

AWAKE

FADE IN:

EXT. FARMHOUSE, SOUTH-CENTRAL MISSOURI - 4 AM, LATE FEBRUARY

The house was built in the 1830s, and is nestled in a grove of cottonwood trees on more than 50 acres of once rich Ozark farmland. A long dirt driveway leads from the farmhouse to a paved two-lane road. The next farm over is two miles east and the nearest town is another nine.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bedroom is in the attic of the story-and-a-half farmhouse, tucked under the sloping rafters of the roof. The walls, wood floor and slat ceiling were whitewashed long ago. A single door with a black porcelain knob leads to the hallway, a bathroom, other bedrooms and the world beyond.

INT. FARMHOUSE, STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Feet in wool socks and slipper boots slowly climb the wood stairs, step after deliberate step.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Most prominent in the bedroom is a black wrought-iron bed, covered by two wool blankets over a chenille spread hiding white cotton sheets. At the foot of the bed is a cedar blanket chest, on which are stacked three or four folded quilts, patchwork and not.

Next to the bed is a round pedestal table holding a 1920s slag glass lamp, a collection of vintage alarm clocks, several cloth-bound books, and matching tortoise shell hairbrush and comb. Across the room, in an alcove, are side by side double-hung windows dressed with sheer bridal lace curtains.

A Saw-whet owl is heard.

INT. FARMHOUSE, STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

The slippered feet turn a corner on the stair landing, rest a moment, then continue the climb.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beneath the windows, is a window seat over a radiator; several needlepoint pillows line the bench seat. On top of a double-door mahogany armoire are arranged several glass canning jars that hold a collection of sea shells. The only other piece of furniture in the room is an upholstered platform rocking chair. There is no phone, no television and no radio.

On the road, two hundred yards from the house, the sound of an 18-wheeler as it lumbers past.

INT. FARMHOUSE, BEDROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The slippers approach a closed door. They stop.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the walls, yellowed family photos and small paintings of rural landscapes hang from picture rails. Above the bed hangs a framed poster of Mikhail Baryshnikov, circa 1977; it's the only item in the room that appears to have been introduced in the last half-century.

Parting clouds permit a shaft of moonlight through the window, revealing AMELIA, 50, asleep in bed, beneath the poster.

In back of the house, a garbage can is overturned. A dog barks.

Amelia is roused briefly, but then almost immediately dozes off again.

Title: **AWAKE**

INT. FARMHOUSE, BEDROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hand of an old woman touches the closed door, caresses it briefly, then forms into a fist.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amelia is asleep. Her breath is visible in the cold bedroom.

Three soft, separate knocks on the bedroom door ... Knock. Knock. Knock.

Amelia doesn't stir.

INT. FARMHOUSE, BEDROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The balled fist knocks three times. These knocks are more insistent than the previous three.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A few seconds pass, then Amelia moves quickly up to one elbow, raising her head from the pillow to listen.

She waits.

Hearing nothing, she lies back down.

Silence.

The staggered knocking comes again, louder, and Amelia sits straight up, her eyes on the bedroom door.

Amelia? VOICE (O.C.)

M-Mother? AMELIA

Ya 'wake? VOICE (O.C.)

You scared me to-- AMELIA

--I come in? VOICE (O.C.)

Course. AMELIA

ETHEL enters. She is 76, frail and white haired, wearing a fleece robe over a flannel nightgown.

What in tarnation?! It's Harrison's meat locker! ETHEL

The radiator's busted. I told you. Why were you knockin like that? AMELIA

Like what? ETHEL

Like Marley's ghost. AMELIA

Ethel removes a quilt from the top of the blanket chest and drapes it over her shoulders. Amelia is still bundled up in bed.

ETHEL  
I fig'rd ya might be sleepin.

AMELIA  
Course I was sleepin, Mother. It's  
... four in the mornin. What's wrong?

ETHEL  
Ya wanna quilt?

AMELIA  
No.

ETHEL  
I can see my breath.

Ethel exhales in short bursts, several times.

ETHEL (CONT'D)  
See?

AMELIA  
No.

ETHEL  
Turn up the lamp.

AMELIA  
Mother, I'm tired. And cold. Can it  
wait?

ETHEL  
I was sittin in Gideon's room.

AMELIA  
When?

ETHEL  
Jis' now. Before.

AMELIA  
Doin what?

ETHEL  
Thinkin. Fer a spell. Jis' thinkin.

Amelia flops back onto the bed, turning away from ETHEL, and pulls the blankets up to her chin.

AMELIA  
That's very interestin.

ETHEL

It's a might warmer in there. Queer, huh? Ain't been a body in that room fer purt-near twen'y years an' it's still warmer than this-here room ya pract'ly *lives* in. Ain't that sump'n?

AMELIA

Giddy's room is next to the chimney. Always been warmer in the winter. And cooler in the summer.

ETHEL

The chimbley ain't got nothin to do with it.

Ethel doesn't move for several moments, then she walks over to the rocking chair. She sits.

Silence. The clocks tick.

Ethel begins rocking, creaking slightly.

AMELIA

What.

ETHEL

Nothin. Sshhh. Get yourse'f back to sleep.

AMELIA

I can't with you sittin there.

ETHEL

I ain't makin a sound.

AMELIA

You're rockin.

Ethel looks down into her lap.

ETHEL'S POV - CONTINUOUS

A sleeping SEVEN-YEAR-OLD AMELIA is curled up in Ethel's lap as she rocks. Ethel holds an open book.

ETHEL (V.O.)

I 'member a time when ya liketa *begged* me to rock here til ya went asleep.

With a deep exhalation, Ethel's frosty breath covers the young Amelia.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ethel continues to rock. The child and book are gone.

AMELIA

Forty-somethin years ago.

ETHEL

Ya want I should read to ya?

AMELIA

What's wrong, Mother? Is it the sciatica?

ETHEL

No. I was better, but I got over it. Won't be seein the sun come up fer purt-near three hours yet. *More'n* three.

AMELIA

Sooner than that. Unfortunately.

ETHEL

Seven twen'y-seven.

AMELIA

I'm not gonna argue with you.

Ethel looks out the window.

A FULL MOON: YELLOWISH-WHITE

ETHEL

That-there moon is purty 'nough to make a rabbit smooch a hound dog.

Silence once more. Amelia is still, but far from asleep.

ETHEL (CONT'D)

I could sing.

AMELIA

Please don't.

ETHEL

Ya useta like it when I'd sing to ya. "Band Played On." "Beautiful Dreamer." 'member?

CU ON AMELIA, HEAD ON THE PILLOW, TURNED AWAY FROM ETHEL:

AMELIA

Barely.

Ethel sings as we continue to watch Amelia's face.

ETHEL (O.C.)  
*Beautiful dreamer,  
 Queen of my song,  
 List while I woo thee  
 With soft melody.  
 Gone are the cares  
 Of life's busy throng,  
 Beautiful dreamer--*

Amelia turns her head quickly to face Ethel, who continues to rock, suddenly silent. Amelia returns to her pillow.

No sound.

ETHEL (CONT'D)  
 I aim to sell the farm.  
 (waits)  
 Melie, ya hear what--

AMELIA  
 --Mother, please go back to your room. I have to work tomorrow. Today.

ETHEL  
 I said I'm a-fixin to sell this place.

AMELIA  
 I heard you.

ETHEL  
 An' it don't concern ya none? Best to start packin.  
 (no response)  
 Gonna sell it next week.

Amelia reaches over and switches on the lamp.

AMELIA  
 (sitting up)  
 No. You're not.

ETHEL  
 I am.

AMELIA  
 You're not. You say this every winter.

ETHEL  
 An' I fig'rd it was only fair to tell ya.

AMELIA  
 You've told me plenty of times.

ETHEL  
'tain't true.

AMELIA  
Sure it is.

ETHEL  
You're plumb crazy.

AMELIA  
Prob'ly.

ETHEL  
Crazier'n a bag o' greased weasels.

AMELIA  
(confirming)  
You don't remember havin this  
conversation before.

ETHEL  
'at's right.  
(can't resist)  
When?

AMELIA  
Many times.

ETHEL  
Not with me, ya ain't.

AMELIA  
Think back. Start with last January.

INT. FARMHOUSE, FRONT DOOR - AFTERNOON

Amelia opens a creaking screen door to discover a half dozen boxes piled in the living room. "Amelia" is scrawled on each box in crayon.

AMELIA (V.O.)  
I came home from the plant to find  
you'd packed up all my things in  
boxes. I remember, 'cause it was my  
birthday.

ETHEL (V.O.)  
Nope.

SFX: The screen door slams with a bang, yanking us out of  
this memory.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ethel in the rocking chair, Amelia in bed.

ETHEL

Never happen'. An' if'n it did, we're still here, ain't we?

AMELIA

And we'll be here next winter. And the next.

ETHEL

Naw, this time I done made up my mind. Spoke to that Mr. Whitaker.

AMELIA

(a confirmation)  
At the bank. When?

ETHEL

Las' week.

AMELIA

When last week? What day?

ETHEL

Frid'y.

AMELIA

You were--

ETHEL

--Winds'y. We spoke Winds'y.

AMELIA

On the phone?

CU ON ETHEL:

ETHEL

Naw, in town. You were a-workin' at the plant.

EXT. MAIN STREET - EARLY AFTERNOON

An old red pickup truck kicks up dust as it turns onto Main Street of a very small town. The truck pulls up in front of the town's only -- and quite historic -- hotel.

ETHEL (V.O.)

José took me. In the truck. We did lunch at the hotel.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

At a booth in the hotel restaurant sit Ethel and JOSÉ, mid-50s, Mexican, dressed as a farm hand, his hat on the table. He and Ethel are studying their menus.

SHOT MOVES IN TIGHT ON JOSÉ, WIDE-EYED AT THE MENU OPTIONS:

AMELIA (V.O.)  
(confirming again)  
Lunch. You and José.

ETHEL (V.O.)  
Naw! Mr. *Whitaker*!

FAST PAN TO ETHEL, WHO SPEAKS STRAIGHT INTO CAMERA:

ETHEL (CONT'D)  
What would José an' I be doin eatin  
at the hotel?!

CU ON AMELIA:

AMELIA  
(confirming)  
Wednesday.

ETHEL (O.C.)  
Yup.

INT. FARMHOUSE, AMELIA'S ATTIC BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ethel in the rocking chair, Amelia in bed.

AMELIA  
And you had lunch with--

ETHEL  
--Ordered their pork chops. Myrtle Davis swears by 'em, but I found 'em a might dry. Mr. Whitaker et the--

AMELIA  
--So if I ask José, he'll confirm this story.

ETHEL  
If I let 'im. But I sworn 'im to secrecy. Mex'cans is good at keepin secrets. That's why we lost the Alamo. Ya gotta pilluh fer my back?

Amelia takes a pillow from the bed and throws it at Ethel.