in the study,
where it's peaceful...

INT. STUDY - EVENING

The kind of study you'd expect a historian to have. Books
spill from the bookcase and form large piles on the floor.

Randall looks absently at the Poe book.

MADISON

I know you're anxious to start
pondering the midnight dreary, but --

RANDALL

Poe's character doesn't ponder the
midnight dreary. He ponders *during*
the midnight dreary. Anyway, there
will be little pondering tonight.
Audrey's lost another job. I need
to make a fuss about dinner, and
watch a video she brought over in
the spirit of family togetherness.
My evening is shot.

MADISON

Okay. Cutting to the chase...

Madison puts the photograph down in front of her father.

MADISON (CONT'D)

First impressions.

Randall picks it up, studying it. He flips it over.

RANDALL

1945. Brittany. Hitler sent his
archaeologist, Otto Rahn, to search
for treasure in France in the middle
of the war. Nobody knows why, or
what he was looking for.

MADISON

The cross --

RANDALL

The Cross of Lorraine. The Free
French adopted it during the war --

MADISON

The Free French didn't use those
letters. They're alchemical symbols.

She points at the letters: I.A.A.T.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Ignis, Aer, Aqua, Terra. Fire, Air, Water, Earth. And the Knights Templar adopted the Cross as their emblem way before the Free French did.

RANDALL

I know there are a few stragglers around claiming to be modern-day Templars, but the real thing was wiped out in the fourteenth century.

MADISON

Right. Supposedly for heresy --

RANDALL

But really for being more powerful than the Church. Anyway, today's Templars are just --

MADISON

Wannabees.

RANDALL

Exactly. This is someone else.

Randall frowns, thinking.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

So. The Nazis find something, but before they can make use of it, they're stopped by someone who wants to make sure they're scared off. So they string this fellow up and paint their symbol on the wall in his blood. The Nazis were a superstitious lot. I'd imagine this kind of warning would put them off the search.

MADISON

This "someone"... a secret society?

RANDALL

If it's a secret society you're after... Hamilton is in town.

MADISON

Oh, please. Hamilton is like... the world's biggest anti-historian. He never met a conspiracy he didn't believe. He's probably the only man in the world who still believes in the Rosicrucians, for heaven's sake.

RANDALL

Which makes him the most likely person to know to whom this symbol belongs.

MADISON

You're not trying to set me up with him, are you?

RANDALL

You and Hamilton? Matter and antimatter? God forbid.

Madison laughs.

MADISON

Which one am I? Thanks, Dad. You never let me down.

The door opens. Madison's friend SHELLEY pokes her head in. She's dressed in workout clothes... the kind you wear after you've already spent lots and lots of time working out.

SHELLEY

Hey, Dr. Ellis. Ready, Madison?

MADISON

Oh, God. I forgot...

SHELLEY

No, no, no. You're not getting out of this, you slacker.

MADISON

I'm truly in the middle of something --

SHELLEY

If we get the chance to climb Everest, I will be ready. You will not.

MADISON

I did two hours day before yesterday.

SHELLEY

I did *three* hours yesterday.

MADISON

Great. Let's go do four hours and then we can both drop dead from exertion. See you later, Dad.

RANDALL

Have fun...

He pats his pockets absently and smiles.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Aha! There they are...

MADISON

What?

RANDALL

My keys. Been looking for them for hours. See you tomorrow, Madison.

Madison shoots a look at Shelley.

MADISON

If I survive Everest...

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Madison and Shelley are halfway up a rock-climbing wall. A couple of other PEOPLE are climbing as well, attached to harnesses. Madison and Shelley, scorning such safety measures, are crawling their way to the top unaided. They're also managing to carry on a conversation.

SHELLEY

Please tell me you're not getting all "Nancy Drew Investigates" about this.

MADISON

Bernadette came to *me* --

SHELLEY

Great. You're calling her Bernadette. You're emotionally bonding with her.

Shelley moves higher up the wall. Madison watches her.

MADISON

You have *got* to work on your addiction to Dr. Phil. I'm not "emotionally bonding" with her. She's dead... and I just need to find out *why*.

SHELLEY

You always need to find out why. Remember first grade? You wrecked Christmas by conclusively proving that Santa Claus was just a myth --

MADISON

Perpetuated by our parents. Yeah. Sorry about that.

SHELLEY

Look, Madison. Just... be careful. I mean... this is seriously scary.

MADISON

I'll be careful. And now that I've got you distracted...

With a burst of power, Madison turns into Spiderwoman, stretching and climbing, suddenly at the TOP of the wall.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Hand me my Tibetan prayer flag, the race to the summit is OVER.

SHELLEY

The race to the refreshments is ON.

Shelley races down the wall, Madison scurrying after her.

INT. BAKERY - EVENING

The bakery that Shelley owns. It's not too hip to be comfortable, and the coffee's great. Shelley and Madison sip coffee in what looks like a 50s breakfast nook. There are a few other customers, but the place is quiet.

MADISON

So. I know this... guy.

SHELLEY

Oooh, a guy.

MADISON

Not that kind of guy. His name is Hamilton...

SHELLEY

Cute?

MADISON

Passable.

SHELLEY

Successful?

MADISON

In his own field. He's a writer.

SHELLEY

Sounds like your type.

MADISON

He writes garbage. He'll take two completely unrelated things, like, say, the Rosicrucians, who didn't exist, and "prove" they defeated the Nazis with the aid of British witches.

SHELLEY

People read this stuff?

MADISON

People hold conventions about this stuff. And Hamilton's like the Stephen King of alternate history. They adore him.

(MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

He travels around on this boat he built, collecting weird, expensive junk.

SHELLEY

So how can he help?

MADISON

He's the world's biggest conspiracy theorist, with more information in his head than a library. And he has a crush on me.

SHELLEY

So it's easy. Trade sex for information.

Shelley's a little loud. Madison notices a man (SINCLAIR, 30s, handsome) looking at them. Madison gives him a look. He smiles slightly and retreats behind his book.

MADISON

I'm not trading anything for anything.

SHELLEY

Right. I can see why you'd want to avoid spending time with a passably cute famous writer who's crazy about you and who could help solve your bizzarro mystery with a wave of his ink-stained hand.

Madison reaches for the coffee pot. Shelley grabs it away.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

No more. You have work to do.

MADISON

You are a being of pure evil.

SHELLEY

Call the Boat Guy.

EXT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A nondescript apartment building. The building's dark. Clearly just about everyone is in bed.

Madison heads up the walkway to the building.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Madison unlocks the front door and opens it.

THE HALLWAY

Is dark. Too dark.

MADISON

Clicks the light switch. Nothing. She snaps on the teeny HELLO KITTY FLASHLIGHT that's on her key chain. It's not helpful. Madison can now see about six inches in front of her. As she steps into the hall... CRUNCH. She looks down.

SHATTERED GLASS

Covers the floor... glass from the LIGHT BULB.

Madison hesitates, then strides towards her apartment door.

CREAK.

Madison freezes.

CREAK CREAK CREAK.

Footsteps.

MADISON

Hello?

Nobody answers. Madison FLINGS herself at the door, trying to fit her key into the lock as the footsteps start to RUN.

CLICK!

The key SLIDES into the lock. Frantically, Madison turns the key and FLINGS the door open, fumbling for the switch just inside, sending a flood of LIGHT into the hallway.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT

The footsteps are fading now, clearly retreating.

Madison SLAMS the door. As she does, she SEES something tacked to the INSIDE of the door -- A TAROT CARD.

CLOSE ON CARD

It's bent, creased, old, the edges worn. It shows a stylized, painted MAN, hanging upside down by one foot, arms down, blindfolded. Just like the NAZI in Bernadette's photograph.

MADISON

Stares down at the card, her hand shaking. There's only one way to take this... as a warning.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MADISON'S OFFICE - MORNING

Madison looks at a bulletin board, upon which is tacked the GERMAN PHOTO and BERNADETTE'S OBITUARY. Alyssa watches as she tacks the TAROT CARD up.

ALYSSA

Whoa. The Hanged Man again. Where'd you get that?

MADISON

Tacked to the door of my apartment.

ALYSSA

Okay, that is not good. I don't suppose you called the police...

MADISON

And tell them what? That I'm being stalked by a crazed gypsy?

Philip, looking pleased, enters waving a FOLDER at Madison.

PHILIP

I've got something.

Madison leaps up, excited, and grabs the folder. One piece of paper flutters out. It's a photocopy of a NEWSPAPER STORY.

MADISON

This is it?

PHILIP

Hey. It took me *hours* to find that.

ALYSSA

What's it say?

MADISON

It's a receipt from a reparations agency. Everything from the dig was loaded on a train and sent to Paris. But in a bit of incredibly bad timing, the train rolled through a village called Oradour just as the Germans were torching it. Nothing survived.

PHILIP

At least it's an answer. Better to know than not know, right?

Madison just looks at him. He backs towards the door.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

I'll just go, then.

Philip departs. Madison sighs and pins the paper onto the rather pathetically underpopulated bulletin board.

ALYSSA

Bummer. The Bloody Book, blown up in Oradour.

MADISON

Or maybe whoever killed the Nazi got it first. There's only one thing left to do... throw myself to the wolves. Well, wolf. Singular.

Off Alyssa's sympathetic look...

EXT. HAMILTON'S BOAT - DAY

An eccentrically painted boat that looks as if it's been around the world a few times... which it has.

INT. HAMILTON'S BOAT

Madison and HAMILTON (30s, good-looking but intense) sit in a cabin crowded with bizarre items. Hamilton's got everything from fertility statues to Fauvist paintings. There may even be a Beanie Baby lying around somewhere. Hamilton is clearly excited, showing off his collection.

HAMILTON

And this is a fragment of a letter written by the *real* William Shakespeare, not that Stratford fellow who fronted for him.

MADISON

For God's sake, Hamilton, not everything is a conspiracy.

Hamilton's used to dissenting opinions and does what he always does... moves on. He holds up a SWAMP THING comic.

HAMILTON

Not terribly valuable, but it does feature the first appearance of John Constantine. Of Hellblazer fame.

MADISON

That's great. But I'm really interested in hearing about... this.

She shows Hamilton a sketch of the symbol. He stares at it, clearly unsettled, then looks at Madison.

HAMILTON

Ormus.

MADISON

Ormus?

HAMILTON

A secret society that modified the Templar cross to reflect its belief in Alchemy and Magic.

MADISON

Another bunch of Templar wannabees?

HAMILTON

Just the opposite. They provided "evidence" that justified burning the Templars. And while the fires were still hot, they started burning women. They betrayed Joan of Arc --

MADISON

Why women? Why Joan?

HAMILTON

She was a woman with power. And... a calling. She was dangerous.

MADISON

So they burned Joan.

HAMILTON

Along with thousands of other women who embodied power, who threatened Ormus with their knowledge. You see, the cross that Ormus corrupted has three bars, symbolizing three forces. Three kinds of power. One creative, one destructive... and another, mysterious force. Joan, and the other women they killed, embodied that third force. Ormus wants it. If they can't manipulate it... they'll destroy those who can.

MADISON

Wants it? They're still around?

HAMILTON

I do know those who may have connections with the modern-day incarnation of Ormus.

MADISON

And will you be mingling with them while you're in town?

HAMILTON

I will be attending an auction... at which a variety of interesting people will be in attendance.

MADISON

You're formal when you're evasive.

HAMILTON

And you're forward when you're angling for an invitation. Madison... these people are not to be taken lightly.

MADISON

I know. But... it's too late to turn back now.

Hamilton sighs.

HAMILTON

This evening. Eight o'clock. Black tie, of course.

MADISON

Of course.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

A rundown theater that looks as if it dates from the twenties.

INT. THEATER

It's small, dark and creepy in that way old theaters are. An AUCTIONEER in a tux stands on the stage, showing off a WATERCOLOR PAINTING. The expensively dressed MEN and WOMEN who are bidding are out for blood; the bidding is fierce. Madison, who's sitting next to Hamilton, watches, fascinated.

MADISON

I didn't think that pastoral landscapes were the kind of thing these guys would be thirsting for.

HAMILTON

It's one of Hitler's paintings.

MADISON

Hitler owned that?

HAMILTON

Hitler *Painted* that.

The gavel slams down. The painting is carried off.

AUCTIONEER

Next, hand-painted Tarot cards, once owned by Heinrich Himmler himself...

Madison looks at her auction catalogue, and sees

A PHOTOGRAPH

of a ragged-looking deck of Tarot Cards. The HANGED MAN is prominently displayed. It looks identical to the one that was left tacked to Madison's front door, which means it's exactly the same as the photo of the dead Nazi.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

We'll open at five hundred.

Madison lifts her paddle. Almost immediately, an OLDER WOMAN behind Madison bids.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Six hundred. Going once...

Madison waves her paddle again. The woman follows suit. Madison turns to look at her. The woman looks at her coolly, then nods, conceding. It's odd. Madison raises her paddle.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Going once, twice... sold for seven hundred to number twenty-six.

MADISON

God. Victoria is going to kill me.

INT. THEATER - LATER

There's a break in the action as the auction workers haul an unsavory looking statue onstage. Madison, who has paid for the Tarot deck, is dying to look at them, but not right here.

MADISON

I'll be right back.

Before Hamilton can answer, Madison hurries out.

INT. THEATER LOBBY

Madison, clutching the cards, starts to look at them. Her eye is caught by a MOVEMENT nearby. She turns. A curtain that leads into the theater is swaying, as if someone just came through it... but there's nobody there. Spooked, Madison looks around, then ducks through a doorway labeled BALCONY.

INT. THEATER BALCONY

It's as dimly lit and once-grand-now-shabby as the rest of the theatre. Madison takes the deck out of the case. There is, inevitably, a SWASTIKA stamped on the case.

MADISON

German expressionism, reminiscent of Beckmann...

Madison stops when she reaches the HIGH PRIESTESS CARD.

CLOSE ON CARD

A CROWNED WOMAN, a CROSS OF LORRAINE around her neck, sits between two pillars, one black and the other white. She holds a SCROLL. On the scroll are the letters I.A.A.T.

MADISON

stares at the card, stunned.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Ormus, imposing their symbol on the High Priestess. Taking her power.

SINCLAIR (O.S.)

Himmler's Tarot. A little unsettling, karmically speaking.

Madison whirls, dropping the cards, and sees Sinclair standing right beside her. He smiles.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I startled you.

MADISON

Yeah, being silently crept up on out of the darkness will startle a person.

She looks back at Sinclair. He seems curiously familiar.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I've seen you. At the bakery. Last night.

He smiles at her with a whole "ah, yes, women ALWAYS remember me" kind of expression.

SINCLAIR

How flattering that you remember.

MADISON

So what are you doing *here*?

SINCLAIR

I'm a collector. Like you. Hugh Sinclair. Happy to meet you.

Madison moves to pick up the cards. Sinclair bends to help. As Madison picks up a second card, he takes hold of it at the same moment, his hand touching hers. He stares at the two cards Madison holds.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

The Magician and the High Priestess. Yin and yang. Light and dark.

MADISON

Male and female.

SINCLAIR

A meeting of opposites?

MADISON

Or the striking of a balance. Two equals, each as important as the other.

SINCLAIR

I'm beginning to understand your interest in these.

He taps his finger on the High Priestess Card.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Ignis, aer, aqua, terra. And a Cross of Lorraine. Ormus.

MADISON

You know about Ormus?

SINCLAIR

A little. They go to great lengths to guard their secrets from outsiders.

MADISON

Lengths that don't stop at murder?

SINCLAIR

Yet you are, rather publicly, trying to ferret out those secrets.

MADISON

I don't know who you really are, but if you're trying to intimidate me --

SINCLAIR

I'm merely trying to point out that your investigation... well, some might call it a dangerous occupation.

MADISON

What would you call it?

Sinclair smiles, all dark charisma and dangerous appeal.

SINCLAIR

A shared interest that might better be discussed over a drink...

Madison hesitates, drawn to him. Then she comes to her senses. This is possibly an evil Ormus guy. She pulls away.

MADISON

Look, I'm here with someone --

SINCLAIR

Ah. Yes. Hamilton. You can do better.

Madison is stung.

MADISON

I *do* do better. We're not on a *date*.

SINCLAIR

Good to know.

Madison's getting the hell out of here. As she turns to go...

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Ormus never found the Bloody Book.

Madison stops. Sinclair smiles.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

If they had found it, found a way to harness its power... we'd all know.

MADISON

What *is* the Bloody Book?

SINCLAIR

Have a nice evening, Ms. Ellis.

MADISON

That's DR. Ellis. Damn it.

But he's already gone.

INT. ELLIS HOUSE

The family is gathered in the living room. The TV is on, but nobody's watching. Carolyn and Randall play Scrabble, Audrey reads, and Brianna scribbles in a notebook. Madison is clearly itching to talk to her dad.

MADISON

You were right, Dad. Hamilton recognized the symbol. It's a group called Ormus, a secret society that's actually managed to remain a secret.

RANDALL

The symbol?

MADISON

Yeah, you know. The Cross of Lorraine, the Hermetic symbols...

RANDALL

Oh, yes. Of course. The symbols.

Carolyn smiles a little too brightly, and changes the subject.

CAROLYN

Madison, you may be interested to know that I did choose the redhead...

MADISON

Yeah, she was my favorite. Dad --

AUDREY

I liked the brunette.

Madison looks at Audrey. She seems tense.

MADISON

How's the job search? I could put in a word at the museum gift shop --

AUDREY

Thanks, but I'd feel weird selling souvenir ashtrays in a place my little sister practically runs.

MADISON

I am far from practically running the museum.

AUDREY

I'll find something on my own.

Audrey leaves the room. Madison's frustrated.

MADISON

I think she'd really like that job.

RANDALL

You're her little sister, and she already sees you as being more successful than she is. It's hard for her to accept your help. Just... don't stop offering.

Madison sighs and turns back to her dad.

MADISON

I know you're busy pondering the midnight dreary and all --

RANDALL

The midnight dreary?

MADISON

The Poe diary?

RANDALL

Excuse me, Madison, I believe I may
have a triple word score.

He bends over the board, clearly avoiding her. Madison,
confused, stands.

MADISON

Well... Ormus calls. Better run...

EXT. MUSEUM - NIGHT

The museum's closed. There's a LIGHT on in Madison's office.

INT. MADISON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Madison stands in front of her bulletin board, holding the
Tarot deck. She pins a card on the board. Alyssa stands
beside her, trying to help Madison work this out.

MADISON

The Tarot tells the story of the
search for the Holy Grail. The Fool
represents one of Arthur's knights,
searching for the Grail.

CLOSE ON CARD

The Fool. The first card of the Tarot. A carefree young man
steps off a cliff. Madison's hand places another card: an
elderly MAN with a long white beard and eyes in shadow.

MADISON (CONT'D)

The knight meets Arthur's magician.

ALYSSA

Merlin?

MADISON

Right. And Merlin has a female
counterpoint. The light to his dark.
The High Priestess. Morgan le Fay.

She places the High Priestess card next to Merlin.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Only Morgan can guide the knight.
She has the Book that holds the secret
of the Grail's location. The Bloody
Book. But Ormus finds her.

Madison turns the card around, hiding the Priestess.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Ormus silences the Priestess. The
Book vanishes. And then...

She hesitates.

MADISON (CONT'D)

And then *what*?

Alyssa looks at her.

ALYSSA

Coffee?

MADISON

Definitely.

Alyssa smiles and heads off. Madison stares at the cards. As she ponders, she hears a muted NOISE outside the office.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Alyssa?

There's no answer. After a moment, there's a stealthy FOOTSTEP, as if someone's trying not to be heard.

Madison clicks off the light, then moves to the window. She eases herself onto the ledge. She JUMPS to the next window. She's in luck. The window is ajar. She slides through.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Madison picks up a small, solid STATUE.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madison steps into the hall. It's empty. Her office door is open. A FLASHLIGHT moves inside.

INT. MADISON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Madison THROWS the door open. There's a MAN by her desk. He WHIRLS. He's wearing a plastic Halloween mask. As the man moves, she whips the statue around and CLONKS him on the head. Hard. He goes down. Madison runs.

INT. MADISON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Madison, a GUARD in tow, races down the hall to her office. The door is now closed. Madison flings it open.

MADISON

There!

GUARD

There, what?

Madison looks. The man is gone. But, left behind... the MASK, smiling smugly, its empty eyeholes staring up at her...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MADISON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A weary Cooper holds a bag that contains the mask. He looks at Madison. Alyssa hovers, concerned, in the background.

DETECTIVE COOPER

Next time, don't be a superhero.
Call 911.

MADISON

I really didn't have time...

DETECTIVE COOPER

Word of advice. Whatever you've
gotten involved in... opt out.

Cooper walks off. Madison glowers at his back.

MADISON

Easy for you to say.

ALYSSA

I think he has a valid point. I
mean... look at this place.

Madison looks at her office, which looks like a tornado hit it. The intruder was obviously looking for something. As Alyssa starts picking Tarot cards off the floor, Madison turns and looks at the white board. The PHOTOGRAPH is gone.

MADISON

The picture? That's what he wanted?

VICTORIA (O.S.)

If you had followed proper procedure,
this wouldn't have happened.

Madison jumps. Victoria's suddenly there, as if she's just beamed in.

MADISON

What are you talking about?

VICTORIA

Obviously, the thief was after your
illegal auction purchase.

MADISON

No, the cards are still here.

VICTORIA

This museum does not deal in illegally
obtained art --

Madison holds up the Magician card. Victoria stares at it. Her instincts take over.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
German modernism...?

MADISON
Or Expressionism. Looks a little like Beckmann to me.

VICTORIA
That would be incredible... but we can't display them without a trail of ownership. We need provenances.

MADISON
Then I'll get them.

VICTORIA
See that you do. And... your exhibit?

MADISON
Moving right along.

VICTORIA
No more trouble. I mean it.

Madison nods. Victoria leaves. Madison and Alyssa turn back to the mess left behind by the intruder...

INT. BAKERY - MORNING

Madison sits at a small table by the window, writing. Shelley comes over with coffee. She refills Madison's cup.

SHELLEY
I've decided to start local band night again. Friday. Be here.

MADISON
Work. Exhibit. Me. Screwed.

SHELLEY
Caffeinate. You'll feel better.

Shelley heads back to the counter. Alyssa rushes in and drops into the seat across from Madison.

ALYSSA
Call me genius.

MADISON
Genius. What do you have?

ALYSSA
One train survived Oradour.
(MORE)

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

I found documentation. There were archaeological finds on the train.

MADISON

That's fantastic!

ALYSSA

Even more fantastic. The Allies didn't know what to do with this junk, so they handed it off to French scholars. And... I have some names.

MADISON

How many?

ALYSSA

Six. Descendants of the original scholars. All still in France.

MADISON

I'm going.

ALYSSA

To France? I've got phone numbers --

MADISON

Whatever's going on, I'm not the only one after this thing. I make a phone call, and Joe Ormus is on the next plane to Paris, following MY lead. I'm going to get there first.

ALYSSA

But this is just where the stuff went after the war. It could be long gone. And there's no way Victoria will let you expense this.

MADISON

But someone else might...

EXT. STATELY MANSION - LATER

A well-maintained mansion that screams old money.

INT. MANSION

Madison is being shown into a drawing room by a BUTLER.

BUTLER

Follow me to the Games Room, Miss..

Madison follows the butler into

INT. GAME ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Which is all burnished wood and polished brass. A SNOOKER TABLE dominates the room, but the butler leads Madison past it, to a state-of-the-art plasma TV. Sitting cross-legged on the floor is THOMAS ASHBLESS (60s), founder of the museum and all-around rich guy. Ashbless is hunched over a PlayStation2, playing a hard and fast game of Vice City.

BUTLER

Miss Madison Ellis, Sir.

The butler leaves. Ashbless keeps playing.

ASHBLESS

Dr. Ellis.

MADISON

Mr. Ashbless. This is a far cry from the billiards I was expecting.

ASHBLESS

Would you like to play?

MADISON

No, thanks. I came to ask you something. A big favor. For me.

ASHBLESS

And for your exhibit?

MADISON

Yes.

ASHBLESS

Granted.

MADISON

But you don't even know what it is.

ASHBLESS

Victoria phoned. She ranted about how you were destroying the museum's reputation, that you bought something illegal, that someone fell out of your office window, some other stuff.

MADISON

I can explain --

ASHBLESS

To vex Victoria this much, you must be on the trail of something good.

MADISON

I am... but I need to go to France.

ASHBLESS

As I said... granted.

MADISON

Wow. I don't know what to say --

ASHBLESS

Just find an interesting story.

MADISON

Thank you.

ASHBLESS

You know, you've made a greater enemy of Victoria by coming to me.

MADISON

I don't have a choice.

ASHBLESS

I know...

He's done. He turns back to his game. Madison, feeling oddly comforted, leaves.

INT. ELLIS HOUSE - EVENING

Madison enters, finding Carolyn in the kitchen.

MADISON

Hey Mom, where's the big suitcase?

CAROLYN

Spare bedroom closet. Going somewhere?

MADISON

France. Research.

CAROLYN

How lovely. Have fun!

Madison hesitates, expecting a few motherly questions or bits of advice on going up the Eiffel Tower or avoiding the line for the Mona Lisa at the Louvre. Nothing.

MADISON

I'm just hoping to not get killed, but I'll try to make time for fun.

CAROLYN

That's a good idea, dear.

Carolyn's clearly distracted. Madison shrugs and heads off to find the big suitcase.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM

Madison opens the closet and pulls down the world's most gigantic suitcase. The whirlwind that is Brianna rushes in.

BRIANNA

Are you going somewhere? Can I go?

MADISON

Sorry, honey. Not this time. It's a research trip, to France --

BRIANNA

I want to go. The Eiffel tower is in France.

MADISON

I don't think I'll be seeing the Eiffel tower this trip.

BRIANNA

Well, anyway, I wanted to give you my paper. The one I got an "A" on.

MADISON

I think your mom would love that --

BRIANNA

No. She doesn't care.

MADISON

Of course she cares.

BRIANNA

She's mad because I let you help me, instead of asking her. But I've moved past her intellectually anyway.

Madison's amused, and horrified.

MADISON

Really.

BRIANNA

All she thinks about is showing up my dad by finding the perfect guy.

MADISON

She said that?

BRIANNA

Well, not exactly. But it's her fault my dad left.

MADISON

It's nobody's fault, Brianna.

(MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

Your parents just... grew apart.
Your mom's doing the best she can.

BRIANNA

I wish Mom was more like you.

AUDREY (O.S.)

Brianna, time to go.

Brianna and Madison look up, startled. Audrey's in the doorway, looking grim. Brianna doesn't argue, just heads for the door. Audrey remains, staring at Madison.

MADISON

Hey, Audrey --

AUDREY

Don't teach my daughter to sneer at me.

Yikes. Audrey overheard.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

You have no idea how hard it is to be a single mother.

MADISON

No. I don't. But I can't just shove Brianna away when she asks me for help. She's ten. Her hurt feelings are a bigger deal than yours or mine.

AUDREY

She should be asking *me* for help.

MADISON

Maybe you should ask her why she doesn't, instead of yelling at me.

Audrey looks at the suitcase Madison holds.

AUDREY

Wow. Talk about metaphors.

MADISON

What?

AUDREY

That suitcase is like a metaphor for your whole life. You're always running away from this family.

MADISON

What are you talking about? I'm here, like, every night --

AUDREY

You drop in to bring my daughter presents, compliment Mom on her books, engage Dad in some intellectual conversation... meanwhile, I'm over making dinner and cleaning up while you act like a visitor.

MADISON

I can't deal with this right now.

AUDREY

Of course you can't. Have a great trip. I'm sure you'll bring Brianna back something wonderful.

Madison, stunned, stands there as Audrey leaves. After a moment, she picks up the suitcase and goes.

EXT. PARIS - DAY

It's a lovely day in Paris. Madison stops in front of a BUILDING with a stone archway. Flags decorate the building.

MADISON

31 Avenue Bosquet. American University. Good place to start.

Madison enters.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - LATER

Madison exits. She crosses something off her list.

MADISON

Okay, first dead end.

Madison heads off, passing a MAN who is reading Le Monde. As Madison passes, the man lowers the paper. It's SINCLAIR. He tucks the paper under his arm and follows Madison.

EXT. CAFE - LATER

Madison, clearly exhausted, nurses a coffee.

THE LIST

Every address is crossed out...

MADISON

Stares at the list.

MADISON

I must have missed something.

She pulls out a MAP of the city. The addresses she's visited are marked on the map. Madison stares at it, trying to decide what to do next. Then, suddenly, she sees something.

Madison grabs a pen and starts to draw, connecting each address with the next. A bar forms... then a crossbar... then another. A perfect CROSS OF LORRAINE. Madison circles the point between the two crossbars. The exact center of the cross. She bends to read the name she's circled.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Rue Rene Descartes.

She hesitates, then...

MADISON (CONT'D)
I've done crazier things.

She swigs the coffee, using it as courage.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Don't let me down, Monsieur Descartes.

Madison finishes her coffee and leaves, unknowingly passing SINCLAIR, who stands and follows.

EXT. RUE RENE DESCARTES - LATER

Madison, map in hand, moves along the street, staring at each house, each storefront, each sign.

MADISON
It's got to be in this block. I
just need a clue...

She stops, staring up at a gloomy-looking house.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Or a huge neon sign.

The house is liberally decorated with gargoyles, statues, and carved stone. All jut out from the house... but one carving doesn't -- an inverted, *schacciato* relief of a woman in armor, her hair flowing over her shoulders. She holds a SWORD in one hand, a CROSS OF LORRAINE in the other, giving them up to God. She's hidden unless you look for her.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Joan of Arc.

She walks up to the door and firmly knocks. Moments later, the door is opened by an ELDERLY WOMAN (GENEVIEVE DE MOLAY).

MADISON (CONT'D)
My name is Madison Ellis, and --

Madison realizes she's speaking English.

GENEVIEVE

I have some English. I am Genevieve de Molay.

MADISON

This might sound strange. You have this carving over your door, and...

GENEVIEVE

You have come about the artifacts. My father tell me to keep the house and wait... Somebody will come.

She opens the door wider and smiles at the startled Madison.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

Please. Come in.

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

Madison follows Genevieve down a narrow FLIGHT OF STAIRS. The cellar is big, and every single inch of floor space is filled with BOOKSHELVES that tower to the ceiling.

GENEVIEVE

There are many treasures my father collected, for his entire life.

MADISON

I'm looking for a manuscript.

She hesitates, looking at the room.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I'm not sure where to start...

GENEVIEVE

If you are worthy, you will find it.

Madison looks at Genevieve, surprised. Genevieve leads her to a bookshelf against the wall. The books here are different, homemade almost. All battered leather.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

My father's records of all he found. You will discover what you seek here.

(beat)

I will leave you alone.

Genevieve leaves. Madison turns to the bookshelf. There are hundreds of battered leather books on those shelves. She pulls out a book, opens it carefully.

CLOSE ON BOOK

The pages are covered in writing and sketches, unintelligible if you don't know what you're looking for.

Madison closes the book. On the SPINE is a stamped number -- 167864. Madison examines the other books. They all have stamped numbers on their spines.

MADISON
154678... 567431... 769831...
(beat)
All of them have six numbers, not in any order. Okay. Something with numbers... a sequence of numbers?

Madison moves to another shelf, going left to right.

MADISON (CONT'D)
857142... 714285... 571428...
(beat)
Wait a minute.

She reads them in the other direction, right to left.

MADISON (CONT'D)
571428. 714285. 857142.
(beat)
The same numbers in sequence.

She goes to the next book.

MADISON (CONT'D)
428571. 285714. Why is this so familiar...?
(beat; realizing)
The sacred number. The Ennead.
142857. The Number of the Goddess Morgan le Fay believed in.

Excited, Madison scans the spines of the books, now knowing the mysterious order of the collection.

MADISON (CONT'D)
142857. Bingo.

Madison opens the book. It's filled with the same type of scribbling, but something falls out of the book. Madison bends down to pick it up. It's a TAROT CARD -- the Hermit.

MADISON (CONT'D)
The Hermit. The solitary wise one who shines a light on the path.
(beat)
Consider that light shined.

Madison flips carefully through the book.

BOOK - FIRST PAGE

Written in bold script: "The Door is within."

Madison turns the page.

BOOK - NEXT PAGE

It's the beginning of a story, written in tiny script, covering the entire page.

Madison squints, reading the tiny print.

MADISON (CONT'D)
It's the Grail quest. Merlin, King
Arthur, Morgan le Fay...

She flips through the book.

MADISON (CONT'D)
With illustrations.

BOOK - PAGE

A rough sketch of a KNIGHT on horseback.

Madison flips past another chapter to

BOOK - ANOTHER PAGE

A SKETCH of three stones -- two large ones propped up against each other, one smaller stone in front. Below it is written "Here lies Ambrosius."

Madison starts to turn the page, then stops.

SKETCH - A CLOSER LOOK

Almost hidden, a faint CROSS OF LORRAINE.

There's a CRASH from upstairs. Madison turns.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Genevieve?

She closes the book and rushes up the stairs. She shoves the door. Something's in the way. With a shove, Madison pushes it open. As she steps into the living room

A BLOODY HAND

Thanks to the ground in front of her.

Madison gasps, horrified as she sees

GENEVIEVE DE MOLAY

Slumped on the carpet, sightless eyes staring upwards, dead. A KNIFE protrudes from her chest. Her other hand, covered in blood, has drawn FOUR LETTERS on the baseboard. I.A.A.T.

A MAN, wearing a cheap MASK, appears in the doorway, blocking Madison's exit from the house. Madison, terrified, heads the only place she can: back down into the cellar.

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

The door SMACKS open. Madison takes the stairs two at a time. The man is fast, gaining on her. Madison falls deliberately, using her momentum to slide downstairs, hitting the floor with a thump and racing through the maze of bookcases. The man DIVES, grabbing her ankle. Madison falls hard. The man stands over her, knife in his hand. As Madison tries to scramble to her feet...

SINCLAIR

Is there, throwing the masked man back into a bookcase.

The man scrambles to his feet and runs for the stairs. Sinclair and Madison give chase, but the man knocks A BOOKCASE over, into their path. He races up the stairs, then turns, brandishing a LIGHTER. It flickers, eerie... The man HURLS IT DOWN THE STAIRS. It lands on a pile of books. The books, dry and old, FLARE UP, almost EXPLODING into FLAME, driving Madison and Sinclair away from the stairs.

SINCLAIR AND MADISON

Dive for cover as the books start to go up like fireworks. Above them, the door SLAMS and LOCKS. They're trapped.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

The BOXES are burning. BLINDING SMOKE fills the room.

MADISON AND SINCLAIR

Are emptying shelves, their goal a

SMALL WINDOW

High up on the far wall.

As they work, Madison babbles.

MADISON

-- it's a handwritten story of the
Grail quest, very lurid and Arthurian,
but there are hidden clues in it.

Sinclair looks back at the burning books.

SINCLAIR

If you're telling me this in hopes
that the information will live on
after you, you may have chosen the
wrong person. Let's move.

Madison glances up at the now empty bookcase.

MADISON

This can't be any harder than the
wall at the gym.

She flies up the shelves, impressing herself... and Sinclair.
She tries the window. It won't open. She throws all her
weight behind it. Finally, it gives with a CRACK.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Madison drops, rolling aside to avoid being squashed by the
plummeting Sinclair. Smoke billows out after him. She stares
at him, not sure how to take any of this.

MADISON

It's now hard for you to hide the
fact that you've been following me.

SINCLAIR

Luckily for you.

MADISON

I held my own.

SINCLAIR

Once I'd saved you from being
butchered, like the old lady.

Without a word, Madison gets up and starts to limp away.
Sinclair gets up, too, and follows Madison down the street.

MADISON

That old lady was "butchered" because
I came here. Two people have died.
Because of me.

SINCLAIR

No. Two people have died because of
the Bloody Book. Genevieve knew
this day might come.

Madison turns on him.

MADISON

What do you know about all this?
Who are you?

SINCLAIR

I'm what I told you. A collector.
Like you. Nothing more.

MADISON

A collector. Right. I collect
stories. I thought this was just
another story... another puzzle for
me. Something to write a paper about.
But this book... people have been
martyred for it. Others have murdered
for it. All throughout history.
And because I talked about the stupid
Book in my lecture, I started the
whole thing up again. They killed
Bernadette, and when they couldn't
scare me off, they killed Genevieve --

SINCLAIR

It's not too late to walk away.

MADISON

It is for me.

Sinclair looks down at the book, then back at her. There's
a long moment, then Madison holds the book out.

MADISON (CONT'D)

You did save my life. I guess.

Sinclair flips through it.

SINCLAIR

You're right. A simple Grail story.

MADISON

Not so simple.

(beat)

There's a clue hidden in one of the illustrations. A sketch of three rocks. Underneath is written "Here lies Ambrosius."

SINCLAIR

Ambrosius. Another name for Merlin.

MADISON

Those stones mark Merlin's Cave, where he was imprisoned. It's in Paimpont Forest. The Broceliande.

SINCLAIR

Which is also the source of all Grail stories in France.

MADISON

Right.

SINCLAIR

This is a little... speculative.

MADISON

You don't have to come.

SINCLAIR

Yes. I do.

EXT. BROCELIANDE FOREST - NIGHT

It's eerie, beautiful. This is Brittany's version of Glastonbury -- a sacred pagan site. Madison and Sinclair stand at the edge of the forest, which is scraggly and not as lush as it used to be.

Sinclair follows Madison down a path. The moon is very bright, casting strange shadows so that the forest looks enchanted.

MADISON

Here. Merlin's final resting place.

Before them are the THREE STONES from the drawing. Madison crouches down, examining the stones. Sinclair looks around.

SINCLAIR

So now what? We start digging?

Madison shakes her head. She rises, looking around. At the edge of the forest, seen only dimly, is a building. Madison points towards it.

Madison points. At the edge of the forest is a CHURCH. On the outside, it looks like a castle.

MADISON

It's the Church of the Holy Grail.

SINCLAIR

The Grail Castle.

MADISON

The final stop in the Grail quest.
The question is: are we worthy enough
to find what we're looking for?

INT. CHURCH - LATER

It's dark, the only light the MOON streaming in through glorious STAINED GLASS WINDOWS.

SINCLAIR

These are not the Stations of the
Cross I'm used to.

Indeed, the artwork looks schizophrenic -- in one painting, Jesus stands next to the magician Merlin.

MADISON

The church was refurbished in 1942,
and to sort of commemorate the fact
that the Grail stories were set around
here, the Abbot in charge merged
Christian and Grail icons.

SINCLAIR

So now what? I mean, if this is the
Grail castle, I'd imagine it would
have been pulled apart by Grail
hunters long before now.

MADISON

It's not that easy. You have to
know where to look.

SINCLAIR

And you do?

MADISON

I'm thinking.

She walks around, looking at the windows, at the art work, at anything that might spark an idea. She suddenly stops.

MADISON (CONT'D)

There was a Tarot card in the book.
The Hermit.

SINCLAIR

So?

MADISON

It's the ninth card of the Tarot.

(beat)

The Ennead, the mystical number that led me to the clues that got us here... is 142857. When you add the numbers together you get twenty-seven. Add two and seven together --

SINCLAIR

You get nine.

MADISON

Merlin was imprisoned within nine circles. The boundaries of the mortal world are marked by the ninth wave. Nine is the number of magic...

Madison has arrived at her destination -- a PAINTING of Jesus, who has fallen for the third time. Standing above him is the sorceress MORGAN LE FAY. Sinclair joins Madison.

SINCLAIR

Is that...?

MADISON

Morgan le Fay. Kind of the Mary Magdalene of Grail lore. And this is the *ninth* station of the cross.

Madison kneels, starts pushing at stones and bricks. She glances up at Sinclair.

MADISON (CONT'D)

You could help.

Sinclair kneels down and begins helping. Madison pushes hard and almost loses her balance as she finds a stone that's loose. Sinclair helps, and they manage to rock the stone out of its spot. Madison coughs at the dust. She reaches in, tentative. She looks at Sinclair, startled, as she pulls out something wrapped in CLOTH. Madison carefully opens it.

AN ILLUMINATED PAGE

From a manuscript; very ancient, brittle. The edges of the page are gilded and decorated, and the script is beautiful. It looks like gibberish to us.

Madison stares at it, absorbing it.

SINCLAIR

Welsh?

MADISON

British. The language of the pre-Saxon Britons.

SINCLAIR

Which I suppose you speak.

MADISON

Nobody speaks it. I can read it. Enough to get by, anyway.

SINCLAIR

I'm impressed.

MADISON

Yeah, well. Stick around.

SINCLAIR

So? What does it say?

Madison stands, reverently covering the page with the cloth. As she turns, she's knocked backwards by a FIGURE that scrabbles at the page, trying to rip it from her hand. Madison hits the ground, clinging to the page, trying to scramble away from her attacker while protecting her find.

The man throws himself on Madison, pinning her down, frantically grabbing at the page. He's suddenly lifted into the air, flung backwards, his head hitting the floor. Madison looks up, still clinging to the page. Sinclair stands over the man, who lies, dazed, on the ground.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Madison...

MADISON

I'm okay.

She gets to her feet, checking the page for damage, then looks down at the man. He's wearing that damn MASK.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Okay, Jason or Freddy or --

Madison RIPS the mask from the man's face. She's stunned.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Philip?

Philip stares at the page hungrily.

PHILIP

I have to have it.

MADISON

One word: no way in hell.

Sinclair hauls Philip to his feet. Philip's torn shirt rips further, revealing a red ORMUS SYMBOL tattooed between his shoulder blades. Madison stares at it.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Looks like Ormus has one less member.

PHILIP

That page belongs to us.

MADISON

No. It doesn't. But I know why you want it. I know what it is.

PHILIP

Then you're in great danger.

MADISON

And so is Ormus...

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Two POLICE OFFICERS haul Philip away. Sinclair watches them, then turns to Madison. She's looking at the page again.

SINCLAIR

Well? Is this the Bloody Book?

MADISON

Just one page.

(beat)

And it was written... by Merlin.

SINCLAIR

So Merlin...

MADISON

Existed.

SINCLAIR

So you were right. The Bloody Book is about the Holy Grail.

MADISON

No. It IS the Holy Grail.

SINCLAIR

I'm not following.

MADISON

Merlin wrote it... but it was dictated by his teacher. Morgan le Fay.

SINCLAIR

The evil sorceress?

MADISON

Not so evil. Just cast that way.
Look, the Tarot tells us that the
Fool is taught by the Mage. But the
true teacher... is the High Priestess.

As we dissolve, we move into the STORYTELLER POV, which is a stylized recap of our story and its revelations.

DISSOLVE TO:

STORYTELLER P.O.V. - THE HIGH PRIESTESS CARD

It SHIMMERS, becoming an image of MORGAN LE FAY, in a GOLD CLOAK. She holds a BOOK.

MADISON (V.O.)

The High Priestess, holding the Bloody Book. A book written by women, holding their knowledge of the Grail.

A MALE HAND grabs the book. Morgan collapses, sobbing.

MADISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As Christianity drove out the Goddess, the priestesses were killed or converted. Morgan gave part of their knowledge to Merlin, who wrote it down. Then Morgan vanished from history. That third force represented by the Cross of Lorraine... it's the knowledge of the priestesses, the magic of the Goddess. Merlin couldn't have known any of it without Morgan.

MERLIN

Elderly, in a typical magician's lair complete with OWL and weird creatures in jars. He bends over the book, searching...

MADISON (CONT'D)

The secret remained with the women... like Joan of Arc, who other women tried to get recognized as a Savior.

We see an image of JOAN OF ARC, dressed in ARMOR. She holds a SWORD and stands before a CROSS OF LORRAINE.

BACK TO SCENE - MADISON

Looks at Sinclair.

MADISON (CONT'D)

There was a network of powerful women... and Ormus wanted to take power away from them.

(MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

One power creative, one destructive,
and the third... a secret, held by
the women. The Holy Grail.

(beat)

They still want it. They're still
willing to kill... not only women,
but the men who stand beside them.
The book holds the key to a power...
that people would kill to harness.

We flash on:

THE PHOTO

of the dead Nazi. Then, quickly:

BERNADETTE

Lying dead beneath Madison's office window. And then:

GENEVIEVE

dead in the hallway, the ORMUS letters written in blood at
her side. And, finally:

THE HANGED MAN CARD

tacked to Madison's front door. A warning.

MADISON

Clutches the page from the Book as she looks at Sinclair.

MADISON (CONT'D)

There's a war going on. A war that
started hundreds of years ago. And
now... I'm a foot soldier. Bernadette
chose me. Genevieve chose me. I'm...
a part of this now.

SINCLAIR

What are you going to do?

MADISON

What Ormus is afraid I'll do.

She looks down at the page.

CLOSE ON THE PAGE...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ASHBLESS GALLERY - NIGHT - THE PAGE

Which is now protected by glass. WIDEN TO INCLUDE

A BANNER

Which reads "THE ISIS PROJECT: THE FORGOTTEN FEMININE."

THE GALLERY

Now home to Madison's exhibit, which looks like a really detailed collage: PAINTINGS, MANUSCRIPT PAGES, PHOTOGRAPHS, BOOKS, AND DRAWINGS are displayed, like a timeline.

Above a painting of the Goddess ISIS, a banner reads "THE FIRST FEMININE." The banner above Morgan le Fay's page reads "THE GODDESS UNDERGROUND." Over a painting of JOAN OF ARC being burned, a banner reads "THE GODDESS PERSECUTED." At the end of the gallery are modern paintings and photos, featuring modern WOMEN who have broken the mold. The banner reads "THE GODDESS TRANSFORMED." Museum-goers follow the history of women to modern day.

A nervous Madison stands with Victoria, who is examining the Morgan le Fay page. Victoria turns towards Madison.

VICTORIA

The Isis Project?

MADISON

It's about recovering the history of women. Women lost in time because of religious and political suppression, the denial of their voices and power. If Morgan was out there, lost for centuries...

She gestures at the page.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Then there are others, too. Not just legendary figures like Morgan. Women like Bernadette duBois, killed before she had a chance to tell her story.. Now we're telling that story for her. For her and all the other lost women. I'll find them... their voices, their images, the objects they created...

VICTORIA

With provenances.

MADISON

Of course.

VICTORIA

That page... is quite a find.

MADISON

And there are other pages.

VICTORIA

Kindly clear your travel plans with
me in future.

MADISON

Of course. Yes. Definitely.

Victoria walks away.

ASHBLESS (O.S.)

You made Victoria cry.

Madison turns. Ashbless stands there, almost grinning.

ASHBLESS (CONT'D)

Partly in frustration, but she was
moved. It's an emotional journey.
May there be more in your future.

Ashbless moves off. As Madison stares after him...

HAMILTON (O.S.)

Madison... congratulations!

Madison turns. Hamilton toasts her with a glass of champagne.

MADISON

Thanks. I'm glad you could come.

HAMILTON

And Hugh Sinclair? Did you hope for
his arrival as well?

MADISON

You know him?

HAMILTON

No one really knows him.

MADISON

Ah. A subtle warning. Well, don't
worry. He vanished from my life as
mysteriously as he appeared.

Hamilton just smiles, as if he knows something she doesn't.
Before she can question him, he turns to look at the exhibit.

HAMILTON

The connections you've made are...
impressive. You may be worthy after
all.

Madison looks at Hamilton, surprised.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

See you soon, Madison. Good luck.

INT. ELLIS HOUSE - LATER

The family is at the table. Carolyn is oddly quiet, but Madison doesn't notice... she's excitedly talking about her exhibit. Brianna hangs on every word.

MADISON

I can't believe I made Victoria cry.
I wish someone had caught it on tape.
Anyway, you guys will see it as soon
as you're feeling better, Dad.

RANDALL

What's this? I feel fine.

CAROLYN

He had a little migraine, Madison.
We'll see the exhibit tomorrow.

RANDALL

What exhibit? Something special?

Madison turns to look at Carolyn. Carolyn avoids her eyes. Madison glances at Audrey. For the first time, Audrey looks at Madison without anger... but with something that looks like sadness. Madison looks at her dad, who smiles at her.

MADISON

No, Dad. It's nothing special.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Carolyn loads dishes into the dishwasher. Madison comes up behind her, hesitant, but needing to know.

MADISON

Mom...

CAROLYN

Everything's fine, Maddy.

MADISON

No, it isn't. The other day, Dad
couldn't find his keys. They were
in his pocket. And he didn't remember
that we'd been talking about the
Nazis, or Poe, and now... my exhibit.

Audrey comes in and stands beside Madison. For the first time we see the resemblance. They look like sisters.

MADISON (CONT'D)

He has Alzheimer's, doesn't he?

CAROLYN

The beginning stages. Very... early.

(MORE)

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

But the doctor says they're making
marvelous strides, every day...

INT. ELLIS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Madison and Audrey sit in silence. Finally, Madison speaks.

MADISON

This will be hard on Mom. On
everyone.

Audrey is surprisingly gentle.

AUDREY

On you, most of all. You and Dad...
always so close. I could never
compete with you.

MADISON

I never wanted to compete with you.
I just wanted... to be your sister.
Be friends, maybe. We used to be.

AUDREY

I know. It's just that... my life
has always been a mess. Still is.
Your life has always made sense.

MADISON

My work has made sense. My personal
life... maybe not so much.

AUDREY

Maybe we have fewer differences than
we think.

MADISON

Or maybe... right now... they just
don't matter.

(beat)

It's so unfair. Dad prides himself
on his intellect...

AUDREY

He won't know, Madison. Not really.

MADISON

Maybe not. But we will.

Madison and Audrey look at each other, not sure what's going
to happen, but -- at least for the moment -- knowing that
they'll do their best to pull together.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Madison walks away from the brightly lit house to where her car waits in the shadows. As she approaches, she notices a WHITE SQUARE faintly gleaming on the windshield.

AN ENVELOPE

Is stuck under the wiper. It's addressed to Madison in flowing script. Madison picks it up, opens it. Inside

A WHITE CARD

Which is blank... except for an embossed SYMBOL - a Cross of Lorraine, with the letters I.A.A.T. The Ormus symbol.

MADISON

Stares down at the symbol, scared.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK

As Madison stands in the darkness, knowing that Ormus is telling her that they're there, and they're watching her...

FADE OUT: