

(THE HAUNTED TEXT)

by

(Brian Leslie)

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INT. JAKE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The camera zooms in on a stack of worn board games and comic books scattered atop a wooden coffee table. A STRAY POPCORN KERNEL skitters across the floor as a BEAT pulses from unseen speakers. The room is aglow with the soft light of string bulbs, casting long shadows against the walls lined with movie posters.

JAKE THOMPSON lounges on an overstuffed couch, his green eyes darting between the phone in his hand and his two friends. He taps his foot to the rhythm, restless.

JAKE  
You guys heard about the Whitmore place, right? Supposedly, it's haunted by the ghost of old man Whitmore himself.

Emma perches on the armrest, her blue eyes rolling dismissively as she flicks through her own phone.

EMMA  
(Playful sarcasm)  
And let me guess, he's throwing an underground party for all the cool ghosts in town?

LIAM sits on the opposite end of the couch, a crease of worry etched into his brow as he glances up from his phone.

LIAM  
(Cautious)  
They say people have gone missing there... I don't know, maybe some places are off-limits for a reason.

Jake's grin widens, mischief glinting in his eyes. He nudges Liam with his foot.

JAKE  
(Challenging)  
Come on, man. Since when did you start believing in ghost stories?

Suddenly, Jake's phone buzzes, slicing through the banter. A TEXT MESSAGE pops up from an UNKNOWN SENDER. Jake's expression shifts to intrigue mixed with a hint of unease.

INSERT: Jake's phone screen, displaying the message "I see you... You shouldn't go."

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JAKE  
(Reading aloud)  
"I see you... You shouldn't go."  
Huh, that's creepy.

Emma snatches the phone from Jake, squinting at the screen.

EMMA  
(Defiantly)  
Probably just someone trying to scare us away. I say we crash this party and prove there's nothing to be afraid of.

Liam's voice trembles slightly but there's undeniable curiosity in his tone.

LIAM  
Are we really doing this?

Jake retrieves his phone, locking eyes with both Liam and Emma. His adventurous spirit radiates from him like heat from a flame.

JAKE  
(Resolved)  
We're not backing down because of some prank text. Let's solve the mystery of the Whitmore mansion ourselves!

Emma smirks, her confidence infectious.

EMMA  
That's the spirit! Adventure awaits, gentlemen!

The three share a moment of charged silence, the weight of their impending journey settling over them. Then, with a collective nod, they rise from their seats, their decision made.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. JAKE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

A low-humming dehumidifier and the occasional POP of popcorn punctuate the room filled with vintage movie posters and a worn-out sofa. JAKE THOMPSON, LIAM PARKER, and EMMA HENDERSON are sprawled on beanbags, bathed in the blue glow of their phone screens.

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Jake tosses a handful of popcorn into his mouth, green eyes flicking rapidly as he scrolls through his feed. His brown hair falls over his forehead in a casual disarray. He pauses, an image catching his attention.

JAKE  
(Excitedly)  
Guys, check this out!

Liam looks up, cautious curiosity in his deep brown eyes. He brushes back a curl from his face, leaning in closer to Jake's phone screen.

LIAM  
(Warily)  
What is it this time, Jake?

Emma leans over Jake's shoulder, her striking blue eyes narrowing as she examines the screen. She swipes a piece of popcorn from the bowl, her movements exuding a natural confidence.

EMMA  
(Sarcastically)  
If it's another one of those prank videos, I swear—

JAKE  
(Cutting in)  
No, no, it's not that. Look, it's about the Whitmore mansion party!

The three friends exchange a look of shared intrigue. Emma taps on the screen, enlarging the post.

EMMA  
(Half-joking)  
So, what's the plan? Sneak in like ninjas?

Jake laughs, his crooked teeth flashing in a mischievous grin.

JAKE  
(Playfully)  
Ninjas? Please. We're more like... detectives on a secret mission.

Liam chuckles but shakes his head, his voice steady but with a hint of excitement beneath his pragmatic tone.

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LIAM  
(Realistically)  
As long as we don't end up as  
ghost food. You know the stories  
about that place.

Jake nudges Liam with his elbow, teasing him.

JAKE  
(Impishly)  
Since when did you start believing  
in ghost stories?

Emma snorts, flipping her wavy auburn hair back  
defiantly.

EMMA  
(Mockingly)  
Yeah, Liam, aren't you Mr. 'I'll-  
believe-it-when-I-see-it'?

Liam gives a half-hearted shrug, trying to mask his  
anticipation.

LIAM  
(Reasonably)  
Just saying, there's no harm in  
being careful.

Jake springs up from his beanbag, energy crackling around  
him like static.

JAKE  
(Determined)  
Well, 'careful' is my middle name.

Emma rolls her eyes but grins, standing up to join Jake.

EMMA  
(Confidently)  
Mine's 'Danger'. Emma Danger  
Henderson.

They all laugh, the thrill of potential adventure  
threading through their camaraderie. The basement, once  
just a hangout spot, now feels like the starting line of  
something new, something exciting.

FADE OUT.

INT. JAKE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The room pulses with the energy of a plan forming, the three friends circled around a cluttered coffee table. Jake's eyes gleam in the low light, reflecting a map of their small town spread out before them.

JAKE  
(pointing at the map)  
So, it's settled then? We're doing  
this?

Liam leans forward, his fingers tracing the well-worn paths they've all walked countless times, each street holding memories of their shared childhood.

LIAM  
(conspiratorially)  
It's not every day we get to solve  
a real-life mystery, right in our  
own backyard.

Emma nods, her blue eyes scanning the familiar grid of streets converging on one point—the heart of local legend.

EMMA  
(excitedly)  
And it's the Whitmore mansion! Can  
you imagine the stories that place  
could tell?

Jake scoops up a handful of popcorn, his voice laced with anticipation.

JAKE  
(cheerfully)  
Yeah, and we'll be the ones  
telling them after tonight!

Liam folds the map with practiced hands, his expression sobering slightly.

LIAM  
(resolutely)  
We'll need a plan. Can't just  
barge into the unknown.

Jake smirks at Liam's caution, but there's respect in his tone.

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JAKE  
(teasing)  
You're right, O' Captain My  
Captain. We do it smart—we scout,  
we stick together.

Emma grabs her jacket, her movements full of purpose.

EMMA  
(determinedly)  
And we watch each other's backs.  
No heroics, agreed?

JAKE/ LIAM  
(in unison)  
Agreed.

They share a look, the weight of their decision settling in. The air hums with the possibility of what lies ahead.

EXT. SMALL TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

The trio steps outside, the familiar sights and sounds of their tight-knit community wrapping around them like a warm blanket. Porch lights flicker on as dusk settles, casting long shadows over neatly trimmed lawns.

JAKE  
(whispering)  
There's something about a small  
town at night, huh?

Emma gazes around, a soft smile playing on her lips.

EMMA  
(sentimentally)  
It's like everything's sleeping,  
except for us.

Liam glances back towards Jake's house where Sarah Thompson stands by the window, watching over them.

LIAM  
(gratefully)  
And Mrs. T. Thanks for the snacks!

Sarah waves from inside, her silhouette reassuring in the soft glow of the living room light.

JAKE  
(warmly)  
She's the best. Let's make her  
proud, team.

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The friends fist bump, a silent pact beneath the starlit sky. They turn their faces toward the edge of town, where the outline of the Whitmore mansion looms on the horizon.

LIAM

(musingly)

To think, most people go their  
whole lives without ever really  
knowing the secrets hidden right  
under their noses.

Emma quickens her pace, the thrill of the unknown drawing them onward.

EMMA

(impatiently)

Well, we're not most people. Let's  
go uncover some secrets.

With a collective nod, they stride down the quiet streets, leaving the safety of the known behind as they head towards an adventure that promises to test their bravery, their friendship, and their very understanding of the world they thought they knew.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. JAKE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The basement is a teenage haven, posters of rock bands and movie icons plastered on the walls. A single lamp casts a warm glow over the trio as they sprawl across bean bags and old couches. Jake flicks through his phone with rapid swipes, Liam leans in to peek at the screen, and Emma snacks on popcorn, tossing a kernel into her mouth with practiced ease.

JAKE

(excitedly)

Guys, check this out!

Emma leans closer, her eyes widening.

EMMA

What is it?

Liam squints at the glowing screen, his voice tinged with skepticism.

LIAM

What's got you all riled up now,  
Jake?

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Jake's finger hovers over the image of an ornate, decrepit gate.

JAKE  
There's talk about an underground party tonight at the Whitmore mansion.

Emma snorts, a playful gleam in her eye.

EMMA  
(teasing)  
"Underground" as in cool, or because it's in a crypt?

Liam chuckles but looks uneasy.

LIAM  
(concerned)  
Isn't that place supposed to be haunted? Like, seriously bad mojo?

Jake scoffs, brushing off the concern with a wave of his hand.

JAKE  
(dismissive)  
Come on, man. It's just old people trying to scare us.

Emma's lips curve into a mischievous smile.

EMMA  
Eager to see some ghosts, are we?

Jake grins back, nodding enthusiastically.

JAKE  
You know me too well.

A moment of silence falls as they consider the possibility. The whispers of long-forgotten tales seep into their thoughts. Emma breaks the silence with a note of intrigue.

EMMA  
(dramatically)  
They say kids went missing there, you know. Vanished without a trace.

Liam frowns, crossing his arms.

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LIAM

(wary)

And you want to go there... why exactly?

Jake's eyes sparkle with a daring light.

JAKE

(challenging)

Because if those stories are true, wouldn't you want to be the one to unravel them?

Emma nods, her adventurous nature taking over.

EMMA

(firmly)

I'm in. If there are secrets, we'll find them.

Liam hesitates, torn between caution and curiosity.

LIAM

(reluctantly)

Alright. But we stick together. No wandering off.

JAKE

(enthusiastically)

Deal!

They share a determined look, their hearts racing with the promise of the unknown. The allure of the Whitmore mansion beckons, its dark silhouette a challenge against the night sky.

JAKE

Let's gear up then. It's going to be one heck of a night.

The friends exchange excited glances, their bond solidifying in the face of the looming adventure.

FADE OUT.

INT. JAKE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The room, bathed in the blue glow of smartphones, feels charged with the excitement of the upcoming adventure. Jake thumbs through his phone when it BUZZES unexpectedly. He glances at the screen, his usual grin faltering as he reads the new message.

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INSERT: Jake's phone screen displaying the text "I see you... You shouldn't go."

Jake's eyebrows knit together in confusion. He looks up to Emma and Liam.

JAKE  
(trying to sound  
casual)  
Guys, check this out.

Emma leans over, her eyes scanning the ominous message. A small frown forms on her lips.

EMMA  
(concerned)  
Who's it from?

Liam peers at the screen, his body tensing.

LIAM  
(suspicious)  
It doesn't say. Unknown number.

Jake shrugs, attempting to brush off his unease.

JAKE  
(defiantly)  
Probably just someone messing with  
us.

EMMA  
(slightly anxious)  
But what if it's a warning? Those  
stories about Whitmore aren't  
exactly bedtime fairy tales.

Liam nods in agreement, but there's a curious gleam in his eyes.

LIAM  
Yeah, but think about it—what if  
it's part of the whole setup? To  
make the party seem creepier?

Jake considers this, his adventurous heart winning over.

JAKE  
(excited)  
That's genius! Imagine showing up  
after getting a text like this.  
It's all about the atmosphere.

Emma bites her lip, torn between fear and fascination.

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EMMA  
(reluctantly)  
I guess so...

JAKE  
(courageously)  
Look, we agreed to stick together,  
right? We can handle some spooky  
texts.

Liam takes a deep breath, nodding.

LIAM  
(resolute)  
Together then. Let's not let some  
random prankster ruin our night.

Jake's infectious enthusiasm returns as he stands up,  
grabbing his jacket.

JAKE  
That's the spirit! Let's head out  
to Whitmore and see what's really  
going on.

They gather their belongings, the basement's warmth  
giving way to the unknown chill of the night ahead. The  
mystery of the mansion and the thrill of defiance stoke  
the fire in their young hearts.

FADE OUT.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The trio stands at the threshold, the night air carrying  
whispers of adventure and warning. Jake adjusts his  
backpack, his eyes sparkling with mischief.

JAKE  
(grinning)  
This is it, guys. No turning back  
now.

Emma looks out into the dark, her expression a mix of  
excitement and nerves.

EMMA  
(teasingly)  
Afraid the boogeyman will get you  
if you do?

Liam chuckles, checking his phone one last time before  
slipping it into his pocket.

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LIAM

Let's just make sure we're the  
ones doing the scaring, not the  
other way around.

They step outside, closing the door behind them with a  
decisive click.

EXT. WHITMORE MANSION - NIGHT

The moon casts an eerie glow over the dilapidated mansion  
as they approach. The once grand facade now looms  
ominously, windows like hollow eyes watching their  
advance.

Jake strides forward, undeterred by the mansion's  
foreboding presence.

JAKE

This is better than any haunted  
house attraction!

Emma scans the dark perimeter, her confidence unwavering  
despite the chill creeping down her spine.

EMMA

Yeah, real authentic. Just don't  
forget this isn't some game.

Liam nods, his gaze steady on the mansion.

LIAM

We stick together, no matter what.

They reach the front steps, pausing to take in the  
magnitude of their undertaking.

Suddenly, a figure emerges from the shadows, startling  
them. It's OLD MAN WILKINS, the town historian and self-  
proclaimed guardian of local lore.

OLD MAN WILKINGS

(gravely)

Should've heeded that warning,  
kids.

Emma steps forward, her voice betraying none of her  
surprise.

EMMA

Do you know something about the  
party, Mr. Wilkins?

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Old Man Wilkins shakes his head, a sorrowful look in his eyes.

OLD MAN WILKINGS  
Not the party, Emma. The house.  
It's got a history darker than any  
story you've heard.

Jake's interest is piqued, his natural curiosity overriding the unease.

JAKE  
What kind of history?

Wilkins looks between the three of them, the weight of untold stories heavy in his gaze.

OLD MAN WILKINGS  
(sighing)  
A tale of loss and restless  
spirits. But if you're set on  
going in, heed this: respect the  
past, or it'll come back to haunt  
you.

Liam considers the old man's words, a newfound seriousness settling over him.

LIAM  
(respectfully)  
We'll be careful, Mr. Wilkins.  
Thanks for the heads-up.

Old Man Wilkins nods, stepping back into the night, his final warning lingering in the cool breeze.

OLD MAN WILKINGS  
Just remember, sometimes the  
monsters we seek are the ones we  
bring with us.

With that cryptic advice, he disappears as silently as he appeared.

Jake breaks the momentary silence, determination etched onto his face.

JAKE  
(defiantly)  
Monsters or not, we're going to  
find out the truth.

Emma and Liam exchange a look, their resolve matching Jake's.

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EMMA

Let's do this.

LIAM

Together.

They ascend the steps to the mansion, the thrill of the unknown propelling them forward into the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jake rummages through the pantry, gathering snacks for the adventure ahead. The kitchen is bathed in the warm glow of an overhead light, casting long shadows across the floor.

SARAH THOMPSON (Mrs. T) enters, a dishtowel slung over her shoulder.

SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)

Planning a late-night exploration,  
Jake?

Jake turns to face his mother, his backpack half-zipped and bulging with provisions.

JAKE

Yeah, we're heading out to the  
Whitmore place.

Heard about a party...

Mrs. T's expression shifts to concern as she leans against the counter.

SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)

The Whitmore mansion? You know  
I've told you

about that place. It's not just an old building.

Jake's eyes sparkle with intrigue, a half-smile tugging at his lips.

JAKE

I know, mom. Local legends, right?

Mrs. T nods, crossing her arms.

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SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)  
More than legends, Jake. That  
house has seen tragedies

that would make stones weep. People say it holds on to  
the

echoes of those who lived there.

She walks over to the kitchen table, motioning for Jake  
to join her.

SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)  
Sit with me a minute?

Jake sits, his demeanor open and attentive.

SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)  
Generations ago, the Whitmores  
were like royalty around

here. But something happened... A fire. Lives lost. Some  
say

they never left, their spirits trapped in those walls.

Jake leans forward, captivated.

JAKE  
Is that why people think it's  
haunted?

Mrs. T gives a small, knowing smile.

SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)  
Haunted, cursed, who can say? But  
one thing's certain: the

past doesn't like being disturbed.

Jake considers this, then stands, slinging his backpack  
over his shoulder.

JAKE  
We'll be careful, I promise.

Mrs. T stands, approaching Jake with a hesitant but  
supportive gaze.

SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)  
Jake, your heart is wild, and I  
love that about you. Just...

remember to respect the stories that house tells.

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Jake grins, giving his mom a quick hug.

JAKE  
I will. And I'll bring back my own  
stories to tell.

Mrs. T watches him head towards the door, pride and worry mingling in her eyes.

SARAH THOMPSON (MRS. T)  
(softly)  
Be safe, my brave explorer.

Jake glances back with a reassuring nod before stepping out into the night.

FADE OUT.

INT. PARKER HOUSEHOLD - LIAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Liam is packing a flashlight and water bottle into his backpack when the door swings open. MR. THOMAS PARKER stands in the doorway, his posture rigid.

TOM  
Liam, what are you doing?

Liam jumps, startled, then turns to face his father with an attempt at nonchalance.

LIAM  
Just getting ready for Jake's  
sleepover.

Tom steps into the room, eyes narrowing as he spots the hiking boots beside Liam's bag.

TOM  
Those aren't for sleeping. You're  
going somewhere else.

Liam hesitates, looking down at his feet. He knows better than to lie.

LIAM  
We might... check out the Whitmore  
place.

Tom's expression hardens, his voice taking on a stern edge.

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TOM  
I've heard the stories, Liam. It's dangerous.

LIAM  
But Dad, it's just an old house—

TOM  
(cutting him off)  
And it's off-limits. I don't want you taking risks.

Liam clenches his jaw, frustration bubbling beneath the surface.

LIAM  
I can handle myself.

TOM  
It's not about that. It's about being responsible.  
(pauses)  
I expect you to stay away from that mansion.

Liam looks up, his deep brown eyes meeting his father's. There's a silent plea for understanding there.

LIAM  
What if there's nothing to be afraid of? What if it's just a story?

Tom softens slightly, though his resolve doesn't waver.

TOM  
Sometimes, son, it's the stories we should fear the most.

Liam nods, conceding, as Tom exits the room. But once alone, Liam's expression shifts from acquiescence to determination.

LIAM  
(to himself)  
I need to see for myself.

He zips up his backpack with quiet defiance and slips on his jacket.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITMORE MANSION GROUNDS - NIGHT

Liam, Jake, and Emma approach the imposing silhouette of the Whitmore mansion. The moon casts long shadows across the unkempt lawn, making the abandoned structure even more intimidating.

JAKE

Here it is... our first challenge.

He points towards a rusted gate, its bars bent and twisted—clearly the work of previous trespassers.

EMMA

Looks like we're not the first ones here.

Liam steps forward, examining the gate. He takes a deep breath and then looks back at his friends.

LIAM

If we're doing this, let's do it carefully.

With a cautious glance around, Liam pushes against the gate, which groans ominously but gives way. They slip through one by one, their adventure just beginning.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

The trio stands in the cavernous entrance hall, their footsteps echoing ominously. Dust motes dance in the beam of Jake's flashlight as they sweep the area, revealing peeling wallpaper and a grand chandelier hanging precariously overhead.

JAKE

(grinning)

Welcome to the legendary Whitmore Mansion! Not quite the party we expected, huh?

Emma scans the room with her phone's flashlight, disappointment flickering across her face.

EMMA

(sarcastic)

Yeah, it's a real rager. Where's the DJ booth, Jake?

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Liam steps closer to an old portrait, wiping away a thick layer of dust. His eyes narrow as he studies the grim faces of the painted figures.

LIAM

(uneasy)

Maybe the stories are true...  
Maybe this place really is  
haunted.

Jake claps Liam on the back, his laughter reverberating through the empty space.

JAKE

(teasing)

Come on, man. You're not buying  
into that, are you? It's probably  
just bad Wi-Fi keeping everyone  
away.

Suddenly, a loud CREAK from above interrupts them. They all look up, tension gripping their faces. A staircase looms before them, its railing warped and steps looking like rotten teeth in the dim light.

EMMA

(determined)

Upstairs. That's where we'll find  
some answers... or at least  
something cooler than this sad  
welcome party.

Liam steps cautiously towards the staircase, testing the first step with a gentle press of his foot—it groans under his weight.

LIAM

(worried)

This looks about as safe as  
juggling knives.

Jake bounds past him, taking two steps at a time, the wood protesting loudly with each step.

JAKE

(adventurous)

Where's your sense of adventure,  
Liam? This is what we came for!

Emma follows Jake, albeit more cautiously, her blue eyes shining with the thrill of the unknown. She reaches out to steady herself against the wall.

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EMMA  
(encouraging)  
Come on, Liam. Don't make me go  
into the creepy attic alone with  
this guy.

Liam hesitates, then exhales deeply, his protective  
instincts kicking in.

LIAM  
(resigned)  
Alright, but stay close. And watch  
where you step.

They ascend slowly, each creak of the staircase ramping  
up the tension. Halfway up, a board snaps under Jake's  
foot, sending a splintered piece tumbling down. They  
freeze.

JAKE  
(panting)  
Okay, that was my nine lives right  
there.

Emma grips the railing tighter, managing a nervous  
chuckle.

EMMA  
Let's just hope this mansion isn't  
looking to add us to its ghost  
collection.

With a collective deep breath, they continue their  
cautious climb, reaching the top with hearts racing and a  
newfound respect for solid ground.

LIAM  
(relieved)  
Next time we pick a place with an  
elevator.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

The trio stands in a dimly lit, dust-laden hallway lined  
with portraits whose eyes seem to follow their every  
move. Jake leads the way, his phone's flashlight cutting  
through the darkness.

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JAKE  
(whispering)  
You guys feel like we're being  
watched?

Emma rolls her eyes, scanning the eerie corridor.

EMMA  
(sarcastically)  
By the ancestors of the Addams  
Family? No doubt.

A sudden RUSTLE from the end of the hall makes them all  
jump. Liam clenches his fists, ready for anything.

LIAM  
(tense)  
What was that?

They inch forward when a SHAPE shifts in the shadows. A  
BEAM OF LIGHT pierces the darkness, and ANOTHER GROUP OF  
TEENAGERS emerges, equally startled.

JAKE  
(relieved)  
Oh, it's just you guys.

The leader of the new group, a girl with a PIERCING GAZE,  
steps forward, holding up her phone like a shield.

GIRL  
Who are you? You here for the  
party too?

Emma nods, a mix of relief and curiosity on her face.

EMMA  
Yeah, we thought we were the only  
ones who got the invite.

The girl lowers her phone, revealing a HALF-SMILE.

GIRL  
Name's Rachel. That party seems  
like a bust, huh?

Liam looks around at the expectant faces of both groups.

LIAM  
Looks like we might have to make  
our own fun. Explore together?

Rachel exchanges quick glances with her friends before  
nodding in agreement.

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RACHEL  
Sure, why not? There's safety in  
numbers, right?

Jake grins, his GREEN EYES sparkling with mischief.

JAKE  
Absolutely. I'm Jake, by the way.  
This is Emma and Liam.

As they exchange names, the tension eases slightly,  
replaced by a sense of camaraderie. They form an  
IMPROMPTU ALLIANCE, each with their phone light raised,  
casting long shadows on the walls as they move deeper  
into the mansion.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - GRAND HALLWAY - NIGHT

The two groups stand huddled together, their PHONE LIGHTS  
flickering against the decaying grandeur of the hallway.  
Jake steps forward, his eyes scanning the intricate  
details of the once-lavish decorations.

JAKE  
(energetic)  
Alright, team, let's split up and  
cover more ground. We'll meet back  
here in 30.

RACHEL  
(apprehensive)  
Split up? Haven't you ever seen a  
horror movie, Jake?

Jake laughs off her concern with a dismissive wave.

JAKE  
(grinning)  
We're writing our own story here.  
Plus, we're not exactly splitting  
up, just... spreading out.

Emma steps closer to Liam, giving him a reassuring look.  
Liam nods, ready to face the unknown.

EMMA  
(confident)  
Let's start with that hallway to  
the left. It looks promising.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They move towards the indicated direction, stepping over scattered debris. The floorboards creak ominously beneath their weight.

LIAM

(calmly)

Watch your step, everyone. This place isn't exactly stable.

Their lights reveal the remnants of opulent furniture and portraits hanging askew on the walls. Dust motes dance in the air as they disturb the stillness of the mansion.

Rachel's group veers off to explore another corridor. Their voices fade into whispers as they disappear from sight.

EXT. WHITMORE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Outside, the moon casts an eerie glow over the forsaken grounds. A SHADOW watches from behind a broken window, its gaze following the teenagers' progress.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Jake, Emma, and Liam enter what was once a majestic library. Rows of bookshelves stretch towards the ceiling, now home to spiders and neglect.

EMMA

(awed whisper)

This is incredible...

She runs her fingers along the spines of moldy books, her blue eyes wide with fascination.

LIAM

(skeptical)

You think any of these talk about what happened here?

JAKE

(optimistic)

Only one way to find out, right?

They spread out, each examining different sections of the vast room. Jake pulls out a heavy tome, blowing dust from its cover. He coughs and wipes his brow.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

JAKE

(teasing)

Who needs cardio when you've got  
ancient libraries to clean up?

Emma chuckles, but her laughter is cut short by a  
SQUEAKING SOUND. They all freeze.

LIAM

(tense)

That better be the wind...

A RAT scurries across the floor, disappearing into a  
small hole in the wall. They exhale collectively,  
relieved.

EMMA

(relieved)

Just a rat. Let's keep moving.

As they continue their search, the CAMERA PULLS BACK to  
reveal a PAINTING with eyes that seem to follow them,  
hinting at a presence that watches their every move.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - HIDDEN PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

The narrow corridor is lined with sconces, their flames  
long extinguished. Cobwebs cling to the walls. EMMA leads  
the way, her flashlight beam cutting through the  
darkness.

EMMA

This place is like a maze.

JAKE, right behind her, runs his hand along the wall,  
feeling for anomalies.

JAKE

(muttering to  
himself)

There's gotta be something...

His fingers catch on a loose stone and he presses it. A  
soft CLICK echoes and a section of the wall swings open,  
revealing another hidden room.

LIAM

(eyes wide)

Nice find, Jake!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They step into the room cautiously. Dust motes dance in the flashlight beams as they sweep across the interior.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - SECRET ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is small, intimate, and filled with artifacts. A desk sits in one corner, its surface littered with old PAPERS and a leather-bound JOURNAL.

Jake picks up the journal, his green eyes scanning the faded handwriting.

JAKE  
(excited)  
"August 5th, 1892" - This could  
tell us everything!

Liam examines an old PAINTING hanging crookedly on the wall. It depicts a stern-looking man with piercing eyes. He shivers involuntarily.

LIAM  
(nervous)  
Guys, look at this...

Emma joins him, peering at the painting.

EMMA  
(squinting)  
Doesn't that kinda look like-

Suddenly, the EYES of the painted figure seem to MOVE.

ALL THREE  
(shocked)  
Whoa!

They jump back, hearts racing. Emma reaches out, adjusting the frame, and the eyes snap back to their painted stare.

EMMA  
(tentative)  
Optical illusion... or something  
weirder.

Jake flips through the journal, finding a DISTURBING ENTRY.

JAKE  
(reading aloud)  
"Mercer watches, even now. I can  
feel his eyes upon me."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Liam and Emma gather around, trying to make sense of the cryptic words.

LIAM  
(analyzing)  
"Mercer" - as in Alex Mercer? What  
does it mean?

EMMA  
(determined)  
We have to keep looking. There's  
more to this.

They nod in agreement, the allure of uncovering the mansion's secrets stronger than their fear. They exit the secret room, leaving the ghostly painting staring after them.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - ANOTHER HIDDEN ROOM - NIGHT

The next room is larger, lined with bookshelves filled with DUSTY TOMES and more eerie PAINTINGS. The subjects of the paintings all share the same haunted expression.

JAKE  
(fascinated)  
These must be previous  
residents...

He trails off as he notices one portrait has been SLASHED, the face disfigured by jagged cuts.

EMMA  
(uneasy)  
Someone really didn't like that  
guy.

LIAM  
(pensive)  
Or something wanted to make sure  
he was never seen again.

A chill runs through them as they contemplate the implications. Their flashlights catch on stacks of letters tied with ribbon, yellowed with age.

JAKE  
(picking up a stack)  
Love letters... or goodbye notes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA

(sighs)

This place is full of stories  
nobody ever finished.

They share a moment of silence, the weight of the mansion's history pressing down upon them.

LIAM

(resolute)

Let's press on. We're not going to  
end up like them.

With renewed purpose, they exit the room, eager to piece together the puzzle of the Whitmore mansion before it claims them as another unfinished story.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - DILAPIDATED BALLROOM - NIGHT

Liam leads the way, flashlight beam dancing across the faded grandeur of the once opulent ballroom. Emma Sinclair follows close, her own light skimming over peeling paint and shattered chandeliers.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(whispering)

Feels like this place has been  
waiting for us... for anyone.

LIAM

(nods)

It's eerie, like it wants to be  
rediscovered.

Their eyes meet in a fleeting moment, something unspoken passing between them.

EMMA HENDERSON

(from behind)

Hey, lovebirds, find anything?

Emma Sinclair smirks, shaking her head as she turns away, brushing past Liam with a playful nudge.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(teasing)

Just ghosts of waltzes past.

Liam watches her go, a ghost of a smile on his lips. He hesitates before following, catching up to her side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIAM  
(trying to be casual)  
So, Emma, what got you into all  
this... adventure stuff?

She shines her light on a tattered piano cover, lifting  
it to reveal yellowed keys.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(playing a discordant  
note)  
Life's too short for boring. You  
get that, right?

LIAM  
(smiles)  
Guess I'm starting to.

They share a look, brief but intense. The sound of their  
friends' voices fades, the mansion enveloping them in its  
mystery.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(sincere)  
I'm glad you're here, Liam. Brave  
and smart is a good combo.

LIAM  
(heart racing)  
Thanks. I could say the same for  
you.

Emma Sinclair's smile widens, emboldened by the darkness  
around them.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
Well, let's see if brave, smart,  
and lucky can find our way out of  
here.

She walks ahead, Liam following, their flashlights  
merging into one path of light.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITMORE MANSION - OVERGROWN GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The group regroups outside, under the moonlight. Emma  
Henderson nudges Liam, nodding toward Emma Sinclair.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(smirking)  
You two seem cozy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIAM  
(defensive)  
We're just figuring things out.

Emma Henderson raises an eyebrow but says nothing, her gaze lingering on the chemistry between Liam and Emma Sinclair.

JAKE  
(impatient)  
Can we focus? We need to find clues, not play matchmaker.

The tension breaks and the group moves on, but Liam steals another glance at Emma Sinclair, her face illuminated by the soft glow of the moon.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - DUSTY LIBRARY - NIGHT

Papers flutter to the floor as a loud CRASH echoes through the library. The friends whirl around, beams from their flashlights slicing through the darkness.

JAKE  
(whispers)  
What was that?

LIAM  
(carefully stepping forward)  
Stay close.

Emma Henderson clutches Liam's arm, her breath quick and shallow. Liam meets Emma Sinclair's gaze, his concern mirrored in her eyes.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(fearful)  
This place is freaking me out.

A shadow moves across the far wall. The group tenses, ready for confrontation. But it's only a curtain billowing from a gust of wind through a broken window.

LIAM  
(relieved)  
It's just the wind.

Suddenly, the floorboards GROAN ominously beneath them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA HENDERSON

(wary)

This whole place could come down  
on us.

JAKE

(grinning)

Adds to the thrill, doesn't it?

His grin fades when he sees Liam's worried look.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(tight voice)

"Thrill" isn't the word I'd use.

Liam's gaze softens as he turns to Emma Sinclair.

LIAM

(reassuringly)

We'll be okay. We have each  
other's backs, right?

EMMA SINCLAIR

(smiling weakly)

Right.

They share a moment before a sudden BANG reverberates  
through the mansion. They jump, hearts pounding.

JAKE

(exasperated)

Seriously? What now?

They rush towards the sound, finding a door ajar leading  
to a dimly lit corridor. A sense of dread fills the air.

LIAM

(whispering)

We shouldn't split up.

JAKE

(determined)

We need answers. Let's go.

As they proceed cautiously, Emma Sinclair slips her hand  
into Liam's. Their fingers intertwine, a silent pact of  
mutual support. Emma Henderson notices, her eyes  
flickering with an unreadable emotion.

The corridor leads to a grand ballroom where chandeliers  
hang precariously overhead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMMA HENDERSON

(nervous)

Looks like no one's danced here in  
a century.

Their laughter is tense, forced. Suddenly, a LOUD  
CREAKING above them drowns out their mirth.

LIAM

(urgent)

Move!

They dart away just as a chandelier crashes to the  
ground, sending shards of glass flying.

JAKE

(angry)

That was too close!

LIAM

(panting)

We need to get out of here.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(voice trembling)

I can't do this. It's insane.

Liam turns to her, torn between his protective instincts  
and the gnawing fear in his own gut.

LIAM

(sincerely)

We'll make it through, together.

Before more can be said, another door swings open  
violently. The group freezes, bracing for danger.

JAKE

(low growl)

Who's there? Show yourself!

Silence follows; the tension is palpable. Then, footsteps  
are heard retreating rapidly into the shadows.

EMMA HENDERSON

(shaken)

Was that... Alex Mercer?

JAKE

(cynical)

Or someone else who's playing  
games with us.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

LIAM  
(decisive)  
We can't trust anyone outside of  
this group.

Together, they step back from the darkened doorway, their unity solidified by the unknown threat lurking in the mansion. Emma Sinclair squeezes Liam's hand tighter, her fears momentarily eased by his presence.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

The dust from the shattered chandelier settles like a thin fog on the ballroom floor. The group stands in a tight circle, their breaths audible in the eerie silence that follows the chaos.

JAKE  
(eyes scanning)  
We're not alone in this place. We  
stick together, no matter what.

Liam nods, his protective gaze lingering on Emma Sinclair, then shifts to Emma Henderson, who looks more determined than scared.

LIAM  
We've got each other's backs.  
Let's keep moving.

They proceed towards another hallway. Behind them, a shadow detaches itself from the wall—a member of the new group, DEREK, sneaks away unnoticed, his eyes glinting with curiosity at a half-open door leading down to the basement.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The group pauses, catching their breath, when Jake does a headcount.

JAKE  
(frowning)  
Wait... where's Derek?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA HENDERSON  
(peering back)  
He was right behind us after the  
chandelier dropped.

LIAM  
(voice rising)  
Derek!

His call echoes unanswered through the halls. A chilling  
silence returns as their calls go unheeded.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(whispering)  
Do you think something got him?

Jake's face twists into an expression of frustration and  
betrayal.

JAKE  
(angry)  
No. He took off. I saw him eyeing  
that door before we left the  
ballroom.

The revelation hits them hard. Liam clenches his fists,  
the color draining from his face.

LIAM  
(turning to the  
others)  
This is what that thing, Alex  
Mercer, wants—us turning on each  
other.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(tense)  
But why would he just leave like  
that?

JAKE  
(sarcastic)  
Maybe he's after some haunted  
souvenir, or worse, maybe he's  
working with Mercer.

Emma Sinclair shivers, pulling her jacket tighter around  
her shoulders.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(scared)  
What now? If people are willing to  
ditch us...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LIAM  
(resolute)  
Now we really can't trust anyone  
but ourselves.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(determined)  
Then let's keep moving. We find  
out what's going on here, and we  
get out, together.

Jake nods, his usual confidence shaken by the weight of their predicament. They exchange looks of wary determination and press on into the unknown depths of Whitmore Mansion.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - BASEMENT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The camera shifts to a close POV of Jake as he steps forward, peering into the gaping maw of the basement entrance.

JAKE  
(mutters)  
Here we go... Into the belly of  
the beast.

Liam grips the railing, testing its stability before descending the steps. His cautious nature is palpable.

LIAM  
(quietly)  
Watch your step. No telling what's  
down there.

Emma H. follows behind, her flashlight cutting through the thick darkness. She scans the walls, alert for any signs of danger.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(jokingly)  
What, afraid of a few ghosts,  
Liam?

Liam shoots her a look, one eyebrow raised in silent challenge.

Jake leads the way, his green eyes reflecting determination and fear. The silence is oppressive, heavy with anticipation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE  
(to himself)  
Alright, Alex Mercer... What are  
you hiding?

The trio descends slowly, their footsteps echoing ominously. They reach the bottom, revealing a labyrinth of corridors branching off from the central chamber.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(pointing)  
Look, there's writing on the  
wall...

Her finger traces old markings, barely legible in the dim light.

LIAM  
(reading)  
"Seek the heart to find the  
truth."

JAKE  
(enthusiastic)  
That's it! We find the heart of  
this place, we find our answers.

The group exchanges tense nods, understanding the gravity of their mission.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(determined)  
We stick together. No more  
secrets, no more running off.

They push deeper into the basement, each step bringing them closer to the unknown.

LIAM  
(resolute)  
And we keep an eye out for  
Derek... He might need us.

JAKE  
(grimly)  
If Mercer doesn't get to him  
first.

The tension mounts as they continue forward, united by fear but driven by the unyielding desire to uncover the truth and survive.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - DEEPER BASEMENT - NIGHT

The walls close in, damp and cold as the friends press forward through the labyrinthine corridors. Every shadow seems alive, every whisper a call from the beyond. Jake leads, his hand steady on the flashlight, illuminating a path littered with debris.

JAKE  
(squinting)  
Over here. I think I see something.

They huddle around an ancient door, its wood warped with age. Carvings etched into the surface dance under the beam of light—a map of the mansion's heart.

LIAM  
(analyzing)  
This... this has to be it. The heart of Whitmore.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(urgent)  
And if we find the heart, we can end this nightmare.

Jake pushes against the door; it groans but gives way to their combined effort.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - HEART CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

They stumble into a grand room, dust motes swirling like spirits in the air. An old chandelier hangs precariously above, its crystals catching faint moonlight filtering in from a cracked dome ceiling.

LIAM  
(catching breath)  
So, this is it? The source of all the stories?

JAKE  
(excited)  
It's gotta be. Look at this place!

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(nervous)  
Guys, Derek... We can't forget why we're here.

Emma H. nods, her eyes scanning the chamber for any sign of their betrayer friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA HENDERSON

(focused)

Right. We need to find him before  
Mercer does.

A chill breeze whispers through the chamber, sending a  
shiver down their spines. They exchange wary looks.

LIAM

(whispering)

He's here... Mercer is watching  
us.

Jake steps toward the center, his shadow long and  
wavering.

JAKE

(louder)

Alex Mercer! We're not afraid of  
you!

Silence follows, thick and oppressive.

EMMA HENDERSON

(defiant)

We know you lured us here. We just  
want to leave—take Derek and go.

An eerie laugh echoes, bouncing off the high walls and  
chilling their bones.

ALEX MERCER (V.O.)

(ghostly)

You think it's that simple? To  
come into my domain and just walk  
out?

JAKE

(firm)

We'll do whatever it takes.

LIAM

(resolute)

And we will find Derek. You won't  
stop us.

The laughter fades, replaced by a low hum emanating from  
deep within the walls. The heart of the mansion begins to  
reveal its secrets.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(scanning)

There! A passage behind the  
tapestry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They rush to the hidden doorway, pulling aside the heavy fabric to uncover the truth and face the darkness within. Their determination is set—they will save their friend and escape the mansion's clutches or perish trying.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - HIDDEN PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

The friends step through the hidden doorway, coughing as dust fills the air. The passage is narrow and the only light comes from the flashlights on their phones.

JAKE  
Leading with a grin.

This is it, guys! The heart of Whitmore!

Their lights flicker over cracked walls lined with ancient portraits. Emma Sinclair grips her phone tightly, the beam of her flashlight shaking slightly.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
How much further, you think?

LIAM  
(eyes scanning)  
Hard to say. Keep your eyes peeled  
for anything—

A loud CRACK interrupts him. They freeze. A section of the ceiling collapses, sending debris crashing down just steps behind them.

EMMA HENDERSON  
Jumping back.

That was close!

Jake turns, his mischievous grin replaced by concern. He reaches out, ensuring everyone is unharmed.

JAKE  
(concerned)  
Everyone okay?

They nod, but the fear is evident in their eyes. Jake's usual bravado fades, giving way to earnest determination.

JAKE  
(determined)  
We have to keep moving. But stay  
alert.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They press on, deeper into the shadows. Their footsteps echo in the cramped space.

Suddenly, a ghostly figure materializes in front of them, translucent and floating inches above the ground. It has no discernible features, yet its presence sends a chill down their spines.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(strained whisper)  
What is that?

LIAM  
(steadyng his voice)  
Just an apparition. Mercer's  
trying to scare us.

JAKE  
(mocking bravado)  
You'll have to do better than  
that, Mercer!

The figure drifts closer, its form becoming more defined—a young woman, her expression one of sorrow and warning. She raises a hand, pointing ahead before dissolving into the air.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(shaken)  
Was she... one of the victims?

Liam nods solemnly, his pragmatic nature doing little to comfort them.

LIAM  
(sombre)  
It looks like we're not alone  
here.

They reach a fork in the passageway. The left path slopes downward, while the right leads upward. Both are shrouded in darkness.

JAKE  
(pointing right)  
Up means out. We go right.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
But what if Derek went down?

Jake hesitates, torn between escape and loyalty. Emma Henderson places a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

EMMA HENDERSON

(confident)

We find Derek. We stick to the plan.

JAKE

(nodding)

Right. Let's go down then.

They take the left path, descending into the depths of the mansion. The air grows colder, the weight of the mansion pressing in around them.

Another CRASH resonates through the passage as part of the wall gives way, revealing a decrepit room beyond. They jump back, narrowly avoiding falling stones.

LIAM

(catching his breath)

This place is coming apart!

EMMA SINCLAIR

(worried)

Are we even going the right way?

JAKE

(focused)

We have to trust our instincts.  
Come on.

He leads the way into the newly revealed room. Dust swirls as they enter, their lights casting eerie shadows across the walls.

Suddenly, a muffled cry echoes through the chamber—Derek's voice.

JAKE

(excited)

That's Derek!

They rush toward the sound, adrenaline fueling their steps. As they navigate the crumbling room, their unity is the only thing keeping the fear at bay.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - DECREPIT ROOM - NIGHT

The friends hurry through the dark, Emma SINCLAIR's flashlight beam dancing frantically along the walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The muffled cry they heard before has ceased, leaving only their heavy breathing and the occasional groan of the mansion.

JAKE  
(shouting)  
Derek! Can you hear us?

No response. He exchanges a worried glance with EMMA HENDERSON.

LIAM  
(voice shaking)  
What if it wasn't Derek? What if—

EMMA HENDERSON  
(cutting him off)  
We can't think like that, Liam.

Suddenly, a loud BANG reverberates through the room as a door slams shut by itself. EMMA SINCLAIR jumps, her light wavering.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(startled)  
Did you guys see that?

JAKE  
(firmly)  
It's just the wind. Keep moving.

They edge forward, but LIAM hesitates, his eyes scanning the darkness.

LIAM  
(pensive)  
Guys... I have a bad feeling about this.

JAKE  
(teasing)  
Since when did you start quoting old movies?

LIAM  
(angrily)  
This isn't a joke, Jake!

EMMA HENDERSON  
(sympathetic)  
Liam's right. We need to be careful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The air thickens with tension as their fears surface.  
They reach an ornate door, its wood swollen with age.

JAKE  
(pushes against the  
door)  
It's stuck.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(urgent)  
Let me try.

EMMA HENDERSON and JAKE step back. EMMA SINCLAIR braces herself and SHOVES the door open. A gust of stale air rushes out, carrying a strange scent.

LIAM  
(wrinkling his nose)  
What is that smell?

They enter cautiously. Inside, the room appears to be an old study, shelves lined with decaying books, a desk covered in scattered papers.

JAKE  
(sifting through  
papers)  
Look at this...

The others gather around as he holds up an aged photograph: A PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN with piercing eyes  
— Alex Mercer.

LIAM  
(reading from a  
journal)  
"Alex Mercer, last of the Whitmore  
line..."

A sudden realization dawns on them as they piece together the clues.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(shocked)  
You don't think he's...

JAKE  
(excited)  
The Phantom!

A CHILL fills the room. They look at each other, understanding the gravity of their discovery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LIAM  
(apprehensive)  
If that's true, then we're in his  
domain now.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(determined)  
Which means we need to find Derek  
and get out. Fast.

Their fears momentarily set aside, the group's resolve hardens. They know what they're up against now. With renewed purpose, they exit the study, ready to face whatever lies ahead.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - HIDDEN CHAMBER - NIGHT

The group descends a narrow, spiraling staircase hidden behind a false bookcase. The air grows colder as they reach the bottom.

JAKE  
(whispering)  
This has to be it.

A dimly lit chamber unfolds before them, walls lined with ancient symbols. A figure stands in the center, shrouded in shadow.

LIAM  
(tense)  
Who's there?

ALEX MERCER, THE PHANTOM, emerges from the darkness, their presence oppressive. Their voice echoes eerily around the chamber.

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
I've been expecting you.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(steadfast)  
Alex Mercer... You're The Phantom?

The Phantom nods, a slow, deliberate motion. They take a step closer, and a soft, unsettling light illuminates their masked face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
(lilting tone)  
Indeed, children. You've been  
quite... persistent.

JAKE  
(defiant)  
You sent us that invite, didn't  
you? To trap us here?

The Phantom's laugh is low and chilling, resonating off  
the stone walls.

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
Yes, I needed new souls, and your  
curiosity led you like lambs to  
slaughter.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(angered)  
Why us? What do you want?

The Phantom gestures grandly to the chamber, their cloak  
billowing slightly.

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
To continue my legacy, of course.  
This mansion thirsts for life, and  
I am bound to satiate its hunger.

LIAM  
(squaring his  
shoulders)  
Well, we're not sticking around to  
be your next meal.

The Phantom tilts their head, considering Liam.

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
Oh, but you have no choice. You  
are already part of the game.

The friends exchange worried glances, realizing the  
gravity of the situation.

JAKE  
(clenching his fists)  
We'll see about that.

The Phantom's eyes seem to glow beneath their hood, a  
sinister promise.

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
Let the final act begin.

BLACKOUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - HIDDEN CHAMBER - NIGHT

The chamber's walls are lined with bookshelves, dust dancing in the air caught by the flickering light of candles. JAKE, EMMA, and LIAM huddle around an ancient leather-bound journal they've found on a carved wooden desk.

JAKE  
(leafing through  
pages)  
Guys, look at this... It's  
Mercer's journal.

His fingers pause on a yellowed page, the ink faded but legible.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(peering over Jake's  
shoulder)  
"June 5th, 1892... I fear my  
experiments have taken a dark  
turn."

LIAM  
(scratching his head)  
Experiments? What was Mercer into?

They turn the page to reveal detailed sketches of strange devices and symbols.

JAKE  
(frowning)  
Some kind of... occult science?  
Trying to cheat death or  
something?

EMMA HENDERSON  
(voice quivering)  
"Tragedy has struck. My beloved  
Eleanor is gone, and with her, my  
reason for abiding by the mortal  
coil."

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(reaching out to  
touch the page)  
So, Mercer lost someone they  
loved...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIAM  
(glancing up at the  
Phantom's last known  
location)  
And that loss... it broke them.

The friends absorb the sorrow that seeps from the pages,  
understanding the despair that fueled Mercer's descent  
into darkness.

JAKE  
(steadyng his voice)  
"Bound by grief and rage, I sought  
solace in the forbidden. The  
mansion became my sanctum, my  
curse."

The room feels colder as the weight of Mercer's words  
settles in the air.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(eyes wide)  
This place, it's not just a  
building. It's an extension of  
Mercer's soul.

LIAM  
(pensive)  
We're not just trapped in a house;  
we're trapped in Mercer's torment.

JAKE  
(closing the journal)  
We're dealing with more than a  
ghost. We're up against a century  
of pain.

They share a moment of silence, the enormity of their  
task becoming clear.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(determined)  
Then let's not let Mercer's story  
end with us.

Jake nods, pocketing the journal, a new resolve hardening  
in his eyes.

JAKE  
No, we'll finish it—our way.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - LIBRARY - NIGHT

The room is cluttered with the detritus of ages, cobwebs draping over shelves like bridal veils forgotten in a crypt. The friends huddle around a heavy oak table, fingers tracing over an ancient map of the mansion.

JAKE  
(checking his phone)  
No signal. We're on our own.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(studying the map)  
Look at this... ley lines  
converging right under the  
mansion.

LIAM  
(squinting)  
Energy points. Could Mercer have  
used them for their experiments?

EMMA HENDERSON  
(leaning in)  
"Where shadows lie, there the  
spirit is bound." It's from one of  
Mercer's texts.

JAKE  
So, we break the shadows, we break  
the binding?

Emma Sinclair nods, pointing to a spot on the map marked with an arcane symbol.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
I bet that's where we need to go.

LIAM  
And how do we get there without  
becoming ghost chow?

A sudden CREAK echoes through the library. They freeze.

JAKE  
(low)  
"Light shall reveal and light  
shall bind."

He snatches a dusty candelabrum from the table, lighting it with an old box of matches he found earlier.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(smiling weakly)  
Guess it's time to test that  
theory.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - SECRET PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

The flickering candlelight casts long shadows as they creep through the narrow stone passageway, the air thick with the musty smell of decay.

EMMA HENDERSON  
This feels right. I can almost  
hear the house breathing.

LIAM  
That's not comforting, Em.

They arrive at a DEAD END. Frustration settles on their faces until Jake spots something—a hidden MECHANISM in the wall.

JAKE  
(grinning)  
Bingo!

He presses it. A section of the wall SWINGS OPEN, revealing a spiral staircase plunging into darkness.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(voice trembling)  
Down the rabbit hole?

Jake leads the way, the candle held high. The stairwell seems to stretch endlessly into the abyss.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - HEART OF THE MANSION - NIGHT

At the base of the stairs, they find themselves in a vast, circular chamber. In its center, a pedestal with an intricate DEVICE humming with energy.

LIAM  
(tense)  
That's got to be what's holding  
Mercer here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE  
Okay, so we destroy it?

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(hesitant)  
It's not going to be that easy.

As if on cue, the chamber begins to SHAKE, dust falling like snowflakes. The device GLOWS brighter.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(screaming)  
Guys, look out!

A SHADOWY FIGURE emerges from the device—THE PHANTOM, Alex Mercer. Their eyes are abyssal pools, face obscured by darkness.

THE PHANTOM  
(Alex, ethereal voice)  
You dare challenge my eternity?

LIAM  
(defiant)  
We're ending your story, Mercer!

JAKE  
(readies himself)  
For Eleanor, for everyone you've trapped here!

THE PHANTOM  
(laughing coldly)  
Foolish children...

With a wave of their hand, The Phantom unleashes a BLAST OF ENERGY, sending the friends flying across the room.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(crashing against the wall)  
Ugh!

EMMA HENDERSON  
(struggling to stand)  
We need light, now!

Liam scrambles towards the fallen candelabrum, lighting it once more. The light seems to WEAKEN The Phantom.

THE PHANTOM  
(faltering)  
No... impossible!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jake rises, holding the journal high, a beacon amidst the chaos.

JAKE  
(shouting)  
"Bound by grief and rage" - well,  
it's time to let go, Mercer!

The light from the candle and the words from the journal combine, creating a LUMINESCENT BARRIER around The Phantom.

THE PHANTOM  
(agonized scream)  
You can't-

Their form begins to DISSIPATE, screaming, as the energy device CRACKLES and EXPLODES. Silence falls, broken only by the panting of the friends.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(wincing)  
Is it over?

JAKE  
(looking at the  
remnants of the  
device)  
For Mercer, yes. But we've still  
got to get out alive.

LIAM  
(putting an arm  
around Emma  
Henderson)  
One crisis at a time, right?

They exchange determined looks, their bond solidified by the ordeal. But the mansion still holds many secrets, and their escape is far from certain.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CONTINUOUS

Thunderous vibrations shake the mansion's foundation as energy pulses through the walls. The friends are thrown in different directions, each landing in separate, unknown rooms.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Jake scrambles to his feet, books toppling around him.  
He's alone, breathing heavily, his face shadowed by fear.

JAKE  
(whispering to  
himself)  
Okay, Jake... keep it together.

He inches toward a window, but the shutters slam shut on  
their own, cloaking the room in darkness.

JAKE  
(calling out)  
Liam? Emma?

Silence answers back. Jake's hand trembles as he reaches  
for his phone—no signal.

JAKE  
(to himself)  
Great, just great...

Suddenly, the murmurs of long-lost voices fill the room,  
whispering secrets and regrets. Jake covers his ears, his  
eyes wide with panic.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - GRAND HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Liam lies sprawled on the floor, gasping for air. His  
gaze fixes on the portraits lining the walls; their eyes  
seem to follow him.

LIAM  
(panting)  
Not real... not real...

He staggers to his feet, trying to push through the  
dread. A figure appears at the end of the hallway—an  
apparition of his stern father, TOM.

APPARITION OF TOM  
(disappointed)  
Risk-taker, failure... Is that  
what you want to be, Liam?

Liam clenches his fists, fighting back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIAM  
(shouting)  
No! You're not him!

The apparition sneers, then fades into the shadows. Liam's shoulders slump, the weight of his insecurities bearing down on him.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma Henderson's silhouette is barely visible among the decaying grandeur. She stumbles forward, her breath forming clouds in the cold air.

She hears a GIGGLE from the corner—a child's voice.

CHILD'S VOICE  
(creepy sing-song)  
Come play with us, Emma...

Emma spins around, searching the darkness.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(fearful)  
Who's there?

More giggles, more whispers. They surround her, closing in.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(screaming)  
Leave me alone!

She collapses, her hands over her ears, tears streaming down her face.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Emma Sinclair finds herself under a shattered glass dome, the night sky mocking her with its vastness. She struggles to rise, gripping a broken telescope for support.

Her heart hammers against her ribcage as she recalls the romantic moments with Liam—now just echoes in the void.

A SHADOW looms over her. It's The Phantom, or a trick of the mind?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(challenging)  
You think you can scare me? I've  
seen worse than you!

The Shadow doesn't move, but its presence oppresses her,  
a tangible darkness suffocating hope.

Emma Sinclair closes her eyes, taking a shaky breath. She  
musters every ounce of courage left within her.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(resolute)  
I'm not afraid of you, Mercer!

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The corridor stretches into darkness, a gaping maw of  
despair. JAKE THOMPSON's footsteps echo as he staggers  
down the passage, his phone's flashlight casting long,  
ominous shadows.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(voice trembling)  
This is a joke... right? Emma?  
Liam?

No response comes from the void. Jake slumps against the  
wall, sliding down to the cold floor. His eyes are wide  
with terror, his breaths shallow.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(to himself)  
We're in over our heads. This  
isn't some game.

He pulls out his phone, desperately tapping at the  
screen. Another message from The Phantom flickers on the  
display.

THE PHANTOM (TEXT MESSAGE)  
"Your fears are my strength. Your  
hope, my nourishment."

Jake chokes back a sob, smashing his fist against the  
wall in frustration.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE THOMPSON  
(angry and defeated)  
Damn you, Mercer!

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

LIAM PARKER paces among the towering bookshelves. Every book he touches sends a cloud of dust into the air, each particle a reminder of the time slipping away.

He stops, breathing heavily, his hands clenching into fists.

LIAM PARKER  
(shouting)  
You can't keep us here forever,  
Mercer! We won't let you!

A sudden CREAK echoes from the shadows, and Liam spins around, searching for the source.

LIAM PARKER  
(scared whisper)  
Who's there?

Silence answers him, suffocating and relentless. He collapses onto a dusty armchair, his face buried in his hands.

LIAM PARKER  
(muffled)  
I just wanted an adventure... Not  
this.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - DUSTY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

EMMA SINCLAIR moves slowly through the hallway, her eyes scanning every corner. She flinches at the slightest noise, her nerves frayed to their limit.

Her hand brushes against a peeling wallpaper, and she recoils as if burned.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(hoarse whisper)  
Liam... please be okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She reaches a dead end, the realization dawning on her—there's no way out. Her shoulders sag, and the fight drains from her body.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(resigned)  
It's over. We've lost.

A faint WHISPER travels through the air, The Phantom's voice barely audible.

THE PHANTOM (O.S.)  
(sibilant and  
mocking)  
Surrender to the darkness...

Emma Sinclair squeezes her eyes shut, tears seeping through her lashes.

EMMA SINCLAIR  
(defeated)  
We tried...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

LIAM PARKER stumbles into the grand ballroom, his breaths short and ragged. He clutches a candlestick as his only source of light, the flickering flame casting long shadows that dance across the walls.

He scans the room, desperate to find EMMA SINCLAIR, his heart pounding like a drum in his chest.

LIAM PARKER  
(intense whisper)  
Emma!

A soft GROAN from the far corner of the room catches his attention. He moves cautiously, each step echoing ominously in the vast, empty space.

EMMA SINCLAIR is slumped against a wall, her face pale in the dim light. Her eyes are closed, and a trickle of blood runs down her temple.

LIAM PARKER  
(urgent)  
Emma, hey! Can you hear me?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Liam kneels beside her, gently shaking her shoulder.  
Slowly, she opens her eyes, her gaze unfocused.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(dazed)

Liam... I thought I was alone.

Liam brushes her hair back from her forehead, examining the wound. The tenderness in his touch reveals the depth of his feelings.

LIAM PARKER

(concerned)

You hit your head... but you're  
not alone. I'm here.

She reaches up, her fingers brushing his cheek, a silent thank you for his presence.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(weak smile)

Our first date's pretty memorable,  
huh?

LIAM laughs nervously, trying to mask his fear.

LIAM PARKER

(teasing)

Yeah, I'll remember to leave  
haunted mansions off the list next  
time.

Their laughter falters as another CREAK sounds overhead, followed by the distant LAUGHTER of The Phantom.

LIAM PARKER

(resolute)

We've got to get out of here,  
Emma. For both of us.

EMMA SINCLAIR nods, trying to push herself up, but winces in pain.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(pained)

I think my ankle's twisted.

LIAM PARKER wraps her arm around his shoulders, supporting her weight.

LIAM PARKER

(determined)

Lean on me. We'll make it out  
together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They start to move towards the exit, each step a struggle. The ballroom seems to stretch endlessly before them, their progress agonizingly slow.

Suddenly, a gust of WIND extinguishes the candle, plunging them into darkness.

LIAM PARKER  
(whisper-shout)  
Stay close!

The PHANTOM'S VOICE echoes through the darkness, taunting them.

THE PHANTOM (O.S.)  
(sneering)  
Love won't save you now...

LIAM PARKER  
(defiant)  
It's stronger than anything you've got!

EMMA SINCLAIR squeezes Liam's hand tightly, a silent pledge of unity.

The two friends press on, disappearing into the enveloping shadow, their fate uncertain.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - DECREPIT HALLWAY - NIGHT

The walls seem to pulsate with a sinister energy as shadows dance across them. JAKE, LIAM, and EMMA HENDERSON huddle together, their breaths forming misty clouds in the cold air.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(voice quivering)  
How do we even know there's a way out?

LIAM, supporting EMMA, glances around the hall, his eyes reflecting the dim light filtering through a cracked window.

LIAM PARKER  
(strained)  
There has to be. Mansions like this are full of hidden passages. We just need to think...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA leans heavily against LIAM, her face pale, a mix of pain and resolve etched into her features.

EMMA HENDERSON

(hoarsely)

What if that text was right? What  
if we shouldn't have come?

Jake looks at his friends, his green eyes dulled by fear but sparked with an undercurrent of determination.

JAKE THOMPSON

(firmly)

No. We're going to make it out.  
Together.

Suddenly, a low GROWL resonates through the hallway, eliciting a start from each of them. Their heads turn towards the source of the sound, a darkness that seems to consume the light.

THE PHANTOM (O.S.)

(mocking)

Questioning your bonds of  
friendship now?

Jake steps forward, fists clenched, as if he could fight off the unseen menace with sheer will.

JAKE THOMPSON

(defiantly)

Our friendship is stronger than  
your tricks!

EMMA HENDERSON

(encouragingly)

He's right. You've tried to break  
us, but here we are, still  
standing.

LIAM looks from Emma to Jake, a nod of solidarity passing between them.

LIAM PARKER

(resolute)

Let's end this.

They advance down the hallway, bracing themselves against the ethereal wind that begins to howl, rattling the very bones of the mansion. The PHANTOM'S LAUGHTER grows louder, challenging them as they push on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE PHANTOM (O.S.)

(gleeful)

Come then, children. Face your  
demise!

A door at the end of the hallway cracks open, a sliver of light promising either salvation or doom. They exchange glances, their silent agreement clear: they will face whatever lies beyond, together.

END SCENE.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - END OF HALLWAY - NIGHT

The door creaks wider, revealing a room bathed in an unnatural glow. Jake, Emma, and Liam step into the threshold, eyes wide, their breaths visible in the chill air.

LIAM PARKER

What is this place?

The room seems to pulse with energy, the walls lined with mirrors that reflect their anxious faces. In the center, a pedestal holds an ancient book, its pages fluttering as if caught in a breeze.

EMMA HENDERSON

(whispers)

It's like... it's waiting for us.

Jake approaches the book, his hands hovering over the cover.

JAKE THOMPSON

(tentatively)

Wait... the legends. The tales mom  
told me about facing your  
demons...

He looks back at his friends, realization dawning in his eyes.

JAKE THOMPSON (CONT'D)

(with conviction)

This is it. We need to face what  
scares us most. Our insecurities,  
our fears.

Emma bites her lip, pondering, while Liam crosses his arms, skeptical yet intrigued.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE PHANTOM (O.S.)  
(tauntingly)  
Do you have the courage? Or will  
you run like the scared children  
you are?

A mirror in front of Jake suddenly fogs up, and words  
form on the glass surface: 'Face yourself'.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(to himself)  
Okay, then. Let's do this.

He steps forward, placing a hand on the mirror. His  
reflection twists, showing him not as he is, but as he  
fears-alone, abandoned by his friends.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(stepping forward)  
Jake, you're not alone. Not ever.

Liam joins them, his face set in determination as his own  
reflection contorts to show him as a failure in his  
father's eyes.

LIAM PARKER  
(defiantly)  
I'm more than my dad's  
expectations. I'm brave. I'm...  
me.

Emma approaches the last mirror, her reflection morphing  
to show her overshadowed by her peers, unnoticed and  
unremarkable.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(finding strength)  
I am seen. I am strong. And I  
matter.

Together, they confront the twisted reflections, reciting  
their truths, their voices growing louder, blending into  
a chorus of self-acceptance.

JAKE, EMMA, LIAM  
(in unison)  
We are not our fears!

The room SHUDDERS, the mirrors CRACKING, as the Phantom's  
hold begins to weaken. Light from the mirrors  
intensifies, blinding them momentarily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

When their vision clears, the mirrors are normal again, the room calm. They exchange looks of awe and encouragement, their bond fortified.

THE PHANTOM (O.S.)  
(furious, faltering)  
No! You can't—

But it's too late. The power they've unleashed from within themselves is already working against The Phantom's dark magic.

LIAM PARKER  
(breathlessly)  
We did it...

EMMA HENDERSON  
(grinning)  
Together.

Jake nods, pride and relief washing over him.

JAKE THOMPSON  
Now let's finish this.

They turn towards the book on the pedestal, ready for the next challenge, united and stronger than before.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - GRAND HALL - NIGHT

The atmosphere is charged with an electric tension as JAKE, EMMA, and LIAM cautiously approach the center of the grand hall. The grandeur of the mansion has now become a sinister backdrop to their confrontation.

Before them stands their former ally, ALEX, eyes glinting unnaturally in the dim light, body rigid and seemingly controlled by an unseen force.

EMMA HENDERSON  
Alex, this isn't you!

The Phantom's voice HISSES through Alex's lips, chilling and discordant.

THE PHANTOM/ALEX  
(mocking)  
Save me? You can't even save yourselves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jake steps forward, his expression resolute. His hands are clenched into fists at his sides, but his voice is steady.

JAKE THOMPSON  
We know what we're facing now.  
Your tricks won't work anymore.

Liam circles slowly to Alex's left, trying to find an opening, a glimmer of the real Alex within.

LIAM PARKER  
We're not letting you go, Alex.  
Fight it!

Emma reaches out a hand, hesitant but firm, her eyes brimming with tears.

EMMA HENDERSON  
Please, come back to us. We need  
you. The real you.

A sudden FLICKER of confusion crosses Alex's face before The Phantom regains control, contorting Alex's features into a SNARL.

THE PHANTOM/ALEX  
Useless sentiment!

Alex lunges towards Jake, who narrowly DODGES, rolling away and pushing himself back up.

JAKE THOMPSON  
It's not sentiment. It's strength.  
Our strength!

Liam joins Jake, standing shoulder to shoulder with him as they face down the possessed Alex.

LIAM PARKER  
And we stand together, no matter  
what.

The air CRACKLES as The Phantom's energy builds around Alex, the shadows in the room stretching towards them like tendrils.

THE PHANTOM/ALEX  
You think you can defy me? I am  
eternal!

Emma steps forward, bravery etched into every line of her face, her voice ringing out clear and true.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMMA HENDERSON

But we are united. And we won't  
give up on our friend.

The three friends lock eyes, nodding to one another, a  
silent agreement passing between them. They take a  
synchronized step forward, encircling Alex, their  
presence a barrier against the darkness.

JAKE, EMMA, LIAM

(in unison)

We are here for you, Alex.

Their combined willpower seems to form a SHIELD of light  
around Alex, penetrating The Phantom's possession. Alex's  
body TREMBLES, resistance flickering within.

ALEX MERCER

(struggling for  
control)

Help... me...

The Phantom SCREAMS, a sound of rage and despair, as the  
bond it has with Alex begins to CRUMBLE under the assault  
of friendship and determination.

JAKE THOMPSON

Hold on, Alex! We've got you!

They reach out, each grasping one of Alex's hands,  
forming a human chain. The energy in the room PULSES,  
oscillating between the dark and the light.

Liam's voice breaks through the cacophony, strong and  
reassuring.

LIAM PARKER

We're bringing you home.

With one final PUSH of collective strength, the light  
OVERPOWERS the darkness. The Phantom's presence RECOILS  
and then VANISHES with a deafening crack, leaving behind  
only the echo of its defeat.

Alex COLLAPSES, free from The Phantom's grasp, the  
friends rushing to catch them. They lower Alex gently to  
the ground, panting and exhausted but alive.

EMMA HENDERSON

(relieved)

Alex?

Alex's eyes flutter open, clarity returning to their  
gaze. A weak smile tugs at their lips.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

ALEX MERCER  
(hoarsely)  
You... did it.

Jake, Liam, and Emma share a look of triumph mixed with fatigue, their hearts still racing from the battle.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(smiling)  
We all did. Together.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - NIGHT

The LIGHT from the previous confrontation fades, casting eerie shadows across the ancient walls. The friends stand in a tight circle, their expressions a blend of determination and weariness.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(eyes steady)  
We've come too far to give up now.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(nods)  
Yeah, we know this place better than our own backyards. We use that.

LIAM PARKER  
(firmly)  
And we stick together. No more secrets, no more fear.

Alex Mercer stands shakily, their eyes alight with newfound resilience. They look at each member of the group, an unspoken gratitude passing between them.

ALEX MERCER  
(voice stronger)  
It's not just about escaping anymore. We end this. For everyone The Phantom has hurt.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(grasps Alex's shoulder)  
We'll need every bit of what you know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alex nods, gesturing towards an old map on the wall, lines and symbols scrawled over it—a blueprint of all their fears and the mansion's secrets.

ALEX MERCER

(points)

These passages... they're The Phantom's chains, anchoring it here.

Liam steps forward, his face set, the romantic glint in his eye replaced by the steely resolve of a leader.

LIAM PARKER

So, we break the chains.

EMMA HENDERSON

(quickly)

But carefully. One wrong move and this whole place could come down on us.

A SOUND echoes, faint and otherworldly—the distant whisper of The Phantom's rage. The friends exchange knowing glances, readying themselves.

JAKE THOMPSON

(checking his  
makeshift weapon)

We can't let fear decide our fate.

Alex leads the way, their knowledge of the twisted corridors now a beacon of hope. The friends follow close behind, each step a silent vow to face whatever darkness lies ahead.

ALEX MERCER

(cautiously)

This way. Stay close.

They navigate through the mansion, their movements synchronized—a dance with danger honed by hours of trial and terror. As they reach the heart of the mansion, where the energy thrums strongest, they halt.

LIAM PARKER

(softly)

This is it.

Emma reaches out, her fingers brushing against Liam's for a moment—a silent promise that no matter the outcome, their bond would remain unbroken.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMMA HENDERSON  
(bravely)  
Together.

With a collective nod, they step into the chamber, the epicenter of The Phantom's power. The air crackles with malevolent energy, but within each friend burns a fiercer light—their courage, their unity, their refusal to be broken.

As The Phantom emerges, a swirling vortex of shadows and malice, the friends steel themselves. This was the moment of truth, the culmination of every challenge they had faced, every fear they had conquered.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(raising his voice)  
Hey! Your party's over!

The Phantom HISSES, a sound of pure spite, but the friends do not waver. They advance, armed with the lessons of their past and the strength found in each other.

ALEX MERCER  
(resolute)  
It ends tonight, Phantom! We're  
not your prisoners anymore!

The final stand begins.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - NIGHT

The chamber pulsates with an eerie glow, dust motes dancing like lost souls in the light. The friends stand shoulder to shoulder, their faces etched with determination.

LIAM PARKER  
(to Emma)  
Whatever happens... I'm glad  
you're here.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(nods)  
Wouldn't be anywhere else.

The Phantom materializes before them, its form more defined now—a dark silhouette against the spectral light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX MERCER/THE PHANTOM

(sneering)

Bravery? Here? Foolish children!

JAKE THOMPSON

(defiant)

We're not kids anymore, Mercer.

And we're done playing your games.

Jake steps forward, the others flank him, forming a united front. The air thickens, charged with supernatural energy as The Phantom grows larger, towering over them.

THE PHANTOM

(ominous)

You cannot defeat what you do not understand.

A fierce gust of wind HOWLS through the chamber, sending debris flying. The friends shield their eyes but hold their ground.

EMMA HENDERSON

(shouting)

We understand more than you think!

Emma thrusts her hand forward, an amulet they found earlier in their hands. It SHINES brightly, casting a protective barrier around them.

The Phantom LAUGHS, a hollow sound that reverberates off the walls.

THE PHANTOM

Your trinkets are useless!

JAKE THOMPSON

We'll see about that.

With a swift motion, Jake throws a handful of dust into the air—an old trick Mrs. T had mentioned, to reveal the unseen. The particles cling to The Phantom, outlining its form, making it vulnerable.

LIAM PARKER

(urgently)

Now! The chant from the journal!

The friends begin to recite in unison, words of an ancient language learned from the cryptic writings they had discovered within the mansion's library.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRIENDS

(in chorus)

"Solvo vinculum, redde  
libertatem!"

The Phantom SCREAMS, its form flickering as it clutches at the air, trying to fight off the incantation.

ALEX MERCER/THE PHANTOM

(panicked)

No! This is my domain!

In a desperate act, The Phantom lunges at them, its shadowy tendrils reaching for their throats. But the amulet's light pulses stronger, repelling the assault.

EMMA SINCLAIR

(courageously)

Not anymore! Whitmore is free of  
you!

A CRACKLING noise fills the room as parts of the ceiling start to fall, the structural integrity of the mansion giving way under the battle's strain.

LIAM PARKER

(determined)

Keep going! Together!

They continue the chant louder and with more conviction, each word a hammer strike against The Phantom's chains.

Suddenly, a beam of pure light bursts forth from the amulet, engulfing The Phantom. Its cries FADE as its form disintegrates into nothingness.

The friends fall silent, panting heavily. They look around, realizing the immediate danger isn't over—the mansion begins to collapse around them.

JAKE THOMPSON

(shouting)

Move! We have to get out!

They sprint towards the exit, dodging falling debris and racing against time itself.

EXT. WHITMORE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Bursting from the front doors, they emerge into the cool night air just as the mansion CRUMBLES behind them, a cloud of dust chasing their heels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The friends collapse on the grass, catching their breaths, watching as the last remnants of the Whitmore mansion settle into ruins.

LIAM PARKER  
(exhales)  
It's over...

They share a look of exhausted triumph, their bond stronger than ever.

FADE OUT.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - RUINED GRAND HALL - NIGHT

The air is thick with dust, the moonlight slicing through the shattered windows casting long shadows across the dilapidated walls. JAKE THOMPSON, LIAM PARKER, and EMMA SINCLAIR stand in a tight circle, faces set with grim determination.

Jake clutches an ancient amulet, its gem flickering with otherworldly light. They exchange glances, nodding to each other as they prepare for the final confrontation.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(urgently)  
Remember, it's afraid of us now!

Emma grips Liam's hand tightly, offering a silent promise of support. They can hear The Phantom's whispers echoing around them, chilling their spines.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(steadfast)  
We're ending this. For everyone it trapped here.

A ghostly figure emerges from the shadows—ALEX MERCER, THE PHANTOM. They move with eerie grace, eyes burning with malice.

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
(menacingly)  
You cannot destroy what you do not understand.

Liam steps forward, his voice tinged with defiance.

LIAM PARKER  
(fearlessly)  
We understand enough, Alex. You're done hurting people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a shout, Jake raises the amulet high. A beam of light shoots out, enveloping The Phantom. Their form flickers, pained screams filling the room.

THE PHANTOM (ALEX MERCER)  
(screaming)  
No! You can't—

The friends join hands, the amulet's glow intensifying, forming a protective barrier around them. The Phantom writhes, their essence starting to unravel.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(resolutely)  
This ends now!

The light explodes outward, washing over the entire hall. Flickering apparitions appear, the souls held captive by The Phantom. They look at the teenagers with gratitude before fading away, finally released.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(whispering)  
Go in peace.

As the last wisp of The Phantom disintegrates, the amulet dims, its purpose fulfilled. Silence falls, broken only by the creaks and groans of the mansion.

LIAM PARKER  
(in awe)  
It's... over.

They look around, the weight of their actions settling in. The mansion, once oppressive with malevolence, now feels just empty and old.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(breathing hard)  
We did it. We actually did it.

Emma smiles faintly, the tension leaving her shoulders.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(gently)  
Yeah, we did.

They stand together amidst the ruins, united by courage and the unbreakable bond of friendship.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WHITMORE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

The ancient walls of the Whitmore mansion GROAN ominously, a forewarning of impending doom. Dust and debris rain down as the structure begins to buckle under its own weight.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(coughing)  
This way! Follow me!

Jake leads the charge, his green eyes scanning for a safe path through the chaos. Liam and Emma are right on his heels, moving with frantic energy.

LIAM PARKER  
(shouting over the  
din)  
We need to get out—now!

A LOUD CRACK resounds above them, sending a shower of splintered wood cascading toward the ground. They DUCK and weave through the debris, their escape a desperate dance with danger.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(urgently)  
The main hall! It's our best shot!

They burst into the grand entryway, once majestic, now a deathtrap. The chandelier SWAYS precariously overhead, threatening to crash down at any moment.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(panting)  
Almost there... keep going!

EXT. WHITMORE MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

They explode out of the front doors just as the chandelier falls with a thunderous CRASH behind them. They don't stop, sprinting away from the mansion as it IMPLODES in a cloud of dust and memory.

The three friends collapse onto the grass, chests heaving, as they watch the destruction. The once-menacing silhouette of Whitmore mansion crumbles until only rubble remains.

LIAM PARKER  
(breathlessly)  
That... was too close.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

EMMA HENDERSON  
(smirking despite  
herself)  
"Too close" is an understatement.

Jake laughs WEAKLY, the sound tinged with relief and disbelief.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(looking at his  
friends)  
We're alive. We're free.

Their gazes LOCK, an unspoken understanding passing between them. They've faced their darkest fears together and emerged victorious.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(softly)  
We did more than survive, guys. We saved those souls... we ended the curse.

LIAM PARKER  
(grinning)  
And we kicked some serious phantom butt.

They share a tired LAUGH, the sound mingling with the gentle whisper of the wind. Around them, the world is still, as if honoring their triumph.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(standing up)  
Let's go home.

Liam and Emma nod in agreement, getting to their feet. They turn their backs on the ruins of Whitmore mansion.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - DAWN

The first rays of sunlight creep over the horizon, bathing the town in a warm glow. Jake, Liam, and Emma walk side by side down the empty streets, their shadows long behind them.

As they approach their neighborhood, the LIGHTS in the houses flicker on, one by one. The NIGHT'S ORDEAL seems like a distant dream against the comforting normalcy of dawn.

The trio stops at the end of Jake's driveway, a sense of closure settling over them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE THOMPSON  
(sincerely)  
Thank you, for being the best  
friends anyone could ask for.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(teasingly)  
You're not getting sappy on us  
now, are you, Thompson?

LIAM PARKER  
(chuckling)  
Let him be. We earned a little  
sap.

They SHARE a group hug, a silent promise to always have  
each other's backs.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(stepping back)  
Well, I guess this is where we  
say, "See you later."

EMMA HENDERSON  
(nodding)  
"See you later" sounds good.

LIAM PARKER  
(smiling)  
Yeah. See you later.

With that, they part ways, each heading to their  
respective homes. As they walk, the STRENGTH of their  
bond is palpable, a beacon against any darkness yet to  
come.

FADE OUT.

INT. THOMPSON LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The room buzzes with anxious energy as SARAH THOMPSON  
paces by the window, periodically glancing outside.  
Suddenly, her posture stiffens; she spots something.

SARAH THOMPSON  
(relieved)  
There he is!

She rushes out the front door, her face a mixture of  
worry and relief.

## EXT. THOMPSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

JAKE strides up the driveway, his clothes disheveled but his eyes alight with the thrill of adventure. Sarah wraps him in an embrace, nearly lifting him off his feet.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(grinning)  
Mom, I'm okay. We all are.

SARAH THOMPSON  
(choking back tears)  
I was so worried... What happened?

Jake's grin softens to a warm smile, his green eyes meeting hers with newfound depth.

JAKE THOMPSON  
We got more than we bargained for.  
But we looked out for each other.

## EXT. PARKER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

LIAM stands at the doorstep, meeting his father's stern gaze. MR. THOMAS PARKER steps forward, his usual authoritative demeanor giving way to a rare display of emotion.

MR. PARKER  
(voice shaky)  
Liam...

LIAM PARKER  
(firmly)  
Dad, it's over. We're safe.

Mr. Parker pulls Liam into a tight hug, his rigid stance crumbling as he holds his son close.

MR. PARKER  
You scared me half to death, boy.

LIAM PARKER  
(smiling)  
We handled it. Together.

## EXT. HENDERSON FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

EMMA walks toward her house, her auburn hair catching the morning light. Her mother appears in the doorway, her face etched with concern.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMMA'S MOTHER

Emma! Oh, thank God!

They embrace fiercely, Emma allowing herself a moment of vulnerability in her mother's arms.

EMMA HENDERSON

(sighing)

I know, Mom. It's good to be home.

Her mother holds her at arm's length, examining her daughter's face.

EMMA'S MOTHER

Did you...

EMMA HENDERSON

(defiantly)

We did what we had to do. And we made it out.

INT. THOMPSON LIVING ROOM - A BIT LATER

Sarah fusses over Jake, offering him blankets and hot drinks. He accepts them with an indulgent smile.

SARAH THOMPSON

(concerned)

You need to rest now, honey.

JAKE THOMPSON

(teasing)

Is this your way of grounding me without saying it?

SARAH THOMPSON

(playfully stern)

Just take care of yourself, Jake.

EXT. SMALL TOWN STREETS - LATER

The three friends stand together once more, united by their shared experience. They exchange looks that acknowledge the ordeal they've survived.

JAKE THOMPSON

(proudly)

We faced The Phantom... and won.

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CONTINUED:

LIAM PARKER  
(earnestly)  
We couldn't have done it without  
each other.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(smirking)  
So what's next for us,  
adventurers?

They share a knowing glance, their bond unbreakable,  
their hearts ready for whatever life throws at them next.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. THOMPSON BASEMENT - DAY

The basement is once again a haven for the three friends,  
now surrounded by open books, old maps, and newspaper  
clippings about the Whitmore mansion. The air hums with  
the energy of revelation.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(eyes scanning a  
document)  
So Alex Mercer... The Phantom...  
was actually trying to protect  
something.

LIAM PARKER  
(frowning)  
But what? All they did was scare  
people away.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(connecting dots)  
Maybe that was the point—to keep  
people away from the real danger  
inside.

Jake points to an old, faded photograph among the papers,  
depicting a solemn ALEX MERCER standing in front of the  
mansion.

JAKE THOMPSON  
Look at this—Mercer wasn't just  
haunting the place; they were the  
last living relative of the  
Whitmores, guarding the curse  
placed on their family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIAM PARKER

(shocked)

You mean, all this time, we were trespassing on their attempt to fix the past?

Emma picks up a journal, its pages yellowed with age, but the writing still legible.

EMMA HENDERSON

(reverently)

"Only when the hearts of strangers brave enough to face the darkness unite..." That's us. We were the key to breaking the cycle.

JAKE THOMPSON

(nodding)

And by facing our fears, we set them—and the victims—free.

Liam places his hand on Jake's shoulder, a silent gesture of camaraderie.

LIAM PARKER

We did more than survive a haunted house; we ended a century-old tragedy.

EXT. SMALL-TOWN DINER - DAY

A quaint diner sits nestled among the familiar sights of their hometown. The three friends sit in a booth, sipping milkshakes, a sense of normalcy returning.

EMMA HENDERSON

(sighs contentedly)

It feels good... being back here, knowing what we know now.

JAKE THOMPSON

(grinning)

Who would've thought our little adventure would turn into a history lesson?

LIAM PARKER

(chuckles)

And who knew Emma Sinclair had a thing for historians?

Emma rolls her eyes playfully as Liam nudges her teasingly.

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CONTINUED:

EMMA HENDERSON  
(playful sarcasm)  
Ha-ha, very funny.

Their laughter fills the diner, drawing smiles from the other patrons.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(earnestly)  
Guys, seriously though... are we just going to go back to normal after all this?

LIAM PARKER  
(looking thoughtful)  
"Normal" isn't the same anymore. We're not the same.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(resolute)  
Whatever "normal" is now, we'll face it together.

They clink their milkshake glasses together in a silent pact, their shared gaze holding promises of future adventures.

FADE OUT.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Students mill about, chatting and laughing, as the final bell of the day rings out. Among them, JAKE, LIAM, and EMMA walk shoulder to shoulder, their backpacks slung over their shoulders. The familiarity of school life buzzes around them, yet they move with a newfound confidence.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(eyes twinkling)  
You guys realize we've become legends in our own right? The kids at Whitmore Mansion?

EMMA HENDERSON  
(smiling)  
Yeah, but let's not let it go to our heads.

LIAM PARKER  
(nods)  
We've got each other's backs. That's what counts.

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CONTINUED:

They stop at a bench, the afternoon sun casting long shadows across the courtyard. They all sit, watching younger students race by, oblivious to the deeper currents of life that Jake, Liam, and Emma now understand.

JAKE THOMPSON  
So, what's next for us then? Ghost hunting? Mystery solving?

EMMA HENDERSON  
(teasingly)  
As tempting as that sounds, how about we focus on acing Mr. Benson's history project first?

LIAM PARKER  
(grins)  
You just don't want to admit you're into the whole 'adventure' thing as much as we are.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(playfully elbowing him)  
Shut up, Parker.

A silence falls over them, comfortable and companionable. Their eyes meet, each reflecting a shared journey that has irrevocably altered the fabric of their youth.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(sincerely)  
Hey, I mean it though. You guys... after everything, you're like my family.

LIAM PARKER  
(squeezing Jake's shoulder)  
Same here, man.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(firmly)  
We stick together. No matter what.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS LOOP - AFTERNOON

The friends stand up, slinging their bags over their shoulders once more. They head toward the bus loop, their steps synchronized. As they reach their respective buses, they exchange looks of mutual respect and understanding.

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CONTINUED:

JAKE THOMPSON

(waves)

Catch you guys tomorrow!

EMMA HENDERSON

(flashing a peace  
sign)

Bright and early!

LIAM PARKER

(smiling)

See ya, heroes.

They board their buses, taking seats where they can still see each other through the windows. As the buses pull away, they keep eye contact, silently reaffirming the unspoken pact between them.

INT. MOVING SCHOOL BUS - AFTERNOON

Jake gazes out the window, his green eyes reflecting the passing scenery. A small smile plays on his lips as he thinks of their next adventure. He pulls out his phone, quickly typing a message to his friends.

INSERT PHONE TEXT  
MESSAGE:

"Can't wait for the weekend. Let's make some new legends."

He hits send, pocketing the phone with a sense of anticipation for whatever comes next. With every jostle of the bus and every mile that takes him away from the school, he knows one thing for certain: their bonds of friendship are unbreakable.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY

The trio, slightly older and visibly more confident, hike through a dense forest trail, their laughter echoing among the trees.

JAKE THOMPSON

(leaping over a log)

Come on, slowpokes! Race you to  
the clearing!

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CONTINUED:

EMMA HENDERSON  
(rolling her eyes but  
grinning)  
You're on, Thompson!

Liam hangs back, checking his compass with a furrowed brow.

LIAM PARKER  
(calling out)  
Guys, wait up! The map says we  
should head north from here.

Jake skids to a halt, turning back with an exaggerated groan. Emma jogs to Liam's side, peering at the compass over his shoulder.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(throwing his hands  
up)  
Fine, Mr. Navigator! Lead the way.

CUT TO:

EXT. MYSTERIOUS CLEARING - DAY

The friends emerge into a sun-dappled clearing, surrounded by ancient trees. In the center, a strange stone formation beckons.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(excitedly pointing)  
Check this out! It looks like some  
kind of altar.

Jake circles the stones, touching the moss-covered surfaces with a mixture of reverence and curiosity.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(low whistle)  
This has got to be centuries old.  
Imagine the stories it could tell.

Liam pulls out a notebook, jotting down notes and sketches of the site.

LIAM PARKER  
(concentrating)  
We need to document this. It could  
be important.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Emma snaps pictures with her phone, capturing every angle. Her blue eyes are alight with the thrill of discovery.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(smirking)  
"Local Teens Uncover Ancient  
Mystery." How's that for a  
headline?

Jake laughs, clapping Liam on the back as they explore the area together.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(teasingly)  
I can see it now: "Intrepid  
Adventurers" led by none other  
than Jake Thompson—

LIAM PARKER  
(interrupting)  
—And his ever-practical sidekick,  
Liam Parker.

They share a knowing look, acknowledging their unspoken bond.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(joining in)  
And don't forget Emma Henderson,  
the brains of the operation.

A sudden rustling noise from the surrounding woods catches their attention.

LIAM PARKER  
(alert)  
Did you guys hear that?

They huddle closer together, instinctively forming a protective triangle.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(bracing himself)  
Whatever it is, we'll handle it.  
Together.

The rustling grows louder, and a deer bounds into the clearing, pausing briefly to stare at them before darting away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMMA HENDERSON

(laughing)

Guess we're braver than we  
thought.

LIAM PARKER

(shaking his head)

Or just jumpier.

JAKE THOMPSON

(grinning widely)

Either way, it's another adventure  
for the books.

They exchange smiles, their camaraderie unshaken by the  
scare.

FADE OUT.

INT. JAKE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit, the walls adorned with memorabilia  
from past adventures. Jake, Liam, and Emma sit in a  
circle on the floor, surrounded by maps, books, and  
various trinkets they've collected over time.

JAKE THOMPSON

So, what's next for us? Haunted  
caves? Secret societies?

Jake's eyes twinkle with mischief as he leans forward,  
elbows on his knees.

LIAM PARKER

I think we could use a break from  
"haunted" anything for a while.

Liam chuckles, running a hand through his curly hair, but  
there's a spark in his eyes that says he's not entirely  
serious.

EMMA HENDERSON

(mock seriousness)

Agreed. I vote for a lost treasure  
hunt. Something with less...  
supernatural surprises.

Emma playfully tosses a small artifact to Jake, who  
catches it with ease.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE THOMPSON

(sly grin)  
"Less" being the operative word  
there, Henderson?

LIAM PARKER

(raising an eyebrow)  
You two are incorrigible.

Emma grins at Liam, appreciation shining in her eyes for their shared experience and friendship.

EMMA HENDERSON

But seriously, guys. After  
everything at the Whitmore  
mansion...

Her voice trails off, and the three friends exchange meaningful glances, acknowledging the weight of their shared history.

JAKE THOMPSON

(firmly)  
We're stronger because of it. All  
for one, and one for all, right?

Liam nods in agreement, his expression solemn yet filled with camaraderie.

LIAM PARKER

Absolutely. We've got each other's  
backs, no matter what.

They reach out, hands stacking in the center of their circle—a silent pact.

EMMA HENDERSON

I wouldn't have it any other way.  
You guys are more than friends;  
you're family.

The moment lingers before Jake breaks the silence with his trademark grin.

JAKE THOMPSON

All right, enough mushy stuff.  
Let's plan our next great  
escapade!

They laugh together, the sound echoing off the basement walls, filled with warmth and the promise of future adventures.

FADE OUT.

INT. JAKE'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

The basement is dimly lit, with posters of rock bands and adventure movies adorning the walls. The three teenagers are sprawled out on bean bags and an old couch, their laughter subsiding into a comfortable silence.

JAKE THOMPSON  
You know... I've been thinking  
about everything we went through.

Jake gazes at a map on the wall, dotted with pins marking their past adventures.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(nods thoughtfully)  
We've learned so much, haven't we?  
About the world, about each  
other...

LIAM PARKER  
And about ourselves. I never  
thought I'd be the one to—

He breaks off, his gaze turning inward as he grapples with his memories.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(squeezing Liam's  
hand)  
To face your fears head-on. You  
were amazing, Liam.

Liam offers a small, grateful smile, clearly moved by Emma's words.

JAKE THOMPSON  
(rubbing his chin)  
It's like every challenge was a  
mirror, showing bits of us we  
never knew existed.

EMMA HENDERSON  
Some of those reflections were  
pretty dark, though.

Silence falls over them as they consider this, the weight of their experiences settling in their hearts.

LIAM PARKER  
But that's just it, isn't it? We  
all have darkness in us. It's  
choosing not to let it control  
us... That's what counts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Emma nods, a fierce determination lighting up her eyes.

EMMA HENDERSON  
Bravery isn't the absence of fear.  
It's the will to keep going  
despite it.

Jake looks from Liam to Emma, pride swelling in his chest.

JAKE THOMPSON  
Together, we can face anything.  
That mansion tried to break us,  
but here we are.

LIAM PARKER  
(grinning)  
Stronger than ever.

They share a look, an unspoken understanding passing between them.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(earnestly)  
We're a team—a weird, slightly  
dysfunctional, yet unbeatable  
team.

Jake chuckles, shaking his head in amusement.

JAKE THOMPSON  
"Unbeatable" is right. With a  
sprinkle of crazy.

Liam and Emma laugh, the sound mingling with Jake's.

LIAM PARKER  
Friendship like ours? It's rarer  
than any ghost or phantom.

EMMA HENDERSON  
(deadpan)  
Thankfully, less likely to haunt  
us too.

Their laughter fills the room again, light and carefree, yet underpinned by a newfound depth of understanding and connection.

FADE TO BLACK.