

Brodhead Society

One-Hour Pilot

"Gaist"

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OPEN ON

TITLE CARD: Brodhead, Wisconsin - 1902

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - WOODS OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DUSK

A sunset burns red on the horizon while a young couple are walking the tracks side-by-side, enjoying each others company as their chemistry builds.

JOHN ELSNOR (20s), dressed sharp in a black tie and manicured mustache. Carries himself with polite ease, the kind that comes from a life lived for someone else.

MARGARET BELL (20s), trusting eyes, easy smile. She wears her best dress, but it's her charm she leans on, soft, playful, and aimed squarely at John.

JOHN

What a night for a walk.

John makes eye contact with Margaret and shares a genial smile.

MARGARET

I love it out here.

The woods briefly clear as it reveals the Sugar River under a trestle bridge that is only a short stroll ahead. Its impressive iron structure looms against the fiery sunset. John keeps glancing at Margaret.

JOHN

Beautiful.

In the distance, a pale, ghostly figure of a YOUNG GIRL (8) stands rigid in the middle of the bridge. Her faded dull silhouette flickers, as if struggling to stay in this world.

John squints.

JOHN

You see that?

Margaret looks to John, then ahead. The silhouette flickers away before she can see it. Margaret squints, straining into the sunset and shakes her head. John struggles to catch another glimpse.

JOHN

I thought I saw a kid?

He turns to Margaret with a smile playing it off as nothing.

JOHN
Probably just the light in my eyes.

John walks onto the bridge. Nervous, Margaret stops at the edge.

JOHN
It's OK. Look... we can walk on the wood ties.

The ghostly pale figure of the Young Girl appears mid-bridge, her wet hair clings to her head. A damp, tattered white dress drapes over her small frame. She stares, unblinking, at the sunset.

Margaret sees the young girl and stops in her tracks.

MARGARET
JOHN.

John looks up, his eyes widen. He stumbles back, drops to his butt. Margaret steps back, her eyes locked on the girl. John slowly gets back to his feet.

JOHN
(insecure)
Hello?

He glances back at Margaret. She shakes her head. He turns back to the young girl, pauses, slowly steps up to her.

JOHN
Everything alright?

The soft WHIMPERING of a child echos in the air. John reaches out, his breath catches as his hand passes right through her shoulder. John stares at his hand with jaw gaping, eyes wide.

MARGARET
Did your hand?

The young girl turns slowly, unnaturally smooth. Her face is streaked with dirt, eyes swollen and red as if she's been crying. Her eyes meet John's. Sadness gives way to surprise, then sharpens into anger.

She rises slightly into the air and releases an unnatural bone-chilling scream.

YOUNG GIRL GHOST
RUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUNNN!

John falls back on the bridge as the the young girl rises over John clenching her fists to her sides.

YOUNG GIRL GHOST
RUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUNNN!!

MARGARET
JOHN!

John scuttles backward, scrambles to his feet and bolts toward Margaret.

JOHN
Ruuuun!

Margaret sprints frantically down the tracks. The sound of her heavy breathing and whimpering echos in the air.

John sprints full speed. The second his feet hit solid ground off the bridge, he risks a glance back and trips. He tumbles down the steep embankment and crashes into tall bushes.

EXT. INSIDE TALL BUSHES BY THE RIVER - CONTINUOUS

John is on his back. He sits up out of breath, nervously looks around. His face scratched and bleeding. The bushes surrounding him shake violently. Panicked, his eyes dart back and forth.

EXT. WOODED TRAIN TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Margaret breathes heavily as she runs toward town, just yards ahead.

JOHN (O.S.)
(Blood-curdling scream)
Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!

Margaret stops and nervously turns back. The tracks stretch empty beneath the sky, the bridge a lonely silhouette against a deep red sunset.

END OF TEASER

TITLE CARD: Harris House Hotel - Current Day

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE HOTEL - MAIN STREET, BROADHEAD, WI - DAY

A two story redbrick building with a witch's hat tower observatory sits on the corner of a traditional midwest town square. Its curbside is an elaborate awning over two large black wooden doors clad with gothic iron work.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is cluttered with pots, pans and various open boxes of food. The center island is covered with half prepared meals.

PATRICK SCOTT (late 20s), is charismatic but guarded, a social chameleon with something tucked just beneath the surface, works the kitchen like it's a stage and sanctuary.

Scallions drop onto a cutting board and he turns to tend the stove. A knife resting on the counter slowly glides away from the cutting board on its own, then comes to an eerie stop.

Toast pops from a toaster. Patrick's hand grabs the toast and throws it on a plate.

He tosses two more pieces of bread into the machine. A quick tap on the toaster's homemade touch display, the screen flickers to life. Without missing a beat, he grabs two plated orders and heads to the service window.

PATRICK
Seven's up!

DOTTIE VAN SKIKE (late 50s), a rough, weathered soul, who's been waiting tables her whole life with a bit of sarcasm and resentment, arrives at the window.

Dottie inspects the orders and grunts as if they barely pass approval.

INT. HARRIS HOUSE RESTAURANT - DINING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Dottie pulls the food order from the service window of the classic diner and carries it to a table where two customers are waiting.

On the other end of the dining room, SAMANTHA HARPER (late 20s), is waiting on a table.

Samantha, smart, sharp, and hard to rattle. Her fire runs deep, showing her confidence and sometimes a little temper.

At Samantha's table, ERIC SCHULTZ (30s), preppy arrogance and aloof, leans in to whisper something to KRISTINE SCHULTZ (late 20s), self-absorbed and shallow. She wears a flowery sundress and a delicate chain necklace with a pearl pendant. Their BABY sits in a highchair beside them.

Eric looks over the menu.

ERIC
What's kapusta kiszona?
(kap-PUST-ah kiss-zōn-nah)

Kristine shrugs. Samantha gives a look over her shoulder at the kitchen.

SAMANTHA
Kapusta kiszona
(kah-POOS-tah kee-SHOH-nah) is
sauerkraut. The cook is Polish, or
crazy... or both.

Eric looks disgusted and turns back to the menu.

KRISTINE
Sounds like ethnic food.

Kristine sticks out her tongue in disgust while she stares at her nails.

KRISTINE
I'll have two cups of mixed fruit,
a cup of cottage cheese and half a
slice of toast with half an
avocado.

Samantha bites her lip while jotting down the order.

ERIC
Garden omelet and cheesy hash
browns. Is it real cheese?

SAMANTHA
Our very own Decatur Dairy award
winning.

Samantha catches a glimpse of the woman's pearl pendant and leans in for a closer look. Her eyes pop with curiosity.

SAMANTHA
(very friendly)
I love your necklace.

KRISTINE

Thanks.

SAMANTHA

Is it a local pearl?

With a small shrug, Kristine is clearly unsure of how to answer.

KRISTINE

It was a gift I got in Baraboo...
years ago.

SAMANTHA

Oh. Maybe it's a Ho-Chunk necklace.

Samantha leans in a little closer to get a better look.

SAMANTHA

It's amazing. Some Native American
jewelry holds spiritual
significance. Believed to ward off
negative energy and evil.

Kristine looks unamused and tries to lean away from Samantha.

KRISTINE

(aside)
I guess it didn't work.

She looks toward Eric and the highchair.

A few yards away, Dottie stands behind the counter
eavesdropping with a focused glare, clutching something under
her collar.

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE RESTAURANT - BACK ALLEY - MINUTES LATER

The door to the ally flies open and Samantha burst through. A few feet outside and she looks back to the door shaking her head.

In the ally, a large screen TV wobbles next to a dumpster,
and she gives it a long side look.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Everything OK?

Startled, Samantha gasps. Out from around the back of the TV,
Patrick gives a quick peek and disappears. Samantha smiles
ear-to-ear.

SAMANTHA

Fine.

PATRICK

Come hold this thing still.

SAMANTHA

Whatcha doin'?

PATRICK

Wonderin' if this can be fixed.

Patrick looks up at Samantha with a smirk.

SAMANTHA

Do anything fun on your day off?

PATRICK

Eh.

SAMANTHA

You and Karah do anything special?

Patrick pulls a circuit board from the TV and sits back.

PATRICK

Burnt out.

Samantha rolls her eyes. Admiring the board, he points to a black charred spot and gives a glance to Samantha.

PATRICK

Huh?... Karah left me.

Samantha tries to hide a smile as Patrick pulls a paperclip from his pocket and unfolds it.

SAMANTHA

Sorry to hear that.

He forcefully jabs the paperclip onto the circuit board.

SAMANTHA

Look at you MacGyver.

PATRICK

Last thing she said... She asked...
what's the one thing she can do
that I can't?

SAMANTHA

Talk to strangers?

They share a light laugh.

PATRICK
Leave this shit hole of a dead
town.

Samantha is not hiding her happiness at this news.

SAMANTHA
She left, Brodhead?

Patrick looks upset as he reassembles the TV.

PATRICK
To Walworth.

Samantha can't stop laughing.

SAMANTHA
That's perfect.

PATRICK
There's nothing there.

Samantha's snicker calms to frustration that he is upset about Karah. She walks toward the door. A few steps away, she turns back.

SAMANTHA
There's nothin' here.

A beat.

SAMANTHA
I should get back.

She turns to leave again, then hesitates. With a flash of hope, she takes a chance.

SAMANTHA
Want to get a drink tonight?

PATRICK
On a Tuesday?

Pausing a beat, she nods. He nods back.

PATRICK
Flynn's?

Samantha replies with a genial smile and nod.

SAMANTHA
It's a date.

EXT. HARRIS HOUSE RESTAURANT - FRONT CURBSIDE - DUSK

The front door opens, Patrick and Samantha walk out, all smiles. He looks back at Samantha and she pulls his hand with a mischievous smile.

SAMANTHA

We've been inside all day. Let's go
for a small walk.

She tilts her head in a playful come on gesture.

EXT. WAGON FACTORY - SIDEWALK IN FRONT - DUSK

Strolling along the sidewalk, Samantha and Patrick are enjoying the walk as they approach a modest old yellow brick building from the 1800s. A "FOR RENT" sign hangs in a window.

PATRICK

The ol' wagon factory.

Samantha walks up to the building and rubs her hand across the yellow brick as she admires the construction.

SAMANTHA

A piece of Brodhead history. A symbol of how this small town has had big impacts on the world.

Patrick follows her up to the wall, mirroring her movements with a look of fascination.

PATRICK

How's that?

SAMANTHA

Al Ringling worked here as a kid.

Patrick glances at her, surprised. Samantha gives him a knowing nod.

PATRICK

A Ringling brothers circus,
Ringling? How did I not know this?
I loved Circus World as a kid.

She looks at him flirtatiously and then shrugs.

SAMANTHA

Maybe you should've paid attention
more.

She winks at him. Patrick, in awe, looks from Samantha to the wall towering over them. Samantha slowly backs way and waves her arms over her head as if she is presenting a large reveal.

SAMANTHA
Brodhead is where he started honing
his circus skills.

They turn and continue the walk.

FLASHBACK

CARD TITLE: Downtown Square - 1875

EXT. BROADHEAD SQUARE - 1875 - DAY

A generous size crowd of well dressed city folk gathers near a tight rope, just above their heads, drawn across the median.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
Doing anything that'd draw a crowd.

A beat and AL RINGLING (20s), a strong man wears scary clown makeup and a wig, while he balances on the tightrope juggling baseballs.

A few yards behind him are two NATIVE AMERICANS (a man and woman, late 20s) selling pearls and jewelry. Next to them is FREDDY (early 20s), giving a cheerful and energetic performances with a ventriloquist doll in front of a crowd of children. Freddy's doll is a small twin of him with a black suit and mustache.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
His buddy Freddy, a ventriloquist
and puppeteer... they started a
show... "Babes in the Woods."

Beyond Freddy a group of three women, dressed in all black, approach the Native Americans stand.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
People would flock to the town
square on the weekends to see them.

END FLASHBACK

Samantha and Patrick continue their walk. Patrick rolls his eyes as shivers roll down his back.

PATRICK

Nothing scarier than clowns and
ventriloquists.

Through the corner window of the factory, Freddy's worn, aged ventriloquist doll slumps lifelessly against the wall. Its head propped as it looks outside at the two walking away.

INT. WAGON FACTORY - CORNER WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

The room is a mess with dusty boxes. Antique tools hang on the walls. In the window rests the ventriloquist doll. The sounds of someone rifling through boxes can be heard.

Dottie appears quickly snatching up the doll. She spins it around and rips it apart looking for something inside it. Angrily she throws the torn doll on the floor and turns back to the room.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NEAR TRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha and Patrick stroll just a few yards from a railroad crossing. Samantha turns to him, her energy playful and flirty.

SAMANTHA

Let's walk the tracks.

She pulls a cupped hand out of her pocket and reveals a joint. Patrick grins.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - SUGAR RIVER TRESTLE BRIDGE NOT MUCH HAS
CHANGED - LATER

Samantha skips out onto the bridge without a care. Patrick follows, but a little slower.

She clings to an iron support and leans over the edge.

PATRICK

This bridge was so much fun when we
were kids.

Samantha, all smiles, darts to the end of the bridge and starts throwing rocks into the water.

SAMANTHA

I remember all the partying.

PATRICK

We used to climb down...

Patrick, sees a young girl that sits on a concrete pylon below the tracks.

PATRICK
Someone's down there!

Samantha stops to look.

PATRICK
Hello?

They both look, but the girl is gone. Samantha leans and peers along the bridge.

SAMANTHA
I don't see anyone.

PATRICK
She was right there.

They scan the water.

SAMANTHA
(laughing)
Maybe you are high. Good stuff.

He looks again. Samantha gives up and goes back to throwing rocks. Patrick stands puzzled.

SAMANTHA
let's get that drink.

PATRICK
Yeah.

They go to leave. As Patrick reaches the edge of the bridge, he looks over his shoulder to the empty surroundings.

He joins Samantha, turns back one last time.

In the middle of the bridge, a ghostly silhouette of a young girl stands motionless. Her form flickers in and out, like a weak signal barely holding on.

PATRICK
(nervous wobbly voice)
What the fuck?

Hands trembling, he taps Samantha and points. Samantha turns.

SAMANTHA
Holy Shit!!!

PATRICK
(disgruntled)
By getting dropped off and forced
to walk back to town.

ABBY
Poor kids... It's rumored to be
haunted.
(a beat)
I'll start researching at the
museum.

Samantha winks at Patrick.

SAMANTHA
We can research this diary.

EXT. SCOTCH HILL - ENTRANCE GATE - NIGHT

On a dark countryside road outside of Brodhead, a car pulls off onto a short dirt road. As it pulls past a broken gate into a very small, very old cemetery, the engine and lights turn off.

INT. SCOTCH HILL - CAR FRONT SEAT - CONTINUOUS

The interior of the car is barely lit by the moon light. The TEENAGE GIRL in the passenger seat slaps the shoulder of the TEENAGE BOY driving.

TEENAGE GIRL
Hey. Why'd ya turn it off?

TEENAGE BOY
I didn't. It just shut off on its
own.

The boy sits up straight and fidgets with the ignition.

EXT. SCOTCH HILL - CONTINUOUS

In the weeds on the side of the dirt road entrance, is an old dilapidated sign that reads "Scotch Hill," and beyond it the car. There is a beat of silence and then blood-curdling SCREAMS come from the car as the interior flashes a consuming green light. The light dims to silence.

FADE OUT TO A
CACKLE