

HELLAVISION: TALES FROM BEYOND

Written by

Jason K. Allen

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Contact:
Jason K. Allen
allen.jason.k@gmail.com
615-918-9800

FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A carved pumpkin flickers on the porch.

Trick-or-treaters happily depart with their candy.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

NICK, late 20's, enters the living room with a bowl of popcorn and a soda. He plops down in a chair, grabs the remote and flips on the TV.

NICK
Surely there's a good scary movie
on -- it's Halloween!

He searches the on-screen listings. Finding something, he perks up.

NICK
Yes! Channel 66.

He pushes "66" on the remote, but the button sticks and the TV screen shows "666" instead.

NICK
C'mon! Stupid remote...

On the TV screen, Channel 666 displays nothing but fuzzy STATIC. Then: odd HISSES and BEEPS and WHISTLES from the TV, along with random strange symbols.

Nick tries to change the channel but has no luck. He gives the remote a good whack.

NICK
C'mon, work!

Finally the static dissolves and the TV screen shows a scene: a lake in the woods.

Nick shrugs.

NICK
Well, let's see what this is...

He takes a bite of popcorn and watches.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. HIDDEN LAKE - DAY TITLE: TAMAQUA

A summer morning. The deep woods. An eerie quiet.

Misshapen trees hang over the mucky water.

The sun attempts to peek through the canopy but struggles.

CLANCY (V.O.)
No Man's Land. God's Mistake.

The remains of a fish floats atop the water.

CLANCY (V.O.)
That's what my dad called this
place.

A pile of entrails along the shore. Flies BUZZING about.

CLANCY (V.O.)
He told me to stay away.

A lone bubble rises to the surface of the water.

CLANCY (V.O.)
And I did. For the longest time.

A shorebird stands peacefully at the water's edge.

CLANCY (V.O.)
But I had to see for myself.

A dark figure underneath the water drifts silently toward the shorebird, stalking it.

CLANCY (V.O.)
And now, well... Now I can't seem
to pull myself away.

A violent SPLASH as something explodes from the water.

CUT TO:

THE WOODS

Two fishermen -- CLANCY and JOE, mid-thirties -- trudge toward the hidden lake. Clancy stares ahead stoically. Joe breathes heavily, sweating profusely, irritated.

JOE
Damn, how much farther?

CLANCY

Not much.

A blood-curdling SQUAWK of the panicked shorebird in the distance. Joe pauses, alarmed. The sound ECHOES all around them. Then it ceases abruptly.

JOE

What was that?!

CLANCY

Probably a squirrel.

Joe gives him a look.

JOE

Squirrel, my ass. Sounded like a monkey getting its balls chopped off.

Clancy calmly continues on. Joe sighs, mumbling to himself, swatting at mosquitoes, pushing through the thick brush.

JOE

I just wanted to go fishing. I didn't sign up for no fuckin' safari.

EXT. HIDDEN LAKE - LATER

Clancy and Joe sit on the bank, grasping their fishing poles, staring at the still water. It's deathly quiet.

JOE

Hey Clancy, did I tell ya? My cousin's gonna become a storm chaser. Ain't that some crazy shit?

No reaction from Clancy.

JOE

I think he's just doing it to impress girls. I told him, what, you think girls like guys who drive their stupid asses into tornadoes?

He shakes his head.

JOE

I heard about this one ol' boy who got picked up by a twister, and it carried his sorry ass twenty miles over to the next county. They found him naked in a tree. Lost his ballcap, too. No thanks.

Clancy stares ahead. A long silence.

Joe sighs, bored. He checks his line.

JOE

We came all the way out here for this? Only bites I'm getting is from these big-ass mosquitoes.

He swats another bug on his arm. As he inspects the splotch of blood left behind on his skin, he hears an eerie, low-pitched TRILLING sound nearby. He listens, puzzled.

JOE

There it is again! What is that? And don't tell me it's no damn squirrel.

Clancy listens with knowing eyes. Joe stares back out at his line.

JOE

I thought you said this was a hot spot?

CLANCY

Like I said: You won't get many bites here. But when you do, it'll be a good one.

Joe isn't convinced. Setting his pole down, he walks over to the woods to relieve himself.

He unzips his pants. A STREAM of urine.

When he notices something beside him, the stream of urine abruptly halts.

On a rock, he sees a crude stick man made of twigs and acorns. However, one of its arms is partially missing. At the point where the arm is cut off, there's a substance which resembles dried blood.

JOE

What the...

Disturbed, he zips up.

JOE
(to himself)
Fuckin' satanists.

Meanwhile, Clancy notices something in the water.

CLANCY
Joe, you're getting a bite.

Joe's float bobs up and down.

Joe returns, grabs his pole, tugs on the line. Reels it in.
Examines the prize.

JOE
Son of a bitch!

No fish. And the lure is bitten completely in half.

Clancy nods as if to say: I told you so.

Joe glares out at the water.

JOE
Hell naw. That's just rude.

He shakes his head, mumbling, tying on a new lure.

Across the lake in the shadows, something breaks the surface
and slowly rises from the water. Two dark eyes appear. It's
a human -- a FEMALE.

Her eyes search and then locate the fishermen. She glares in
their direction.

Finally her entire head emerges, and she SPITS OUT out the
remains of Joe's lure.

She sniffs the air, detecting a scent. Looking back toward
the fishermen, she bares her sharp fangs.

Meanwhile, Joe surveys the sky.

JOE
My butt cheeks are sweating. That
means it's gonna rain.

Standing, he wanders down the bank to find a new spot.

JOE
I think I'll try over here.

Before casting his line, he notices a log beside him. On the log is a mound of gnarly teeth. Various sizes and shapes. Perhaps from animals.

JOE
Okay, maybe not.

He quickly returns to his previous spot, mumbling as he goes.

JOE
Shit, I didn't need to see that.
Pile of fuckin' teeth...

He eyes Clancy.

JOE
This place gives me the willies.

Clancy glances around, a peaceful expression. He seems to relish the surroundings.

POV: From across the lake, Clancy and Joe are being watched. They appear in a strange, REDDISH hue. The watcher makes an eerie, low-pitched TRILLING sound.

Having had no luck with fishing, Joe opens a beer and takes a swig. Then he takes out a bag of chips, a pack of powdered donuts, and a cucumber. Clancy gives him a look.

CLANCY
Cucumber?

JOE
I'm trying to eat healthier.

Joe takes his pocket knife and slices the cucumber.

Meanwhile, Clancy unwraps his sandwich.

As Joe snacks on his donuts and cucumber, a SHADOW moves across him. He turns and looks up, but sees nothing. He shrugs it off.

In the background, a shadowy figure hangs upside down from a tree limb, observing Joe and Clancy.

EXT. HIDDEN LAKE - LATER

Joe gulps more beer. Holds his pole. Stares at the water. And badly attempts to sing a Lynyrd Skynyrd song.

Clancy looks over and notices that Joe's fishing line is tangled in a tree overhead.

CLANCY

Joe, your line. It's... not in the water.

Joe studies his pole, oblivious. Looks behind him. Sees his line tangled in a limb above him.

JOE

Oh. Yeah. I knew that.

He attempts to untangle it. And continues singing.

Clancy eyes him stoically. Then he scans the lake, almost as if anticipating something.

A bit farther down the lake, all is calm. Near the shore, the water rocks gently. A leaf falls lazily from a tree. An insect meanders across the forest floor. A wildflower blooms.

A DROPLET falls from above and lands on the flower's petals. Then another. The droplets are red. It's fresh blood.

A CHOMPING sound. Above the flower rests a bird nest on a limb.

The female creature from the lake is now hunched over the nest, CHOMPING away. She hears Joe SINGING in the distance. She turns her head in the direction of Joe, blood and feathers on her mouth. She listens, frowning.

From out of nowhere, WINGBEATS and a SCREECH as a large bird swoops down at her, but in one swift motion she GRABS it and yanks its head off. Blood SPRAYS. She SLURPS the blood.

Joe takes another swig of beer, then CRUSHES the empty can and hurls it into the woods. Clancy frowns.

CLANCY

You shouldn't do that.

Joe BURPS, ignoring him.

After a moment: the sound of the beer can being CRUNCHED like twisted metal. Startled, Joe turns and peers into the woods, but sees nothing.

Joe turns back toward the water, shrugging it off. He grabs another beer.

Another SHADOW moves over Joe and then a BREEZE washes over him as the crushed beer can FALLS into his lap. The can now has reddish, blood-like stains on it.

Freaked out, Joe scoots the can away from him. He gawks at Clancy, who's oblivious to it all.

Then, from across the lake, a huge SPLASH. Clancy and Joe both look, unable to make out what it was.

Joe shakes his head, discombobulated.

JOE

I know I've had a few beers, but...

A tug on Joe's line. Then another. It jerks him. Something heavy.

JOE

Okay, shit's gettin' real!

Clancy squints toward the water.

Joe excitedly reels with all his might, the water SPLASHING as he does.

JOE

Whooo, dog! It's a fuckin' monster!

Joe steps to the water's edge, struggling to reel it in. He grimaces a bit.

JOE

Lordy mercy, I think I pulled a groin.

Suddenly the line goes slack. No more splashing.

Silence. Joe gazes out at his line, dismayed.

Slowly reeling in, Joe reaches down and pulls up the lure. Clancy watches anxiously, swallowing hard.

Joe examines his decimated lure. It's torn to shreds.

JOE

What in tarnation? What do you think it w--

An EXPLOSION from the water. The female creature LEAPS out and grabs Joe, pinning him to the ground.

JOE

Hi, I'm Joe. What's your--

She SNARLS as her fangs dig into Joe's neck. Joe SCREAMS.

JOE

But I just wanted to go fishing!

Clancy watches. Strangely, he doesn't appear panicked.

As she bites Joe, blood SPRAYS everywhere. Onto rocks. Onto Joe's tackle box. Onto his cucumber and donuts.

JOE

Oooh, it tickles! No, wait, it hurts like hell! Yeeoowww!

Joe's struggle is short lived. His feet jerk one last time.

JOE

At least I won't have to go to work tomorrow. Fuckin' job...

Finally he becomes motionless.

Clancy watches in awe.

On the shoreline, the female creature now sucks blood from Joe's lifeless body.

For the first time, we see her completely. She's a mermaid. Her tail flips excitedly, SPLASHING the water.

Clancy observes, mesmerized.

CLANCY (V.O.)

I never much liked Joe anyway.

He notices the SUCKING and CHOMPING sounds.

CLANCY (V.O.)

The first few times, I was nauseated by it. I mean, sure, I've seen Twilight and all those vampire movies, but... it doesn't prepare you for what it's really like.

He notices her body writhing in excitement.

CLANCY (V.O.)

But now it's, well, how do I say this... sort of a turn-on.

He adjusts his crotch area, shuffling around a bit.

CLANCY (V.O.)
But she's part fish. I'm not even
sure how that would work. I mean,
scales and shit.

She pauses from feeding. Clancy snaps out of his daydream.

She raises up and turns toward Clancy. Blood drips from her
lips.

They make eye contact. A connection.

Her expression softens. She seems almost thankful. Clancy
nods.

Then she turns and resumes feeding.

Clancy takes a deep breath, contemplating.

Finally she backs away from Joe's body. She lifts her head
toward the sky. Closes her eyes. And emits a blood-
curdling, high-pitched SCREECH.

Clancy listens, fascinated.

CLANCY (V.O.)
I didn't think I would ever get
used to that sound. But now it's
almost comforting.

She lowers her head. Opens her eyes. Satisfied, she
gracefully returns to the water.

Now submerged except for her head, she turns toward Clancy
again. She wipes blood away from her mouth, almost as if
ashamed of it.

Clancy studies her. Then he regards Joe's lifeless body.

CLANCY (V.O.)
I wonder if Joe will become a
vampire now? Hopefully not a
mermaid. That would be... all
messed up. Maybe he'll become a
zombie. That would be kinda cool.
(reconsiders)
But then I would have to decapitate
him with a shovel. Kill him all
over again. Poor bastard.

He looks back to the creature, but she has disappeared,
leaving only a ripple.

Gradually the water calms. All is quiet.

Clancy gazes upward toward the forest canopy.

EXT. HIDDEN LAKE - DAY

Misshapen trees hang over the water.

The sun attempts to peek through the canopy but struggles.

CLANCY (V.O.)
When I first discovered Tamaqua --
that's what I named her -- she was
sick. I guess she had depleted
most of the food here. It seems
she can't leave here -- or else
doesn't want to.

Animal bones litter the woods.

CLANCY (V.O.)
She needed fresh blood. I brought
her whatever I could find.

FLASHBACK: Clancy leaves cages on a rock. The cages contain
rats. Birds. Hamsters.

The caged animals await their doom. An eerie low-pitched
TRILL. The animals recoil from a SPLASH in the water.

CLANCY (V.O.)
But it wasn't enough. Her thirst
grew. She needed more. So I...

BACK TO SCENE: A fly crawls on Joe's lifeless body. Joe's
arm is now partially off and bloody, just like the stick man.

CLANCY (V.O.)
Maybe my dad` was right. Maybe I
shouldn't have come here.

EXT. HIDDEN LAKE - DAY

Clancy sits on a rock, reading a book of poetry aloud.

CLANCY (V.O.)
But now I feel... connected.

Tamaqua, her head protruding from the water, listens intently
as Clancy reads. She tilts her head, fascinated.

CLANCY (V.O.)
My dad taught me to appreciate
nature. To respect it.
(MORE)

CLANCY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And she's, well, part of it.
Somehow. She trusts me. She
didn't ask to become... whatever
she is.

They make eye contact. She contemplates his words.

CLANCY (V.O.)
Where did she come from?

Tamaqua notices a splendid spider web. She gazes at the spider, watching it work, fascinated. She nods, almost as if communicating with it.

CLANCY (V.O.)
Is she of God? Satan? Is it
nature gone awry? Mother Nature's
revenge?

Growing restless, she turns and dives back into the dark water.

Clancy closes his book and sets it aside, watching her go.

CLANCY (V.O.)
And what now?

Her tail slices the water, disappearing into the lake.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "Five years later..."

A LITTLE GIRL plays in a kiddie pool. We see her only from behind. She's laughing. Splashing. Grasping a doll.

CLANCY (V.O.)
Where does it all end?

A pensive Clancy sits in a lawn chair, observing the girl.

Beside the kiddie pool: a flustered rat in a cage.

The little girl eyes the rat, exposing her fangs, her mermaid tail splashing the water excitedly.

FADE OUT.

A blood-curdling, high-pitched SCREECH pierces the air.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK'S LIVING ROOM

as Nick watches TV. He shrugs.

NICK
Not bad...

He takes a sip of soda.

On TV, Channel 666 breaks up and again shows nothing but
STATIC.

Nick sighs, irritated.

For a split second the screen shows an image of a creepy
smiling ventriloquist's dummy, along with more of the strange
symbols. Then more fuzzy STATIC.

Nick shakes his head.

NICK
What a weird channel. Must be low
budget.

Finally the static dissolves and the TV screen shows a scene:
a teenage boy in a bedroom.

Curious, Nick takes a bite of popcorn and continues watching.

The TV screen displays:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT TITLE: PICTURE THIS

It's 1977. Posters adorn the wall: Jaws. Farrah Fawcett.
Kiss.

Cocky jock RODNEY, 18, lounges on the bed, chatting on the
phone.

As he talks, he removes from a box: a Polaroid camera and a
note. He sets the note aside, studying the camera.

RODNEY
(on phone)
You're not gonna believe this: Paul
Meyers gave me a camera today!
Yeah, he said it's a late birthday
present. Of all people.

He listens, suddenly an incredulous look on his face.

RODNEY

What?! I don't bully him! If I do, it's because he deserves it.

(a beat)

Yeah, I know his dad was mean to him, but that's no excuse. It's just... he's always dressed in black, he hardly ever says anything, he rarely leaves his basement. He's such a creepy little weirdo. And get this: The camera's not even new. It's used!

He has an idea.

RODNEY

Hey, wanna come over? Mom and dad aren't home. I have this camera, we might as well put it to use. Maybe you can pose for some centerfolds...

(laughing crudely)

Okay, catch ya later, babe.

He hangs up the phone. Studies the camera. He has another idea.

He fixes his hair. Straightens his shirt. Posing, he aims the camera at himself and snaps a photo.

He removes the photo and stares at it, waiting.

Finally an image appears. In the photo, he sees himself but also something else: On the wall behind him, the faint image of a PALE FACE -- a ghastly looking creature.

RODNEY

What the...

Startled, he whips around and eyes the wall, but sees nothing.

He turns back around and examines the photo further. The face is no longer there.

He shakes his head, perplexed.

He eyes the camera. Then aims the camera at himself and snaps another picture.

As the image comes into focus, Rodney's mouth drops open.

In the photo, two pale, GROTESQUE HANDS are wrapped around his neck.

Rodney gawks at the photo. He eyes the camera. Suddenly he coughs.

He reaches for his throat. And begins to choke.

The camera falls from his hand.

Rodney struggles, falling out of frame and onto the floor. Violent CHOKING sounds.

We now SEE the handwritten note beside the camera box.

PAUL (V.O.)

"Rodney -- This is a special camera, as you will soon learn. I gave it to my dad, but he died soon after receiving it. I thought you should have it. You deserve it. Sincerely, Paul."

The choking sounds diminish.

Then... silence.

The camera rests on the floor, aimed at Rodney's lifeless body. It FLASHES, taking another picture.

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK

as he watches TV. He nods, impressed.

NICK

Damn. This channel's gruesome!

Channel 666 breaks up again. More STATIC.

Then, along with the BEEPS and WHISTLES, a new sound emanates from the TV: voices WHISPERING. Then: distant CRYING. It's like a strange transmission from another world.

NICK

What the...

He tries to change the channel again but has no luck.

The lamp beside him FLICKERS. He notices but shrugs it off.

Frustrated, he starts to get up, but finally the static dissolves and shows an image: a rain-splattered sidewalk at night.

Nick sighs, sitting back in his chair. He decides to continue watching. Takes another bite of popcorn.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. DANCE ACADEMY - NIGHT TITLE: GOTTA DANCE

Rain SPLATTERS the sidewalk. Not a soul in sight.

LIGHTNING. THUNDER. A black cat darts across the street.

Lumbering FOOTSTEPS as a dark figure approaches in the shadows.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

LAYLA, mid-30's, energetic and passionate, instructs young STUDENTS in the art of dance.

The students struggle, many appearing disinterested.

LAYLA
C'mon, guys, I know you can do
better than this.

They stare at her blankly.

STUDENT #1
Did we do the wrong steps?

LAYLA
It's not about the wrong step.
It's just... where's the passion?!

A bored student checks his phone.

LAYLA
I mean, why are you even here?

STUDENT #2
My mom made me. She said it was
this or piano lessons. I hate
piano.

Layla paces, examining them.

LAYLA

Dance is the most beautiful of all art forms! A way to express yourself through movement. Using the human body. Don't you get it? You have this wonderful opportunity to learn. To become as one with music. To transcend!

They continue to stare blankly.

STUDENT #3

Are we almost done?

Layla sighs.

INT. DANCE ACADEMY/RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

A wall of fame featuring photos of noted dancers.

The female RECEPTIONIST is distracted by someone in the waiting room -- a motionless fellow wearing a worn, muddy shoe. His other foot is bare -- pale and grotesque.

PAN UP to a deteriorating, hollow-eyed zombie, whose clothes were once nice but are now dirty and tattered. He wears a constant frown. This is GUNTHER.

Gunther studies the wall of fame: Gene Kelly. Josephine Baker. Mikhail Baryshnikov. Sammy Davis Jr. Weird Al Yankovic. He does a double take at Weird Al.

The receptionist, repulsed by his odor, slyly raises a can of disinfectant.

Gunther hears SPRAYING. He eyes the receptionist, who quickly hides the can, appearing innocent.

A paper wad plunks Gunther in the head. He looks across from him at a young BOY and GIRL, who frown at him.

GIRL

What are you looking at?

No response from timid Gunther, who swallows hard.

BOY

Hey, we're talking to you, ugly!

Gunther looks away, trying to ignore them.

BOY
When did they start letting
freakin' zombies in here?

The boy shakes his head disgustedly, checks his Power Rangers watch.

Gunther drops his head. Another paper wad plunks him.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

The studio is now empty except for Layla, who holds an ice pack on her knee.

Finally she stands, limps across the room and puts her knee brace back on. She presses the INTERCOM.

LAYLA
Okay, send in the next one.

As she replaces a CD in the BOOM BOX, the door opens.

A figure steps inside, plodding toward her awkwardly.

LAYLA
Sorry my last lesson ran late. I--

Turning around, she freezes.

Standing in front of her is a hunched-over zombie: Gunther.

Layla steps backward, concerned.

Gunther regards her blankly. Reaching into his pocket, he removes a wrinkled piece of paper and holds it out.

She cautiously steps forward and takes it, then steps back. She reads it: "Swing Dance Lessons - 8 Week Course - 40% Off With This Ad - Certificate Awarded".

LAYLA
You want dance lessons?

She notices red stains on the paper.

LAYLA
Is this... blood?!

Gunther shrugs. She grimaces, drops the paper, grabs the hand sanitizer.

Reaching into his jacket, Gunther removes a PHOTO and holds it out. Layla sees that it's a photo of Fred Astaire.

Gunther points at the photo and then at himself.

LAYLA
You wanna be... like Fred Astaire?

He nods. She brightens a bit.

LAYLA
He's my favorite dancer.

She motions to a poster on the wall: Fred Astaire.

LAYLA
If only I could have danced with
him. Just once.

She notices a name on back of the photo: "Gunther".

LAYLA
Is that your name? Gunther?

He nods. She examines him, intrigued.

LAYLA
Have you ever danced before?

He hands her a newspaper clipping. She reads it.

LAYLA
"Local Man Accepted Into Juilliard
School of Dance."

Her mouth drops open.

LAYLA
That's you! You attended
Juilliard?!

He shakes his head "no."

LAYLA
(puzzled)
But... What happened?

He runs his hand across his neck.

LAYLA
You... died?

He sighs.

LAYLA
You never got to fulfill your
destiny -- did you?

He drops his head.

LAYLA

Well, I dunno. I mean, I've never taught a...

She regards him. He slicks down his hair, stands up straight, adjusts his jacket.

LAYLA

But maybe that's what I need. A new challenge. Fred Astaire... that's ambitious! If you only knew how long I've waited to teach a student who was dedicated and passionate. But I must warn you: I'm a tough teacher!

He takes a step back, intimidated.

LAYLA

Um, do you have money? To pay?

He reaches into his pockets, finding only a bloody finger.

LAYLA

Oh, never mind -- it's not about that. It's about making a difference. Touching lives. Thank you, Gunther. You've lifted my spirits today!

She joyfully starts toward him, but then reconsiders.

LAYLA

Wait. You eat people. Right?

He looks down at the bloody finger he's holding.

LAYLA

Would you... eat me?

He looks her over. Licks his lips. Shakes his head "no."

LAYLA

If you do, then you won't get that certificate! Okay, well... we have a lot of work to do!

She excitedly approaches the boom box.

LAYLA

I'm going to put on some music.
Feel free to move to the beat. We
need to see if you have rhythm.

She pops in a CD. A BIG BAND TUNE plays. Gunther stares at her blankly.

LAYLA

Does that make you feel like doing
anything?

He picks his nose. Layla nods. She tries a different song.

LAYLA

How about this one?

Gunther examines his feet. He attempts to move them, but is only able to lift them up and down clumsily.

Pausing the music, she approaches him with caution.

LAYLA

Here, take my hand.

Gunther nervously reaches for her hand. As he does, Layla notices his hideous hand and fingernails. She cringes as they lock hands. She places his other hand on her back.

Layla now gets a good whiff of him and turns her head away, coughing.

LAYLA

(nauseated)

Just follow my lead: One, two,
three, four...

He attempts to follow but is hopelessly slow and out of rhythm.

Pausing, Layla grabs a pack of breath mints.

LAYLA

Mint?

He takes one. Not remembering what to do with it, he puts it down the front of his pants.

LAYLA

Okay, let's try again. One, two,
three, four...

He struggles and steps on her feet, nearly falling over.

Frustrated, Gunther GROWLS, grabs her menacingly and starts to take a bite out of her.

LAYLA

Hey!

She breaks free and SLAPS his face, shredding his dead loose skin. He steps backward, stunned.

She notices the skin residue on her hand, repulsed. She rushes away, gagging.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "Week 2"

The two young bullies peep through the door, laughing.

Layla, wearing a surgical mask and sanitary gloves, teaches Gunther to dance, but he trips over his own feet and CRASHES to the floor.

BOY

What a doofus!

GIRL

Yeah, he should've stayed in the ground where he belongs.

Layla notices Gunther's gloomy expression. Removing her mask and gloves, she takes a seat beside him on the floor.

LAYLA

I know this can't be easy for you.
So much to overcome. People
judging you. Looking down on you.
Trying to decapitate you with
shovels.

Gunther considers this. He scratches an itch on his arm.

LAYLA

Sure, you're a little rough around
the edges. You move slow. Have
two left feet. Poor posture. And
your pants are on backwards.

Gunther examines his pants, realizing the zipper is in back. Embarrassed, he zips it up.

LAYLA

But you have courage. You have determination. I have a good feeling about you, Gunther!

Still scratching his arm, Gunther rolls up his sleeve, pulls out a maggot and offers it to Layla, who gags.

MONTAGE - INT. DANCE STUDIO

"Week 3"

Layla warms up, stretching a bit. Gunther observes her. He attempts to stretch as well, but gets stuck.

"Week 4"

Layla teaches Gunther a new move, but he can't get the hang of it. She pauses, takes a swig of water.

Layla reaches into her gym bag, removes an energy bar and snacks on it.

Gunther reaches into his gym bag, removes a severed human arm wearing a Power Rangers watch and snacks on it.

"Week 5"

Layla enters, noticing a bloody trail leading to the mirror and a crude message written in blood: "Dream Large!"

Gunther, unaware of her presence, practices his moves. Layla admires him.

"Week 6"

Layla teaches Gunther another move. He slides his hand down onto her butt. She slides his hand back up. He slides it back down.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

"Week 7"

SWING MUSIC plays as Layla sits on the floor, sobbing.

A bewildered Gunther watches her.

LAYLA

Can you turn off the music, please?

Gunther examines the boom box, perplexed. He pushes a button, which plays a different song. He tries another button, which plays "The Monster Mash." He lifts an eyebrow, intrigued.

He pushes another button, finally able to turn it off.

LAYLA

It's just... dancing is my passion, Gunther. But unlike you, I wasn't good enough for Juilliard. So I decided to teach. My dream was to train someone special -- perhaps the next Fred Astaire. But instead all I got was...

She regards Gunther. He slicks down his hair. She feels ashamed.

LAYLA

No, I didn't mean... It's just... I've tried everything, Gunther. I wanted to do this. For you. I feel like... such a failure.

She wipes away tears as Gunther considers her words. He takes a seat on the floor beside her.

A quiet moment as they contemplate sadly.

Layla rubs her aching knee. Gunther eyes his clumsy feet.

Finally Gunther takes out a photo and studies it.

LAYLA

What's that?

He hands it to her. It's a photo of Broadway.

LAYLA

Broadway! So that's where you wanted to end up?

He nods.

LAYLA

Me, too! Oh well, there's nothing wrong with dreaming.

She gazes into the distance as if visualizing something.

LAYLA

Anything is possible in dreams, Gunther. Anything...

Gunther gazes ahead, too.

INT. DARKENED STAGE (DREAM SEQUENCE) - NIGHT

A SPOTLIGHT comes on, brightening the stage.

Stepping into the spotlight is Layla, dressed elegantly. She looks down at her knee, which now has no brace. She gazes all around, amazed.

Also stepping into the spotlight is Gunther, now human, dressed to the hilt. He eyes his feet, which move smoothly. Finally he notices Layla.

Gunther holds out his hand. Layla takes it.

And they dance together -- beautifully and with passion.

The crowd CHEERS.

Layla and Gunther are overcome with joy.

BACK TO SCENE

Layla and Gunther stare ahead, relishing their dream.

Layla snaps out of it. She notices her knee brace. Gunther eyes his feet. Then he observes himself in the mirror. He sighs.

LAYLA

I have nothing else to teach you,
Gunther. I'm sorry. But I'll make
sure you get a certificate. You
tried your best.

Gunther considers this. He shakes his head "no." Standing, he gazes up at the poster of Fred Astaire, imagining his face in the photo.

He regards Layla, who wipes away more tears. She regards the photo of Fred Astaire

LAYLA

If only I could have danced with
him. Just one dance.

Returning to the boom box, Gunther pushes a button. SWING MUSIC plays. He holds out his hand toward Layla, who glances up, puzzled.

LAYLA

You just don't give up, do you?

She stands. Suddenly he takes Layla and they dance.

Gunther dances stiffly but with abandon and passion. As his confidence grows, his technique improves.

Gunther spins her, picks her up, tosses her. She CRASHES to the floor awkwardly but rises and continues.

As the song concludes, Gunther spins Layla and holds her close to the floor. He winks at her.

Realizing the music has ended, Gunther drops Layla with a THUD to the floor and then returns to zombie mode, clumsily lumbering away.

Layla gawks at him, impressed.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

The studio is dark, silent, empty.

Gunther stands alone, admiring his dance certificate.

Layla approaches, a pep in her step. She regards the certificate.

LAYLA

You deserve it. You earned it!

She notices his suitcase.

LAYLA

So you're off to Broadway now...

He takes a nervous breath.

LAYLA

Oh, I have a present for you.

From behind her back she presents him with a top hat. Gunther takes it, examines it.

LAYLA

My little way of saying thank you.

He tries it on. It falls down over his eyes.

She gives him a hug, holding her breath as she does.

LAYLA

You are so brave. One of the bravest people -- er, things -- er, beings -- I've ever known. I'm so proud of you, Gunther!

A tear runs down Gunther's cheek. Layla offers him a tissue. Not recalling what to do with it, he puts it down his pants.

LAYLA

And a little snack for your trip.

She hands him an energy bar. He takes it, grimacing.

LAYLA

You're one of my prize students now. You can't just go around eating people anymore.
(considering)
I'm pretty sure Fred Astaire never ate anyone.

He examines the energy bar. He reaches into his bag and removes a severed human foot. He regards it, salivating.

Layla gives him a look. He reluctantly drops the foot into a trash can. The JANITOR notices, irritated.

Gunther picks up his suitcase and heads for the door.

LAYLA

Oh, and say hello to Broadway for me!

Tippling his hat to her, Gunther suddenly leaps, kicks his heels together and spins around.

Then, returning to zombie mode, he straightens his hat and lumbers out the door.

LAYLA

Good luck, Gunther. Knock 'em dead!

INT. DANCE ACADEMY/RECEPTION AREA - DAY

The receptionist works at her computer.

In the waiting room, a fellow wearing old, shredded clothes sits in a chair. It's another ZOMBIE.

He anxiously peruses the pictures on the wall of fame: Gene Kelly. Josephine Baker. Gunther on Broadway.

He nods, inspired.

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK watching TV. He appears uncertain.

NICK
Huh. Dancing zombie. I'm not sure
how to feel about that.

Then more STATIC on TV.

Nick glances down at his nearly empty popcorn bowl.

NICK
Time for a refill...

He gets up and heads for the kitchen.

While he's gone, the static dissolves. The TV screen now shows an image of Nick's living room -- and Nick's empty chair.

An eerie silence.

When Nick returns from the kitchen, the image on TV switches to a wilderness area.

Nick notices, appearing interested. He sits, chomps some popcorn, and watches.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. WOODS - DAY TITLE: LENA

A deep, remote forest.

The sun's rays struggle to reach the ground due to the thick canopy.

A scruffy backpacker, AUSTIN, late 20's, roams aimlessly through the forest. He gazes up at the trees, pleased.

Pausing, he removes his pack and takes a seat on a boulder.

He studies his surroundings. He watches a squirrel skip across a limb.

The sound of SHUFFLING leaves catches his attention. He glances over in the woods but sees nothing.

He takes out a bottle and gulps some water.

More SHUFFLING in the woods. Austin finally sees the source of the sound: a browsing deer. He watches it, leaning back on his pack.

The deer observes him.

Stretching out on the boulder, Austin takes a deep breath.

Birds SING. The peaceful forest sounds relax him.

He closes his eyes. And dozes off.

While he rests, the SHADOW of a human-like figure above him glides across his body. He doesn't notice.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Austin continues to nap on the boulder.

Finally stirring, he opens his eyes, glances around and digs through his pack.

Behind him in the distance, a pale, blurred FACE -- almost without form -- peeks out from behind a tree, then quickly disappears.

As Austin removes a protein bar from his pack, the same blurred face now peeks out from behind a boulder. It watches Austin.

Austin admires the scenery as he munches on his snack. Suddenly he glimpses a human-like FIGURE darting behind a boulder.

Puzzled, he stands, gawking in its direction.

AUSTIN

Hey!

Silence. He sees nothing.

Finally the figure peeks out from behind the boulder. Austin spots it. Alarmed, it ducks back down.

AUSTIN

Hey! I know you're there.

After a moment, the figure stands hesitantly. Finally the face takes shape and can be seen clearly for the first time. It's a girl.

LENA, early 20's, has a kind, innocent face, with long, red, matted hair which appears damp. She wears tattered, dirty old clothes and grips a roughly hewed hiking stick. She appears tentative and perplexed.

LENA
You can see me?

Austin chuckles.

AUSTIN
Uh, you're not exactly wearing
camouflage.

Lena glances down at her herself. She holds out her arms and studies them, oddly fascinated.

AUSTIN
What are you doing here?

Lena nervously searches for an answer. She considers running away. But doesn't.

LENA
Just... exploring.

AUSTIN
You're a hiker?

She nods "yes." He notices her worn, out-of-fashion hiking attire and her bare feet.

AUSTIN
Where's your campsite?

LENA
Nearby.

Austin takes a few steps in her direction. Lena tenses up. But doesn't run.

LENA
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to spy. I
was just... I'm not used to seeing
any people around here.

AUSTIN
No, you're good. I didn't expect
to see anyone, either -- especially
so far off trail.

An awkward silence. Then...

LENA
My name is Lena.

AUSTIN
I'm Austin.

She nods, oddly fascinated by his name.

LENA
(speaking slowly)
Au-stin.

She notices his hefty backpack lying on the boulder.

LENA
How long are you here for?

AUSTIN
Just the weekend.

She considers, nodding.

Austin eyes the surrounding the forest. As he does, Lena gawks at him, captivated. She again looks down and examines her own arms and legs, seeming amazed, almost giddy.

AUSTIN
First time I've been to this area.
Thought I'd go off on my own and
have a little adventure.

Lena admires the forest cheerfully.

LENA
This is a special place. The trees
here... they're my friends!

A breeze causes leaves to RUSTLE. Austin notices.

Lena appears refreshed.

LENA
It feels so good to be out of
there!

AUSTIN
Out of where?

Lena isn't sure how to answer. She thinks quickly.

LENA
My campsite. It was no fun there.

Austin nods.

Lena happily examines the forest floor.

LENA
Look at all of the little plants!
There's so much life here. I just
wanna be a part of it all!

Austin chuckles, amused by her enthusiasm.

AUSTIN
Yeah. Some days I think I should
just stay out in the woods forever.

She considers his words, intrigued.

LENA
Really?

He shrugs, gazing up at the forest.

AUSTIN
Seems to be a peaceful life. Not
too much drama.

Lena nods, fascinated.

She kneels, further inspecting a rocky jumble, appearing
excited by something.

LENA
Austin, come look at this!

Austin wanders over. He bends down to get a closer look.

LENA
All of the moss and lichens on this
rock? It's like a whole little
world down there!

AUSTIN
Yeah.

She points to a plant on the rock.

LENA
That one's called Reindeer Lichen.
You can eat it! It's kinda chewy,
though. Doesn't have much taste.

As he examines the plant, Lena moves close to him for the
first time.

Austin is unaware as she studies his face, watching his every move with curiosity and awe. She sniffs him oddly, taking in his aroma fully and completely.

Sensing something, Austin turns and catches her gazing at him. He's flattered.

Austin isn't sure what to make of her. She blushes and looks down, embarrassed.

Austin takes out his smart phone and snaps a photo of the plant.

AUSTIN
Reindeer Lichen, you say?

She nods. She examines his phone.

LENA
Is that... a camera?

AUSTIN
Uh, yeah. Not a good one, though.
It's an older model phone. I'm not
much of a techie.

Lena doesn't understand. He shows her the photo. She studies it, amazed.

LENA
Wow... far out!

Amused, Austin has an idea. He playfully aims the camera at Lena, who seems alarmed and uncertain what to do.

He snaps a photo, then glances at the image. Nothing's there except for the forest.

AUSTIN
You ducked!? Camera shy, huh?

Lena just grins politely.

Shrugging it off, Austin stands and wanders around, checking out the many natural wonders.

Lena happily follows him. She examines her own footsteps, curious, as if learning to become comfortable in her own skin.

Austin glances back at Lena, who eyes him, following him, grinning slyly.

Austin approaches a tree with rough bark. He runs his hand over the bark.

AUSTIN

Huh. Weird.

LENA

That's Shagbark Hickory. The nuts are delicious. And the big strips of peeling bark... lots of animals use it for shelter. Butterflies, lizards... even bats!

AUSTIN

Wow, you really are into nature. How do you know all this?

LENA

I used to spend a lot of time exploring in the woods.

AUSTIN

You should be a teacher.

LENA

(sadly)

That's what I wanted to be. Well, kind of. I wanted to be a park ranger.

AUSTIN

Hey, you're still young!

She drops her head, uncertain.

Austin roams a bit more. Lena follows to his left, just a few feet away.

AUSTIN

Do you--

When he glances back at Lena, she's no longer there.

Having detected no movement, he notices that Lena is now suddenly behind him on his right -- perhaps a hundred feet away. She looks all around cheerfully, unaware of his gaze.

Puzzled, Austin observes her.

Lena gazes up at the forest, holding her arms out joyfully. She spins in circles like a playful little girl, laughing innocently.

Austin chuckles to himself, curiously attracted to her. He turns and continues on.

Lena spins and plays happily. For a split second her face BLURS oddly but then reappears intact. Austin doesn't notice.

LENA

Isn't it a beautiful day?

Austin glances around, nodding in agreement.

AUSTIN

Yeah.

He turns to Lena, waiting for her to catch up to him.

AUSTIN

And it's getting better all the time.

She blushes. Austin studies her.

Lena eyes him bashfully, awkwardly, excited by the moment and by his attention.

LENA

I like walking with you, Austin.

Austin, pleasantly surprised, considers her words. He takes a couple of steps toward her.

AUSTIN

I kinda like walking with you, too, Lena.

Austin gazes at her, infatuated.

Lena eyes him back, suddenly an eager, fierce, almost hungry expression. She bites her lip.

Austin steps forward and starts to reach out for her.

Startled, Lena recoils. Her smile disappears. Her demeanor changes.

She now recalls a time in this same forest when:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An older man -- his face unseen -- reaches for Lena and grabs her.

LENA

No!

But he ignores her.

Finally Lena breaks free. And runs.

The man chases her through the forest.

Lena flees desperately, unable to see in the darkness, glancing back as she runs.

Then, suddenly, all goes black.

BACK TO SCENE

A confused Lena steps away from Austin, who appears apologetic.

AUSTIN

I'm sorry, I thought you were... I thought we...

Embarrassed, he turns away from her.

AUSTIN

I'm so sorry. That's... I've never done that before.

Irritated at himself, he wanders onward.

Lena considers and decides to follow him. But now she keeps her distance, appearing conflicted.

Something up ahead catches Austin's eye. He strides over to investigate.

He approaches a natural cavity, looking down inside. It's a sinkhole.

AUSTIN

Wow. A sinkhole.

When Lena sees the sinkhole, she pauses, frowning. Her pupils DILATE instantly. Birds SQUAWK violently overhead.

Lena steps backward.

Austin notices her odd reaction.

AUSTIN

You okay?

LENA
I don't like it.

AUSTIN
You don't like... sinkholes?

LENA
I don't like that one.

Austin regards the sinkhole.

AUSTIN
Why is that?

LENA
That's... where I died.

Austin examines her.

AUSTIN
What do you mean?

LENA
I was running. I couldn't see. I
fell. I was still alive -- for a
while.

A bit creeped out, Austin gazes down into the sinkhole where
he hears the ECHO of her words: "...for a while."

When he looks back to Lena, she isn't there.

No sign of her. Vanished.

Austin scans the area.

AUSTIN
Lena?

No reply.

The forest becomes eerily silent.

Austin glances up at the trees, noticing the sudden quiet and
stillness.

AUSTIN
Phoe--

A hand BURSTS out from the sinkhole and grabs Austin's foot.

He looks down and sees deteriorating fingers gripping his
ankle.

AUSTIN

Hey! What--

Another hand emerges from the darkness, grabbing his other ankle. Stunned, Austin struggles to get loose.

He falls to the ground, trying desperately to break free.

He reaches for the grotesque hands and attempts to loosen their grip, but to no avail.

Panicked, Austin eyes the surrounding forest.

AUSTIN

Lena, help! There's something--

He looks down toward the sinkhole as the hands grip tighter, pulling harder.

A head emerges from the sinkhole. Austin notices that it has long, red, matted hair -- and the ghostly, deteriorating face of Lena.

LENA

(warped, ghostly voice)

I like you, Austin. It gets lonely
down here.

She drags him down into the hole as Austin fights helplessly with all his might.

LENA

(warped, ghostly voice)

All I want is to not be alone
anymore.

AUSTIN

Nooooooooooooo...

And with one final, powerful tug, Austin is pulled into the darkness.

Then... a sudden calm.

Rays of sunlight peek through the canopy.

A bird SINGS cheerfully.

A squirrel hops across a limb.

LENA (O.S.)

(regular voice)

All I want... is a friend.

And all returns to normal as the sound of Lena's innocent voice ECHOES throughout the forest.

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK watching TV. He nods, impressed.

NICK
Heck yeah, sinkholes kick ass!
(contemplating)
How come I've never heard of this
channel?

He takes out his phone and browses.

While he's focused on his phone, the image on TV changes. The screen shows a live shot of Nick sitting in his living room staring at his phone. Nick doesn't notice.

NICK
Channel 666... It's not listed
anywhere.

Finally he puts his phone away and glances back up the TV.

Nick's mouth drops open when he sees himself on screen. He stares at himself as the on-screen Nick stares back at him.

Nick gawks at the image of himself. He glances all around the room, baffled.

When he returns his gaze to the TV, he now sees a hooded, faceless figure looming behind his chair. It tilts its head down toward Nick.

Startled, Nick turns and looks behind him. But sees nothing.

When he turns back to the TV, the screen is now fuzzy STATIC again. More BEEPS and WHISTLES and WHISPERS.

NICK
How... how do they do that?

Nick shakes his head, discombobulated -- his mind blown.

NICK
Freakin' technology...

He closes his eyes, rubbing his face.

When he reopens his eyes, everything seems back to normal.

There's now a new image on the TV screen: Pumpkins flickering on a front porch.

Nick notices the image. Alarmed, he scoots up in his chair and studies the TV screen.

NICK
Wait... Is that my porch?!

He shakes his head "no" -- surely not.

He watches, baffled, shaken.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT TITLE: FUN SIZE

The candle in the pumpkin flickers. A KID in a plastic ghost mask leaps up onto the porch and rings the doorbell.

A cheerful old man, ELMER MCDANIEL, opens the door.

KID
Trick-or-treat!

Elmer grins. He reaches inside and grabs his platter of goodies. He takes a couple of tiny candy bars and drops them into the kid's bag. The kid stares down into the bag.

KID
What was that?

ELMER
Candy bars. Fun size!

The kid turns toward the nearby shrubbery.

KID
It's him.

Two kids emerge from the shrubbery -- a witch and a goblin.

KID
You're Elmer McDaniel, right?
Inventor of fun size candy bars?

ELMER
Yep, that's me! Fun size Elmer!

The three kids study Elmer.

KID
Tell me: What exactly is fun about
miniature candy bars? I fail to
see the hilarity.

ELMER
I, uh... well...

KID
Did you get fun size candy bars
when you were little?

ELMER
Well, no. All we had was...
regular size.

KID
That's what I thought.

They glare at Elmer.

ELMER
It's just... candy has so much
sugar. And your teeth. I just
thought...

Elmer realizes they're not buying it. They close in on him.
He steps backward.

ELMER
What... what do you want?

KID
An apology.

Elmer considers.

KID
And one other thing.

The witch takes out a pair of garden shears. Elmer gulps,
stepping backward. They follow him inside and shut the door.

EXT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The three kids calmly depart, closing the door behind them.
They step off the porch and disappear into the darkness.

Two new trick-or-treaters leap onto the porch and ring the
doorbell. The door opens. They start to yell "trick or
treat" but then they see something that gives them pause.

A pale Elmer steps outside, forcing a grin. The kids notice Elmer's bandaged hand. Blood drips onto the porch.

ELMER

Oh, don't mind that. It's nothing.
They only took my fun-sized finger!

With his other hand, Elmer holds out the platter of candy. The kids examine the platter, then they SCREAM and run away.

Elmer, puzzled by their reaction, regards the platter which contains fun size candy bars and a severed pinky. He sighs, regretful. He calls out after them.

ELMER

Next year I'll get regular size. I
promise!

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK who gawks at the screen, disturbed.

The channel breaks up again. More fuzzy STATIC.

Then: a KNOCK at the door, which causes Nick to jump. He turns and eyes the front door.

Another KNOCK.

Nick stands. Swallows hard. And tentatively steps toward door.

NICK

Who is it?

KIDS (O.S.)

Trick or treat!

Nick approaches the door. Cautiously opens it. Peeks out.

He sees several excited neighborhood kids in Halloween costumes.

KIDS

Trick or treat!

Nick nods dumbly. He grabs his bowl of candy and carefully places some treats into their bags.

NICK

Take notice -- those are big candy bars. Full size!

The kids nod, puzzled. Then they turn and scurry away.

Nick watches them go. He glances around his porch and yard as if looking for something or someone. But he doesn't see anything.

He closes the door. He checks his hand to make sure his pinky is still there. It is.

Taking a deep breath, he heads back inside.

On Channel 666, the TV screen now shows a family walking at a carnival.

Nick takes a seat. Still disturbed, he halfheartedly picks up his popcorn bowl and stares vacantly at the TV.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY

TITLE: MONSTER MANSION

A sparse crowd scattered about a dreary small-town carnival.

BOBBY SLATER, age 15, finishes his corn dog as he wanders the midway. He wipes mustard from his mouth, growing bored.

Walking beside him are REBECCA, his 18-year-old cheerleader sister, and DREW, 20, her preppie boyfriend.

Drew laughs loudly while Rebecca giggles. Bobby frowns, annoyed, keeping his distance from them.

Bobby looks over and sees "Bobo the Clown" in a dunking booth, sadly awaiting customers.

Drew points at something in the distance.

DREW

Hey, check it out!

They see a haunted house located a bit off the beaten path.

Drew hurries toward it, pulling Rebecca by the hand. Bobby follows begrudgingly.

As they approach this "Monster Mansion" attraction, recorded sounds of "scary" laughter and "terrifying" screams BLAST from speakers. The ride features mechanical carts for transporting passengers inside.

Bobby examines the cheesy hand-painted mural on the outside wall, which depicts gnarly monsters, witches, demons, and other menacing creatures as they terrify humans.

BOBBY
(to himself)
This is so lame.

Bobby notices the ticket taker sitting nearby. Haggard, tired-looking and grim, the old CARNY stares stoically at the ground.

DREW
C'mon! We can't not do this!

Drew eyes Bobby.

DREW
How 'bout it? You ready to face
the ultimate experience in terror?

Bobby sighs, irritated.

BOBBY
Just go. And hurry up.

REBECCA
You need money for ice cream or
anything?

Bobby shakes his head no. Rebecca nods, then excitedly follows Drew.

A family of four, with a LITTLE BOY and LITTLE GIRL, approach and gaze up at Monster Mansion. Bobby notices them.

LITTLE BOY
Can we ride this?!

LITTLE GIRL
No! That's too scary!

Their parents chuckle. They depart.

Drew and Rebecca take their seats in a cart.

REBECCA
Oh, wait! I just remembered: I'm
afraid of the dark.

Drew sticks out his chest.

DREW
That's okay, I'll protect you!

He puts his arm around her as they both snicker.

The stoic Carny pushes a button, and the cart begins to move.

Drew and Rebecca gaze out in Bobby's direction, feigning terror, making faces. Bobby just shakes his head, annoyed.

As the cart nears the entrance, Drew and Rebecca notice a sign above: "Please stay inside cart - For your own safety."

Bobby watches the cart disappear inside, Rebecca and Drew giggling all the way.

Bobby sighs, scanning the fairgrounds for anything interesting. No such luck.

A slight WHIMPERING nearby. Bobby notices a stray dog.

The dog eyes the haunted house, disturbed by something, its tail bending between its legs. It whimpers a bit more and then runs away.

Bobby turns his attention back to the haunted house. The fake LAUGHTER emitting from the speakers gradually gets on his nerves. He eyes the Carny, who seems oblivious to it, lost in his own world.

A few HIGH SCHOOL KIDS approach, examining Monster Mansion. Bobby notices them.

HIGH SCHOOL KID #1
Let's ride it!

HIGH SCHOOL KID #2
Nah, it sucks big time. Let's ride
the Avalanche again.

The kids quickly move on.

Bobby returns his gaze to the haunted house... waiting.

Finally the exit door opens and the mechanized cart emerges. But the cart is empty. Bobby watches as the cart rolls to a stop.

The Carny remains motionless, still staring at the ground.

Puzzled, Bobby wanders closer. He steps toward the exit doors, expecting another cart to emerge. It doesn't.

Growing impatient, Bobby eyes the Carny, nervously clearing his throat.

BOBBY
Is, uh... there something wrong
with the ride?

The Carny shows no reaction as the recorded laughter and screams ECHO all around. Bobby steps closer.

BOBBY
Um, excuse me? How long does this
ride take?

The Carny doesn't look up.

CARNY
(grumbling)
One minute.

BOBBY
Um, my sister and her boyfriend
have been in there for several
minutes. They haven't come out.

The Carny raises his head. He methodically turns toward Bobby, staring blankly at him, looking right through him.

A bit unnerved, Bobby swallows hard.

BOBBY
I think there's something wrong
with the ride. Can you maybe check
it out?

CARNY
It's working. Just like it always
has.

Suddenly a muffled, distant SCREAM.

Bobby looks all around, puzzled, attempting to determine the location of the sound.

Then another SCREAM -- and a girl's voice calling out:
"Bobby!"

The hair stands up on Bobby's neck.

BOBBY
(to himself)
Rebecca?

He gazes up at the haunted house.

The Carny stares at the ground, showing no reaction.

As thoughts race through Bobby's mind, he has a sudden realization. He relaxes a bit, irritated.

BOBBY
Very funny.

He shakes his head, not amused.

DREW (O.S.)
(distant muffled scream)
Help! Somebody help us!

Bobby crosses his arms and waits.

BOBBY
Stupid jerk.

A young couple approach. The GUY checks out the haunted house, while the GIRL focuses on her cotton candy.

GUY
I haven't been in one of those
since I was a kid.

The girl seems uninterested, and they quickly depart.

Bobby glares toward Monster Mansion. Finally he cups his hands together and gazes into the darkened entrance.

BOBBY
(yelling out)
Yeah, really funny guys. C'mon,
let's go!

Bobby notices the Carny suddenly staring at him with an odd expression.

BOBBY
Uh, I think my sister and her
boyfriend are pulling a prank.
Where are they at in there, anyway?

The Carny glares at him.

CARNY
(matter-of-factly)
There are no people inside.

Unnerved by the Carny's tone, Bobby examines the building closer. He wanders around in search of another exit.

BOBBY

Where the heck are they?

He walks to the side of the building and then behind it, finding no other doors.

Unlike the front of Monster Mansion, with its paintings of monsters, the back of the structure is plain, black, dreary.

Bobby notices something in the grass -- the skeletal remains of a small animal. He grimaces, not keen to investigate further.

A few feet away he notices something else on the ground: a small glob of greenish slime. He studies it, perplexed.

A bit weirded out, Bobby returns toward the front.

When he returns, he notices the Carny staring at him.

CARNY

What do you think you're doing?

BOBBY

Looking for my sister. I know they're in there somewhere.

CARNY

You must be mistaken.

The Carny calmly returns his gaze to the ground.

Confusion sweeps over Bobby. He glances up at the mural again, studying the wall of monsters. One of the demon-like creatures has greenish slime dribbling from its mouth.

Frustrated, Bobby reaches into his pocket and takes out four ride tickets. He strides over to the Carny. He holds out the tickets, and the Carny methodically takes them and then leads him to a cart.

As Bobby gets in the cart, the Carny gives him a grave look. Bobby shudders.

The Carny walks over and pushes a button, setting the cart in motion.

As the cart advances, Bobby looks out toward the carnival. No other people in sight. But the stray dog has returned. It looks directly at Bobby, whimpering, barking.

Bobby glances up as the doors open, welcoming him into Monster Mansion.

INT. MONSTER MANSION - DAY

The cart rolls down a dark hallway. Bobby curiously looks all around, unable to see anything.

Suddenly a loud BUZZER and an explosion of LIGHT as a demon mask appears in front of him, its eyes glowing red.

Unfazed by the cheap-looking mask, Bobby searches for Rebecca and Drew.

BOBBY

Hey, where the heck are you guys?!

As the cart turns a corner, a SIREN blares as a werewolf-like beast in a cage LIGHTS UP. The mechanized creature shakes the cage bars, as if trying to escape.

The cart quickly moves on to the next scene.

Bobby looks down toward the tracks, determining his next move.

A light FLASHES in front of him as a mechanical witch JUMPS out, CACKLING. Bobby pays it little attention.

As the cart moves past the scene, the witch returns to its previous position, motionless.

The cart turns another corner as a distant, muffled SCREAM of a man is heard. Bobby listens, irritated.

BOBBY

You guys think you're--

A HORN blares as a large grotesque clown hovers over Bobby, all lit up. It LAUGHS with evil glee and HONKS its squeaky horn.

Bobby hears another muffled SCREAM -- this time a female.

REBECCA (O.S.)

Bobby! Bobby, help us!

Bobby searches for their hiding spot. He examines the floor.

A GROWLING sound and BURST of light as a mechanical frog man springs up out of the darkness, startling Bobby.

REBECCA (O.S.)

(distant muffled scream)

Bobby!

Bobby looks all around but sees nothing.

BOBBY
Okay, that's it!

Fed up, Bobby crawls under the arm bar and jumps out of the cart.

EXT. MONSTER MANSION - DAY

The exit door opens and a cart rolls out. The Carny notices the cart is empty. He drops his head, a grave look on his face.

Meanwhile, near the back of the haunted house, Drew and Rebecca crawl out from underneath the building.

They stand, dusting themselves off. Drew laughs.

DREW
You think he could hear us
screaming?

Rebecca shakes her head, amused but feeling guilty.

REBECCA
Now he's gonna hate you even more!

Drew chuckles. He takes her hand and leads her to the front. They look for Bobby.

DREW
Where'd he go?

Rebecca shrugs.

REBECCA
Probably getting a funnel cake or
something.

INT. MONSTER MANSION - DAY

Bobby stands motionless in the darkness.

BOBBY
How can you even see in here?

Nearby, the mechanical witch suddenly twitches. Its head tilts oddly and creepily in the direction of Bobby's voice.

Bobby takes a step, but is uncertain of his footing.

Further down the track, the mechanized beast remains motionless in its cage... until it quietly pushes the cage open.

BOBBY
I'm gonna kill you guys!

Nearby, the frog man is crouched motionless. Then it slowly opens its bulging eyes... and sticks out its long, grotesque tongue, making a "RIBBIT" sound.

EXT. MONSTER MANSION - DAY

Drew and Rebecca search for Bobby.

DREW
You don't think he got pissed and walked home, do you?

Rebecca shrugs. She approaches the Carny.

REBECCA
Have you seen the brown-haired boy who was with us? He was waiting out here when we went inside.

The Carny doesn't look up. He shakes his head "no."

INT. MONSTER MANSION - DAY

Bobby hears something behind him -- a CREAKY floor board. Then: slow, heavy FOOTSTEPS.

BOBBY
Rebecca?

From another direction: a HISSING sound. Then more FOOTSTEPS. Bobby turns, squinting into the darkness.

BOBBY
Drew?

An eerie, low-pitched GROANING sound emerges. Followed by a loud, ear-splitting clown HORN, along with a BURST of automated light.

The light allows Bobby to see momentarily. His eyes widen when he sees what's in front of him: A cackling witch; a snarling, werewolf-like beast; a frog man, its long tongue springing outward excitedly;

a hissing demon with green slime dribbling from its mouth; a groaning, white-faced ghoul; and the towering clown, smiling, saliva dripping from its broken teeth.

The creatures gaze at Bobby with great anticipation.

Bobby stands frozen, stunned, as the light fades and the darkness returns.

EXT. MONSTER MANSION - DAY

Rebecca and Drew search everywhere, becoming concerned.

Two TEENS approach the haunted house, holding out their tickets, but the Carny shakes his head, refusing them entrance.

The Carny puts up the "Closed" sign. The two teens shrug and walk away.

The Carny peers out toward the carnival. He sees Rebecca and Drew searching desperately for Bobby.

Finally the Carny glances up at the mural on the outer wall of Monster Mansion. He studies it.

With a resigned expression, the old Carny finally turns, sits, lowers his head, and stares at the ground.

He sighs.

CARNY
(to himself)
Sometimes they get hungry.

CLOSE ON the mural, which depicts monsters -- the beast, the witch, the frog man, the clown, and other creatures -- pursuing horrified humans, one of which now has the face of young Bobby Slater.

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK watching TV with a stoic expression.

On Channel 666, the screen shifts scenes. It again shows Nick sitting in his living room staring at the TV -- staring at himself.

Nick anxiously edges up in his seat, gawking at himself on TV. He again looks all around the room.

When he looks back at the TV screen, he now sees himself wearing a grotesque pig mask.

Baffled, Nick slowly reaches up and touches his face. All feels normal. But when he touches his nose, a SQUEALING pig blares from the TV. Nick recoils, horrified.

The TV screen displays more fuzzy STATIC.

Back to Nick, who appears to be dozing in his chair. Suddenly he jumps and opens his eyes, as if waking from a bad dream.

NICK
No, bad pig! You--

He looks around, realizing his whereabouts. Everything seems normal. He takes a deep breath.

He tentatively lifts his hand to his face and touches his nose. All feels normal.

The static on TV dissolves, and the screen now shows a woman in a kitchen.

Nick watches, still trying to regain his composure.

The TV screen displays:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY TITLE: MOM

REBECCA, mid-40's, washes and dries the dishes.

Something outside the window catches her attention.

REBECCA (V.O.)
Mom had been dead for six years.
But today I saw her in the garden.

Rebecca's POINT OF VIEW: An gray-haired woman (her back to us) stands motionless in the vegetable garden.

REBECCA (V.O.)
I know that blue dress anywhere.

Mom remains eerily still. Suddenly she LEAPS onto the ground.

Rebecca observes, baffled.

Mom grapples with something. Then she stands. She lifts a hand to her face.

REBECCA (V.O.)
But something was different now.

When mom finally turns around, we SEE that she's calmly devouring a rabbit, blood spraying everywhere.

Rebecca watches, stunned.

Mom lifts her head, noticing Rebecca in the kitchen window.

REBECCA
(softly to herself)
Mom?

Mom seems to recognize Rebecca. She smiles warmly, blood dripping from her lips.

REBECCA (V.O.)
Mom never did like rabbits in her garden.

Mom lifts her other hand, revealing a decapitated squirrel. She takes a bite of it, grinning.

REBECCA (V.O.)
Nor squirrels.

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK who watches TV.

NICK
That was... short.

More STATIC on TV.

NICK
What is the deal with the static?!
Such a weird channel. Good movies,
though. And some kick-ass
interactive features! Whew...

Feeling exhausted, he gulps his soda.

On a nearby couch, we SEE the silhouette of a ventriloquist's dummy sitting in the darkness.

The dummy silently turns its head toward Nick, who doesn't notice.

On TV, the static dissolves as the scene shifts to zombies trudging through a forest.

Nick perks up.

NICK
Zombies! Now we're talkin'!
Shit's about to get real. Please
dear God, I hope they don't
dance...

He excitedly grabs a handful of popcorn.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. WOODS - DAY TITLE: GOING GREEN

A small band of ZOMBIES trudge through the forest.

One zombie munches on a human arm.

Another devours a liver.

The zombies notice two BACKPACKERS on a trail up ahead. They pursue the backpackers, who SCREAM and run away.

However, one particular zombie doesn't give chase. He sighs, looks away, disinterested. This is STANLEY.

Stanley turns and heads off in a different direction.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - DAY

Stanley sadly lumbers along the edge of the woods.

Pausing, he notices an entrance sign for a "Nature Park". He studies the sign, curious.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A family enjoys lunch at a picnic table.

A shorebird wades in the glistening lake.

A young girl happily chases a butterfly.

Stanley peeps out from the bushes, watching the activity with interest.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A boy skips rocks across the lake. Stanley observes from behind a tree.

When the boy departs, Stanley cautiously emerges.

Stanley approaches the shore, picks up a small rock, studies it. He raises his arm back to skip the rock, but he awkwardly drops it onto the ground.

Baffled, he picks up another rock and tries again. He stiff-arms it, and the rock travels a couple of measly feet and PLOPS harmlessly into the water. He sighs, dejected.

But then something else catches his attention: a playground.

EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND - DAY

A little boy plays on a swing. When he sees the zombie approaching, he SCREAMS, jumps off the swing and runs away.

Stanley examines the dangling swing. Puzzled by it, he attempts to sit on it, but he loses balance and goes sprawling onto the ground.

He tries again. He finally manages to sit on it, wobbling, holding on for dear life.

A YOUNG GIRL approaches.

YOUNG GIRL
Just hold on to the chain. I'll
push you.

The Young Girl gives a slight push. Stanley freezes.

Another push. Stanley SQUEALS in fear.

He swings higher. And higher. He looks around, stunned.

Eventually he realizes he's not going to die, gradually enjoying the new adventure and cool breeze on his face.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Anna Marie, you get away from that
zombie right now!

YOUNG GIRL

Aww, mom...

The Young Girl wanders off. Stanley is puzzled by her departure. But he continues swinging.

EXT. PARK - DAY (MONTAGE)

A) Two women admire a wildflower. One photographs it, the other smells of it. Stanley watches from afar, noticing the pleasure on their faces.

B) Stanley sees a fisherman along the bank. He plods toward him, scaring him away, then picks up the abandoned fishing pole. He clumsily raises the pole backward and casts toward the water. Unbeknownst to him, the line never reaches the water; it has become entangled in a tree behind him. He patiently watches the water, waiting for something to happen. Nothing happens. Bored, he drops the pole and lumbers off.

C) Stanley kneels and smells of a flower, in awe of its beauty.

D) Two people paddle a canoe across the lake. Stanley studies them. He takes a canoe from the bank and drags it into the water, attempting to get in, but he loses balance and falls splashing into the lake. Angered, he punches the water.

E) Hundreds of ants work busily at an anthill. Stanley lies on the ground, watching them, mesmerized. A park ranger watches Stanley, intrigued.

F) Stanley again tries to skip rocks across the lake. Pausing, he sees a park visitor toss a candy wrapper onto the ground. Stanley examines the litter, puzzled. A tear falls from his eye. He picks up the litter and places it in a trash can, wiping his eyes.

G) Several people, including Stanley, enjoy a game of volleyball. The ball travels through the air and bops Stanley right in the noggin. The others laugh. Stanley starts to get mad and terrorize them, but he has a change of heart. He chuckles, nods his head, grits his teeth.

H) Stanley examines a bird nest filled with eggs. This makes him happy. Bird droppings land on his shoulder. This makes him mad. He looks up, shakes his fist.

I) Stanley watches two people ride bikes. Finding a bike on the ground, he picks it up and gets on. He pedals clumsily and steers straight into a tree, crashing to the ground.

J) A park ranger leads a hike, teaching park visitors about trees. Among the group is Stanley, who listens intently. He examines a leaf, fascinated.

K) Deer graze in a pasture. Attempting to emulate them, Stanley grazes along the shoreline. He spits out a mouthful of grass, disgusted.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. PARK - DAY

A family enjoys grilling out.

Standing at the grill is Stanley wearing a chef's hat. He happily flips burgers, serving them to the family. A girl takes a selfie with Stanley, who jokingly pretends to bite her.

On the grill are burgers, hot dogs, vegetables, and a severed human foot.

Stanley licks his lips.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Stanley enjoys a hike along a nature trail.

He finds a turtle, studying it excitedly.

He roams all around, in awe of nature, feeling more alive than ever. He takes a deep breath.

EXT. PARK - SUNSET

Stanley sits peacefully on a bench, enjoying the sunset.

A park ranger approaches, clearing his throat to get the zombie's attention. He points to a sign which reads: "Park Closes At Sunset".

Stanley examines the sign.

EXT. PARK - SUNSET

Stanley lumbers past the entrance sign.

He turns and looks back toward the park, reminiscing about his glorious day.

Sighing, he reluctantly departs.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - DAY

A small band of zombies trudge alongside the road, a couple of them gnawing on human body parts.

Stanley begrudgingly rejoins them. He walks with them for a bit, but something seems amiss.

Stanley pauses, turns toward the woods. He gazes at the birds, the trees, the flowers.

He glances at his fellow zombies, contemplating. Finally he turns away from them and strides into the woods alone.

The other zombies watch him go, puzzled. They finally decide to join him, and they all disappear into the forest.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A bird sings joyfully from the treetops.

SUPERIMPOSE: "One month later..."

A pair of binoculars aim toward the singing bird.

Clutching the binoculars is Stanley, wearing a floppy hat and backpack. His "Go Green" t-shirt has a bit of blood splattered on it.

He points at the bird. Another zombie borrows his binoculars and observes the bird, fascinated.

Other zombies gather around Stanley, who takes out his bird identification book and shows them a photo of the bird. They all examine the photo.

One zombie notices a butterfly, fascinated by it.

Another smells of a flower.

And yet another examines a leaf, flipping through a tree identification book.

In the distance, a new band of zombies approach through the woods. When they spot the nature-loving zombies, they pause, puzzled, noticing their unusual activity and happy facial expressions. They move closer, curious. Elrod welcomes them.

A zombie lying on the ground uses a magnifying glass to observe an insect. He invites one of the new zombies to join him.

More curious zombies appear from out of the woods and approach the scene.

Elrod observes his students as they find joy and meaning in nature. He gazes at the sky, taking a deep breath. A glorious day to be alive. Or dead.

Nearby, one of the zombies spots something on the ground. He reaches down and picks up a cell phone. He studies this strange contraption, puzzled by it.

He smells of it. Tastes it. Places it to his ear. Finally he put his fingers on it and begins pushing buttons clumsily. Suddenly images and sounds radiate from the phone. His eyes light up. Amazed, he pushes more buttons.

The other zombies notice him. All of them except for Elrod wander over to check out his new toy.

The zombie plays with the cell phone gleefully. He can't get enough -- he's addicted. He watches a video of kittens doing funny things. He grins. The other zombies watch, fascinated.

Finally the zombie wanders off with the phone, still playing with it. The other zombies follow him excitedly, and they all disappear into the woods.

Elrod now stands alone, watching them go. He sighs sadly.

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK who watches TV, somewhat disappointed.

NICK

Eh. Not what I was expecting.
But... nature's cool, I guess.

More STATIC on TV. Nick shakes his head, irritated.

The dummy is no longer on the couch beside him.

However, a random bubble floats through the room behind Nick. He doesn't notice.

Below in the darkness, a snake slithers on the floor near Nick's feet. He doesn't notice this, either.

On TV, the static subsides and the scene shifts to a lake and a fisherman in a boat. Nick watches.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. LESTER LAKE - SUNSET TITLE: THE LOST TOYS OF LESTER LAKE

All is calm. Fisherman BILL, gruff, 60's, sits in his ramshackle boat, gazing vacantly at his float in the water.

Reeling in his line, he eyes the empty hook. He sighs, growing weary. He glances at his watch.

He decides to cast his line out once more. And so he does. He stares at the float. And waits. A soft, distant WHISPER. Bill glances around, puzzled, seeing nothing.

The float bobs -- finally a bite! Bill yanks, reeling it in. On his hook: a slimy toy clown. Frustrated, he removes the weathered toy and disgustedly tosses it back into the lake.

He puts his pole away and packs up. As he does, low MURMURS and WHISPERS echo all around him. He notices. The sounds are indecipherable. Then: a RIPPLING sound.

Peering out at the water, Bill sees the toy clown bobbing up and down, glaring at him. Nearby, an old ragged doll rises to the surface. Then a charred action figure. A broken plastic dinosaur. And a TEDDY BEAR with one eye missing.

Disturbed, Bill glances all around as the deteriorating toys surround his boat, MURMURING, gazing up at him.

BILL
What... who... what do you want?

TEDDY BEAR
We just want someone to play with.

ALL TOYS
Play with us! Play with us!

Bill turns and now sees a burned, disfigured, one-armed PORCELAIN DOLL sitting in the boat across from him.

PORCELAIN DOLL
We want to play with you. Now!

The floating toys close in on Bill, TAPPING and SCRATCHING against his boat, climbing inside. Bill gulps, terrified.

FADE TO BLACK.

BILL (O.S.)
Dear God... no!

The toys GIGGLE and LAUGH cheerfully as Bill SCREAMS.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK who watches TV.

NICK
And that's why I don't go fishing.

He reaches down for some more popcorn, but hears a slight SPLASHING sound and feels a strange sensation.

Glancing down, he notices his bowl of popcorn has become liquefied -- looking almost like buttermilk.

He tentatively touches the liquid, perplexed.

As he does, a red droplet falls from the ceiling and goes KERPLUNK in the bowl.

Nick looks up but doesn't see anything.

A THUMP at the door startles him, causing him to splash the bowl of liquid on himself -- but the liquid is now blood red.

On TV, the scene shifts to a neighborhood with kids in costumes trick-or-treating.

Nick glances at the TV. He glances down again at the bowl of red liquid. And then glances up toward the ceiling.

Finally he stares at the TV, terrified, his mouth agape.

The TV screen displays:

EXT. SUBURBS - NIGHT TITLE: THE HORSE-DRAWN HEARSE

A lit pumpkin flickers on a porch.

Three KIDS wearing plastic Halloween masks excitedly ring the doorbell.

When the door opens, they shout: "Trick or treat!"

SUPERIMPOSE: "October 31, 1973"

After receiving their candy, the kids happily depart. The WOMAN inside steps out and watches them go, grinning.

She surveys the neighborhood and sees no other kids around. She blows out the pumpkin, goes back inside and turns off the porch light.

Nearby, eight-year-old DANIEL TAYLOR wanders across a lawn. He removes his plastic mask and peers into his bag of candy.

MOTHER (O.S.)
(from afar)
Daniel? Daniel, it's time to come
in, hon!

He looks off toward a nearby house.

DANIEL
Okay, mom!

Daniel glances around the neighborhood. All is quiet. Everyone has gone inside for the night.

Rummaging through his bag of goodies, he samples some candy corn. Then he reluctantly ambles toward home.

In the distance, a faint CLICK-CLACK -- like horseshoes on pavement. Slow, methodical.

Daniel pauses and peers into the darkness, but sees nothing. He reaches back into his bag for more candy, then continues on.

The CLICK-CLACK sound draws closer. Daniel detects movement in the distance. He steps toward the road to get a better look.

Emerging from the darkness: a horse pulling an old-timey wagon. Seated atop the wagon is a shadowy figure wearing a top hat.

Daniel watches, curious.

The wagon comes closer, finally pausing in the road.

With wide eyes, Daniel studies the wagon and the massive black horse.

Daniel's eyes follow the horse's reins, which lead to pair of pale hands with long, slender fingers.

The wagon's DRIVER -- angular face, grim expression, a splash of silver hair peaking out from under his tall black hat -- stares ahead, motionless.

A long silence. All is deathly quiet.

The horse WHINNIES, causing Daniel to jump.

The driver slowly turns his head in the direction of Daniel. He glares at him with cold, hollow eyes.

Daniel, frightened, turns and runs for home. Glancing back, he notices the driver still staring in his direction.

Daniel leaps up onto his porch and hurries inside.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daniel steps to the window. He tentatively pulls back the drapes and peeps outside.

The horse and wagon are no longer there. Only darkness.

Daniel swallows hard.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A nameplate on a desk reads: "Daniel Taylor".

Daniel, now in his late 40's, wears a sweater and a sad expression as he sits behind the desk sorting through mail.

SUPERIMPOSE: "October 31, 2012"

The doorbell RINGS. Daniel glances up, strides across the room and opens the door. It's a BOY & GIRL wearing Halloween masks.

BOY & GIRL
Trick or treat!

Daniel manages a grin. He grabs two handfuls of candy from a platter and drops it into their sacks.

BOY & GIRL

Thank you!

They depart. Daniel watches them longingly.

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daniel steps onto the porch. He scans the neighborhood.

He strolls out onto the lawn, admiring the night sky. He takes a deep breath.

He watches the last of the trick-or-treaters disappear down the road.

As Daniel starts back inside, he detects a faint SOUND in the distance. He pauses, listening.

It's the CLICK-CLACK of horseshoes on pavement. Slow, methodical.

He gazes toward the road, seeing nothing.

As the CLICK-CLACK sound draws closer, Daniel eases across the lawn, squinting into the darkness.

From out of the fog appear a horse and wagon -- the same horse and wagon he saw as a kid.

Daniel watches intently, barely taking a breath.

As the wagon moves closer, it becomes apparent that there's no driver. The horse pauses in the road -- directly in front of Daniel.

Daniel gawks at it, frozen. He cautiously approaches, gazing into the eyes of the horse, which calmly stares ahead.

Resting on the wagon's seat is a tall black top hat. Daniel studies it.

Then something catches Daniel's attention in back of the wagon: a long wooden box in the shape of a coffin.

The horse WHINNIES, causing Daniel to jump.

Unnerved, Daniel glances all around. The streets are empty. The neighborhood silent.

He removes a pen from his pocket and flips on the pen's tiny flashlight. He examines the nondescript box. Then he tentatively approaches the horse.

He shines a light on the saddle. The saddle's nameplate reads: "Thurman Chesterfield & Blackie".

The horse calmly turns its head toward Daniel. It gazes into Daniel's eyes, almost as if trying to make a connection.

Daniel reaches out for the horse, but can't bring himself to touch it. Instead, he backs away.

Perplexed, Daniel turns and heads for home.

When he reaches his porch, he turns and looks back. The horse and wagon remain -- the horse still gazing at Daniel.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daniel enters and closes the door. Disturbed, he takes a deep breath.

He approaches the window. As he pulls back the curtain to look out, the wagon driver's pale, scowling face FLASHES in the window for an instant. Daniel SCREAMS, falling backward to the floor.

His heart pounding, Daniel stares up at the window. He stands, attempting to regain his composure.

Working up some courage, he approaches the window and tentatively pulls back the curtain, peering out.

The horse and wagon are no longer there. Only darkness.

Daniel steps away from the window, not sure what to make of it all.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daniel sits at his desk, contemplating.

He moves to his computer and types the name "Thurman Chesterfield", then pauses to read the results.

Clicking on a link, he examines the screen. His his eyes widen.

On his computer MONITOR is an old black-and-white photo of the same driver -- sitting atop the same horse-drawn wagon.

Daniel studies the scowling driver, whose piercing eyes seem to stare back at him. Suddenly the photo appears to come alive -- the driver's mouth OPENS.

DRIVER (V.O.)

Daniel!

Daniel JOLTS backward, turning away, petrified.

Closing his eyes, he attempts to calm himself. He slowly turns back to his monitor. The photo now appears normal again.

Daniel examines the photo, which is part of an old newspaper article. He scrolls up the page and notices the date: "Dec. 5, 1973".

The headline reads: "Missing Hearse Driver Presumed Dead -- Thurman Chesterfield and Horse Blackie Unseen Since Oct. 31st".

Daniel's mouth falls open. He stands, paces, disturbed.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

A modest home in a rural area.

Daniel walks to the door and knocks. The door opens and a woman appears. They both go inside.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

Daniel takes a seat. MS. CHESTERFIELD, late 50's, pleasant looking, sits across from him.

DANIEL

Thank you for agreeing to see me,
Ms. Chesterfield.

MS. CHESTERFIELD

You're quite welcome. It's nice to
have company. I don't get many
visitors out here. Would you like
a cup of coffee or something to
drink?

DANIEL

No, thank you.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
So you wanna know about my
grandfather?

DANIEL
Well, yes. I mean, I'm interested
in local history. I ran across an
old article about him going
missing.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
I was eighteen when he disappeared.
He was the last horse-drawn hearse
driver around these parts. He so
loved his job. He was, you see, a
very spiritual man. He took great
pride in taking people to their
eternal resting places. But...
times changed. They wanted him to
drive a motorized hearse -- a car.
He refused. He thought it was
unnatural. So they had to let him
go. His last day on the job was
October 31st, 1973. He never came
home that evening.

Daniel considers her story. He FLASHBACKS to seeing Thurman
and Blackie on that very Halloween night as a kid.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
Driving that hearse... it brought
him peace. The sad part is, he
never received a proper burial
himself. He believed people should
be put to rest properly, or else
their souls would forever be...

She searches for the correct word.

DANIEL
Restless?

Ms. Chesterfield nods.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
Yes.

Daniel lowers his head, contemplating.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
Grandpa was quite the character.
People were scared of him for some
reason. I guess he did have a
rather hateful expression.
(MORE)

MS. CHESTERFIELD (CONT'D)

And he would sometimes lay in the coffins. He said he could think better that way. But he was a gentle soul. I'll never forget that beautiful ring he wore on his finger -- it had angel wings on it. I still miss him terribly.

DANIEL

What happened to his horse? And his wagon?

MS. CHESTERFIELD

They disappeared along with him.

Daniel attempts to take it all in.

DANIEL

Funny, when I was a kid I developed an odd fascination with cemeteries, burials -- that sort of thing. I thought it was all... strangely beautiful.

MS. CHESTERFIELD

Hmmm. Where did that interest come from?

DANIEL

Well, our house was near a graveyard. We passed by it a lot. I'm sure that had something to do with it. It was... peaceful. Also, I saw your grandfather's hearse once when I was a kid. Although I didn't really understand what it was at the time. But... let's just say it had a big impact on me.

Ms. Chesterfield nods, fascinated.

DANIEL

I remember telling my mom once that I wanted to work at the funeral home. She didn't think too highly of that.

Ms. Chesterfield chuckles.

DANIEL

Then later in life I actually decided to pursue it.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)
But my wife -- ex-wife -- thought
it was too morbid. So...

He shrugs. Ms. Chesterfield grins. She studies Daniel.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
I think grandpa would've liked you.
He had a good feel for people. I
think he would've been drawn to
you.

Daniel considers this.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
What do you do for a living now,
Mr. Taylor? If you don't mind me
asking...

DANIEL
I work for an insurance company.

MS. CHESTERFIELD
Oh. Do you like it?

DANIEL
No. Not really.

Ms. Chesterfield nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Three kids wearing Halloween masks happily leap off the porch
with their bags of candy. Daniel steps outside and watches
them go.

SUPERIMPOSE: "One Year Later - October 31, 2013"

Daniel glances around the neighborhood.

Seeming a bit tense, he takes a seat on the porch step.

He takes a deep breath, gazing at the night sky.

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - LATER

Daniel now wanders across his lawn, holding a flashlight.

He looks around the neighborhood again. The trick-or-treaters are gone. All is quiet.

He approaches the road and glances from side to side, seeing nothing.

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - LATER

Daniel sits on his lawn near the road, almost as if waiting for something.

Growing weary, he glances at his watch.

At the house next door, a curtain is pulled back. A curious LITTLE BOY in pajamas peers toward the road. He notices Daniel sitting on the lawn.

Standing, Daniel glances up and down the road once more. Finally he turns and heads for his house.

As he approaches the porch, he freezes when he sees the horse-drawn wagon in his driveway.

The wagon is again without a driver. The driver's black top hat rests on the seat.

Daniel gawks at the wagon, his mouth ajar. He approaches cautiously.

He peers into the horse's dark eyes.

DANIEL

Blackie?

Nodding, the horse WHINNIES.

DANIEL

You remember me.

Daniel shines his flashlight on the wagon, walking all around, examining it. He notices the same wooden box in back.

He tentatively reaches out and touches the box, rubbing his hand over it, as if to make sure it's real.

Contemplating, he grasps the lid and slowly lifts it.

The lid CREAKS. Daniel swallows hard.

He opens it completely and shines the light inside. His eyes widen.

Inside the box: a human skull... and human bones.

"Daniel...", WHISPERS the driver's voice. Daniel shudders and steps back, feeling a sudden BREEZE on his face. He glances all around, overwhelmed.

Breathless, Daniel works up a bit of courage. He steps forward and examines the human remains in the coffin. On one finger he sees a ring. Shining a light on it, he notices that the ring has angel wings.

Daniel suddenly SLAMS the coffin shut and steps backward, terrified. He shakes his head, studying the horse and wagon intently.

DANIEL
Why... me?

He paces back and forth.

Pausing, he lifts his head toward the heavens as if searching for answers.

The horse watches him, curious.

After several moments of contemplation, Daniel lowers his head.

MS. CHESTERFIELD (V.O.)
I think grandpa would've liked you.
He would've been drawn to you.

Daniel considers this. He gazes at the horse and wagon, his fear evaporating.

He steps to the wagon and studies it with a sense of awe. Then he turns and walks away, disappearing behind his house.

The horse and wagon remain in the driveway. All is quiet.

Daniel reappears from behind his house, now carrying a shovel. He marches to the wagon and places the shovel up beside the seat.

The horse nods and WHINNIES.

Daniel looks all around as if surprised by his own actions.

He strides to the back of the wagon and stares down at the coffin. He takes a deep breath.

DANIEL

I don't know what happened to you,
Thurman Chesterfield. But... you
shall rest in peace.

Daniel returns to the front of the wagon. He looks up at the seat. Takes a deep breath. And then climbs aboard.

He notices the black top hat on the seat beside him. He studies it intently.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The horse-drawn wagon sits in a remote pasture.

Blackie stares ahead. Thurman's top hat lay on the seat.

In back of the wagon, Thurman rests in a coffin, gazing at the stars above, contemplating.

THURMAN

You and I... we weren't made for
these times, Blackie. Maybe we
should just... go our own way.

Blackie WHINNIES, nodding his head. Thurman considers it further, arriving at a conclusion.

THURMAN

There's a better place for you and
I.

He gazes at the sky, a twinkle in his eye.

BACK TO SCENE

Daniel, still sitting atop the wagon, continues to study Thurman's hat. He now seems certain about what must be done.

Finally Daniel takes the reins. With a peaceful expression, he gently tugs on them.

Blackie begins to step. CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK.

The wagon rolls and creaks down the driveway.

Daniel takes a deep breath, a newfound sense of purpose on his face.

The little boy in pajamas from next door now stands on his lawn, watching Daniel approach.

Daniel notices the spooked boy, who just stares up at him, mouth open.

From the boy's POV, there is no wagon and no horse. There's only Daniel, seated in mid-air.

Daniel nods warmly at the boy. Then he tugs the reins, and the wagon pulls out onto the road.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Zack, come back inside! You should
be in bed!

The little boy watches as the image of Daniel strangely fades and breaks apart -- like a lost transmission -- and then disappears into thin air. Suddenly there's nothing there.

Stunned, the little boy swallows hard, turns and runs for home.

Now in its own realm, the old wagon moves down the road. Daniel stares ahead determinedly. In the seat beside him sits the ghostly image of Thurman Chesterfield.

Thurman looks over at Daniel and nods, pleased.

The CLICK-CLACK of horseshoes echo in the night air as the horse-drawn hearse -- along with Daniel Taylor and Thurman Chesterfield -- disappear into the darkness.

FADE OUT.

END OF SEGMENT

BACK TO NICK who is now hunched in his chair, blanket over his face, terrified, motionless.

Suddenly another heavy THUMP at his door.

He peeks out from the blanket. Glances toward the front door. Swallows hard.

NICK
No more candy! Go away! I'm all
out!

Silence.

Then: another THUMP at the door.

He turns and eyes the door.

Someone is KNOCKING slowly, heavily, randomly.

Nick turns back to the TV, where the scene has shifted to a dark woods. The images on TV are suddenly in black and white, and also rather blurry and jittery and otherworldly.

Standing in the woods: a pale, sinister OLD MAN wearing an old-fashioned top hat. He turns his head and glares into the camera.

OLD MAN (ON TV)
Welcome. We are broadcasting...
from Hell!

Eerie angelic singing ECHOES from the forest as the camera drifts through the woods. The sound of distant SCREAMS.

Nick tries again to turn off the TV, but can't.

Back on TV, the Old Man begins a sermon of sorts.

OLD MAN (ON TV)
In the days of old, there reigned a demon named Neza-doriac. He was also known as the demon with three horns. He collected souls for the Master. But he was deemed too barbaric. So he was banished from Hell. But for one night each year, the Master opens the gates of Hell and allows him entrance to do his bidding. To... harvest souls. It is the night you know as October 31st. This night. The night of the Neza-doriac!

From inside Nick's living room: a GIGGLING sound.

Nick turns and sees the ventriloquist's dummy sitting on his couch. Wearing a name tag that says "Hello, my name is Bartholomew", the dummy stares at Nick.

While Nick gawks at the dummy, behind Nick a human-like object PLUMMETS from the ceiling and drops behind his chair, landing with a THUD.

Not wanting to find out what it was, Nick locates his phone and desperately dials a number.

Placing the phone to his ear, he detects an OPERATOR.

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
We're sorry. The number you have
dialed, 666-6666, cannot be
reached. That's because there are
no phones in Hell.

He stares at his phone.

NICK
What?! That's not the number I
dialed. I--

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
Please hang up and try your number
again. Or not. It doesn't matter.
You are doomed.

Frustrated, Nick hurls the phone across the room. Behind his
chair: muffled GROANING.

MAN'S MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)
Help me! Please...

Then from behind his chair: a SIZZLING sound, like meat on a
grill. Nick gulps.

Standing, Nicking peeks behind the chair.

He sees on the floor: a preacher's suit of clothes and shoes.
But there is no man inside them -- only a sizzling, jelly-
like substance where the head and hands should be. And a
Bible.

Horrified, Nick runs for the door, but there he hears the
THUMPING, which grows louder.

He steps back and rushes to a window, but sees the hooded
figure, with glowing red eyes, peering in at him.

The dummy Bartholomew, now sitting on a table, watches it
all, amused.

As Nick backs away from the window, he notices a bubble
floating across the room. SCREAMS and VOICES emanate from
the bubble.

VOICES (FROM THE BUBBLE)
Help us! Please! The pain...

Nick freezes, overwhelmed.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Nick? Hey, Nick!

Nick eyes the TV. On the screen, he sees himself sitting in his chair, laughing, slapping his knee, pointing at himself mockingly.

NICK (ON TV)
If you could see the look on your
face right now!

NICK
For the love of God, what is
happening?!

NICK (ON TV)
God? Um, you might not wanna use
that word around here, bud. Just
sayin'.

Nick glances around the room. Swallows hard. Slowly steps back to his chair.

Uncertain of what to do, Nick sits. Rubs his face. Shakes his head. Tries to snap out of it.

NICK
I knew I should've watched
Hallmark...

The Old Man on TV stares out at Nick.

OLD MAN (ON TV)
Sorry, dear viewer. I'm afraid you
chose the wrong channel. On the
wrong night.

NICK
But I didn't choose--

Brief STATIC returns to the TV. Then it dissolves as the scene shifts back to the woods, where a BATTERED MAN is tied to a tree.

The Battered Man looks all around, wild eyed, terrified. He nods at someone off camera, as if being coached. Then he looks into the camera -- directly at Nick. He forces a grin.

BATTERED MAN (ON TV)
Happy Halloween, everyone! From
all of your friends at Channel 666.
We hope you've enjoyed the show!

The Battered Man looks away and sees someone - or something - moving toward him.

BATTERED MAN (ON TV)
No! Please!

He panics, staring back into the camera at Nick.

BATTERED MAN (ON TV)
You! Turn off the TV! Now!
Before it's too late! They will--

The picture breaks up and goes to STATIC as he SCREAMS. A droplet of blood runs down the TV screen.

Nick desperately mashes the remote control. He jumps up and tries to turn the TV off manually, but has no luck.

Another THUMP at the door...

He unplugs the TV, but it still won't shut off -- more STATIC and SCREAMING.

The blood in his popcorn bowl BOILS...

Bartholomew the dummy giggles...

Somewhere a pig SQUEALS...

The THUMPS at the door get louder and faster...

Nick panics. He BANGS on the TV repeatedly. Finally it shuts off. The TV screen goes black.

Smoke rises from the TV.

Silence.

Nick surveys the room.

The clothes behind his chair are no longer there.

He notices regular popcorn in his bowl.

The dummy is gone.

Nothing at the window.

Nick breathes a sigh of relief. He shakes his head.

Not knowing what to do at this point, he drops into his chair, exhausted.

Tilting his head back, he closes his eyes as he attempts to calm himself.

A KNOCK at the door. Nick opens his eyes. He anxiously sits up.

Another KNOCK. Then he hears the sound of LAUGHING KIDS.

KIDS (O.S.)
Trick or treat!

Nick breathes a sigh of relief.

Still feeling a bit woozy, he stands, finds his bowl of candy and starts for the door. But suddenly he freezes.

On the wall, Nick sees the silhouette of a large, grotesque, beastly creature -- with three horns protruding from its head.

The dummy Bartholomew now sits in Nick's chair, giggling.

The stunned Nick drops the bowl of candy. One piece of candy that falls to the floor is a "Fun Size" candy bar.

The silhouette of the three-horned demon advances toward the stunned Nick with plodding, heavy FOOTSTEPS.

The TV suddenly SPARKS and CRACKLES and comes back on.

OLD MAN (ON TV)
This is the end of our broadcast.
We now return you to your regular
programming. Happy Halloween.

The TV shuts off again.

The lamp in the room flickers and then goes off. The room goes dark.

FADE TO BLACK.

The demon's footsteps abruptly pause. Silence.

NICK (O.S.)
Hello?

Then: a low but ferocious SNARLING.

More silence. Then:

NICK (O.S.)
Would... you care for some candy?

THE END