

Prologue

The comic starts with the image of a well on an otherwise black page. The side of the well is smeared with blood, indicating that a body was dragged into it. A small scraggly speech bubble emerges from off-page.

Unknown: no...

We then see a young woman. She stands in front of the front door inside of a humble farmhouse. She is tall and pale with long red hair. She is wearing a teal nightgown. She is very distraught, clutching a newspaper.

Woman: No, no no no...

She is crying hysterically. She wanders aimlessly around in panic. A small scruffy dog tilts its head with concern. She reaches for a matchbook. She lights a single match while staring straight ahead.

Cicada Book 1: Welcome

The first page is entirely black aside from a single faded line of text:

“I have to find...”

“Bird-”

On the next page, the sun sets over a vast desert. A horse is walking through the sand, and on its back is a sleeping woman. She has tan skin, large round glasses, and long dark hair worn in two braids. The horse sneezes, startling the woman awake. She frantically looks around.

Text box: The woman awoke without a clue of where she was. She had nothing with her except a measly two cents and the horrible feeling that she had done something terribly wrong

In the distance, a figure riding towards her becomes visible. She shouts out to them.

Woman: Hello?

The figure says nothing. They continue approaching.

Woman: I've found myself a bit lost!

Again, the figure says nothing. They are getting closer. The woman looks a bit nervous now

Woman: Look I'm not asking for too much. If you would happen to know your way around this place, I would really appreciate some help!

Once again, no response. The woman looks down and mumbles to herself.

Woman: Alright, I'll figure it out myself.

A gloved hand reaches out to her, she looks up to see that it is the figure. He's a man dressed in a long tattered black coat. He wears a black cowboy hat and a bandana around his neck. His most notable feature is the large black void in place of a face. This startles her and the horse, which runs wildly in the other direction.

The silhouette of a small town is now visible in the distance ahead. She races into town, passing the Large sign in front which simply reads “Welcome”

Title page: Chapter One: Welcome

The woman stares confused at the reins of the horse. She sloppily ties them to a wooden pole outside of an Inn. She focuses on this task for some time before finally succeeding in tying the knot. She looks up to where the horse should be standing, revealing that the animal has escaped from its reins and ran off. She looks out in the direction where the horse would have run. She tilts her head in confusion. There is no horse, but there is a large well in the middle of the road where there wasn't one before.

A character from off the page is laughing. We see it is a man dressed in a sheriff's uniform. He is leaning over the banister leading up to the inn with a small glass in his hand

Sherif: Havin' trouble with your horse girl?

Woman: I'm not too familiar with handling horses

He laughs for a moment but stops once he gets a good look at the woman

Sherif: Say you're awfully young...

The woman is visibly uncomfortable with the statement, unsure of what he meant by it

Woman: Sherif you wouldnt happen to know a thing about... well this is gonna sound awfully silly but, a bird?

Sherif: The only bird I know of here is Missy's

He gestures to the Inn door

Sherif: And I'm no Sherif, not any more.

Woman: Now-

He interrupts her

Sherif: Its a dangerous Job, men get hurt all the time. Some die even. Somethin' I didnt come to terms with til' now... anyway I'm going off to be with family, finally relax for once

He finishes what was left in his glass

Sherif: Good luck girl, you'll need it

He walks away, tipping his hat to her. A deep red cicada flies out from under it. The woman is disturbed by the sight.

She enters the inn. She walks into the first door on the right. It is a small parlor. In the back sits a desk. A pale woman with long white curly hair is leaning over the desk smoking a cigar. She is making direct eye contact with the woman as if she was expecting her arrival.

New Woman: Howdy there, stranger.

Woman: Good evening-

She looks down at the name plaque Which reads “Hostess Missy”

Woman: -Missy.

She reaches out for a handshake

Woman: I must say this is quite a lovely, umm -old fashion town. And this establishment of yours really is the bee's knees.

Missy: Well I'm glad you think so, can I help you?

Woman: You see I'm here on important business. You wouldn't happen to know anything about a bird perhaps?”

She glances down at a taxidermied roadrunner that sits on Missy's desk. There is a small plaque mounted onto its base that reads “Assistant host Gabriel”

Missy: The only bird I know is Gabriel here and he ain't for sale

Woman: That's quite alright, I don't believe that's the bird I'm looking for anyhow.

Now It would be dearly appreciated if I would be allowed to stay here for a few nights.

Missy nods while petting Gabriel

The woman digs through her pocket and pulls out two coins. She presents them to Missy with a wince, knowing it isn't enough

Missy: We don't accept those here

Woman: Then I'm afraid I must humbly ask- beg that you allow me to stay here free of charge

Missy laughs

Missy: Who's askin'?

Woman: I'm afraid I can't answer that.

Missy: Well then mysterious stranger, you're in luck. I just so happen to be feelin' generous today. I'll let you stay for free if you agree to do some odd jobs for an ol' friend of mine. Deal?

As she speaks, she pets Gabriel

Woman: Sounds like a fair deal.

She says so with poorly hidden annoyance.

She shakes Missy's hand vigorously.

Missy: So, could you at least tell me about this "bird business" bringin' you here?

The woman smiles awkwardly and shrugs her shoulders.

Missy: So you've got no money, no name, and no business bein' here as far as I'm concerned. Did you bring anythin' with you beside the clothes on your back?

Woman: Well I did have a horse, it ran off though. Poor thing I hope it can fend for itself out there.

Missy: Well, I can assure you with 100% confidence that the horse is dead!

The woman looks horrified

Missy: -Anyway, can I interest you in a drink whilst I'm still in a givin' mood?

She opens a cork with her teeth and pours herself a drink as she says this.

Woman: No thank you, I don't drink.

Missy spits out the cork.

Missy: Well that's no fun, why not-

She is interrupted by a pale yellow cicada which lands on the bottle. She looks down at the bug, then back up at the woman with an awkward smile. She looks down at the bug with disgust.

Missy: How 'bout I just show you to your room?

Woman: That sounds nice, thank you.

The woman is led up an old wooden staircase leading to a hallway of rooms. Missy opens the first one using a bird skull-shaped key. The room is small and simple, filled with nothing more than a bed, a washing basin, and a small nightstand. Missy pulls out a notepad and fountain pen.

Missy: Now I'll be needin' a name for the record. Since you won't tell me yours, I'll just put you down as Jane Doe-

Woman: -If I may interrupt, Jane Doe is a name for unidentified Cadavers, I'd like to go by a living person's name if that's alright.

Missy: I don't see why not, what do you have in mind?

The woman thinks for a second.

Woman: Elsie. My name is Elsie.

Missy gives a curious smile.

She writes the name on the notepad. Preceding it is a list of previous guests, all John and Jane Does.

Missy: Well I'll be off now, holler if you need anythin'.

Elsie: Thank you and good night ma'am.

Missy (shouting from outside of the room): 'Night!

Elsie removes her coat and lies down on the bed. She is staring at the ceiling. Beside the bed is a window. The “ghost cowboy” from earlier (whom I will be referring to as *Neil* for the remainder of this script for the sake of Simplicity) can be seen standing in the town through the window. She finds a small notepad and pen left on the nightstand. She begins writing:

Two Things I Know

1. My name might be Elsie

2. I'm looking for a Bird

The next page shows Missy in the parlor, playing solitaire. She is interrupted by a knock at the door. She groans with annoyance while getting up to answer it. A sharply dressed man with crescent-lensed glasses enters.

Missy: Evenin' Peter.

Peter: Good evenin'

He follows Missy back into the Parlor.

Missy: You just missed the new Arrival.

He sits at the bar while she pours him a cup of coffee

Peter: I had *other* matters to attend to.

Missy: And how's that been goin'

Peter: About as well as you'd think it would

As he says this he pulls a burnt wide-brim hat from his vest. He shakes it out, popping it back into shape while sending ashes into the air

Missy: Sounds rough

He places that hat on his head

Peter (With sass): Yeah

Missy: I wish I could help ya Peter, I really do.

Peter: Well your idea of "helpin'" ain't much more than a drink, a cigar, and a game of cards.

Missy raises an eyebrow

Peter waves his hands in defense

Peter: Not that it's a bad thing

Missy: I think she'll be able to do somethin' about it, the newcomer.

Peter: And if that dont work, we can always-

Missy: nope, I don't wanna think 'bout it not workin' when we haven't even tried
yet

Peter: Believe me, Missy I want this to work just as much as you do.

Missy: good

There is a panel of silence

Missy: She calls herself "Elsie"

Peter stops drinking from his glass to give a sideways glance to Missy. He then
nods to himself

The next scene is entirely in black and white. We see a match light a lantern which illuminates the room. rElsie is seen walking through a lavash mansion parlor room. She is waving the lantern around. She spots something: A bloody newspaper has been nailed to the wall. She tilts her head sideways, a gesture which will be used frequently to represent her entering a “detective state of mind”. Suddenly A woman's hand rests on Elsie's shoulder.

An unfamiliar voice from behind: Looks like a clue, no?

Elsie is startled, she turns around to see who it is, but no one is there. She turns back around, revealing her back is now covered in pale yellow cicadas.

She wakes up. It is dawn. It was only a dream. Many of the yellow cicadas are spread around the room, But Elsie does not notice.

Elsie: Detective! I'm a detective

She makes her way downstairs. Missy and Peter are talking in the Parlor. She tries to listen in, But Missy is somehow aware of her presence.

Missy: Good Mornin' Elsie!

Elsie awkwardly stumbles into the room.

Elsie: oh! Good morning.

Missy: Remember that job I mentioned yesterday? Well, this is Peter, he's got your Job.

Peter removes his hat and reaches out to shake Elsie's hand.

Peter: Pleasure meetin' you

Elsie Shakes his hand.

Elsie: Right-

Peter: Just meet me by the chapel at the end of town whenever you're ready.

Elsie: What kind of job is this? Cleaning? Altar serving?

Peter: Oh no, I think you'll find this task much more interestin' than that.

Elsie looks to Missy, who gives her a mischievous grin.

Elsie: Interesting how?

Peter puts his hat back on his head.

Peter: You believe in spirits Elsie?

She gives a shocked look but nods.

Peter: Good

As he says this, he tips his hat at the two women and leaves

The next scene takes place an hour or two later. Missy is reading The obituary page

of a newspaper on the porch of the inn. She is sitting on a railing, kicking her dangling feet. Elsie exits through the door. She is finishing re-braiding her hair.

Elsie: You seem awfully happy.

Missy: Of course I am, I get a break for once! I'm usually the one doin' this kinda work with Peter.

Elsie: Ghost work?

Missy: Yeah, pretty much. Sendin' restless spirits on their way to the beyond and whatnot. Say, you never struck me as the kind of person to believe in such things.

Elsie: I didn't, not before I came here anyway.

Missy jumps up with intrigue

Missy: Oh? Well, now I'm curious.

Elsie: I'll be sure to tell you about that later, but I best be going now, I have to walk all the way to the end of town on foot.

As she is saying this, she is walking towards the street. She eventually looks up to see that the horse from earlier has returned. She climbs up and onto it.

Elsie (Annoyed): So you just come and go as you, please?

We then are shown a short sequence of Elsie riding through the eerily empty town. As she gets closer, a few black cicadas begin flying around her. She shoos them away.

Elsie (To the horse): I really hate bugs you know.

The horse, almost in response, licks a cicada off of its eye and eats it. Elsie shutters with disgust.

She arrives at the chapel. It is completely covered in black cicadas. The horse looks up at Elsie almost smugly. Peter stands casually in front of the chapel looking down at a pocket watch

Elsie: This isn't some kind of Extermination job is it?!

She shouts as she dismounts from the horse

Peter: That depends on how you'd define Extermination. Come inside and I'll explain.

Elsie makes an "I'm watching you" Gesture toward the horse before following Peter inside the decrepit chapel.

Peter: Her name's Adelaide

Elsie: Her?

Peter; The spirit hauntin' my chapel. She's been refusin' to move to the beyond. She's stopped listenin' to Missy and I. I'm hopin' a fresh face might talk some sense into her.

Elsie: I wouldn't say that sounds like something I could do!

Peter: And *I* wouldn't jump to no conclusions

As they talk, Peter leads her upstairs to an attic.

Elsie: Forgive me for saying this, but it would seem rather blasphemous for someone of your profession to believe in such things.

Peter: I'm not sure I understand what you're Gettin' at.

Elsie reaches the top of the attic ladder. The attic is a small triangular-shaped room. Which is filled to the brim with cicadas. In the middle of the room sits the red-haired woman from the beginning of the chapter. Her body is engulfed in flames but seems to be completely unbothered. Elsie stares at her, wide-eyed.

Peter: Mornin' Adelaide, I've brought a guest to see you.

Adelaide whips her head around in a panic but is relieved to see Elsie

Elsie: Hello!...um- Ma'am

Adelaide smiles; it almost looks genuine

Adelaide: Good morning Miss, I admit, I'm quite saddened to see such a kind face in this wretched town. I must know what brings you here.

Elsie is made visibly uncomfortable by the question

Peter: That's enough now, she only wants to help you.

Adelaide: Help me? there's no one who could possibly help me now. I'm dead.

She speaks with an eerie calmness. Throughout the entire scene, she wears a subtle smile that uncannily conflicts with her emotions at some points.

Peter lightly nudges Elsie forward. She cautiously watches the flames above her.

Elsie: Well-um?

Adelaide: It's alright. *I* don't shy away from personal conversation. You can ask about how I died if you'd like.

Elsie: Alright, how did you..uh- die then?

Adelaide: A house fire. I was so terribly distraught that I burned the place to the ground with myself inside.

Elsie: I'm sorry to hear that.

Adelaide: Don't be, There are far more tragic stories out there than mine, Besides, now I get to live in this lovely, dusty old attic.

She smiles at her own sarcasm while Peter rolls his eyes

Elsie: I can't say I know much about your situation, but you don't seem too fond of this place. Wouldn't you much rather move on and uh- find peace?

As she says this, Adelaide's calm facade begins to crack slightly. The flames around her grow ever so slightly larger.

Adelaide: peace? I'd say not everyone is deserving of such a thing.

Elsie: What makes you say that?

Adelaide: I just think It's Naive to see things that way. My husband's murderer for example... would they deserve to find peace?

Elsie: I suppose not.

Adelaide closes her eyes and sighs. A few black cicadas stick to her face.

Elsie: What was he like?

Adelaide calms down again and smiles.

Adelaide: His name was Nickolas. He was wonderful, and kind, and brave, and strong.

As she speaks, Her flames grow larger and the cicadas engulf her.

Adelaide: He was nothing but good to me.

Elsie: Wouldn't you want to go then? You might get to be with him again.

Adelaide: No. I can't. I can't bring myself to face him again

Adelaide tilts her head down

Adelaide: ...Not until he receives justice.

Elsie: Justice? They were never caught then, the murderer?

Adelaide shakes her head no.

Elsie and Adelaide look each other in the eye for a moment. The contrast between the two of them is shown through a side view.

Elsie gives a reluctant sigh

Elsie: I wasn't too keen on putting more effort into this task than necessary...But, I am a detective. It would be a crime against the profession not to put my expertise to use when the opportunity arises.

Adelaide: And how do you plan on doing that?

Elsie: I will get justice for your husband. I will find the murder

Peter looks at her with a surprised and concerned expression

Adelaide (with genuine shock): Oh?

Elsie tilts her head to the side with a determined smile

Elsie: Tell me everything you know.

“Intermission” Panel : CICADA

Adelaide: Everything I know? Well alright-

She grabs a small wooden cross from the wall

Adelaide: I'll warn you, I don't know very much.

She burns the cross to ash in her hands, letting the ashes trickle through her hands.

As she tells her story, it is drawn in ash on a backdrop of flames.

Adelaide: (Narration) It was december 18, A sunday I believe. I was cooking supper when he left. Just as he would every night. He kissed my forehead sweetly as he always did and patted our dog goodbye He set the newspaper he was reading atop the pile by the door. He grabbed his suitcase and his good winter coat and promised to be back by ten at the latest. I ate alone on our bedroom balcony and waited. Ten o'clock came and went and still no Nickolas. It wasnt until I read his obituary in the paper that I knew he died...

Elsie : Thank you.

Adelaide nods. She smiles painfully.

Adelaide: No, thank you.

Elsie: And the body? Where was it found

Adelaide: I havent got a clue

Elsie: That's all I need from you for now. Good day.

Elsie and Peter exit the attic and Adelaide's facade fades completely as her eyes fill with tears.

The next scene shows Elsie and Peter Walking through the chapel.

Peter: Hey, I'm glad you're helpin' and all, And really you've been a great help.

That's the most I've ever seen her open up, but I don't want you gettin' your hopes up. You're not gonna have an easy time with this.

Elsie: I didn't think I would

Peter: We don't have any evidence.

Elsie: Not yet, we just started.

Peter: It's just that-

Elsie: I don't mean to interrupt but I'll be fine, I've done this kind of thing before you know. I wish I could talk to the sheriff...

Peter looks surprised

Peter: He wouldn't know a thing about this

Elsie: what do you mean!?

Peter: he didnt do much law enforcement 'round here, just hung 'round the bar mostly.

Elsie: No wonder this is such a dangerous town

Peter stops for a second.

Peter: I've uh well I think I got an idea. Somethin' that'll help

He turns around and leads her back farther into the chapel. He pulls back an old rug from the back corner to reveal a trap door on the floor.

Elsie: a basement?

Peter: An archive

He opens the door and begins climbing down a ladder. The descent is dark and covered in cobwebs

Peter: You commin'?

Elsie gives a look of disgust. The next panel shows Elsie dramatically making her way down the ladder while complaining about the mess. Peter stands at the bottom with a tired look. She finally makes it to the bottom and stands cartoonishly rigid.

Peter: Took you long enough.

He lifts a lit lantern from the wall and begins leading her through a seemingly endless corridor. There are doors on all sides of the hallway. The wall and floor are completely covered with clutter. Much of which being some sort of reference to pop culture.

Elsie: Oh my-

Peter: I keep a pretty good record down here. If anyone has even so much as stepped foot in this town, I've got somethin' of theirs.

Elsie: That sounds rather terrifying

Peter: don't think of it that way, I just think people ought to be remembered is all.

Elsie: would you happen to have anything of mine down here?

Peter: I don't know, did you put anything down here yet?

Elsie smiles and shakes her head and continues walking

Peter: Anyway, lookin' at Nickolas's file should give us a pretty good start.

Elsie: When was the last time you saw him alive, Peter?

Peter: You're interrogatin' me now? I promise you I couldn't have had less to do with this situation.

Elsie: (with a playful smile) Answer the question

Peter sighs

Peter: I never met the man, he wasn't the church goin' type. Missy did once though, Briefly.-Says he was a quiet man. Just drank without sayin' nothin' before headin' out.

Peter bends down to pick something up from the floor. He hands it to Elsie. It's a torn piece of paper from a newspaper

Peter: you'd probably want this, It's his obituary.

It reads: Mr. Nickolas Stirrit was found dead on Monday the 19 of December. The deceased was born in Peafield township 23 years prior to mother Annet Stirrit and Father Mark Stirrit. Police have declined to share further details regarding the death, though Foul play is suspected.

The picture next to the text shows a man with dark hair standing in front of a well.

Elsie: This isn't very helpful, what else do you have?

Peter: There ain't any little clues in there or nothin'?

Elsie: None that I can see, although little clues have never been a strong suit of mine.

Peter looks taken aback

Peter: Well sorry but that's all I've got

Elsie: What do you mean that's all!?

Peter: Like I said, I never knew the man all that well.

Elsie dramatically folds her arms

Elsie: (under her breath) Useless

Missy: (off-screen) You fella's talkin' 'bout me behind my back?

Elsie and Peter both jump in surprise.

Missy: Sorry, didn't mean to scare ya'

Peter: What happened to that day away from me that you were so excited 'bout

Missy: I got bored. I missed your big dumb face.

She turns to Elsie.

Missy: How'd it go?

Elsie: Very well thank you, we're solving a murder!

Missy: How exciting! How about I invite you two back to my parlor for some lunch and y'all can tell me all 'bout it!

The next page shows the three of them about to walk out of the chapel.

Elsie: wait just a moment...

She runs over to the ladder

Elsie: Miss Adelaide! Peter, Missy and I are leaving for lunch! Would you like to join? Can the dead still eat?

Elsie continues to ramble-yell up to Adelaide while Missy and Peter exchange glances.

Peter: I'm thinkin' We were right about her.

Missy: *I was right*

Missy playfully shoves him

Peter: You were right.

The next page shows the three of them sitting at Missy's bar.

Missy: Ooh this is so excitin'!

Peter: I wish you'd get this excited over all of our jobs.

Elsie: So this whole ghost thing happens often?

Missy: In a town like this? You can bet that horse of yours it does!

Elsie: (sarcastically) Actually you can just have him.

Missy: You mentioned earlier that you didn't believe in spirits and such before comin' here, What changed your mind?

Elsie: I saw one With my own two eyes. A Ghost Cowboy. He rode on a Back horse, and his face, well it was no face at all.

Missy: Oh him? Oh, Him and I go way back!

Missy cackles while nudging Peter with her elbow. Elsie smiles awkwardly before looking down thoughtfully.

Elsie: But seriously why here? Why have I never seen a ghost before now?

Missy: 'cause whether they realize it or not, spirits are drawn to us. Helpin' them is what we do

Elsie: Well while on the topic of jobs, I feel I should thank you both. I've run into a bit of pickle regarding my own, so your kindness has been greatly appreciated.

Missy: You're very welcome!

Peter: Your job? You're here on detective business aren't you? You stuck on a case?

Elsie: No, far worse. I can't remember what the case is! I've been struck with an amnesia of some kind- God I'm not even sure Elsie is my real name! All I know is I'm looking for a bird. Strange I know- but until I've sorted all that out, this case of the missing husband killer will keep my wits sharp.

The final scene of the book takes place that night. Elise is sitting in her bed. A single candle illuminates her room. She is looking down at a page of notes. It reads:

Nickolas

- Went missing on Sunday
- Age 23
- Well?

Elsie looks at the paper, then out her window.

We then see her outside, presumably going to look for the well. She walks over to where the well once was but sees nothing there. She stands confused. She looks all around. The final panel shows a side view of Elsie standing before a vast and empty desert. The distant silhouette of Niel is visible.

Cicada Book 2: The Ghosts

The book begins at night time. Elsie is tossing and turning in her sleep. She is having a nightmare.

The nightmare is shown in black and white. Elsie stands on a stage. Before her is an empty auditorium. She is wearing an Odett costume. Music begins to play. She looks nervous but begins to dance anyway. The Dance she performs is the Dying Swan. She ends the performance with the mime for death. She stands up and curtseys. To her surprise, she is met with applause. She looks up to see a woman clapping for her. She has short blond hair which is worn with a scarf. Her face is obscured by a bright light emanating from a window. Elsie tilts her head to the side.

Elsie: I know you...

Elsie stumbles and falls off stage

The drawings are in color again. Elsie Bolts upwards with a gasp. She relaxes for only a moment before realizing her room is covered in a small warm of yellow cicadas. She frantically shoos them away. After all the insects are gone she falls face-first back into bed. There is a knock at her door. She responds with a groan before opening it. It is Peter.

Peter: I've got somethin' to show you. It'll help with the investigation.

Elsie: Good morning to you too.

Peter: I know it's early, but it's real important. I'll explain when we get there.

The two exit the room to meet Missy in the hallway.

Missy: (yawns) Are we all ready to go?

Elsie: you're coming too?

Missy: Oh yeah, I've got to see this!

The next page shows the three of them standing outside of the chapel. A large farmhouse sticks out awkwardly from the side of it. Missy roughly pats Peter on the back.

Missy: That's new!

Elsie: What is it?

Peter: Adelaide's House.

Elsie: The house she burned down?

Peter: When a spirit stays on this plane for a while, they start Alterin' it, oftentimes without even knowin' it. A "Simulacrum" is what we call it. A physical manifestation of emotional energy thats built up over time. It starts small usually, small objects or alterations to themselves. Adelaide's moved beyond that point it seems. She's makin' full structures now. These bigger ones usually don't last long so we better be quick.

Elsie nods

Elsie: (to herself) Simulacrum...

She turns in the direction where the Well was previously.

Peter: This'll help with the murder investigation right?

Elsie: Yes, very much so.

Peter: Alright let's waste no more time then

As he says this, he pulls himself up onto the sideways porch. He reaches his arm out to pull Missy up next.

Missy: So Elsie, You're the one in charge of this here investigation-

Missy and Peter then both help Elise climb up.

Missy: -What exactly are we lookin' for?

Elsie: Anything and everything to do with Nickolas.

Peter stands up. Despite the fact they are standing in a sideways building, he has no trouble standing. Elsie looks at him, shocked and confused.

Peter: Let's get on goin' then.

Elsie shakily pulls herself up, clinging to a beam. She lets go, discovering she can stand just fine.

The next panel shows all three of them standing before the door, while the background is crooked behind them.

They enter the house. It is eerily perfect. All rooms are lit with bright sunlight coming through the windows. What follows is a sequence lasting about three-four pages of the characters exploring the various rooms of the house. At one point Elsie discovers a ghostly dog in one of the rooms. It stares at her with terrifying, glowing eyes. Elsie has a comedic stare-off with it. The sequence ends with Elsie and Peter independently investigating the same room when they are startled by

Missy gasping loudly. The two rush into the next room to find Missy standing before a mirror, holding a dress up to herself. All the windows in this room are covered in thick curtains, making the room darker and warmer-lit than all previous ones.

Missy: (surprised to see them) You find somethin'?

Peter: No, we did not.

Missy returns her attention to the mirror

Missy: Ain't this just beautiful? I had no idea our Adelaide was one for dressin' up!

Peter: (to Elsie): Is this helpful? Is she helpin'?

Elsie shakes her head

Peter: Missy I think you'd better-

Elsie: wait!

She pushes past Peter

Peter: you found something?

Elsie reaches into an open clothes chest and pulls out a thin scarf. A pale yellow Cicada flies out as well. Peter and Missy watch her with anticipation. She wraps the scarf around her neck and smiles. Missy claps excitedly while Peter looks confused.

Peter: i'll keep lookin', you two keep doin'-

He makes an exasperated gesture toward the women before leaving the room.

Missy wraps an arm around Elsie

Missy: you're fun! I didn't know you were fun!

Elsie (with a deadpan expression) : What gave you the impression that I wasn't

Missy: Well in that case-

Missy places a ridiculous hat atop Elsie's head and the two playfully waltz around the room giggling before tripping and falling into a couch.

Missy: But really, wouldn't you rather go work on your Investigation? Peter's right, this place probably won't be around for much longer.

Elsie: I know, this just piqued my interest.

She lifts the scarf from around her neck.

Elsie: I Know it from somewhere- somewhere back home.

Missy smiles

Missy: You're gettin' your memory back.

Elsie: It is a start.

Elsie admires herself for a moment in the mirror. She spots something behind her and makes her way toward it

Elsie: (to herself) “-his good winter coat...”

A men's coat is hung in the back corner of the room. Elsie holds it up. It is covered in blood and black cicadas. She gasps and drops it. The cicadas scatter.

Missy: (lightheartedly) Looks like a clue.

Elsie shakingly nods and lifts it back up carefully. A folded piece of paper falls from a pocket and onto the floor. Missy picks it up. She smiles and raises her eyebrows. She flips the letter around to show Elsie.

Missy: “To Nickolas, From Viola” -Ooh!

She unfolds the letter and begins reading aloud. Her reading starts fun and dramatic, but she soon adopts a more serious tone.

Missy: To my Dearest Nickolas, I can stand it no longer. My heart aches for you. My wretched bore of a fiance brings me no joy. Every night my dreams are blessed with you. I beg you that we run away together. I'll wait for you, for as long as it takes, Viola.

Elsie: poor Adilade.

Missy: Poor Adilade indeed

She refolds the letter

Missy: So this Viola Lady,

Elsie begins pacing as she speaks

Elsie: She's our Prime suspect now. It seems very likely that she was the last to see him alive. At the very least she'd have some useful information. Do you know where we could find her?

Missy: Can't help you there, I've never heard of her before, you're best bet of findin' her would be Peter's Archive.

Elsie nods. She has stopped pacing and is standing turned away from Missy.

Elsie: Is it possible that this information will only upset Adelaide more?

Missy: What are you gettin' at detective?

Elsie: knowing that another woman had feelings for her husband and that there is a possibility that he could have reciprocated them. Could this solidify her decision to stay here and never see him again?

Missy: Elsie, I think she already knows.

Elsie whips around questioningly

Missy: This place ain't real, it's all memories. If this letter is here...

Elsie: Right...

She clears her throat

Elsie: Not that it matters anyway, my focus is on catching the murderer.

As the women speak, smoke begins pouring into the room. Neither of them seem to notice it. Suddenly Peter enters looking frantic. He is holding onto his arm, appearing injured.

Peter: I hope you two found something; useful, we gotta leave!

Missy looks down at Peter's injury and her eyes widen. The two women rush out of the room, still holding onto the coat and letter. The house is quickly filling with smoke and flames.

The group reaches the front door but quickly finds it to be locked. Peter grabs a fire poker and tries to pick the lock frantically. Missy tries to pry open a window.

Neither of these works. The smoke is becoming unbearable and they are struggling to breathe. Elsie closes her eyes tightly and tilts her head to the side. The background fades, showing that she is blocking out her surroundings to focus.

Vague outlines of Adelaide's ash puppets from the previous chapter appear behind her. Suddenly her eyes snap open. She grabs onto Peter and Missy and drags them towards the stairs.

Elsie: Balcony!

As they rush up the stairs, the stairs, as well as the rest of the house, burn away at an unrealistically fast speed. After running through the top-floor hallway, they reach the bedroom. On one side is the door to the balcony. On the other sits the ghost dog. The next page shows the three of them leaping dramatically from the balcony. Elsie carrying the coat, Missy carrying the letter, and Peter cradling the ghost dog.

The next page shows the chapel, now with a giant hole on the side where the house was. The last bits of smoke and ash dissipate into the desert air as the sun just starts to rise.

The next page shows Adilade in her attic. She is sitting with her knees to her chest. A new hole in the room cast a ray of light onto her face. For once, she is not on fire, though she is covered in soot and ash. She is crying and clutching onto the key necklace. The walls are lined with black cicadas.

The next page cuts back to the gang. They have fallen into the chapel and are lying sprawled out on the floor. We can now see the extent of Peter's injuries. His entire right arm is severely burnt.

They all appear *out of it*. Still in shock from what just happened.

Elsie: So simulacrum, they turn to fury infernos in the end?

Missy: No, no this was new. This was an Adelaide thing. Usually, they just fade all normal-like.

Elsie perks up in a panic

Elsie: But our evidence!

Peter: Don't worry 'bout that-

He attempts to sit up, but winces in pain and lies back down

Peter: You'll be fine nothin'll fade in here. I've made sure of that.

Elsie sits up and pulls her knees to her chest.

Elsie: Good

She looks over to where the Archive entrance is.

Elsie: Viola...

"Intermission" Panel: CICADA

The next page takes place a little while later. The sun shines brightly through the hole left in the side of the chapel. Missy is tending to Peter's wound. Adelaide is assisting her, Still not on fire. She looks frazzled.

Missy: Hand me that rag over there will you?

Adelaide nods frantically and does as she was asked

Adelaide: I'm sorry Peter, I am-truly

Peter: You really don't have to keep apologizin' Adelaide. It wasn't like you did it on purpose.

Adelaide stares at him emotionally for a second. Suddenly a large swarm of black cicadas burst from the ceiling, breaking even more of the chapel.

The ghost dog from earlier runs around trying to catch them. Peter sighs and shakes his head in the palm of his un-injured hand.

The next page cuts to Elsie. She is approaching the chapel on her horse. She is still wearing the scarf around her neck. She dismounts from the horse, carrying a small bag. She starts walking towards the chapel door. She stops after a few steps and turns around. The horse has already disappeared.

Elsie: I figured you'd do that.

The next page cuts to Elsie in the chapel. She pulls a small bottle from her pocket. a small torn piece of paper falls out with it

Elsie: This is the correct tonic?

Missy takes the bottle and squints to read the label. She smiles and nods. She turns to walk towards Peter.

Elsie bends over to pick up the paper. It is a ripped corner of a business card. The only word stil legible is "Robert" .On the back the number "109" is written. she tilts her head in confusion

Missy: (to Elsie) That's all I needed from you, you should start lookin' through the Archive

Elsie nods

Missy looks over to the corner opposite the basement door. Adelaide is huddled in the dark. A few black cicadas are sticking to her face.

Missy: (to Elise) Why don't you take her with you.

As she says this she hands the bottle to Peter

Elsie Raises her eyebrow. Missy gives her a pleading look in return.

Elise slowly approaches her

In the background Missy drips the contents of the bottle onto peter's wound. He hisses in pain while missy takes a swig from the bottle.

Elsie: Adelaide, would you be up to joining me

Adelaid nods.

The next page shows Adilade reaching the bottom of the basement ladder. Elsie is already standing at the bottom with a lantern waiting for her.

Elsie: Ready?

Adelaide tilts her head to look past Elsie into the great labyrinth of the archive. She looks intimidated.

Adelaide: I suppose

The women begin walking

Elsie: We're looking for...anything that will help, everything to do with Nickolas

Adilade nods

Elsie: Have you ever been down here before?

Adelaide: I haven't been here myself, though Peter speaks of it plenty.

There is a panel of silence

Adelaide: Did you know simulacrum never fade in the chapel?

Elsie: Peter mentioned something like that earlier

Adelaide: That's why I stay here. Feels more permanent

Elsie stops suddenly. She stands before a wooden door, similar to all the others except for one notable difference. A golden plaque with the number 109 engraved into it. Elsie tries to open it, but it is locked.

She is about to walk away when she hears a crunch beneath her feet. She has stepped on a small piece of paper. She lifts it to reveal that it is a picture; A black-and-white portrait of the blonde woman from her dreams. Elsie's shoe has ripped a hole over the face.

Adelaide peeks curiously over Elsie's shoulder at the picture. Suddenly she takes the scarf from Elsie's neck. She wraps it around her hair to mimic the image. Elsie looks up at her, confused.

Adelaide points at the picture

Elsie smiles at her

Elsie: We should keep going

A sequence of the women exploring the archive is shown.

It ends with Elsie sitting on the floor flipping through a book. She is interrupted by the sound of a door opening

Elsie: Anything?

Alidade: Nothing at all.

Elsie thinks for a moment

Elsie: Viola? Do you know anything about her

Adelaide looks shocked to hear that name.

Adelaide: Well she was very beautiful. Wealthy too. Her hair was this gorgeous deep brown.

Elsie: anything else?

Adelaide: I know about the letters Elsie. This doesn't change anything. It wasn't his fault

Adelaide Keeps a calm demeanor, although black cicadas begin crawling over her body.

Elsie: Oh yes of course. it would be helpful to look into her.

Adelaide: You won't find anything of her's down here

Elsie: No? And why is that?

Adelaide: I don't think Peter knows she even exists

Elsie looks confused

Elsie: Peter said he knows everyone here

Adelaide: so you still don't know?

Elsie: Know what?

Adelaide: (slightly irritated) Never mind all that- Not my secret to tell. How about we go back upstairs?

Elsie is confused and suprised

Elsie: What secret? What dont I Know? Its something to do with peter?

Adilade walks ahead of Elsie. For the entire rest of the chapter Elsie seems slightly upset. They walk for a moment before Elsie spots something. A small swarm of black cicadas is stuck to the wall. Elsie slowly reaches out to it. The cicadas begin to disperse slightly, revealing that they are covering a piece of paper nailed to the wall. Just as Elsie is about to grab it, it burst into violent flames. Elsie jumps back in surprise, She turns around to see Adilade glaring at her from afar.

They begin walking back. There is uncomfortable silence.

Adelaide: (more cheerful) I think I found something that might help

She hands Elsie a letter that reads:

My dearest,

I am to be married this Sunday, afterwards, I will be moving away to my fiance's family manor in Pennsylvania. Now is our only chance. Meet me at the general store the night before. I beg you, dear, I know deep down you love me,

Your's truly,

Viola

Elsie: Sunday? Sunday! That's the day your husband left

Adelaide: It is isn't it, You really think it was Viola who killed him Miss?

Elsie: Things sure are not looking good for her

Adelaide smiles widely

Elsie smiles as well, As the women begin to head back she eyes the burning pile suspiciously

That night Elsie writes in a journal. As she begins listing things her narration is shown as text boxes over various scenes.

Elsie: ~~Two~~ Eight Things I know so far:

1. My name might be Elsie (we see the outside of the chapel)
2. I am looking for a bird (we see that inside of the chapel, Elsie has laid out all of the evidence thus far)
3. I am looking for Nickolas's killer (We see the obituary)
4. The killer is *probably* Viola (We see the first letter)

5. Nickolas was *probably* last seen with Viola in the general store (we see the bloody coat)

6. Viola is *probably* in Pennsylvania (we see the new letter)

7. Peter and Adelaide are *probably* hiding something (We see the torn “Robbert” paper)

The montage of images stops for a moment to look at Elsie once again. She pauses and looks distantly with a serious face before returning to writing

8. I think I have done something terrible (We see the 109 door)

Cicada Book 3: Jagged Lines

The book starts with an establishing shot of the Inn. Its nighttime. We then see Elsie lying upside down on her bed. She looks exhausted. She groans with frustration.

We then see a wider image showing her full room. It is covered with humming yellow cicadas.

Elsie Throws a pillow at a few bugs on the wall. They scatter for a moment before quickly returning.

Elsie curls back up and into bed. She throws the blanket over her head and squeezes her eyes shut. The humming of the insects seems to get even louder. She throws the blanket off of her and bolts upright in a fit of frustration.

Elsie: I'm not going to get any sleep- might as well try and work

She stands up as she says this.

She grabs her coat and reaches for her notepad. She notices a book underneath it where there wasn't one before. She lifts it up, revealing that it is a murder mystery novel. She looks around confused. She leaves the book where it was and leaves, allowing the door to swing shut behind her sending the bugs scattering before all reforming on the door in the silhouette shape of a person.

Text on the page reads: Twenty hours before Nickolas's killer is found

Title page: Chapter Three: Jagged Lines

We see Elsie and her horse wandering through the street with only a candle to light their path. She looks at several buildings before finding one labeled "general store". She knocks on the door, timidly at first before banging loudly.

The door swings open, it was never locked. Elsie looks in and is shocked to find the entire building empty. There is no furniture, wallpaper, or decor. Just blank wooden walls and floor. An empty box with windows and a door.

Elsie walks through the building. She studies the walls and floors carefully, looking for any signs that someone at some point occupied the building.

She scribbles the word “Abandoned” into her notepad

Elsie: looks like a soundstage...

She mumbles under her breath almost instinctively before looking bewildered

Elsie: soundstage? ...whats a soundstage

Before she can dwell too long on the thought she is startled by a familiar hum coming from outside

Elsie: Damn bugs are everywhere in this Devil town!

She mutters, shaking her head before returning to her investigation. Her focus once does not last very long before she is interrupted yet again, this time by the opening of the front door. It's Adelaide. A small swarm of black cicadas buzz around her. Her flaming body lights up the room.

Adelaide: sorry to startle you miss, but I couldn't sleep, and I thought I might find you here.

Elsie: is this really where Viola met with Nickolas? What happened to it?

Adelaide: well no, that's exactly why I wanted to see you. I realize I didn't mention a crucial detail.

Elsie perks up, listening intently

Adelaide: None of it happened here, Nickolas and I are from Louisiana actually. I didn't come here til I was dead. Restless spirits are attracted to this place you know.

Elsie stands completely still, not knowing how to respond

Elsie: why didn't you say something earlier

Adelaide: It seemed like common sense to me, I forgot you wouldn't know

She says this with a slight smile. Ignoring the gravity of what she is saying

Elsie: How am I supposed to find any evidence against Viola then

Adelaide (apologetically): I appreciate all you've done here, but I don't think you're gonna be able to finish this.

Elsie huffs lightly with frustration

Elsie: I'm not giving up on you Adelaide

Adelaide (almost ignoring what Elsie just said): I don't blame you, honestly.

You've got your own case to solve anyhow, don't you Miss?

Elsie: I'm still working on that Adelaide don't you worry. And I'm gonna solve this one too. I just need you to bring a bit more of your memories out here - Like with the letters and the house. You've got to have proof somewhere in there.

She speaks excitedly, stumbling over words as if she is trying to convince herself just as much as Adelaide.

Adelaide: I don't know...

Elsie: It will be alright, I promise, I'll get you your proof. Just let me know about any new simulacrum alright?

Adelaide smiles reluctantly and nods

Adelaide: I think I can finally get some sleep now

Adelaide turns to walk away.

Elsie: Wait I'll ride with you, I'm going to the chapel anyway

Adelaide: No that's alright, I'd rather go alone

We then see Elsie fiddling with the reigns of her horse while Adelaide walks towards the end of town. They wave a short goodbye

Elsie: Well I'll be seeing you later I'm sure

Elsie smiles warmly, a gesture Adelaide does not return.

We then see a distant view of Adelaide walking through the street. Her glowing orange body shines brightly in the night.

Text on the page reads: 19 hours until Nickolas's killer is found

On the next page, we see the silhouette of Elsie riding up to the chapel. The sun is just beginning to rise, basking the entire scene in a purple glow. Peter is already awake and is working on fixing the side of the chapel. He shouts to her without turning away from the board he is hammering.

Peter: This is the perfect way to spend a day Elsie, Workin' hard, Listenin' to the cicada's song

Elsie: I beg to differ, I think those bugs are dreadful, I really think this town ought to do something about them

Peter: No way detective. They aren't no normal bugs

Elsie: Just looking at them makes me ill.

She shoos a few away in disgust

Elsie: I've learned a lot already today and it isn't even morning. Perhaps you can help me learn one other thing.

Peter: I might, what do you want to know

Elise: The door in your archive labeled 109, it's locked, I need to know what's inside it. I have a hunch it has something to do with my bird case

Peter: I don't have no keys for any locked doors. If a door is locked then whoever it belongs to has the key.

Elsie: I see

She looks down, distrustingly

Elise: Could the contents behind the door belong to a man by the name of Robert?

Peter continues working on the wall, the conversation not seeming to bother him at all

Peter: It might, I've known plenty of Roberts

Elsie: You don't remember?

Peter: You take a look down that cellar and tell me you could keep track of everythin' and every person it all belonged to

Elise: I suppose that makes sense

Peter: Right it does

Elise: Peter are you lying?

Peter stops hammering to look at Elsie

Peter: I ain't ever told you somethin' that wasn't true

Elsie gets down from the horse

Elsie: I appreciate your help

She clearly doesn't believe him. She Steps through the large gap in the side of the building to enter the chapel.

We then see her sitting before her display of evidence. She stares at it all intently. She is clearly exhausted. The constant humming of cicadas and hammering clearly bothers her. The sound resembles the ticking of a clock. Something is causing her anxiety but she can't quite place what it is. This is all portrayed through a montage of dialogue-less cells.

We then see Missy riding up to the chapel. Some time has passed and the sun has now fully risen.

Missy (playfully): I'm bored, you think Adelaide'll finally take me up on my offer, relax for a bit, find some peace in self-reflection and booze, let me feel useful in my damn job for once.

Peter: If you want to feel useful you can help me. Besides's Adilades busy...burin' simulacrum I guess

He looks up confused as Adelaide can be seen through the missing wall setting tall stacks of newspapers ablaze. This is odd. She looks unwell.

We see Elsie once again sitting hunched over before her evidence. Despite all the noise, she has begun to drift off into sleep.

We see yet another black-and-white dream sequence. Elsie is sanding in the middle of a back void. As she walks forward the ground ripples like water. The blonde woman appears far into the distance. She wears a white swan costume and dances with her back towards Elsie. Elsie chases after her. She lays a hand on the woman's shoulder only for her to burst into an explosion of white feathers.

Elsie is startled awake. She refocuses on the evidence in front of her. She fails to notice the pale cicadas forming the silhouette of a woman in the background

Voice off the page: Mornin'

Elsie turns to see it is Missy who is lying towards the front entrance. She is lying on her stomach, carving doodles into a pew with a dagger.

Elsie stands up

Elsie: Missy can we talk in private

Missy Nods and gestures for her to follow. Elsie gives a suspicious glance to Peter who is still working on the side wall, not paying attention. She grabs the *109* paper scrap and follows Missy outside.

Text on the page reads: Fifteen hours before Nickolas's killer is found

The next image shows the two women walking down the street towards the first building from the chapel

Elsie: Are you and Peter close?

Missy: We don't see eye to eye really, but he's the closest friend I've got

Elsie fakes a polite smile, unsure of how to feel

Missy opens the door to a generic, run-down-looking building. It is largely similar to the one previous. A plain, boxlike interior. This one however is filled with a few random items. Chairs, books, candles, and other items are scattered around. The building is being used for storage. In a far back corner, a bit of colorful floral wallpaper remains, peeling at the edges. Elsie walks slowly towards it while talking.

Missy: What is it you wanted to talk about?

Elsie: I-

She stops herself, unsure if she can trust Missy

By then she had reached the wallpaper. She picks at it absentmindedly and a pale yellow cicada flies out from behind it startling her.

Elsie: I'm sorry I seem to have forgotten what it is I wanted to say

Missy: I know what'll make you remember

Missy Pulls a deck of cards and begins shuffling them with showy tricks. The onomatopoeia "Tick" is used to represent the sound of the cards throughout this scene, going with the ticking clock motif.

Missy: We play a game, I know the rules, you don't. Nobody's allowed to talk except when they are. If you mess up you gotta pick up a card When I pick up a card I tell you a secret and the same goes for you, deal?

Elsie(Confused): Alright

The women shake hands

The two women sit cross-legged across from each other, each having a hand of cards. Missy plays her turn confidently. Elsie reluctantly plays her turn. Missy shakes her head disapprovingly with a smile and hands her a card

Missy: wrong suit, Now go on

Elsie: A secret? Well... I don't think box silhouettes are very timeless at all, I think they're on their way out in fact.

Missy gives a puzzled look but nods approvingly anyway. She quickly plays her next turn. She knocks rhythmically on the floor afterward (as are the rules of the game). Elsie tries to hand her a card. Missy shakes her head

Missy: The game don't work like that, but since you were bein' clever I'll take it just this once. My secret is that sometimes I catch peter snoozin' after he told me he's goin' to research . The man has too much pride to admit otherwise

Elsie smiles and plays again. Missy hands her another penalty card

Elsie pauses for a moment

Elsie: I don't know if you'd count this as a secret necessarily, but I have a sneaking suspicion that there is another ghost in town, one who's haunting me.

Missy gives a curious expression, leaning forward with her chin resting on her hands.

Elsie: There is a woman, a blonde woman. She keeps coming to me in my dreams. Just thinking about her makes me feel uneasy.

We see a small swarm of pale yellow cicadas which now cover the wallpaper while Elsie continues speaking off-screen

Elsie: I realized that the cicadas make me feel the exact same way

Missy gives an interested hum in response and quickly plays another card

Elsie looks Missy in the eye while tilting her head to the side. She reaches for a card, reluctant and unsure, and hands it to Missy

Missy: Well would you look at that, you really are a clever detective, you got me.

She speaks with a lighthearted sarcastic tone making it clear that she was letting Elsie win.

Missy: I've got lifetimes' worth of secrets, anything you wanna know?

Elsie: I need to know what's behind door 109 in the basement archive. It's locked, Peter claims to not have the key. They're hiding something, him and Adelaide. She said so herself. I won this fair and square. Be honest

Missy: The key would be with whoever owned the room, Elsie.

Elsie looks nervous

Elsie: Robert, do you know Robert!?

Missy: I've known plenty of Roberts.

Elsie looks defeated

Elsie: That's exactly what Peter said

Missy: That's because it's the truth, Elsie

Elsie: I have a paper...

She reaches into her pocket

Elsie: The paper's gone

She takes a deep breath to reset

Elise: Well! Thank you very much for the game, this has been real fun

She stands up, brushes off her skirt, and makes her way toward the door

Missy: There's nothin' Elsie You wanna talk about? No more secrets to confess?

Elsie: No, I better go check on Adelaide, She seemed a bit off this morning

It is obvious that she is only looking for an excuse to leave

She leaves, leaving Missy sitting on the floor shuffling the cards thoughtfully

“Intermission” Panel: CICADA

We see Elsie walk up to the chapel door yet again

Peter: Nice seein’ you again, Elsie

She gives him a rushed greeting, not bothering to look at him, and walks into the building. We see Elsie shouting up to Adelaide from a view of inside the attic. The view is from an odd angle, obscuring most of the room but we can see that it is full of smoke.

Elsie: Adelaide? Can I come In?

Elsie enters the attic to find it full of burning newspapers. Adelaide is completely obscured by all the smoke

Elsie: Adelaide wake up!

Elsie frantically grabs at the burning pieces. One larger, relatively unburnt piece can be seen floating through the smoke. Elsie runs toward it. The bright sunlight coming from the unpatched hole in the bottom of the wall illuminates the far right side of the attic. Elsie slides to the ground just barely missing the paper as it flies through the gap. Elsie quickly lowers all the way to the ground and falls out after it with impressive agility. Peter, still standing on the ladder, watches her.

We see her run through the desert after it. She eventually stops to catch her breath as the wind carries it even farther away. Suddenly her horse runs past her. Peter is riding it towards the paper with great focus. Elsie runs after him. There is a full page showing the two speeding through the desert. Suddenly Elise stops and looks frightened. The horse does the same. We see the shadow of something approaching Elsie. It's Neil. He silently hands Elsie the paper scrap and rides away.

We then see Adelaide standing stunned in front of the chapel while Text reads: 13 hours before Nickolas's killer is found

We then see Elsie inside the chapel with her evidence. Adelaide is standing behind her. She is surrounded by burnt newspaper scraps from earlier. Using all the pieces she finishes putting together the entire front page.

It Reads: Local coal mine Heiress hurriedly married to young steel tycoon on Friday

Elsie: does this look familiar

Adelaide: yes I think I remember seeing this one before

Elsie: And that's Viola?

She points to the picture which shows an extravagantly dressed bride and groom

Adelaide nods

Elsie: Then Viola couldn't have been the killer. We're right back where we started

Adelaide: What? I don't understand!

Elsie: he went missing on Sunday, Viola would have been in Pennsylvania by then.

Adelaide looks down at the floor

Elsie: Don't worry, I'll figure this out, I always do

Adelaide's expression doesn't change

Elsie: Y-you mentioned something before about Peter keeping a secret from me,
can you tell me what it was?

Adelaide: I think I'm just going to rest for a bit if that's alright miss

Elsie: Adelaide please, It's just me and you here, please

Adelaide: It was nice talking with you, Elsie

She rushes forward towards the cellar door.

Text reads: 9 hours before Nickolas's killer is found

The next page begins with a "bang" written on an otherwise plain black page. We then see that the noise is coming from Elsie who is trying to open door 109 with force. She slams into it repeatedly but the door will not budge. Exhausted she begins to walk back. Not paying attention, she bumps into something. It's Peter, standing stiff and rigid as always. He's holding a severely burnt newspaper

Elsie: My goodness Peter I'm so sorry

Peter chuckles

Peter: I found somethin' strange down here This mornin'. After hearin' the investigation's reached a dead end, I thought this might help some.

He hands her the burnt newspaper. A crooked nail through the top shows that it is the one hanging on the wall that Adelaide had burnt up in the previous chapter

It reads: Adelaide Stirit was found dead in her home on the 16th of December. She was 22 years of age when she burned to death in her home Sunday evening. She was the youngest of 5 children born to the distinguished Burton Family and is survived by her four loving sisters

Elise (emotionless and professional): Thank you

She goes to walk past him

Elsie: And thank you for helping me earlier.

Peter: Look I know you don't trust me much

Elsie perks up

Peter: can you just trust that there are some things that I can't tell you just yet. I know you'll figure that all out on your own though. You're a good detective Elsie.

Elsie nods and gives a reluctant smile

Text reads: 5 hours before Nickolas's killer is found

The final scene of the chapter takes place that night. We see Missy sitting in the saloon playing with cards. A large clock on the wall ticks loudly. The sounds of Missy's cards tick in rhythm with it.

We then see Elsie is lying in bed. The pale yellow cicadas are scattered around her room. Elsie shuts her eyes tightly, trying to ignore the noise. Suddenly she bolts upright with a realization

Elsie (wispering to her self) : Sunday!

Text reads: 1 hour before Nickolas's killer is found

Cicada Book 4: The Honest Truth

The book begins where the last left off. Elsie walks down the stairs with a distant expression. She walks past the open parlor door. Missy appears to be playing a game against Gabriel, who sits completely motionless and dead with a hand of cards laid out in front of his stand.

Missy: wanna join?

Elsie: There's something I have to do right now

Missy's gaze softens

Missy: you go do that then

Elsie nods with gratitude and walks away with a determined look

The next page shows her riding through the night on her horse. Neil follows not too far from her.

Eventually, she reaches the chapel

She knocks on the front door. It swings open by itself with a creak. Elsie cautiously walks through the dark chapel. She is startled when she kicks something. It is Peter, sleeping peacefully on the floor with a blanket and the ghost dog which he cuddles like a teddy bear. Elsie Carefully steps over them. She climbs up the ladder

to the attic. Adelaide is sitting on the floor playing with a candle; pinching the flame with her fingertips- then re-lighting it.

Elsie: (off-screen) Adelaide?

Adelaide whips around.

Adelaide: (With a smile) Oh good evening Elsie.

Elsie: hello

Adelaide: Can I Help you Miss?

Elsie: I believe I've come to a breakthrough in your case

Adelaide: (with no emotion) You do?

Elsie takes a deep breath

Elsie: Viola wasn't the killer, the wedding was abruptly moved to Friday. She wouldn't have been in town when Nickolas was murdered

Adelaide: Oh I see... That's Unfortunate news, Is that all?

Elsie: How did you learn of Nickolas's death?

Adelaide: I read of it in the paper of course.

Elsie: No, you didn't

Adelaide: I-

Elsie: You died on the 16th of December, His death wasn't reported until the 18th which would mean-

When Adelaide speaks again the wall behind her is almost pitch black

Adelaide: I killed him

Title page: Chapter Four: The Honest Truth

Elsie: Why?

Adelaide: I didn't mean to- It...

She trails off into silence

Elsie: There's just one thing left that doesn't make sense to me. Why make all this up then? Why get me involved? You're dead for Christ's sake- you could have left! You could have gotten away- I simply do not understand.

Adelaide: I didn't want to get away. I want to rot here!

Countless little glowing eyes appear in the darkness behind her, revealing that it is a swarm of cicadas.

Elsie: It was because of Viola wasn't it? You were jealous.

Adelaide doesn't respond

Elsie: What's the real story, Adelaide?

Adelaide: Just the same as the one I told you before, only he came back and I shot him.

Elsie: It doesn't make sense, You don't make sense.

Adelaide: You wouldn't understand what it's like to have done what I've done!

Elsie: If you feel so guilty then why lie?

We see Adelaide swarmed with black cicadas seemingly mumbling to herself as Elsie questions her out of frame.

Adelaide: I don't...

Elsie: why not tell Peter?

Adelaide: He wasn't supposed to...

Elsie: It's not like we can arrest you.

Adelaide: I was so stupid...

The next panels focus back on Elsie. She takes a deep breath trying to gather her thoughts. She tilts her head to the side.

Elsie: So you killed someone. Someone you love. And then...

She straightened her head suddenly as if something had alerted her.

Elsie: You killed...

Her eyes begin watering. Adelaide looks confused.

Elsie: How are you doing that?

Adelaide: I'm not doing anything.

We see a side view of the two women standing across from one another. A few pale cicadas buzz around behind Elsie's back.

Elsie: You... I didn't-

Adelaide: Elsie?

Elsie curls into herself as pale yellow cicadas continue to swarm her. Adelaide backs away. The next page is black.

The next scene is another dream sequence. For once it is in color, brighter than anything seen in the comic thus far. It appears like a technicolor movie. Elsie is in a very ornate-looking bar. She stumbles over to a couch and sits down. The blond woman comes to sit next to her. She is wearing a veil that covers her face.

Elsie: Who are you?

Blonde woman: You know my name Silly.

Elsie: I'm terribly sorry miss but I do not. you're dead aren't you?

Blonde woman: Of course I am

Elsie: And your haunting me?

The Blond woman says nothing

Elsie: What do you want from me?

The blonde woman hands her a handkerchief with a dove on it and disappears into a swarm of yellow cicadas.

The next page shows Missy in a cluttered room somewhere in the hotel. She is digging through cupboards and boxes. She is throwing around comically strange and stereotypically Western items (a Cowboy boot, a live snake, etc....) She eventually finds what she was looking for, A box of tea bags. She leaves the room and closes the door.

Missy is now sitting at her bar. She has two cups of tea brewing on the counter.

Elsie enters. Her hair is down. She appears to be wearing dark makeup around her eyes.

Elsie: Good morning

She speaks plainly and cautiously

Missy: well actually it's 'round noon, but good mornin' to you too.

Missy holds one of the cups out to her.

Missy: Tea?

Elsie takes the cup

Elsie: thank you.

Elsie sits down

Elsie: Was this the big secret? Adelaide was the killer all along, and everyone knew but me?

Missy: *She* killed Nickolas? I cant Say I was expecting that

Elsie huffs softly

Elsie: So what happened then?

Missy: I was hopin' to ask you that same question actually.

She looks down at her cup

Elsie: Well then I interrogated her for more information. This lead to an argument-very uncharacteristic of me I must add...and she did something strange to me.

Missy: Strange how?

Elsie: It was like her emotions were being forced into me. Almost like she was possessing me! I was feeling all her guilt and grief. It was...awful.

Missy: Are you sure that's what it was? In all my year's doin' this I ain't never heard of such a thing.

Elsie: Cross my heart.

Missy: And then you blacked out?

Elsie: Yes... I saw her again, the blonde woman. The handkerchief... bird- Robert-Bird! I have to go

She starts leaving the parlor before stopping for a moment

Elsie: what happens to Adelaide now?

Elsie turns around

Missy: Adelaide's run off. Peters out lookin' for her now

Elsie: Is it possible she's moved on?

Missy shakes her head and gestures to a black cicada on the wall

Missy: She is still here

Elsie nods

We then see her ride through town. The rising sun bathes the scene in an eerie red. She stares straight ahead, focused on the chapel. Her focus is disrupted when she spots black cicadas on the side of one of the buildings. She reluctantly gets off of her horse and investigates. The cicadas scatter once Elsie opens the door. She is surprised to see that this building is completely empty just as the two previous. She

backs up slowly. She cautiously makes her way to the building next door which is empty as well.

She stumbles into the middle of the road and shouts

Elsie: Hello! Anybody!

We then see a series of increasingly zoomed out panels to emphasise that there is absolutely no one around

She gets back on her horse

Elsie (panicking) : What is wrong with this town

We then see her ride up to the chapel, which for once is almost cicada-less. She climbs down the basement ladder for the final time. She wanders through the archive in almost pitch-blackness before once again reaching the door with the plaque. Yellow cicadas surround it.

Elsie: You're in here aren't you!

She tries to open it with brute force before noticing the keyhole. She pulls out her room key and curiously inserts it. It clicks and the door slowly swings open.

It is just as cluttered as the rest of the archive. This room glows with hanging lightbulbs and dressing room mirror lights. Elsie cautiously enters.

The first thing that catches her eye is a pair of children's size ballet slippers that are dangling from the ceiling.

She continues to walk but is startled by a clanking and crashing sound below her feet. The floor is littered with alcohol and pill bottles.

She makes her way over to the two vanity tables. They are dusty, covered in dead roses, makeup, and pills. Elsie opens one of the drawers. Inside is an item concealed by the dove handkerchief. She pulls away the handkerchief revealing that the item is a small pistol. She picks it up.

Almost instinctually, she poses with the gun pointed outward. Behind her is a poster of a woman in the same pose. It is too blurry to make out who it is.

Suddenly, all the lights in the room go out with a loud pop, startling Elsie. The darkness does not last long. A warm glow appears behind her. Spotlights have appeared in the room. All pointing towards a large poster covered in a white sheet. Elsie cautiously approaches the sheet. She pulls it down relieving a 1920's era movie poster. Painted onto it is the blonde woman, a thick widow's veil covering her face. Next to her is Elsie wearing a detective costume and doing her signature head tilt.

Elsie is in shock. She stumbles backward

Elsie: I don't understand

As she goes backward, she clumsily steps through the empty bottles before bumping into something. She turns around. They are sewing mannequins, each one wearing One of the outfits from the movie poster. The One dressed in the blonde

woman's clothes wobbles before falling face-first into the ground. Elsie immediately brings her hands up to cover her mouth. She collapses to her knees.

We see her from outside the door.

Elsie: I remember... Oh god I remember

"Intermission" Panel: CICADA

Elsie stands up shakily from the Archive entrance and makes her way toward the chapel door.

Peter opens the door and jumps when he sees her. He shifts to a sympathetic, knowing expression

Peter: do You wanna talk?

He reaches out to comfort her.

She recoils back and starts walking towards the confessional door.

Peter: You wanna do this the ol' formal way?

Elsie says nothing and shuts the door behind her.

The next page shows Elsie in the dimly lit booth.

Elsie: It's easier if I don't see the look on your face

Peter: Alright Elsie.

Elsie: My name isn't Elsie ... It- It's Maria, And I'm no detective.

Peter: You've been a pretty great detective as far as I'm concerned

Maria: I was a ballerina...

From this point forward we see her story play out in a grainy black-and-white flashback. There is no dialogue.

We see a young Maria in a ballet class full of other young girls. She stumbles and falls. A young blonde girl helps her up. We then see a montage of the two girls growing up together throughout the 1910s and 20s.

We cut back to Maria in the Confessional. She looks down sadly at the handkerchief in her hand.

Maria: Her name was Birdie.

We see the two women, now grown up, practicing in a dance studio. Maria dances at a bar while Birdie sits on the floor. She is attempting to mend her ribboned-ballet slipper with a needle and thread. She only makes the hole larger, ripping the ribbon clean off. We then see the women dumping their coin purses on the floor. They count their change with a defeated sigh. The next page shows the women on stage. It is the middle of a show. They exchange worried glances throughout the performance. Finally, Birdie does a Foutte, sending her slipper flying off and ribbon floating through the air. We then see the end of the performance. Maria comforts a frustrated Birdie. A man then approaches them, holding out his hand for the women to shake. He hands them a card. It reads: Robert Alden of Alden & Booker: Moving Pictures Studio.

We see Birdie and Maria getting their film makeup done on a film set. They smile excitedly at each other. We then see them filming. Maria plays a detective while Birdie is dressed in a dramatic widow's robe. The set resembles the parlor room from Maria's dream in Chapter 1. The women pose dramatically. This transitions to a movie poster where they are pictured in the same pose.

There is a montage of their life as movie stars. Overwhelming photoshoots, long shooting days, uncomfortable parties, and pills given to them by Robert We then

see Maria come home to her apartment after a long day. She stumbles into her bedroom, tripping over a box on the way. She bends down to pick up the contents of the box. She picks up her old ballet slippers. She carries them into her bed. She cradles them to her chest. We then cut to Birdie's apartment. She is in her pajamas, somberly dancing while smoking a cigarette.

Maria then crawls into Birdie's window through the fire escape. She carries a shopping bag. She pours the contents onto Birdie's bed. Two "scandalous" Dresses and a bottle of alcohol. The women are shown drinking and getting ready. Maria grabs the now bent and worn business card given to them by Robert off of Birdie's dresser. She rips the corner off and writes "109" on it. They then dance drunkenly out of the apartment, occasionally waving and signing autographs for fans. There is a cut to the women entering a rundown hotel. Maria holds the ripped business card in her hand. She looks up and knocks on a door that has a brass plate on the front with the number 109 engraved into it. The door opens to reveal the bar shown in the dream earlier in the chapter.

There is a party montage. The drawings are overlaid with a melting Film effect to signify the memories are fuzzy. The montage ends with Maria and Birdie stumbling out of the hotel. The melting film effect ends the second they enter a car.

Maria is the one driving. She appears incredibly out of it. We see a bright white light against Maria's Frightened face. We then see a silhouette of the two women in the middle of the impact. Birdie was thrown through Windshield. Maria is knocked unconscious but wakes again for just a moment. We see one last image of Maria's face. A streak of dark blood gushes from a headwound on one side of her forehead. Birdie's blood is splattered onto the other side. Birdie is no longer in the vehicle

Maria mumbles

Maria: I have to find...

Bird-

Cut back to the present day

Maria: I don't remember anything that happened after that. I must have run away, ran west I'm assuming. I probably Stole that horse. And now I'm here. I suppose that means I'm on the Lam now.

Peter: No, you're not.

Maria: You're turning me in?

She smiles genuinely

Maria: I should have known you'd be the sort to do so. You're a good man Peter.

Peter: No

We then see Peter's side of the confessional. He pulls out a newspaper from his coat.

Peter: In the early morning of January 2nd, 1927, Beloved Actresses Bernadette Petrie and Maria Bow were tragically killed in an automobile accident. They will be remembered most by their adoring fans for their roles as Mary Harker and Elsie Peck respectively in the revolutionary "Detective Elsie" sound film franchise.

We then see Maria's side again. She stares expressionless while blood drips from her head in the same place it did during the accident. Peter's dialogue bubbles swirl around the room and start to fade.

Peter: A public memorial for the women will be held outside of Alden & Booker

Theater Sunday evening...

The final image of the chapter shows the outside of the confessional door, which is covered in a swarm of pale yellow cicadas.

Cicada Book 5: Memento Mori

The chapter begins in Maria's Room. She is lying in a copper bathtub. She looks tired and depressed. She submerges her face into the water.

We then see her out of the tub. She stands nude in front of a mirror. She brushes her wet hair away from her face to reveal the blood splatter from the car crash has appeared on her face. She rubs her face but the splatter remains. She looks down at her hand. A large pool of blood sits in her palms and pours onto the floor.

Title page: Chapter Five: Memento Mori

We then see Peter and Missy standing on the porch outside. The dog is sleeping on the porch with them. For the first time in the comic, the sky is overcast.

Peter: Quite a job we've done.

Missy: It could be worse

Peter: We've got one spirit who's been in an unconsolable fit for weeks now, and another whose God knows where. Knowin' our luck we'll be gettin' another horse ridin' in here any second now!

Missy looks down at the ground.

Missy: I did all that I could.

Peter: You gave them distractions.

Missy: I offered them moments of peace. You insisted on workin' them to the bone.

Peter: We're in a purgatory Missy, makin' them work towards peace is our job.

Missy: Well clearly one of our methods aint workin'

Peter: or Both

Missy: Or neither

Peter: This is what we get for pawnin' our Job off to another spirit

They argue with a tone of detachment as if it is a respectful debate as opposed to a genuine argument.

Missy: Maybe I'll go out lookin' for Adelaide today. You can stay here and look after Maria.

Peter: Alright, but I think it'll soon be time we start thinkin' 'bout our other option.

Missy nods with a frown

Missy: I'll find her

She whistles at the dog

As she says this, she mounts a horse and rides off into the desert, the dog sniffing close behind.

A voice from behind Peter: Other Option?

It is Maria standing in the doorway. She is wearing the dress she wore on the night of the accident. The blood is gone. For the entire rest of the story, she is constantly surrounded by at least a few pale yellow cicadas.

Peter: Ah Maria, How are you?

He follows her inside

Maria: Im fine, I'll have to thank Missy for that bath. It was nice.

Peter: Glad to hear it.

Maria: What is the other option? What will happen if we don't find Adeilade?!

Peter: That's not somethin' to worry bout' now, I trust Missy. Besides, I gotta worry but gettin you to move on now. I should've never made Adelaide your problem.

Maria leans against the wall

Maria: I ruined everything didn't I?

Peter: Now what do you mean by that?

Maria slowly sinks to the floor

Maria: My life, Birdie's life, The studio, Adelaide's death...

Pale yellow cicadas cover the wall around her. A new orange cicada lands on her knee.

Maria: Adelaide... that Monster! How could she act in such a way?!

The orange cicada flies away

Maria: How could she do that and lie!? I don't...

Peter sits beside her

Peter: Would you like to talk?

She buries her head in her knees

Maria: Why didnt you tell me I was dead?

Peter: Well sometimes when a peson dies they loose all their memoreies from the trauma. Learnin' everything all over again as soon as they get here will make a person go mad.

Maria: Peter I've gone mad anyway! Why does it hurt so much? Im dead aren't I?

Peter: pain aint a livin' person thing, just a person thing

He looks down at his bandage from the fire.

Maria: I've been trying to figure out what it all meant. If our death was our punishment then what was our crime?

Peter: Death dont work like no Judge Maria. Nobody *should* die but everybody does dont they? that make any sense?

Maria shakes her head from side to side

Peter: I don't know if this would mean anything to you, but Bernadette never came through this town.

Maria: She's alive!?

Peter: Eh- no, but it means she moved on peacefully. I doubt she wanted to die, But She had no guilt, no confusion, nothin' holdin' her back. She accepted it.

There is a panel of silence as Maria wipes her face.

Maria: I'd still like to help here if I can.

Peter: That would be nice.

We then see Missy In the middle of the desert. She looks around Frustrated.

Suddenly Neil Rides up beside her.

Missy: Howdy

He never responds

Missy: Can I help you?

He says nothing

Missy: Are you helpin' me look?

He stays silent and starts riding forward

Missy: ha! I bet Peter Ain't ever get special help from you!

Missy follows him. Her smug expression Drops to a more serious one when she spots something ahead.

Missy: woah shes-

She turns to speak to Neil but he has already disappeared.

In front of her stands a tall structure. It is a wooden amalgamation appearing to be formed from bits and pieces of Adelaide's house. Black cicadas swarm around it.

Missy gets down from her horse.

Missy: Adelaide? I know you're round' here somewhere. We just wanna help.

A shadow figure can be seen running past a window on the bottom level. Missy runs into the structure. She looks back toward the dog. It sits down, making clear that it has no intention of entering.

Missy goes inside. The shadowy figure now in front of her is revealed to be a simulacrum of Nickolas. He faces Missy and backs up slowly with a look of terror.

SIM Nickolas: Now Addie- dearest wait!

He Explodes into a cloud of smoke and cicadas, only to reform once again.

Missy(under her breath): Good grief.

She brings both hands up to wipe soot from her face. A chorus of eerie voiced mumble behind her.

Voices: Little Addie...Our baby... A monster...

She turns around. The voices are coming from four well-loved cloth and wood dolls.

As Missy backs away from them, what appears to be a gigantic snake slithers past her feet. A long Hiss sounds from above her head. Towering above her is a large snake woman. From the waist up, She is a nude woman with long red hair and glowing eyes.. From the waist down she is a large rattlesnake.

Snake woman: SSSssssinnerrrr... Killllllerrrr...

The snake, dolls, and Nickolas corner Missy and force her back out the door. Just as she reaches the door frame there is a loud Pop. The visions all poof into soot and

black cicadas. As the debris settles Adelaide is seen standing in the middle of the room, on fire and holding a smoking shotgun. Missy and Adelaide make eye contact for a moment. Missy tries to reach out to her, but the door slams shut.

She sighs in defeat. Neil stands motionlessly a few yards away.

We then see the Inn. Peter and Maria are sitting in the parlor. Maria is sitting at a table while Peter is wiping the bar counter. He repeatedly glances over to Maria, who is sitting silently with her gaze on the ground. The atmosphere is uncomfortable. Peter spots a deck of playing cards on the counter and picks it up.

Peter: Say uh... Missy ever get you to play that one game?

Maria (with a tone I can only describe as getting a child to laugh whilst they are in the midst of a tantrum): Yes! That game is of the devil I tell you!

The two laugh.

Missy slams the door open. She looks frazzled and is covered in ash. The dog waltzes in blissfully unaware.

Missy: I think it's time for the other option.

Peter and Maria exclaim in unison

Maria: what's the other option?

Peter: What happened?

Missy (with disbelief): She's made herself a simulacrum Hell in the middle of the desert.

Missy Sits down on a bar stool

Missy: It's time for the other option, We've gotta get her outta here. Even if that means...

She looks Maria in the eye sadly

Missy: Possession

Maria: Possession?

The next panel is the word *possession* written in chalk. The panel after shows Peter standing in front of a chalkboard. Maria, Missy, ghost dog, and assistant host Gabriell are sat before it like school children.

Maria: So we're gonna possess her and force her to leave?

Peter: The opposite actually. You're gonna go out and meet Adelaide out at Pandemonium. Missy and I are gonna perform a sorta ritual from the chapel. If all goes well, Adelaide's soul will be absorbed into your body. She won't be in control of you or nothin' you're just the container. From there, you're gonna take the both of you out into the beyond.

As he explains, his plan is shown through poorly done chalk drawings

Maria (With a bit of fear): How do I get to the beyond?

Peter: You'll know how when you get there.

Missy: I'm real sorry it's come to this, we hate to send spirits away when they're not ready.

Peter: We don't take this lightly, we see this as a failure in our line of work. Your sacrifice won't be overlooked.

Missy: If you choose to make it that is.

Maria thinks for a moment

Maria: I want to help, in any way I can.

“Intermission” Panel: CICADA

The next page shows the gang outside of the chapel. The sky is menacingly dark grey.

Peter is collecting a pile of books and candles. Missy is tying a long rope around Maria's waist.

Missy: There, that way if anythin' goes wrong, we can pull you back in.

Maria: Thank you

Peter walks over to Maria, who is staring thoughtfully at the sky ahead.

Maria: The beyond, what is it like?

Peter: I wish I knew the answer to that. It might not even be anythin' at all. I just know it ain't here and it's where everyone needs to go.

Maria doesn't respond

Missy: We gotta hurry up. Large Structures don't last long after all and we don't wanna lose her again. Are we ready?

Peter looks to Maria for an answer

Maria: Yeah, I'm ready

Missy grabs her hand

Missy: I'm sorry we couldn't find you any peace

Maria: don't be. I wouldn't say I'm deserving of such a thing

Peter and Missy share concerned glances before Peter puts a hand on Maria's shoulder

Peter: It's been a pleasure workin' with you.

Maria: Thank you, both of you for everything. I suppose this is Goodbye.

Missy whistles and the dog runs out of the chapel

Missy (to the dog): Take her where she needs to go.

Maria turns around to see her horse suddenly standing before her. She pets its nose with a smile before climbing on top of it and riding off following the dog.

Peter picks a book from up off of his pile and begins flipping through it

Peter: Let's begin.

By the next page, The sun is beginning to set. Maria is far into the desert. She is falling asleep on her horse when it sneezes, startling her awake. The next panel shows the dog aggressively sniffing the ground as it walks. It perks up having caught onto a scent and runs forward. Maria follows

They arrive at the structure. It is swarming with black cicadas and smoke is flowing out from all over.

She takes a deep shaky breath before dismounting the horse and entering inside.

Maria: Adelaide?

She climbs up through multiple levels of the impossibly structure house. It is eerily empty. Eventually, she is stopped by a menacing hiss.

The Snake woman lays coiled behind her. Maria jumps back with fright. She uncoils and slithers away revealing a flaming Adelaide. She is bloody and holding a smoking gun.

Maria: I'm sorry about what I said before, I'd like to talk with you.

She holds a hand out for Adelaide to take.

Marial Walk with me?

Adelaide quickly aims the gun at Maria's head with malice

Adelaide: You're a killer! No better than I am!

Maria backs up with her hands in the air

Maria: I'm already dead Adelaide, you know this

Adelaide: I can still make you hurt! I can make us both hurt!

Maria continues to back up until she reaches a staircase. She wobbles a bit before stumbling down. Reaching the bottom she startles up a cloud of ash. When the cloud settles she is now wearing an Odile costume. She struggles both physically and mentally to get back up.

Through a POV panel, we see through Maria's blurry vision that Adelaide is standing at the top of the stairs. She closes her eyes and tilts her head.

Maria suddenly stands and lunges for Adelaide. This leads to a dramatic chase scene which ends abruptly. The second Maria's hand makes contact with her, Adelaide explodes into hundreds of shapeless strokes and orbs of blue light. Maria looks shocked as the orbs are quickly absorbed into her. She falls to her knees as the structure turns to dust and blows away.

It is now nighttime. Maria opens her eyes, which now glow a bright blue, and stands up. She begins walking forward. Neil follows her closely throughout this scene.

Maria and Adelaide then proceed to have a conversation. Though both word bubbles are coming from Maria's body, Adelaide's are *ghostly* in design and come from Maria's head rather than her mouth.

Adelaide: Where are you taking me?

Maria: To the Beyond

Adelaide: Wait!

Maria: We can't wait any longer, Peter and Missy said we have to go.

Maria walks forward for some time. Her face shows discomfort and she lifts her hand to see that it is transparent and glowing

Maria: ah!

Adelaide: We're starting to fade away Miss we have to turn back now!

Maris huffs and moves forward with determination. She walks for a little while longer, eyeing Neil suspiciously. The glow has reached up her arm now

Adelaide: Please I just want to talk, Just for a moment longer.

Maria takes a shaky breath but continues walking

Adelaide: I- I Can't!

Maria shuts her eyes, grabbing them like she's in pain. When she opens them again, the glowing in her eyes is gone. She then writhes in pain as the glow fades from the rest of her body.

We then see her from where Neil is standing. He watches her intently. Eventually, all the light is gone, and the desert is completely dark. The darkness lasts for only a moment. An explosive ray of light erupts from Maria's body. Neil recoils from the

force of the blast. Once the ray completely exits, Maria lies flat on the ground next to Adelaide

The two women lie exhausted on the ground for a moment.

Adelaide: I truly like you miss. really I do

Maria (emotionless) : Thank you

Adelaide: My family was pretty wealthy you know. They cut me off when I married Nickolas.No Burton girl was gonna soil the family name being a farmer's wife. Part of me always wondered If he only wanted to marry me for the money. And when he didn't get it from me, was he gonna find it someplace else?

Adelaide:...It was all an accident

Maria: what?

Adelaide: I miss him. I didn't mean to kill him- honest I didn't.

We see a flashback of what really happened the night Nickolas died. There is no dialogue spoken within the flashback itself, but Adelaide narrates over it.

The flashback begins with Adelaide looking shocked, holding a smoking shotgun.

Adelaide: The gun was never supposed to go off. I saw the letters, I thought he must have gone to see her. I wanted to threaten him, scare him, but I never wanted to kill him.

We then see Adelaide dragging a burlap sack filled with the body through a rainy night. She seems dazed. She takes the key necklace off and ties the bag closed before throwing it down the well.

Adelaide: I was so stupid

We see the very first scene again, Adelaide standing by the doorway holding a newspaper

Adelaide: I did not know what else to do so I did the first normal thing I could think of and began reading the paper.

We see the newspaper she was reading, It was the wedding announcement

Adelaide: I'll never know why the wedding was moved to Friday. I'll never know where Nickolas really went that night. I'll never know if he ever even planned to meet with Viola. All I know is he came home and I killed him before he could say anything.

We see her run around in a panic before lighting the match, setting a pile of papers ablaze and throwing the newspaper on top

Adelaide: I didn't want to die neither, I panicked. I wanted to burn all those awful letters but the fire, It got out of hand! And I tried to get out but I locked the door. My key it...

The flashback ends here

Adelaide: Well I guess he really did get his revenge on me after all. I sent the key down the well with him. He killed me.

Maria: I don't think he did. Death doesn't work like that you know.

Adelaide: Then what do you think?

Maria: I think you're a fool. And a coward, and a liar. Just like I am. But... I know
...mopping around here won't fix anything.

Adelaide: How do we fix it then?

Maria: The things we've done? we cant do anything.

Maria stands up and reaches an arm out to Adelaide

Adelaide: Wait!

Maria: What?!

Adelaide: Just I little longer, I want to say... Im sorry... And I want to tell Peter
and Missy the same. Please?

Maria: I... I'm sorry too...

We see a full page of Maria and Adelaide standing with an invisible bubble around them preventing the cicadas from getting closer

We then see Peter and Missy back at the chapel. Books and candles of all shapes and sizes are lying around. Peter is staring off into space while Missy absentmindedly plays with her hair.

A giant explosion of blue light off in the distance startles them. Before they can say anything the light disappears.

The next page is a full-page image of Maria and Adelaide walking through the desert. Adelaide is no longer on fire and wears her hair up and a different dress. Maria is wearing a silver gown. The Horse and the dog contently walk beside them. A very small swarm of pale and black cicadas fly behind them.

Peter and Missy are cleaning up from the ritual when the two women approach.

Missy: What happened!?

Adelaide is silent, thinking about what to say.

Maria: She wanted to talk to you.

Adelaide jumps down from the horse and stands in front of Peter and Missy

Adelaide: I don't think I could ever make things right with Nickolas, but I want to try and make things right with you. I want to apologize for all the trouble I've caused here.

They smile

Missy: we appreciate that

Adelaide: Well I've fixed all that I can

She turns around to leave again

Peter: Hey, You two came all this way, why don't you stay just a bit longer?

The women smile

The next page shows the Inn. Everyone is sitting at the bar. Peter is drinking a coffee and Maria a tea.

Missy: And anything for you Miss Adelaide?

She thinks for a moment

Adelaide: well I'm not sure, whatever you like best.

Missy nods her head smiling and pours two glasses from an unlabeled bottle.

Missy: I've gotta say Peter this is the best outcome I've ever seen from a possession.

Peter: Quiet a Job we've done.

Adelaide (To Maria): What do you think the beyond will be like?

Maria: I can't say I've got a clue

Adelaide: what would you like it to be like? We've got forever ahead of us, in a perfect world what would you want to do with it?

Maria: The idea of forever frightens me, but I know what I'd like to do tomorrow.

She looks down with a soft smile at the dove handkerchief she is holding.

The next page shows the outside of the inn. Maria's horse is standing and waiting.

The sun is just beginning to rise. Adelaide and Maria climb on top of the Horse.

They turn to wave goodbye to Peter and Missy who are standing on the porch.

Peter sadly pats the dog goodbye.

Peter: Go on now! Get!

Adelaide shakes her head with a smile

Adelaide: I think he'd rather stay with you, Peter

Peter smiles

Peter: Well if he insists

When they turn back Neil and his horse are standing in front of them. Adelaide leans forward and hands him two coins. Maria Smiles and hands him the two coins from the first chapter. He tips his hat and rides off. The women follow.

The final page shows Neil, The women, and a few scattered yellow and black cicadas riding through the vast desert and into the sunrise.

The End