

HALLOW CORNER

Written by

Ryan T. Peverly

c/o 117 Debbie Drive
Eaton, Preble, Ohio
937-241-3473
ryanpeverly@protonmail.com

Registered WGAw 2271847

INT. CLARK HOUSE - NIGHT

RUSS CLARK, early 30s, a young Clark Griswold type, lies half-asleep in a recliner. Sights and sounds of a low-budget horror movie emanate from the bright blue glow of a TV.

The doorbell rings. He stirs. The doorbell rings a second time. He gets up, walks to the door, and opens it to find a group of THREE TWEEN TRICK-OR-TREATERS begging for candy.

TRICK-OR-TREATERS

Trick or treat!

RUSS

Beggars Night hours are over,
aren't they?

TRICK-OR-TREATER #1

Beggars Night doesn't technically
end until midnight! You know that!

TRICK-OR-TREATER #2

And your porch light's still on!

Russ cranes his neck toward his lit porch light.

RUSS

It is, isn't it? Here, take what I
have left.

He grabs for a bucket of candy, pulls out what's left, and distributes it evenly among the three kids.

TRICK-OR-TREATER #3

Thanks, Mr. Clark!

RUSS

You're welcome. Get home safely.

He closes the door, locks it, then goes back to the living room. He turns off the TV and is about to head up the stairs to bed when he remembers to turn off the porch light.

He goes to the door and flips the light switch just as the doorbell rings again, startling him. He opens the door and finds TWO TWEEN BEGGARS, faces obscured in the darkness.

RUSS

Hey, kids, sorry, but I'm out of
candy and the light's off.

BEGGAR #1

We don't want candy, Mr. Clark.
We'd like to use your phone.

RUSS
Is something wrong?

BEGGAR #2
Our parents aren't home and our
phone isn't working.

RUSS
Oh, uh, come on in.

The beggars step into the house past him. He closes the door behind them.

RUSS
Phone's this way.

He walks past them, down a hallway and into the kitchen. The beggars walk down the hall behind him, slowly. He flips on the kitchen light. A rotary phone with a cord that stretches two city block hangs on the wall.

RUSS
You know what, I may have some
extra candy in the cupboard.

He turns his back on the kids and digs through an overhead cupboard opposite the wall with the phone. Beggar #1 picks the phone up off the base and dials. He holds the receiver so Beggar #2 can hear as well. After a couple beats...

BEGGAR #1	BEGGAR #2
Hello, Mother. We're lost.	Hello, Mother. We're lost.
Please send Father.	Please send Father.

Something about the unison tongue creeps Russ out. He pulls out a couple candy bars, hesitantly, from the cupboard as Beggar #1 hangs the phone up. He turns around and lays his eyes on them. His pupils get big.

BEGGAR #1	BEGGAR #2
Father will be here soon.	Father will be here soon.

We finally see what Russ sees. Their eyes are COAL BLACK and these PALE BLACK-EYED KIDS stare icy daggers through him!

RUSS
How. Um. How...how soon?

BEGGAR #1	BEGGAR #2
Soon.	Soon.

Suddenly, Russ's nose starts to bleed black blood. He dabs at it, then starts coughing. He cover his mouth and when he takes his hand away black blood covers his palm.

RUSS

I'm not...I'm not feeling so well.
Maybe you should --

He's cut off by his own gagging, as something builds up inside of him. A couple beats later, he's full-on vomiting BLACK POOLS OF BLOOD onto the floor!

Russ drops to his knees, his hands grabbing for his own throat as his face goes ghost-white and the veins in his neck turn black and the color runs up his face and into his eyes!

SMASH CUT TO:

THE TITLE CARD!

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

THE GUIDE, an ageless, ethereal figure akin to a leprechaun or sprite, walks down a festively decorated street. SEVERAL TRICK-OR-TREATERS roam about. He pauses to watch a child choose between two candy options at a door.

THE GUIDE

Choices. That's what it all comes down to, isn't it? Trick or treat. Light or dark. Life or death.

He continues walking, passing houses with varying decorations. He stops to help an ELDERLY WOMAN with her elaborate display.

THE GUIDE

Quite the spectacle, ma'am. Though I remember when a simple candle in a turnip was enough to ward off evil spirits.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Times change, don't they? But the night's still just as dark.

THE GUIDE

Indeed. And in Hallow Corner, every choice still carries weight.

He turns a corner, the sounds of a FALL FESTIVAL filling the air. He approaches a statue of FOUNDING FATHER DR. JEREMIAH CROW, where a group of TEENAGERS are gathered.

TEENAGER #1

(to friends)

I dare you to touch it. They say
it's cursed.

THE GUIDE

Cursed? No, no, no. But powerful?
Most certainly.

The teenagers turn, startled.

THE GUIDE

Be mindful of your choices tonight,
young ones. For some of you will
emerge from this night transformed,
while others...

He pauses, looking back at the festival.

THE GUIDE

Well, not all who wander in
darkness wish to find their way
back to the light.

The teenagers exchange uneasy glances as he walks away. He approaches a grand church, THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED FLAME, its steeple piercing the night sky. The sound of a bell tolling draws people inside.

THE GUIDE

But for those seeking guidance on
this most hallowed night, there's
always a beacon of light. Or so
they believe.

He ascends the church steps, a knowing smile on his face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (DUSK)

BONNIE BARDOT, 18, a final-girl-next-door type with Sidney Prescott's attitude and Hermione Granger's brain, sprawls on the couch, her nose buried in a worn copy of a "Babysitter's Club" novel. As footsteps approach, she swiftly closes the book, revealing another book inside.

BABS BARDOT, 45, waltzes into the room in a sophisticated yet slightly bohemian dress. A classic beauty, she stands at average height with rich chestnut hair and a single streak of silver at her temple. Her slight accent is hard to place.

BABS

Bonnie, sweetie, how do I look?

Bonnie looks her mom up and down.

BONNIE
You look very mature.

BABS
Mature? As in old?

BONNIE
Mature as in a fully developed,
strong and sensible woman.

BABS
You're so diplomatic. You sure you
don't want to celebrate tonight?

BONNIE
I think I'm at that age where
that's not too appealing anymore.

BABS
Since when is candy corn birthday
cake not appealing? You used to
love that.

BONNIE
Yeah, when I was a kid and didn't
know any better.

BABS
You're never too old for birthday
cake and Halloween spirit.

BONNIE
I'll pass on both, thanks.

BABS
Well, listen, if you're going to
stay home then you need to pass out
some candy.

BONNIE
I won't be home. I told you I'm
babysitting at the Ockermans.

BABS
Then who's gonna pass out candy?

BONNIE
Not my problem.

BRAM (O.S.)
Bonnie Beatrix Bardot!

BONNIE

What?!

BRAM (O.S.)

Get in here right now!

Bonnie huffs and slinks off the couch.

INT. BRAM'S STUDY - DAY (DUSK)

Bonnie steps into a room that feels caught between two worlds, part academic sanctuary, part curio shop. Warm, amber light from antique lamps casts long shadows across the space.

Towering bookshelves line two of the walls, and a glass-fronted cabinet showcases an eclectic collection of oddities.

A large, richly-carved desk dominates the center of the room, its surface a controlled chaos of open books, scattered papers covered in strange symbols, and a state-of-the-art computer that looks very much out of place.

Behind the desk sits BRAM BARDOT, 48, tall and lean with a closely-trimmed beard and salt-and-pepper hair neatly combed but with a rebellious cowlick that refuses to stay put, giving him a slightly disheveled professor look.

BONNIE

Whoa. Where'd you get that tie?

Bram looks down at a tie with an unusual pattern of interlocking crow silhouettes. It stands out from his crisp white shirt and tweed jacket with elbow patches.

BRAM

That's exactly what I wanted to talk to you about. We were cleaning out the rest of grandma's stuff the other day, and I know you don't like birthday gifts anymore, but I thought you may appreciate this.

He retrieves a small box from a hidden drawer in his desk. He opens it to reveal an AMULET that hangs from a simple but sturdy silver chain. He hands it to her.

She studies the design. A half-dollar-sized pendant made of tarnished silver. It's intricately etched with an image of a crow and alchemical symbols and gleams as if newly polished.

BONNIE

What is this?

BRAM

A family heirloom. It's been passed down through generations of Bardots, always on the 18th birthday. But it's more than just a piece of jewelry.

BONNIE

Here we go.

BRAM

Don't cop that attitude. I'm serious. It's...protection. And it comes with great responsibility. Keep it safe, because it's also...

(clearing his throat,
voice lowering)

It's also quite magical, if you know what I mean.

(smiling, normal tone)

It's part of a pair, but I couldn't find the other one. Maybe one of your cousins has it now. Anyway, happy birthday. Eighteen's a big deal, especially for a Bardot.

BONNIE

Thanks, Dad. It's actually really beautiful. And thoughtful.

BRAM

You're welcome. Hey, you're passing out candy tonight, right?

BONNIE

(sighing)

I just went through this with Mom. I'm babysitting at the Ockermans.

BRAM

Then who's passing out candy?

BONNIE

I'll put it on the porch. My word. God forbid kids don't get candy from the Bardots.

INT. BARDOT KITCHEN - DAY (DUSK)

Bonnie walks into the kitchen, opens a drawer and pulls out a black magic marker. She tears off a piece of notebook paper from a pad on the counter and writes on it.

EXT. BARDOT FRONT PORCH - DAY (DUSK)

The front door swings open and Bonnie tapes the piece of paper to the door. She grabs a large bowl of candy from inside and places it on a decorative table near the door.

She closes the door and the text on the note comes into clearer focus -- *NOTICE: IF YOU TAKE MORE THAN TWO PIECES OF CANDY YOU WILL BE CARVED LIKE A JACK-O-LANTERN. OTHERWISE, PLEASE ENJOY THIS CRAP.*

INT. OCKERMAN HOME OFFICE - DAY (DUSK)

A cursor in a Word document blinks. Words appear in a bold title font, letter by letter across the top -- **THE MANY PLAGUES OF DR. CROW.**

The words come from the fingers of JOHN OCKERMAN, 42, as he sits in front of a 1990s Gateway PC. His office is a cluttered shrine to the paranormal -- shelves lined with his previous bestsellers, walls adorned with newspaper clippings about local legends, and a corkboard covered in red string connecting various photos and notes.

John types a sentence underneath the chapter heading: "This is the true story of Dr. Jeremiah Crow and how his--" He pauses, frowning.

JOHN

Ugh, boring.

He deletes it, drumming his fingers on the desk. His eyes drift to a framed family photo -- him, looking distracted, next to his wife and two sons, all smiling.

A knock at the door breaks his concentration. He minimizes the document, revealing a desktop wallpaper of him and his wife in costumes at a Halloween party.

JULIE (O.S.)

John.

He cranes his neck toward the doorway. JULIE OCKERMAN, 38, leans against the frame, a vision in black. Her Elvira costume is both an homage and a statement, the plunging neckline a reminder of the woman beneath the mother and wife.

There's a glint in her eye, part mischief, part frustration, as she surveys her distracted husband.

JULIE

Earth to John. Remember Halloween?
Your kids? Your wife?

JOHN
Is that what you're wearing out?

JULIE
You don't like it?

JOHN
I mean, I do, but is it appropriate
for Beggars Night with the kids?

JULIE
It's supposed to be appropriate for
Beggars Night with you.

JOHN
Oh. Okay.

JULIE
(sighing)
Can you help the boys with their
costumes, please?

JOHN
(turning back)
Yeah, gimme a minute.

INT. OCKERMAN BOYS' BEDROOM - DAY (DUSK)

John helps put finishing makeup touches on JACOB, 10, dressed
as a VAMPIRE. JAMES, 12, dressed as a WEREWOLF, paces
impatiently around the room.

JAMES
C'mon, we're gonna be late!

JOHN
We're not late. Beggars Night lasts
several hours. Plenty of time to
collect a year's worth of candy in
one evening.

John finishes the vampire makeup.

JOHN
Alright. You look like a lean,
mean, bloodsucking machine.

Jacob shoots off the bed!

JACOB
Let's go!

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - DAY (DUSK)

MONTAGE of the Ockermans walking down the festive streets, the kids' bags filling up with candy from house to house.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER BEGGARS NIGHT FESTIVAL - DAY (DUSK)

The Ockermans walk by vendor booths. The boys stop at the booths that offer free candy and add to their bags. They then walk by a booth sponsored by THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED FLAME, where TWO CHURCH LADIES pass out soul cakes.

Julie reaches for a cake. John spots a bandage over her right index finger, then grabs a soul cake of his own.

JOHN

What happened to your finger?

JULIE

I cut it making those cookies you wanted so bad. Remember? The ones you didn't touch before we left?

John utters a small *hmm*, then bites into his cake.

They continue to walk through the festival, passing food vendors, an apple bobbing contest, and giant pumpkin carvers. They stop at a massive, grotesquely misshapen pumpkin that dwarfs all the others.

Behind it stands farmer JACK SMITH, 50s, weathered and smaller than you'd guess. His calloused hands rest possessively on the pumpkin's surface, a glint of pride and something darker in his eyes. He grins at their approach.

JACK

Well, if it ain't our resident ghostbuster. Come to see a real Halloween tradition?

JOHN

That's one big pumpkin.

SMITH

Yeah, I'm both a grower and a show-er. Probably win the grand prize later. Feel free to take a photo.

JULIE

We left our camera at home, but thank you for the offer.

JOHN
How long's it take to grow that?

SMITH
Not too long. Eight, nine weeks.

JOHN
Wow. Well, good luck. Looks like you have a winner.

SMITH
Thank you. Hey, y'all be safe out here tonight, alright? Lot of bloodsuckers walking around.

John shares a glance with Julie.

JOHN
You hear that, honey? Keep that cut away from those bloodsuckers.

INT. BONNIE'S BEDROOM - DAY (DUSK)

Bonnie wakes up her Gateway PC with a slide of the mouse and quickly types an ICQ INSTANT MESSAGE to user JustJerome -- *Babysitting at Ockermans .. stop by?* -- and sends it.

She gets an immediate response -- *fa sho.. time?* -- then types **shrug* maybe 9?* and gets an immediate :-) back.

EXT. BARDOT DRIVEWAY - DAY (DUSK)

Bonnie walks down the driveway. The THREE TRICK-OR-TREATERS from the opening walk down their front porch steps.

TRICK-OR-TREATER #1
Hey! Hey!

BONNIE
What?!

TRICK-OR-TREATER #1
We saw some kids take more than two pieces of candy!

BONNIE
Do you know who they were?

TRICK-OR-TREATER #2
It's the Black kids!

BONNIE

The who?!

TRICK-OR-TREATER #2

That's their last name! Black!

BONNIE

Oh. Thanks for the info.

TRICK-OR-TREATER #3

Are you really going to carve them up like jack-o-lanterns?!

BONNIE

Yes, I am. Now get lost, heathens, before I put you on the list too!

The beggars look at each other and scurry off! Bonnie walks the opposite direction, off into the festive streets.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER BEGGARS NIGHT FESTIVAL - DAY (DUSK)

The Ockermans watch a blacksmith for a few beats. John gets a tap on the arm. He spins around but sees no one at eye level, then looks down at The Guide. He looks up with a smile.

THE GUIDE

Are you the author working on the book about our town, by chance?

JOHN

Guilty. John Ockerman.

He extends a hand for a handshake. The Guide accepts.

THE GUIDE

Puck Littleton, renowned tour guide of this most hallowed corner. And who are these scary monsters?

JOHN

These are my boys, James the wolfman and Jacob the vampire.

PUCK

Do you boys like tricks or treats?

JAMES

Treats!

JACOB

Treats!

PUCK

I thought so.

He produces a GINORMOUS CROW-SHAPED LOLLIPOP from inside his jacket and hands it James.

PUCK

This treat is meant to be shared.
Do you understand?

Both boys nod. Puck looks up to Julie.

PUCK

And Mrs. Ockerman, I presume?

JULIE

Julie, please.

She extends her right hand. Puck cradles and kisses the back of it, then examines the bandaged wound.

PUCK

Is this a fresh wound, dear?

JULIE

Yep. Clumsy baker here.

He pulls out a SMALL VIAL of liquid medicinal tincture from his jacket and hands it to her.

PUCK

Just picked this up from the town apothecary. A few drops will do quite the trick on it.

JULIE

That's very thoughtful, thank you.

PUCK

And John, much like your boys, I'm sure you enjoy a sweet treat. But how would you like the sweetest treat I could offer you tonight?

JOHN

You got bigger lollipops in there?

Puck chortles like that's the best joke he's ever heard!

PUCK

No, no, no. The local gossip train tells me you've been trying to dig up information about Dr. Jeremiah Crow and the manor in which he lived. Did I hear that correctly?

JOHN

You did.

PUCK

How would you like a chance to spend the night at the infamous Crow Manor?

JOHN

I've been trying to track down the owner but it's not public record for some reason. People around here sure do like their mysteries.

PUCK

Yes, we do. And we'd like to keep things that way.

He pulls out a set of medieval-looking keys on a keyring and shows them off like they're a pot of gold.

PUCK

These are the keys to Crow Manor.

JOHN

You own that place?

PUCK

Oh, no, I couldn't afford that. More like a...caretaker. But consider this -- a first-hand experience on All Hallows' Eve in the most mysterious manor this side of the Mississippi. Now that's a bestseller waiting to be written, don't you think?

He dangles the keys in front of John, like Pavlov dangling a treat in front of a salivating dog!

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

John packs up his things, notebooks, pens, flashlights. Julie leans against the doorway again, arms crossed.

JULIE

You're really doing this?

JOHN

Yeah.

JULIE

I thought tonight was supposed to be our night. We haven't been together in, like, months.

JOHN

I know, but the chance to do this, on tonight of all nights, I can't turn that down. It's my job.

JULIE

What about your job of being a good husband? Where does that fit in?

John sighs, runs his hands over his face.

JOHN

You put me in a difficult position when you make me choose between my work and your physical desires.

JULIE

(scoffing)

You're writing books about urban legends and the paranormal. Don't act like it's Shakespeare.

JOHN

Those books put food on our table and pay our rent. And last I checked I was the only one bringing in any money here.

Ouch. She levels a wicked-yet-disappointed stare at him.

JULIE

This move has been tough on me.

JOHN

It's been tough on me too, but you don't hear me complaining.

He picks up his backpack and puts it on.

JOHN

I'll turn the cell phone on if you need anything.

JULIE

Bonnie will be here soon. What am I supposed to tell her?

JOHN

Tell her we don't need her. I'll
talk to you later.

He pecks her on the cheek, then leaves. She continues to lean
against the doorway, nonplussed.

INT. OCKERMAN FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Julie, still in her Elvira outfit, lies curled up on the
couch, a horror movie on TV, a combination of ice cream and
candy around her. She dabs a couple drops of the tincture
Puck gave her onto her cut, then rewraps the bandage over it.

The doorbell RINGS. She gets up and answers it. Bonnie stands
on the other side.

BONNIE

Hi, Mrs. Ockerman. Sorry I'm a few
minutes late.

JULIE

No, I'm sorry. It looks like we
don't need you tonight after all. I
tried calling but no one was home.

BONNIE

Oh. You guys aren't going out?

Julie sighs, leans against the front door.

JULIE

John got an offer to stay the night
at some stupid haunted whatever,
and he decided to take it. Thought
it would make his book better.

BONNIE

Uh, rude.

JULIE

I know, right? I was really looking
forward to letting loose a bit.

BONNIE

Why don't you go by yourself?

JULIE

I don't know. Costume balls don't
sound like much fun by yourself.

BONNIE

C'mon. You don't need a man to have fun. I mean, look at you. You look like a lot of fun by yourself.

Julie thinks on that for a beat.

JULIE

I am pretty fun, I guess.

BONNIE

See.

Julie perks up a bit.

JULIE

You know what, I'll go. You sure you don't mind?

BONNIE

Hey, I agreed to babysit tonight, and I'm gonna babysit the hell out of these boys.

JULIE

You are such a doll. Come in. Make yourself at home.

Bonnie walks in, sets her things down.

JULIE

Boys! Bonnie's here! Get down here right now!

A couple beats, then the boys shuffle downstairs, out of their costumes and in t-shirts and sweats.

BONNIE

Ooh, scary costumes!

JAMES

Shut up.

JULIE

James Joseph! You do not talk to people like that.

JACOB

We can stay home alone.

JULIE

Not with those attitudes you can't.

JAMES

But she sucks as a babysitter.

JULIE

She most certainly does not. She's very good. And cheap.

(to Bonnie)

I am so sorry about that.

BONNIE

It's fine. I'm used to it by now.

JULIE

You have more patience than I do.

Julie grabs her purse from a nearby table.

JULIE

Okay, I'll try to be back by midnight and you both better be in bed by then. If I hear one complaint you're both grounded. And no horror movies. I don't need you wetting the bed again.

JAMES

That was Jake!

JACOB

No, it wasn't! That was you!

JULIE

You've both done it. And stay off the phone. The line needs to be clear in case I need to call.

JAMES

Mooooom.

JULIE

Don't mom me. Behave or else.

She digs through her purse, pulls out three ten-dollar bills and hands them to Bonnie.

JULIE

For pizza.

BONNIE

That's way too much. But thank you.

JULIE

Okay, have fun.

BONNIE

You too.

Julie leaves. Bonnie closes the door and turns to the boys.

BONNIE

Alright, you heard your mom. Any sass and it's your ass.

JACOB

Shut up, Bonnie Bardooooooooot.

JAMES

More like Bonnie Bar-duuuuuuuuh.

The boys chortle at their rudeness!

JACOB

Bar-duuuuuuh! Because she's stupid!

BONNIE

I'm gonna say this one time and one time only. If you insult me again, or if you say anything else that's rude, I will go into that kitchen and find the biggest knife I can, and I'll carve your stupid little faces like pumpkins, and then I'll cut your stupid little peckers off and shove them in your stupid little mouths. You understand me?

James and Jacob stare at her, confused and dumbfounded but definitely aware of the threat made against them. She shoots them a shit-eating smile.

BONNIE

So, what kind of pizza do you guys want? I'm a pepperoni and extra sausage kinda gal.

INT. OCKERMAN FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Bonnie watches TV. The boys upstairs loudly run across the floor, the floorboards creaking quickly under their weight.

BONNIE

Hey! I'm trying to watch a movie!

JACOB (O.S.)

Hey! I'm trying to watch a movie!

Bonnie rolls her eyes, then turns up the volume a bit as Jacob runs down the stairs and manifests into the room.

JACOB
We want pizza.

BONNIE
I tried calling and it was busy.

JACOB
Try again.

Then he takes off running back up the stairs!

EXT. HALLOW CORNER VILLAGE LIMITS - NIGHT

JEROME JUSTICE rolls into town in a Buick Wildcat. The 18-year-old African-American exudes a quiet confidence rare for his age. A hooded a black LIBER LEOPARDS FOOTBALL sweatshirt frames an athletic build.

He passes by a welcome sign that reads WELCOME TO HALLOW CORNER! A WOLFSANGEL displays prominently next to signs and symbols for several local civic groups.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jerome weaves his way through a festive downtown business district. Tons of people out trick-or-treating.

He leaves the business district and turns into a suburban neighborhood, past several festively decorated homes, including Russ's Griswold-like house, then to the end of the street, where he parks along the curb.

He pulls out a flip phone and dials a number, but it's busy. He sighs, hangs up the phone, then tries again. Still busy.

INT. OCKERMAN KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bonnie holds a cordless phone to her ear. The boys upstairs continue to stomp around, running across the floor. She walks to the bottom of the stairwell as the call rings and rings.

BONNIE
Hey! I'm on the phone!

JACOB (O.S.)
Hey! I'm on the phone!

BONNIE
What'd you say?!

JAMES (O.S.)
Get breadsticks!

BONNIE
(to herself)
Yeah, I'll get breadsticks and
shove them up your fu--

UFO'S PIZZA GUY (V.O.)
Thanks for calling Ufo's Pizza,
home of the world-famous Flying
Saucer. Can you hold, please?

BONNIE
Yeah, sure.

Bonnie wanders into the --

INT. OCKERMAN FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

As the line goes dead. Annoyed, she goes to dial again but the phone rings in her hand immediately! She yelps and almost drops it, then answers.

BONNIE
Ockermans, Bonnie speaking.

JEROME (V.O.)
Hey, it's me. I've called like six
times. What's going on?

BONNIE
I was ordering pizza. Are you here?

JEROME (V.O.)
Yeah. End of the block.

BONNIE
Be out in a minute.

She hangs the phone up, drops it on the couch, then walks upstairs to the...

INT. OCKERMAN BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

She pokes her head in. The boys watch a horror movie and pig out on candy.

BONNIE
Hey, I thought your mom said no
horror movies?

JAMES
It's PG-13. Chill, bro.

BONNIE
Not your bro, but I'll let that one
slide. You guys up for a quick game
of hide and seek?

The boys look at each other.

Duh! JAMES Duh! JACOB

BONNIE
Cool. Go hide and I'll come find
you in a minute.

The boys scramble out of the room!

I/E. JEROME'S CAR - NIGHT

Jerome looks around the neighborhood for a few beats, shoots
a quick glance at his driver's side mirror at a GROUP OF
TRICK-OR-TREATERS in the street. Among them, a FIGURE IN A
PLAGUE DOCTOR COSTUME stands motionless a few houses down.

Bonnie rushes up on the passenger side and bangs on the door!

JEROME
Oh, sheezus! Shit!

Bonnie laughs hysterically, then jiggles the door handle.

BONNIE
Unlock the door, fool!

Jerome reaches over and unlocks it. Bonnie jumps in.

JEROME
Why you gotta be like that?!

BONNIE
Because it's Beggars Night, baby!

JEROME
Shit, B. Heart attack city.

She chuckles. He shoots another glance into the mirror. The
plague doctor is gone.

JEROME

You tell your parents yet?

BONNIE

Not yet. The time has to be right,
and tonight is not the right time.

JEROME

You think they'll be cool with it?

BONNIE

Don't make this a race thing, okay?
Everyone makes it a race thing
these days and it's so superficial.

JEROME

I'm just curious why you don't
wanna tell your parents about us.

BONNIE

It has nothing to do with your skin
color, okay? C'mon. You know me
better than that.

JEROME

Race ain't got shit to do with skin
color either, okay? We're talking
blood here. Family. Kinfolk. I just
wanna be sure they're cool with it.

BONNIE

I won't let them be anything but
cool with it, okay?

JEROME

You're still not over him, are you?

BONNIE

It has nothing to do that with
that, I promise.

She extends a pinky. He looks down at it.

JEROME

What are we, twelve?

BONNIE

I don't care how old we are. It's
still a binding agreement.

He rolls his eyes sarcastically, then locks pinkies.

BONNIE
I should get going. Those kids are
demons in training, I swear.

JEROME
Need me to teach 'em some respect?

BONNIE
That's sweet, but I think I can
handle them.

JEROME
Oh, uh.

Jerome fumbles around in his hooded sweatshirt, pulls out a
small jewelry box.

JEROME
I know you don't care about the
whole birthday thing, but I got you
something.

He hands her the box. She doesn't take it at first.

BONNIE
J, c'mon.

JEROME
B, you c'mon. It's called a nice
gesture. People can do that for
you, you know.

BONNIE
Fine.

She takes it, reluctantly, and opens it -- a locket.

JEROME
Open it.

She does. A picture of the two of them sits inside a heart-
shaped frame.

BONNIE
Aw. That's...that's really sweet.

JEROME
See.

BONNIE
And it's the second necklace I've
gotten today. My dad gave me this.

She pulls out the amulet her dad gave her, around her neck and under her shirt. He looks it over.

JEROME
(concerned)
Shit, is that silver?

BONNIE
Yeah. Why? You don't like it?

JEROME
Nah, I just got an allergy or something to it.

BONNIE
Really?

JEROME
Yeah, since I was really young.

BONNIE
You gonna sneeze or something?

JEROME
Nah, not that.

She jokingly moves the amulet closer to him. He scoots back and raises a finger.

JEROME
This ain't no joke. Don't come any closer with that shit.

BONNIE
Damn. Okay. Relax, dude.

JEROME
I'm cool. Just...chill.

She tucks the amulet back under her shirt.

BONNIE
Okay. Uh, I gotta go. I'll message you later. Or tomorrow morning if it gets too late.

She leans over, pecks him on the cheek, and leaves. He dejectedly puts the car into drive and rolls away.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Bonnie walks down the street. She passes by a few houses before settling her eyes on the Ockermans' front door.

Her eyes widen as she notices it's wide open! She sprints toward the house, up the front porch, and through the door!

INT. OCKERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Bonnie rushes through the door, frenzied and panicked!

BONNIE
James! Jacob!

She huffs it up the stairs, to the boys' bedroom. No sight.

BONNIE
Okay, guys, if this is some sort of
prank you got me! Haha! Very funny!

She pokes her head in the main bedroom, the bathroom, then walks back down the stairs. No one in the living room or the kitchen. Panic rising, she grabs the phone and dials.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
The wireless customer you're trying
to reach is unavailable. Please
hang up and try your call --

She hangs up, then dials again.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
The wireless customer you're --

She hangs up and lets out a frustrated scream! She looks around desperately, then heads for the front door.

BONNIE
Okay, think. Where would a couple
of rude dumbass boys go?

EXT. OCKERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

She walks onto the front porch and stares out into the neighborhood. She looks down one direction, then the other, then sets off into a MASS OF TRICK-OR-TREATERS.

EXT. HALLOW WOODS LODGE - NIGHT

Julie snakes her car through a wooded area. A beautiful building emerges along the path behind the forestry, a triangular lodge that gives off Midwestern Overlook vibes.

She finds an empty parking spot, kills the engine, gets out and walks up to the entrance, where a COSTUMED GREETER opens the door for her.

COSTUMED GREETER
 Welcome to the Beggars Night Ball,
 Madame. Follow the spiral staircase
 for both tricks and treats.

INT. LOBBY AT HALLOW WOODS LODGE - CONTINUOUS

She walks into a beautiful, high-ceilinged lobby. The soft sounds of music greet her. She walks to the center of the room, where she descends down a spiral staircase as the volume of the music gets louder.

INT. LOWER LEVEL AT HALLOW WOODS LODGE - CONTINUOUS

Julie follows the staircase to the bottom.

The music gets louder with every step until it's in her face. A festive, rhythmic danceable tune! And people sure are dancing! At least A HUNDRED PEOPLE crowd the dance floor to cut rugs while a LIVE BAND wails away on a small stage!

She weaves through the crowd, taking in the costumed revelers. GORDON GRIMM, a tall, spindly man who looks to be in his 50s, approaches her, his movements graceful despite his gangly frame.

GORDON
 Mrs. Ockerman, I presume?
 (bowing slightly)
 Gordon Grimm, at your service.
 Welcome to the Beggars Night Ball.

JULIE
 Oh, thank you. It's quite...
 impressive.

GORDON
 And your husband, is he...

JULIE
 Not here. Had to do some work.

GORDON
 His work never sleeps, I imagine.
 But where are my manners?

He gestures to an elegant woman sidling up behind him --
 CANDICE "CANDI" CLARK, who looks to be in her 30s.

Her costume, a shimmering, form-fitting gown with intricate crow feather designs, catches the light as her hips shimmy.

GORDON

Allow me to introduce my
significant other, Candice Clark.

CANDICE

(extending her hand)
Please, call me Candi.

Julie shakes Candi's gloved hand.

CANDI

First time at something like this?

JULIE

Is it that obvious?

CANDI

Only to those who pay attention.

GORDON

Well, I'll leave you ladies to get
acquainted. The night is young, and
there's much to discuss.

He gives Candi a meaningful look.

GORDON

Do enjoy yourself, Mrs. Ockerman.
Tonight is a night where you have
the choice to live forever, or to
die with regret.

Gordon nods at her and melts into the crowd.

CANDI

Don't mind him. He loves speaking
in cryptic mystery tongue.

Candi links her arm with Julie's.

CANDI

Come, let's have a drink, shall we?
Name your poison.

She guides Julie towards the bar.

JULIE

Oh, gosh. It's been so long since
I've had a drink. Is there any
absinthe? I used to love that.

CANDI

Absinthe! You continue to impress me. I have just the drink for you.
 (leaning into the bar)
 Barkeep! Two Bloody Fairies with three fingers of absinthe, please and thank you!

She turns back to Julie as BARKEEP nods and gets to work making the drinks.

CANDI

So, tell me, what brings the wife of our town's newest celebrity to our little soiree?

JULIE

How honest can I be?

CANDI

As honest as you want to be.

JULIE

I guess I'd like a chance to forget I'm the wife of the town's newest celebrity for a little while.

CANDI

Then you've come to the right place. Hallow Corner has a way of reinventing people. And nights like tonight have a way of revealing deeper truths about ourselves. We put on masks and costumes and we forget who we are for a while. Not such a bad thing, mind you. And I must say your choice of outfit tonight is also quite revealing. Not that I'm complaining.

The band strikes up a new song, a haunting melody with a pulsing rhythm, as their eyes meet. The tension breaks a couple beats later when the barkeep sets their drinks in front of them. Candi grabs hers. Julie does too.

CANDI

To new versions of ourselves.

JULIE

To new...versions of ourselves.

Both sip, Candi chugging a bit more than Julie. She sets her drink down on the bar top.

CANDI
Let's dance!

Before Julie can respond, Candi takes her hand and leads her to the dance floor. As they move to the music, Candi's movements are fluid, almost hypnotic. Julie finds herself matching Candi's rhythm, their bodies moving closer.

CANDI
(whispering)
You're full of surprises.

As the song reaches its crescendo, Candi pulls Julie close, their faces inches apart.

CANDI
You know, there's a game we play at these parties. Do you like games?

JULIE
What kind of games?

CANDI
The kind that reveal truths. About ourselves, about others, about the past, present and future.

Julie hesitates, glancing around the room.

CANDI
Don't worry, it's just for fun. And completely private, of course. I have a room upstairs.

JULIE
I...I don't know.

CANDI
(tracing a finger along
Julie's arm)
Where's your sense of adventure?
Isn't that why you came tonight?

Julie looks into Candi's eyes, feeling a mix of excitement and trepidation. Julie takes a deep breath.

JULIE
You're right. Let's play a game.

Candi's smile widens, revealing perfect teeth. She takes Julie's hand and guides her towards the spiral staircase, the crowd seeming to part for them as they go. They pass by Gordon, who shoots Julie another perfectly toothy smile.

INT. PRIVATE HOTEL ROOM AT HALLOW WOODS LODGE - NIGHT

Candi lights a candle and the light casts its dancing shadow on walls adorned with intricate art depicting crow motifs. Julie stands near the door, a large bed cutting the room in half, a TV stand and TV along the wall in front of it. She takes in the room, fascinated and unnerved.

Candi retrieves a velvet pouch from a large purse and sits down at a table near the window. She gestures for Julie to join her. Julie walks over and sits across from her.

CANDI

Have you ever heard of corvomancy?

JULIE

I haven't.

CANDI

It's an ancient form of divination using crow feathers.

Candi empties the pouch, revealing a collection of glossy black feathers.

CANDI

The game is simple. You draw a feather, ask a question, drop the feather, and the way it falls reveals the answer. And first-timers always go first.

Julie's breath catches. She knows she should leave, but something keeps her rooted to the spot. She draws a feather.

JULIE

Will John's book be successful?

It spirals down, landing quill-first on the table.

CANDI

Ooh, interesting. The quill points to you. Success, but at a cost perhaps?

Candi's turn. She locks eyes with Julie, then draws.

CANDI

Will I taste something sweet tonight?

Her feather floats down, landing perfectly flat.

CANDI

Oh my. That's a resounding yes.
Your turn.

Julie draws.

JULIE

Will I find what I'm looking for in
Hallow Corner?

It lands with its tip pointing directly at Candi. She smirks.

CANDI

Seems like you already have.

Julie blushes, avoiding Candi's gaze. Candi draws now.

CANDI

Am I going to regret what happens
here tonight?

Her feather spirals down, landing on its side.

JULIE

What does that mean?

CANDI

It means that regret is only for
those who don't survive the night.

The candles flicker as if in response. Julie shivers, then
draws a feather,

JULIE

Is...is John faithful to me?

Her feather falls, landing quill-first and standing upright.

CANDI

Oh, honey. Sometimes it's not about
faithfulness, but fulfillment.

Candi's hand brushes Julie's as she reaches for a feather.

CANDI

Will Julie let go of her
inhibitions tonight?

The feather floats down, landing softly on the table.

JULIE

And what does that mean?

CANDI

Why don't you tell me?

They lock eyes. What tension! Julie picks up a feather with a shaky hand.

JULIE

What's happening here?

It lands, spinning briefly before settling. Candi eyes it for a beat, then gets up and sits on the bed. She pats the spot next to her. Julie gets up, slowly, then sits beside her.

Candi leans over and kisses Julie on the side of the mouth. Julie hesitates, then turns her head and their lips fully meet. Candi kisses her deeply. Julie hesitates again for a moment, then gives in to the passion!

As things heat up, they reposition themselves on the bed. Their kisses grow more intense! Candi kisses down Julie's neck, then pauses and whispers.

CANDI

You smell...intoxicating.

Julie, lost in the moment, barely registers Candi's words. Suddenly, Candi's teeth graze Julie's skin. Julie gasps, half in pleasure, half in surprise.

JULIE

Wait, I...

But Candi doesn't wait. She bites down hard on Julie's neck. Julie cries out, more in shock than pain. Candi pulls back, confusion and then horror dawning on her face.

Candi's skin begins to bubble and smoke! She screams, a terrifying, inhuman sound! Julie watches in frozen horror as Candi's face seems to melt and then... BOOM-SPLAT! CANDI EXPLODES, SHOWERING JULIE AND THE ROOM IN GORE!

For a moment, all is silent save Julie's ragged breathing. Then, reality crashes in. She screams, scrambling off the bed and towards the door, leaving a trail of blood and viscera in her wake!

INT. LOBBY AT HALLOW WOODS LODGE - NIGHT

Julie rushes downstairs into the lobby, her dress stained with blood, mascara running down her face. She's hysterical, stumbling as she reaches the bottom of the stairs!

JULIE
 (screaming)
 Help! Somebody help me!

Gordon hurries over, his eyes widening at the sight of Julie.
 He grabs her by the shoulders, steadying her.

GORDON
 What's happened? Where's Candi?

JULIE
 (between sobs)
 Up...upstairs. The room...Oh god,
 Gordon, she... she...

GORDON
 (to nearby guests,
 maintaining composure)
 Everything's fine. Please, continue
 with your evening.
 (to Julie, sotto voce)
 Show me. Now.

INT. PRIVATE HOTEL ROOM AT HALLOW WOODS LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Gordon pushes open the door, Julie trembling behind him. What
 erotic carnage! Blood and viscera coat every surface.

GORDON
 What...happened here?

JULIE
 We were...and then she bit me...
 and then she just...exploded! I
 don't understand!

Gordon moves further into the room, examining the gore-
 splattered walls and bed, careful not to touch anything. He
 turns to Julie and narrows his eyes.

GORDON
 Tell me what happened exactly.

JULIE
 She kissed me, she bit me, and
 then...this!

Gordon approaches Julie slowly, sniffing the air around her.
 He locates the bite wound on her neck.

GORDON
 May I have a look?

He motions toward the wound. Julie nods her head. He leans in and sniffs it, then steps back and looks deep into her eyes.

GORDON
Have you ingested any medicinal
liquids or creams this evening?

JULIE
I...I don't know. I...

Then it hits her. She digs through her purse and pulls out THE LIQUID VIAL gifted to her by Puck earlier. She hands it to Gordon.

JULIE
I cut my finger and put that on it.

He opens the bottle and sniffs it as his associate MR. THORNE walks down the hallway.

MR. THORNE
Everything okay, Mr. Grimm?

He hands the vial back to her.

GORDON
One moment, dear.

He walks to meet Thorne down the hall.

GORDON
This woman has colloidal silver in her blood and Candi got the worst of it. Her behavior suggests it was unintentional, and I have no reason to doubt her.

MR. THORNE
Sounds pretty suspicious to me. New in town and shows up here with silver in her blood. A bit too convenient, don't you think?

GORDON
I know how it looks, but if she had a plan it wouldn't include hysteria and asking for help. Look at her. She's a mess. Literally.

Thorne ganders down the hall at Julie's hot mess.

MR. THORNE
What do we do with her?

GORDON

Well, we can wipe her memory and send her home and be done with it. Or we can detain her, wait for the silver to make its way out of her blood, which could be any minute now from the smell of it, and then turn her. Do you have a preference?

Thorne glances at Julie, ponders that for a beat.

Julie watches them converse for another beat or two, unable to hear them. Thorne inaudibly informs Gordon of his opinion, then Gordon walks over to her.

GORDON

My associate, Mr. Thorne here, will make sure you get home safely.

JULIE

Shouldn't we call the police?

GORDON

They have no authority here, so we will handle the matter privately. Mr. Thorne will drive you home now, if that's sufficient.

JULIE

Okay.

Gordon leaves. Mr. Thorne walks to her and extends his arm.

MR. THORNE

Right this way, Madame.

She takes his arm and he escorts her down the hall.

EXT. HALLOW WOODS LODGE - NIGHT

Mr. Thorne opens the passenger door of his car for Julie, then closes the door behind her. He gets in the driver's side, starts the engine and maneuvers the car out of the lot. They pass by SHERIFF MILLER, male, 50s, on their way out.

We stay with the Sheriff's car as it pulls up along the sidewalk near the front doors. Sheriff gets out, his hands noticeably gloved, and walks toward the entrance.

INT. LOWER LEVEL AT HALLOW WOODS LODGE - NIGHT

Gordon surveys the party scene, deep in thought. Sheriff walks down the stairs. Gordon senses his presence as he walks up beside him.

GORDON

Sheriff. What can I do for you on this most eventful evening?

SHERIFF MILLER

We have a situation. An emergency council meeting has been called.

GORDON

What is the nature and cause?

Sheriff leans in and whispers something inaudible.

GORDON

I see. I'll inform the rest of the council and we'll be along shortly.

SHERIFF MILLER

I'll let the Magistrate know.

He leaves. Gordon waits for him to make his way to the top of the stairs, then turns back to the party. He looks over the guests, then spots the other council members, deep in drinks and laughter with each other.

There's twentysomething Indian-American DR. MAYA SINGH, pushing-sixty curandera ELENA FUENTES, bald-but-bearded ALLAN AVERY, 40s, and his red-haired wife ELIZABETH AVERY, 40s.

Gordon approaches the group and clears his throat when nobody acknowledges his presence right away.

GORDON

Pardon my interruption, but an emergency council meeting has been called by...

ALLAN

(drunkenly)

Like hell it has! Not tonight!

ELIZABETH

Honey, let him finish.

GORDON

Local law enforcement has detained a trespasser that requires our immediate attention.

MAYA
Has anyone been hurt?

GORDON
Not to my knowledge.

ELENA
Who is it?

GORDON
A boy. But we have been summoned.
Apologies for dampening your moods.

The council members reluctantly file out of the Ball.

I/E. THORNE'S CAR / RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Mr. Thorne turns down a back country road, then brings the car to a stop on the side of the road. Julie looks confused.

JULIE
Why are we stopping?

MR. THORNE
We need to discuss what happened.

JULIE
I told Gordon everything. It was just a misunderstanding.

MR. THORNE
Was it? Or was it intentional?

JULIE
I don't know what's going on. That woman...she just exploded! I swear, I didn't do anything!

MR. THORNE
You do realize what silver does to...certain people, don't you?

JULIE
Look, I just want to go home. I'll just get out here.

She reaches for the door handle just as the doors lock. She turns to Thorne, who smiles.

MR. THORNE
Childproof locks. Every parent needs them.

His fangs extend down and her eyes widen in terror as he lunges at her! She screams and tries to fight him off, eventually extending her legs up and kicking him backward! His head bounces off the glass of the driver's side door window! The impact temporarily stuns him!

She uses the moment to dig through her purse and pull out the silver tincture. She drops some into her mouth just as he shakes off the blow.

He naively opens his mouth, fangs out, then she spits silver and saliva right into his open mouth!

He freezes, swishes the liquid around for a beat before realizing what is, but it's too late! BOOM-SPLAT! AND HE COATS THE CAR INTERIOR WITH GORE!

Julie, covered in more blood and viscera, screams and scrambles over the pile of gore in the driver's seat! She scrambles out of the car, slips and slides on the slick gooey reddish-black slime, and takes off running down the road!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

MONTAGE OF Bonnie searching, calling out for the boys, checking with groups of trick-or-treaters. No luck.

EXT. FALL FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Bonnie rushes into the bustling festival. Decorative lights cast spooky silhouettes over the streets. Laughter and music mingle with spooky sound effects. She weaves through the crowd, eyes darting frantically.

BONNIE

Jacob! James!

She stops at a caramel apple stand, addressing the VENDOR.

BONNIE

Excuse me, have you seen two boys?
Brothers. One's about this tall,
the other a bit shorter?

VENDOR

(shaking head)
Sorry. Seen a lot of kids tonight.

Bonnie moves on, approaching a group of TEENS in line for a dunk tank game.

BONNIE
Hey, have any of you seen the
Ockerman boys?

A bunch of headshakes. Bonnie turns and walks away,
frustrated, trying to hold back tears. She spots Smith's
large pumpkin display and hustles over.

BONNIE
Excuse me, sir?

SMITH
Hey there, young lady. Come to see
the grand champion?

He pats his massive pumpkin proudly.

BONNIE
I'm looking for two boys, the
Ockermans. Jacob and James. Have
you seen them?

SMITH
(thinking)
Oh yeah! Mom dressed like Elvira?

BONNIE
You've seen them?!

SMITH
Shoot. Saw them a while ago. Good
looking family. Think the mom may
have been flirting with me.

BONNIE
How long ago?

SMITH
Couple hours. Everything okay?

BONNIE
Yeah, just...a game of hide and
seek got out of hand.

SMITH
Well, if I see them, I'll tell them
their pretty little babysitter's
looking for them.

BONNIE
Uh, yeah, okay, thanks.

She hurries off, disappearing into the crowd. Smith watches
her go, a hint of concern on his face.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Bonnie walks through the dimly lit streets, her breath coming in anxious gasps. Hordes of trick-or-treaters pass by. She stops at a street corner, looking around frantically.

BONNIE

James! Jacob!

No response. She leans against a lamppost, trying to catch her breath. Suddenly, a voice startles her.

PUCK (O.S.)

Lost something, have we?

Bonnie whirls around to see Puck standing there, his ageless face illuminated by the streetlight.

BONNIE

(startled)

Puck! I... the Ockerman boys are missing. Have you seen them?

Puck's expression turns serious.

PUCK

Missing? Or perhaps...found?

BONNIE

What do you mean? Do you know where they are?

He smiles enigmatically.

PUCK

I know many things. The question is, how much do you want to know? Because the veil has thinned and choices must now be made.

He steps closer, his eyes seeming to peer right through her.

PUCK

Tell me, what would you do if you came face to face with Fate itself?

BONNIE

What? I don't have time for this. I need to find the boys.

PUCK

Time is a circle, my dear. And tonight, that circle is closing.

Bonnie starts to back away.

BONNIE

You're not making any sense.

PUCK

Remember this, Bonnie -- a crow's strength lies not in its caw, but in its watchful eye.

Before Bonnie can respond, a sound of a CAWING CROW draws her attention as it swoops down near her head! She ducks as it settles itself up on the lamppost above her! When she looks back for Puck, he's gone.

In the distance, TWO FIGURES IN PLAGUE DOCTOR COSTUMES stand motionless under another streetlight, watching her. She spots them, then turns and walks in the opposite direction.

EXT. CLARK HOUSE - DAY (DUSK)

EARLIER... Russ puts the finishing touches on his exterior décor for a town-wide decoration competition. What a ridiculous, over-the-top display he's put together!

A car pulls into his driveway as he finishes the festive display. He looks over and sees Candi, his ex-wife, behind the wheel. She gets out, leaves the car running, a little too cool for school, obviously has better things to do.

CANDI

I see you kept it subtle this year.

RUSS

You know I go all-out for Halloween. Best time of the year.

CANDI

Yeah, well, you're compensating.

She shoves a stack of papers into his chest.

RUSS

What's this?

CANDI

Divorce papers.

RUSS

Just had to be today, didn't it?

CANDI

It's just another day, Russ. Get over it. And get over this too, okay? Please. For your own sake.

(walking back to the car)

I don't appreciate the late-night phone calls either. Sometimes I'm not alone.

RUSS

Jesus, Candi. You don't have to torture me like that.

CANDI

(getting in the car)

You're torturing yourself. Happy Halloween, babe!

She gets back in the car and leaves.

He follows the car with his eyes. She passes by another car on her way down the street -- RON and SHELLY NABORS, Russ's neighbors across the street. He watches them pull into their driveway, then walks over.

RUSS

Hey! Ron!

EXT. NABORS HOUSE - DAY (DUSK)

Ron and Shelly get out of their car in the garage. Shelly looks at Ron, then walks into the house. Ron meets Russ in the driveway with a pithy, nonplussed demeanor.

RON

Russ.

RUSS

I just wanted to express my condolences to you again about your son. Just a shame.

RON

Thank you.

RUSS

I don't mean to pry, but is that why you haven't done any decorating this year? I figured the reigning champion four years in a row would want to make it five.

RON
No. Unrelated.

RUSS
Oh, okay. I thought maybe you might use the funeral as an excuse to not participate, seeing how last year's vote was the closest one yet.

Ron takes offense to that.

RON
You know, I can see why Candi left you now.

Russ goes slack. Ron immediately regrets it.

RON
I apologize. That was insensitive.

RUSS
No, I was the one prying. I should be the one apologizing.

Ron waits for a formal apology but doesn't get one.

RON
Okay. Take care, Russ.

Ron walks back into his garage and closes the garage door.
Russ lingers in the driveway as the door goes down.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER BEGGARS NIGHT FESTIVAL - NIGHT

CONTEST JUDGE stands in front of a microphone on a stage.
HUNDREDS OF SPECTATORS watch on.

CONTEST JUDGE
And this year's winner of the
Beggars Night Decoration
Competition is...Russ Clark!

A huge round of applause as Russ makes his way onto the stage to accept the first-place trophy!

EXT. CLARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Russ pulls into his driveway. He gets out of his car, trophy in hand, glances over at the lifeless corpse that is the Nabors' house, and walks over.

EXT. NABORS HOUSE - NIGHT

Russ rings the doorbell once, twice, then knocks.

RUSS
Ron, it's Russ! I just wanted to
apolog--

Ron opens the door in a huff and quietly screams!

RON
For Heaven's sake, what the hell do
you want?! It's late!

RUSS
I just realized I didn't actually
apologize for what I said earlier.
I said I should be the one
apologizing, but that's not really
an apology, so I just wanted to
apologize for what I said earlier
and for not apologizing for it.

RON
That's it?

RUSS
Yeah.

RON
Thank you. I appreciate that.

He looks down at the trophy in Russ's hand.

RON
You win the contest?

RUSS
I did, yeah. Murphy got second, if
you can believe it.

RON
He must have stepped his game up.

RUSS
He really did. Had some of those
flying monkeys on strings between
his house and his garage. You know,
from *The Wizard of Oz*?

RON
Sure. May I offer a word of advice?

RUSS

I'd love some advice from a four-time champion.

RON

You'd be wise to give all this up, unless you want more bad luck.

SHELLY (O.S.)

Honey, who is it?!

RON

It's Russ! From across the street!
(back to Russ)
We're about to go to bed, so--

RUSS

(cutting him off)
What did you mean by more bad luck?

RON

Huh? Oh, nothing. It's just...it'd take a while to explain.

RUSS

I have time.

He thinks on that for a beat, catches Russ's half-interested, half-desperate look, then shouts into the house.

RON

Honey, I'll be out back with Russ!

EXT. NABORS BACKYARD - NIGHT

Ron hands Russ a bottle of beer in front of a raging fire pit. He takes a seat across from him.

RON

I promised Shelly I wouldn't talk about this anymore, so this needs to stay between us.

RUSS

I'm a vault of secrets.

RON

Right. Well, something happened last year that spooked me and Shelly good.

INT. NABORS GARAGE - NIGHT

FLASHBACK TO HALLOWEEN 1997... Ron puts away a first-place trophy among a collection of others in his detached garage. He looks up and notices TWO SHADOWY FIGURES standing across the street, in front of Russ's house.

RON (V.O.)

I was in the garage putting away my trophy when I saw two people standing across the street. At first I thought it was you and Candi. So I yelled something about winning the contest again and didn't get a reply.

EXT. NABORS HOUSE - NIGHT

RON

Which made me think it wasn't you. You've always been quick to trash-talk me about the house. I hope you don't mind me saying that.

RUSS

Not at all. It's true.

RON

Yeah, well, when I realized it wasn't you I got this weird feeling, so I closed the garage up and went inside.

INT. NABORS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ron walks up the stairs, into the master bedroom, and peers out the bedroom window at the two figures across the street.

RON (V.O.)

I went upstairs, to the bedroom, and looked down and they were still there. And they were staring up at me in the window.

One of the figures motions for Ron to come back outside.

RON (V.O.)

And then one of them motions for me to come back outside. But I just stood there, frozen.

EXT. NABORS HOUSE - NIGHT

RON

The hair on my arms stood up, got the goosebumps, all that. Something about it just creeped me out.

INT. NABORS BEDROOM - NIGHT

He watches the figures walk across the street.

RON (V.O.)

And then they started walking across the street toward the house. And they walked up to the front door and rang the doorbell.

Shelly stirs and mouths something to Ron.

RON (V.O.)

It woke up Shelly, and she asked me who it was, and I told her I didn't know. They rang it again and she said I should probably answer it.

INT. NABORS HOUSE - NIGHT

Ron creeps down the stairs toward the front door.

RON (V.O.)

So I walked downstairs, to the front door and looked through the peephole and...nothing.

He opens the door.

RON (V.O.)

Opened the door...no one there.

EXT. NABORS BACKYARD - NIGHT

RON

So I thought, okay, some kids pranked me. No big deal, 'tis the season. So I went to bed, and then something else happened and I realized this was far worse than a harmless prank.

INT. NABORS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ron and Shelly lie asleep in bed. The doorbell rings, startling Shelly awake. She shakes Ron.

SHELLY
Honey. Someone's at the door.

RON
Probably kids looking for candy.

SHELLY
We have plenty left.

He rolls out of bed with a sigh.

INT. NABORS HOUSE - NIGHT

Ron shuffles downstairs and grabs a bowl of candy on a table next to the front door. He opens it to find the SAME TWO FIGURES on the porch, two male teens.

BOTH HAVE PITCH-BLACK EYES. Ron's body immediately crawls with fear. He tries to say something but can't.

BLACK-EYED TEEN #1
Excuse me, sir, but we were wondering if we could come in and use your phone.

RON
Um, no. No, I don't think so.

He slams the door shut! He puts the bowl back and marches back upstairs!

INT. NABORS BEDROOM - NIGHT/DAY

Ron opens a closet and pulls out a SHOTGUN. He sits in a chair in the corner of the room, Shelly already asleep again.

RON (V.O.)
I slept in that chair all night and didn't move until Shelly woke me up the next morning.

Night turns to day. Shelly wakes up Ron.

SHELLY
Why do you have the shotgun out?

He comes to, groggy, but doesn't answer the question.

RON
Are you alright?

SHELLY
Yes, I'm fine.

He gets up and leaves the room. Shelly looks confused.

INT. NABORS HOUSE - DAY

Ron barrels down the stairs and flings open the front door! He looks around. Obviously no sign of the black-eyed teens. But he sees the word "SOON" scratched into the front door!

EXT. NABORS BACKYARD - NIGHT

RON
I haven't been the same since.

RUSS
I don't know. That does sound like kids playing a prank on you.

RON
The feeling I got looking into their eyes...that wasn't a prank. I don't scare easily, but I've never felt that much fear in my life.

RUSS
Could it have been psychological?

RON
I don't know. Maybe. Some things you just can't explain rationally. But I'll say this. That made me rethink what exactly I'm doing here. And if that experience had anything to do with this day and how much time and energy I was putting into this shit, it's worth giving up for our peace of mind.

RUSS
So, you think your son...

RON
I don't think it's a coincidence he died this week. I think that was a reminder. Maybe even a punishment.

A look of dread washes over his face.

RON

So when I say more bad luck, I mean what you've went through recently, with Candi, your own version of loss, could be just the beginning.

Russ holds his eyes, unsure what to make of things.

INT. CLARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Russ walks into his house through the front door, closes it and locks it. He forgets to turn off the porch light.

EXT. BARDOT HOUSE - NIGHT

Exhausted and worried, Bonnie finds herself back at her own house. She enters through the front door.

INT. BONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bonnie walks in, immediately going to her computer. She wakes up the PC with a slide of the mouse, puts in her password.

She clicks the ICQ message window with JustJerome and frantically types a message despite his status marked as away -- *hey.. call me asap.. emergency!* She looks through her contact list. It's sparse and no one else is online.

She pulls open a desk drawer and digs through it until she finds a heart-shaped locket. Inside is a photo of a handsome guy a few years older than Bonnie, posing in a Hallow Corner High basketball uniform.

BONNIE

I could really use your help right now, Ash.

She puts the locket back, then takes a seat on her bed and buries her head in her hands, audibly sobbing.

The PHONE RINGING shocks her back to the moment. She lunges for the phone on her nightstand, nearly knocking it off in her haste to answer.

BONNIE

Hello?! Mom?! Dad?!

Instead of a voice, she hears the slow, rhythmic tapping of a cane on wooden floorboards. She raises her eyes, thinking that sounded like it was coming from inside the house.

BONNIE

James? Jacob? This isn't funny!

The line goes dead. She stares at the phone, then slowly lowers it. She begins to dial a number but she's cut off by the DOORBELL RINGING.

INT. BARDOT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bonnie descends into the living room and approaches the front door cautiously. She peers through the peephole -- nothing. She opens the door slowly -- the porch is empty.

Suddenly, a PLAGUE DOCTOR lunges from the side, pushing into the house! Bonnie SCREAMS, slamming the door on its arm. It recoils, and she manages to shut and lock the door!

She backs away from the door, then turns to run upstairs -- only to find a SECOND PLAGUE DOCTOR at the top of the stairwell! It starts descending slowly, deliberately. She looks around frantically, then dashes for the --

INT. BARDOT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bonnie grabs a knife from the counter. A noise behind her turns her head -- a THIRD PLAGUE DOCTOR emerges from the pantry! She swings the knife, catching it in the arm. It recoils, black liquid oozing from the wound. She uses the moment to bolt past it, back to the --

INT. BARDOT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Plague Doctor #1 has broken through the front door and she's surrounded now. She backs up against the fireplace, knife in hand, then grabs a FIREPLACE POKER for good measure.

BONNIE

Get the fuck back! I'm warning you!

The Plague Doctors advance slowly. Bonnie swings her weapons wildly, keeping them at bay. She edges toward the stairs. Suddenly, she turns and sprints up the steps! The Doctors give chase!

INT. BARDOT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Bonnie races down the hall, the Doctors right behind her. She ducks into her bedroom, slamming the door and locking it!

INT. BONNIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bonnie looks around frantically. The door won't hold for long. She spots the window.

The door splinters as the Plague Doctors break through and the desk goes tumbling! Bonnie dives for the window, managing to open it just as one of the Doctors grabs her ankle!

Bonnie kicks out, her foot connecting with the Doctor's mask. There's a CRACK, and the mask splits, revealing a human eye widened in shock! She wrenches free and scrambles out the window just as a second Doctor lunges for her!

EXT. BARDOT HOUSE ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Bonnie stumbles onto the slanted roof. One of the Plague Doctors is right behind her. She scurries across, looking for a way down. The Doctor in the window lunges, catching Bonnie's arm. Its gloved hand slices into her skin, drawing blood -- but it's not red. It's a mix of BLACK AND SILVER.

The Doctor recoils as if burned, its glove smoking where the blood touched it. Bonnie, equally shocked, takes advantage of the moment. She runs along the edge of the roof, the pursuing Doctor crawling out the window after her.

The other two Plague Doctors are on the ground now, looking up at her as she reaches the corner of the house, trapped. She spots a large oak tree, its branches stretching close to the house. It's a risky jump, but it's her only choice.

The Plague Doctor on the roof lunges at her just as she takes a running leap off the roof towards the tree! For a moment, she's airborne! Then her hands grasp a branch. She swings wildly, propelling herself to a thicker branch!

Below, the two Plague Doctors circle the tree. One begins to climb. The other on the roof contemplates their own jump, but doesn't seem as confident.

She looks around desperately, then spots a second-story window of the neighboring house.

BONNIE

Ron! Shelly! Somebody help me!

She edges out onto a branch stretching towards the neighbor's house. It bends under her weight. She reaches the end of her branch, the neighbor's window still a few feet away. Below, one Doctor has nearly reached her level of the tree.

She takes a deep breath, then swings herself back and forth on the branch. One, two, three swings -- on the fourth, she lets go and flies through the air, crashing through the neighbor's window in a shower of glass!

INT. NABORS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bonnie tumbles onto the floor of a bedroom, cuts from the glass adding to her bleeding wounds. In bed, RON AND SHELLY sit up, flip on a light and stare at her in shock!

BONNIE
(breathless)
Please...help me. They're after me.

SHELLY
Bonnie? Who's after you?

RON
No way, not this year.

She scrambles to her feet, blood leaking from wounds from the glass. Ron gets out of bed and grabs his SHOTGUN, pumps it, then turns to Bonnie, determination in his eyes.

RON
Stay behind me.

Bonnie nods, still catching her breath. Shelly sits up in bed, wide-eyed.

SHELLY
Ron, what are you doing?

RON
What I should've done last year.

SHELLY
I'm calling the police.

He moves to the bedroom door, Bonnie close behind.

INT. NABORS UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ron and Bonnie creep down the hall.

BONNIE
(whispering)
There's three of them.

RON
I've got six shells, two for each.

They reach the top of the stairs. Ron peers down, seeing nothing but shadows.

RON
Stay here. If anything happens to me, go back with Shelly and lock the door.

Ron glances at her bleeding cuts, confusion crossing his face. Before he can say anything, the DOORBELL RINGS.

He starts down the stairs, shotgun at the ready. Bonnie follows a few steps behind.

INT. NABORS LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They reach the bottom of the stairs. The doorbell rings again. Ron approaches the door cautiously, shotgun raised. Bonnie hangs back, her eyes darting around the room.

RON
Who is it?

He's met by a chorus of young voices.

TRICK-OR-TREATERS (O.S.)
Trick or treat!

He hesitates, then slowly opens the door, keeping the shotgun ready but hidden behind it.

EXT. NABORS FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The THREE TRICK-OR-TREATERS from Bonnie's house earlier stand on the porch in their costumes. Their eyes widen at the sight of Ron's grim expression.

TRICK-OR-TREATER #1
Mr. Nabors? Are you okay?

Ron's eyes narrow, scanning the street behind them. Seeing no immediate threat, he lowers the shotgun slightly, bringing it into view of the children. The kids gasp, taking a step back.

RON
No candy tonight. Go home. Now.

TRICK-OR-TREATER #2
But...but it's Halloween...

RON
I said go home!

The children scramble off the porch, running down the street. Ron watches them go, then quickly shuts and locks the door.

INT. NABORS LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ron turns back to Bonnie, who's staring at him with a mix of shock and understanding.

RON
What the hell was that all about?

BONNIE
(shaking her head)
I...I don't know. There were three people in...weird costumes. Like masks with beaks or something. They were chasing me and I don't know why. I'm sorry about the window.

RON
We'll take care of it.

He nods toward her bloody arms.

RON
You okay?

BONNIE
Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine. You haven't seen the Ockerman boys, have you?

RON
Not tonight, no.

SHELLY (O.S.)
Ron? I'm on the phone with the Sheriff, but I don't know what to tell him. What just happened?

Ron looks from Shelly to Bonnie, then back out the window.

RON
I'm not sure. But let's hope it doesn't happen again anytime soon.

EXT. CROW MANOR - NIGHT

John drives up in front of a castle-like structure. He parks, grabs a backpack from the passenger seat, and gets out. Puck waits for him near the front door.

PUCK

I'm glad you came, John.

JOHN

This better be worth it. I probably won't be married tomorrow morning.

PUCK

If that's the way your story's to be written, then so be it. Best to not let temporary feelings get in the way of a good yarn.

He unlocks the front door and pushes it open.

PUCK

After you.

INT. CROW MANOR - NIGHT

John walks into the foyer. Puck follows and closes the door behind him.

PUCK

What do you know about our founding father, Dr. Jeremiah Crow?

John walks through the foyer and takes in the immensity of the place. Typical old manor. Cold, creaky, cobwebbed.

JOHN

Typical mad scientist stuff. Did some weird experiments, killed some people, then blew himself up when something went wrong.

(turning back to Puck)

Why don't you tell me what you know? I bet you have more insights than run-of-the-mill gossip.

PUCK

What I know or don't know isn't the point. You're here to discover the story for yourself. And I can't, and won't, color that for you. But I have invited two other guests who'd be more than happy to. They'll be here shortly. There are candles in the living room should you require extra light throughout the night. Enjoy your evening. I can't wait to read about it.

He shoots John a tricky smile, then leaves through the front door and closes it with a big, haunted-castle-like thud! John grabs a flashlight from his backpack and pokes his light into the first room on the lower level.

INT. CROW MANOR LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John steps in, his flashlight beam cutting through the darkness and illuminating a vast space.

A massive stone fireplace dominates one wall, its mantle adorned with intricate carvings, most notably a crow and a silver crescent moon. Above it hangs an imposing portrait of Dr. Jeremiah Crow, his stern gaze overlooking the room.

Heavy, velvet curtains, now tattered and moth-eaten, frame tall windows that look out onto the overgrown grounds. Moonlight filters through and casts long shadows.

The furniture, a mix of Victorian and Gothic styles. A large sofa sits in the center, its once-rich upholstery now faded and worn. Flanking it are two high-backed armchairs, their wooden frames intricately carved with more crow motifs.

In one corner stands a grand piano, its ivory keys yellowed with age. Sheet music, brittle and yellowed, still sits on the music stand as if waiting for a pianist to return.

Ornate shelving units line one wall, filled with an eclectic array of curiosities and artifacts. Ritual masks, small statues of deities, talismans, amulets, crystals, geodes, antique world globes and star charts.

A large, circular rug covers much of the hardwood floor, its pattern a complex design of alchemical and celestial symbols.

On a side table, John notices an antique chess set, a game seemingly abandoned mid-play. The pieces are uniquely carved, one side resembling humans, the other various birds.

John's light sweeps across the room and catches something glinting in the far corner -- a large birdcage, big enough for someone to stand in. Its door hangs open.

He sets his backpack on a large coffee table in the middle of the room, next to several candles in candleholders and a book of matches. He strikes a match and lights the candles, the flickering light bringing the room's shadows to life.

He walks over and examines Crow's portrait above the fireplace. He notices something odd about the frame. Upon closer inspection, he finds a small latch. With a soft click, the portrait swings open, revealing a hidden safe.

John examines the safe, running his fingers over the lock. He tries a few combinations, but to no avail.

INT. CROW MANOR DINING ROOM - NIGHT

John enters, his flashlight beam sweeping across an ornate dining table. Dust-covered plates and silverware are still set out, as if waiting for dinner guests who never arrived.

He approaches a china cabinet, its glass doors clouded with age. Inside, he spots an odd collection of items -- a set of brass scales and what looks like a group of bird skulls.

A sudden gust of wind rattles the windows. He's only slightly startled, but he turns quickly, his light catching something moving in the corner of his eye. But when he focuses, there's nothing there.

INT. CROW MANOR KITCHEN - NIGHT

A mix of 19th-century design and more modern additions. John opens cupboards, finding old canned goods and what looks like apothecary equipment. He picks up a mortar and pestle, noticing dried residue inside.

A heavy wooden door draws his attention. It creaks open to reveal steep stairs leading down to a cellar.

INT. CROW MANOR CELLAR - NIGHT

John descends cautiously. He reacts to damp, musty air. His light reveals rows of wine racks, most empty but some still holding dust-covered bottles.

In the corner, he spots a large object covered by a sheet. He approaches slowly, grabs the edge of the sheet, and pulls.

It's an OLD ELECTRIC CHAIR, modified with strange attachments and wires. Suddenly, he hears a THUD from upstairs. He freezes, listening intently. Another THUD, followed by the sound of footsteps.

JOHN
Puck?! Is that you?!

Silence. He gives it a couple beats, then slowly walks back up the stairs.

INT. CROW MANOR FOYER - NIGHT

John emerges from the kitchen, looking around warily. He glances at the front door. Closed. He shines his light up a stairwell, then decides against it.

He creeps across the floor and comes face to face with another giant wooden door. No handle, so he grabs the edge of it and slides it open to reveal...

INT. CROW MANOR LIBRARY - NIGHT

The biggest personal library John's ever seen. Shelves with wall-to-wall books. A rolling ladder leans against them, promising access to higher shelves. In the center, a large desk covered in papers. A few windows let moonlight in.

He passes his flashlight over the library from the doorway, then walks in and begins browsing the shelves. He passes over copies of *Faust* and *Frankenstein*, then across a group of more occulted works --

THE CHYMICAL WEDDING OF CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUTZ, RELIGIO MEDICI, CREATING THE HOMONCULUS, ELECTRICAL STIMULATION OF MATTER AND THE AGENCY OF ELECTRIC ORGANISMS.

A soft RUSTLING sound draws his attention to another bookshelf. A leather-bound volume pokes out from a row of similar books, as if pulled by an invisible hand.

He approaches the shelf cautiously. The book then falls to the floor and opens itself. John picks it up, open to a page with an illustration of a plague doctor. He flips it shut and the cover tells him the title is *ARCANA CORVI*, embossed with a crow and silver crescent moon.

INT. CROW MANOR LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Candlelight flickers. John sits on the couch, the *ARCANA CORVI* book pried open on the coffee table. He scribbles furiously in his notebook. His chicken-scratch handwriting shows us some key notes -- *Transmutation... electricity... mixed blood and metals... Medicus Stramineus...*

Suddenly, the sound of VOICES TALKING echoes through the Manor, faint but noticeable. His head snaps up, pen freezing mid-word. He stands, grabs his flashlight. The laughter comes again, fainter this time, almost teasing.

INT. CROW MANOR FOYER - NIGHT

John moves cautiously, following the sound down a twisting corridor he doesn't remember seeing before. The Manor seems to shift around him, growing larger, more maze-like.

INT. CROW MANOR UNFAMILIAR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

John finds himself in a part of the Manor where the walls are older. The voices echo again, closer now. At the end of the corridor stands a large wooden door, dark with age, the voices muffled behind it. He reaches for the handle, hesitates, then turns it.

INT. CROW MANOR HIDDEN STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The door creaks open, revealing a narrow staircase descending into darkness. John holds his candle higher, trying to see the bottom, but the light doesn't reach that far.

He takes a tentative step down, then another. A few more steps and the staircase begins to spiral and turn, then the stairs end abruptly at a brick wall. He runs his hand over the bricks. They feel real, solid. The voices echo again, seeming to come from within the wall itself.

Suddenly, a series of loud BANGS echo through the Manor -- someone pounding on the front door! He whirls around, startled. The banging continues, urgent and insistent.

His flashlight catches something on the wall as he leaves. He stops and shines the light over a series of words painted on the wall --

*Those lost above shall never be found, for the heart only
beats below sacred ground, where quicksilver courses through
blackened blood, a two-lined tree with crown of mud.*

He hurries back up the stairs, giving one last glance at the brick wall before closing the door behind him.

INT. CROW MANOR UNFAMILIAR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

John emerges from the hidden stairwell, closing the door behind him. He glances down the hallway, half-expecting to see something, but it's empty. The BANGING continues.

INT. CROW MANOR FOYER - NIGHT

John approaches the front door cautiously.

The BANGING has stopped, replaced by an eerie silence. He takes a deep breath and glances out the window, then relaxes. He throws the door open to reveal Bram and Babs.

JOHN

To what do I owe the pleasure of a visit from the Bardots?

BRAM

We're here to keep you company. Good to see you again, John.

John shakes Bram's hand, then Babs'.

BABS

What he means is, we're here to tell ghost stories and scare each other half to death.

JOHN

You're speaking my language there.
(gesturing them inside)
Please, come in.

The Bardots enter, their eyes scanning the foyer with a mix of familiarity and unease.

JOHN

I'd welcome you to Crow Manor, but something tells me it's not your first time.

BRAM

(looking around)
Your assumption is correct, although it's been years since the last time we've been in here.

BABS

Still gives me chills.

JOHN

Puck mentioned you might have some insights to share.

BRAM

More than insights, actually. We have the truth.

John nods, processing. He gestures towards the living room.

JOHN

Well, I've got candles lit in the living room. Shall we?

BABS
Lead the way.

As they walk towards the living room, Bram places a hand on John's shoulder.

BRAM
(lowering his voice)
What we're about to tell you...it might change everything you think you know about Hallow Corner. Are you prepared for that?

John pauses at the room entrance, looking back at them.

JOHN
I came here for the truth, no matter how strange.

INT. CROW MANOR LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They enter the living room and sit down, the flickering candlelight creating an atmosphere of mystery and foreboding. Bram and Babs sit across from John, their faces grave. John gets his notebook and pen ready.

JOHN
So, where do we begin?

BRAM
At the beginning, I guess. To understand Hallow Corner, you need to understand Dr. Jeremiah Crow. Or rather...the Order of the Crow.

JOHN
Order?

BABS
Dr. Jeremiah Crow wasn't just one man. It was a pseudonym used by a group of alchemists who worked together in secret.

INT. SECRET MEETING ROOM - DAY - 1850

FLASHBACK... We see a group of SEVEN MEN AND WOMEN OF VARIOUS AGES AND ETHNICITIES gathered around a table. They all wear rings with a crow insignia.

BABS (V.O.)
 Seven brilliant minds, each from
 different disciplines -- alchemy,
 electricity, magnetism, biology,
 various magical systems.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - 1850s-1870s

We see different "Dr. Crows" working on experiments, each
 specializing in a different area.

BABS (V.O.)
 They shared one goal, to unlock the
 secrets of immortality. They used
 the Crow identity to share
 knowledge, pool resources, and
 protect their true identities.

INT. DR. CROW'S LAB - NIGHT - 1871

One of the Crow members injects themselves with a silvery
 liquid. They convulse, falling to the ground.

BRAM (V.O.)
 On All Hallows' Eve, 1871, one of
 them performed an experiment that
 changed the course of history for
 this town and our families. And
 this particular scientist
 experimented, as any good scientist
 does, on himself.

The transformed Crow member stands, eyes now black, skin
 pale, revealing sharp fangs.

BRAM (V.O.)
 They had achieved a form of
 immortality, but at a cost.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT - 1871-1872

MONTAGE of the vampiric Crow member stalking victims,
 draining their blood.

BRAM (V.O.)
 The hunger for blood was
 insatiable. But they were also
 driven to create...offspring.

INT. DR. CROW'S LAB - VARIOUS NIGHTS

The Crow collective experimenting on captured victims, injecting them with vampire blood.

BABS (V.O.)

They couldn't create vampires through bites alone, though. It required a complex alchemical process, combining their blood with that of their victims.

We see two successful transformations -- a man who becomes the first Bardot, and a woman who becomes the first Grimm.

BABS (V.O.)

Our ancestors were among the few who survived the process. So were those of Gordon Grimm.

INT. CROW MANOR LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BABS

Have you met Gordon yet?

JOHN

I haven't, but I've heard the name here and there.

BRAM

The Grimms and the Bardots are descendants of the same genetic pool, but we couldn't be more different from each other in terms of both lifestyle and...habits.

JOHN

Okay, let's pause for a moment. Are you telling me that you two are descendants of...vampires?

BRAM

(hesitating)

Not exactly. We're...descendants of the original vampires created by the Order, but our bloodline has...evolved over time.

BABS

We still have certain...traits, but we're not full-on bloodsuckers like our ancestors were.

Babs and Bram chuckle to themselves. John doesn't.

JOHN

I'm gonna need you to explain that.

BABS

We can walk in sunlight, eat normal food, and we're not sensitive to silver or garlic. And we actually love crosses. We're in church every Sunday. Sometimes Wednesdays too.

BRAM

We're more...human than our ancestors were. But we still have a certain...craving for blood. It doesn't control us, but it's there.

BABS

We've learned to manage it. Small amounts, usually animal blood, satisfy the urge.

JOHN

(scribbling notes)

This is a lot to take in. How have you kept this secret for so long?

BRAM

Carefully. Very carefully. And now you understand the risk we're taking by telling you this.

JOHN

I do. And I appreciate your honesty. But I have to ask...why me? Why now?

BABS

It's about telling the truth and protecting our children. We're parents, just like you. We've raised our daughter to be honest and have integrity, yet here we are keeping this secret from her. And from others too.

BRAM

For centuries, the Order has manipulated the history of Hallow Corner. They've buried the truth under layers of myth and misdirection.

(MORE)

BRAM (CONT'D)

And this is an opportunity to reclaim this town for future generations.

JOHN

Is that why Puck invited me here tonight?

BRAM

Puck is...an ally. Of sorts. He has his own reasons for wanting the truth to come out.

BABS

The Order is worried, John. They see your work as a threat. That's why we're here -- to give you the full story so you can finish what you've started. You moved your entire family just for this. It's admirable. And a little stupid.

The three share a quiet laugh, breaking the tension. The room then falls silent as John contemplates the weight of this revelation and the role he's being asked to play.

JOHN

And Bonnie? She's...like you?

BRAM

Bonnie is...an entirely different story. She's the culmination of generations of...refinement. We worked hard to breed out our more negative traits, just as the Grimms worked to--

BABS

(raising a hand)

Let's not go there, hon. The point is Bonnie is special. Very special. But she doesn't know it yet. And for reasons we can't go into, she has to find out the same way as everyone else.

John stares a bit confusedly at her then, scribbles something in his notebook.

BABS

Does this sound disingenuous?

JOHN

That's not for me to say.

Bram stands.

BRAM

We should probably be going.

John and Babs stand too.

BRAM

You're in danger just by being here. Finish your research quickly and go home to your family. And trust no one.

BABS

And whatever you do, don't--

A sudden BREEZE extinguishes all the candles, plunging the room into darkness! John fumbles for his flashlight.

JOHN

Don't what? Bram? Babs?

When John finally gets his flashlight on, he sweeps it across the room. The Bardots are gone.

He moves to the window, peering out into the night. No sign of them. He turns back to the room, takes a deep breath, then turns his flashlight towards the hallway.

INT. CROW MANOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

John moves cautiously, his flashlight beam dancing across the walls. He reaches the wooden door leading to the hidden staircase and hesitates for a moment before opening it.

INT. CROW MANOR HIDDEN STAIRWELL - NIGHT

John descends the narrow staircase, flashlight in hand. He reaches the brick wall at the bottom and shines his light on the carved message -- *Those lost above shall never be found, for the heart only beats below sacred ground, where quicksilver courses through blackened blood, a two-lined tree with crown of mud.* His eyes widen with realization.

EXT. CROW MANOR BACKYARD - NIGHT

John emerges from the house, his flashlight sweeping across the overgrown yard. He moves past several trees before stopping in front of a massive, gnarled tree, nearly split completely in half and hollowed out.

JOHN
A two-lined tree...

He approaches the tree, shining his light inside its hollowed core. At the base, he notices a patch of dark, muddy earth.

JOHN
With a crown of mud.

John kneels down and digs with his hands. After a few beats, his fingers brush against something metal. He clears away more mud to reveal a trapdoor with an old, rusted handle.

He pulls the trapdoor open, revealing a set of stairs descending into darkness. He hesitates for a moment, then starts to climb down.

INT. CROW MANOR UNDERGROUND PASSAGE - NIGHT

John descends the stairs, his flashlight beam revealing a narrow, damp passageway. He moves cautiously, the walls close on either side. As he reaches the end of the passage, he sees a heavy wooden door. John takes a deep breath, grasps the handle, and pushes it open.

INT. DR. CROW'S SECRET LAB - NIGHT

John steps into a vast, circular chamber. His flashlight reveals ancient alchemical equipment mingling with primitive electrical devices. Dusty journals and strange artifacts fill the shelves lining the walls.

In the center of the room stands a large, ominous-looking chair, fitted with restraints and connected to various tubes and wires.

He traces some of the wiring to a large wooden post in the shape of a cross propped up against one wall, with a SCARECROW nailed to it all Christ-like, but costumed like a PLAGUE DOCTOR.

As he moves further into the lab, the door suddenly SLAMS shut behind him! He whirls around, his flashlight beam catching a glimpse of a PLAGUE DOCTOR mask just before everything goes black!

OVER BLACK -- John whimpers and struggles.

INT. DR. CROW'S SECRET LAB - NIGHT

John sits strapped to the large chair in the center of the room, his mouth gagged. Around him, FOUR PLAGUE DOCTORS work methodically, setting up an array of bizarre equipment.

PLAGUE DOCTOR #1 attaches electrodes to John's temples and chest. PLAGUE DOCTOR #2 prepares vials of shimmering, mercury-like liquid. PLAGUE DOCTOR #3 cranks a large dynamo. Electricity crackles through copper coils.

PLAGUE DOCTOR #2 injects the silvery liquid into tubes connected to John's veins. It courses through transparent pipes, glowing faintly.

PLAGUE DOCTOR #4 throws a switch on the wall. John's body goes rigid as electricity surges through him. The silvery liquid in the tubes begins to pulse and swirl.

Suddenly, the liquid in the tubes starts to boil. John's veins glow beneath his skin, tracing patterns of light across his body. #4 increases the voltage. The humming of the machinery intensifies!

John's eyes roll back, his body convulsing violently! His skin begins to crack, light spilling out from within. The Plague Doctors step back as the equipment sparks and smokes!

In a final, blinding flash, John's body seems to implode! When the light fades, all that remains in the chair is a withered husk, still faintly glowing.

INT. BARDOT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bonnie sits on the couch, visibly shaken. Sheriff Miller, stern and unnaturally still, sits across from her. DEPUTY MILLER, 30s, his son, stands nearby.

SHERIFF MILLER

So, three men in weird bird costumes started all this?

BONNIE

Yeah. They broke in and--

SHERIFF MILLER

(cutting her off)

Front door was unlocked. No sign of breaking and entering.

BONNIE

They came in and attacked me. Who cares how they got in here?

Sheriff raises his hand, an attempt to calm her down.

SHERIFF MILLER
Describe the costumes for us.

BONNIE
They were, like, masks with long
beaks and, I don't know, long
cloaks. A hat.

SHERIFF MILLER
How do you know they were men? If
they were wearing costumes, I mean.

BONNIE
I...I guess I don't know. They just
moved...quickly. And seemed
stronger than...

She trails off, noticing Sheriff Miller's nostrils flare slightly. Suddenly, their radios crackle to life.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
All units, we have a report of a
possible trespasser out on Old
Hallow Road, heading east toward
Hallow Woods. Any available
officers please respond.

SHERIFF MILLER
(to Deputy)
Go check it out.

Deputy nods and leaves, closing the door behind him. Sheriff Miller turns back to Bonnie, a hungry glint in his eyes.

SHERIFF MILLER
I assume that blood came from their
attack and your foray into the
Nabors' house.

BONNIE
Yeah.

SHERIFF MILLER
That doesn't smell like ordinary
blood. At least from here.

Bonnie instinctively covers her arm, but it's too late.

BONNIE
I don't know what you mean.

Sheriff Miller moves with inhuman speed, suddenly beside Bonnie. He grabs her arm, examining the silver blood.

SHERIFF MILLER

You might need medical attention.
May have an infection in there.

Bonnie tries to pull away, but his grip is iron.

BONNIE

Let go of me.

He does.

SHERIFF MILLER

My apologies. Just doing my job.

BONNIE

I'm fine.

Sheriff nods, then stands.

SHERIFF MILLER

(walking toward the door)
I'll keep my eyes out for those
Ockerman boys and any other strange
creatures. In the meantime, try
reaching your parents and...
(stopping at the door)
Maybe go somewhere a little safer.

EXT. RURAL ROAD OUTSIDE HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jerome drives down a country road for a few beats, then --

HE SWERVES VIOLENTLY and narrowly misses hitting something on the side of the road! He tries to regain control of the car, but it hits a pothole and he spins the wheel around and brings the car to a dramatic stop!

He gets out of the car, checks his tires briefly. Whew, no damage. Exasperated, he runs his hands over his face.

He turns toward Puck, illuminated by the car's headlights a short distance down the road. Puck hasn't moved, hasn't even registered that a car just sped by him and nearly hit him! He clasps his hands behind his back, stares up at a FULL MOON.

JEROME

Hey! You okay, man?! I didn't even
see you there!

Puck just keeps staring up.

PUCK
Oh, I'm just fine, Young Jerome!

JEROME
Do I know you?!

PUCK
Everyone in Hallow Corner knows me.
But you're not from here, are you?

Now he gazes at Jerome. A sly smile creeps over his face.

JEROME
How you know that?

PUCK
Your Liber Leopards football
sweatshirt is a dead giveaway.

Jerome looks down at his shirt. Duh.

JEROME
Lucky guess.

PUCK
Luck has nothing to do with, I
assure you. But we don't have much
time, so just remember -- a
leopard's strength lies not in its
roar, but in its silence.

The dark sky then lights up with the sights and sounds of a Sheriff car approaching. The car pulls and parks behind Jerome's. Deputy Miller steps out, flashlight in hand.

DEPUTY MILLER
Having some car trouble?

Jerome says nothing. Deputy flashes his light over the car, then up to Jerome's face.

DEPUTY MILLER
What you doing out here? Drinking?
Smoking them funny cigarettes?

Still nothing. Deputy walks closer to him, sniffs the air.

DEPUTY MILLER
You smell a little funky.

Silence. Deputy comes within a couple feet of him, looks him up and down like he's the predator and Jerome his prey.

DEPUTY MILLER
Got a call earlier about a possible
trespasser and, from the looks and
smells of it, you must be it.

Still silent. Deputy grabs his radio, clicks it on.

DEPUTY MILLER
Hey, pa.

A beat, then --

SHERIFF MILLER (V.O.)
Go ahead, son.

DEPUTY MILLER
I found me that trespasser.

SHERIFF MILLER (V.O.)
What kind of trespasser is it?

DEPUTY MILLER
The kind that ain't welcome here.

SHERIFF MILLER (V.O.)
Bring him in. I'm on my way back.

DEPUTY MILLER
(to Jerome)
You heard the man. Hands up.

Jerome doesn't move.

DEPUTY MILLER
C'mon now. Ain't no heroes around
these parts tonight.

Still nothing. Deputy puts his hand on his gun.

DEPUTY MILLER
Boy, I got some of those magic
bullets in here so it's in your
best interest to comply. Or we can
play judge, jury and executioner
right here, right now. Your choice.

Jerome reluctantly puts his hands in the air.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sheriff walks in through the front door. Deputy stands
against a wall smoking a cigarette.

SHERIFF MILLER
Where is he?

DEPUTY MILLER
Cell two.

Sheriff walks past him. Deputy drops his butt and stubs it out with this boot and follows him.

DEPUTY MILLER
What'd the Bardot girl say?

SHERIFF MILLER
Enough for me to know to just leave it alone for now.

Sheriff walks up to Jerome's cell. He sits on the bench.

SHERIFF MILLER
So, young man, what brings you to our neck of the woods tonight?

Stone cold silence from Jerome.

DEPUTY MILLER
He ain't said shit all night.

SHERIFF MILLER
My boy here said you didn't have any ID on you. What's your name?

Still silence. Sheriff eyes up Jerome.

SHERIFF MILLER
You know, we don't take to your kind too well around here. Had too many problems over the years. Especially on Beggars Night. And your kind sure does like to beg. So, it appears you found yourself in quite literally the wrong place at the wrong time.

JEROME
Do you suspect me of a crime?

DEPUTY MILLER
Holy shit! The boy speaks!

SHERIFF MILLER
Crime's not the word I'd use. But you are suspected of violating Section Four of the bylaws passed by our local council.

JEROME

And what makes you think those
bylaws apply to me?

DEPUTY MILLER

That God-awful stench coming off
you right now.

Sheriff hushes Deputy with a gloved hand.

SHERIFF MILLER

I'll be blunt with you. You have a
formal accusation against you right
now for trespassing within the
jurisdictional limits of Hallow
Corner. Your kind is not allowed
here. Didn't you see the signs
posted throughout town?

JEROME

What signs?

DEPUTY MILLER

The no trespassing signs, asshole!

Sheriff hushes him again.

SHERIFF MILLER

You hush up before you say
something you shouldn't. Maybe
learn something from Buster Keaton
here. Now...

(back to Jerome)

I got a lot of questions, but if
you ain't gonna answer them
directly, you're just gonna sit
here all night behind these...

(tapping the bars)

...silver bars. So if you --

JEROME

(standing, interrupting)

I demand to see your local
magistrate. Now.

Sheriff and Deputy exchange a glance. Sheriff nods.

SHERIFF MILLER

I'll get her on the phone.

INT. MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Jerome sits in a chair across from an empty desk. After a couple beats, THE MAGISTRATE, a slender, middle-aged black woman, walks in with Sheriff and Deputy.

THE MAGISTRATE

You must be the boy with no name
accused of trespassing in our fine
town this evening.

Jerome says nothing. She shoots him a kind smile.

THE MAGISTRATE

You have a serious accusation
levied against you, so we need to
figure some things out, okay?

Still nothing.

THE MAGISTRATE

Let's try this again. People call
me Faye. I remain neutral in all
disputes between creatures of the
night, which is why I hold the
position of magistrate in Hallow
Corner. What do people call you?

JEROME

Jerome.

FAYE

Okay, Jerome. This is not a
proceeding in the human legal
system, and you are not bound by
the laws of Man. You are, however,
subject to any bylaws, truces,
treaties or other binding
agreements made by tribal creatures
who claim dominion over this land.
And you stumbled into a tricky
situation here tonight. Can we talk
about that?

JEROME

Sure.

FAYE

Good. So, I guess the first
question is...are you a werewolf?

JEROME

I'm not a werewolf, but I do have
lycanthropic blood.

FAYE

What kind of lycanthrope are you if not a wolf?

JEROME

My blood belongs to the Pride of Justice of the Anyoto.

FAYE

Were-leopards?

JEROME

Yes.

Faye shares a look with the Sheriff and Deputy. They're curious as hell now.

FAYE

Have you ever hunted here?

JEROME

Only animals. No humans. Or vampires.

FAYE

Are you here tonight to hunt?

JEROME

No. Just enjoying the night with friends. Nothing more or less.

FAYE

Are your friends also lycanthropic?

JEROME

Not that I know of.

FAYE

Do they know you are?

JEROME

Not that I know of.

Faye thinks for a couple beats. Sheriff and Deputy look both intrigued and confused by the questioning.

FAYE

This presents a dilemma of sorts. There's nothing on the record with your tribe, which means there aren't any restrictions, but there aren't any truces either.

JEROME

If your bylaws state werewolves aren't allowed in Hallow Corner, and I'm not a werewolf, then there's no dilemma and I should be free to go.

FAYE

I'm inclined to agree.

DEPUTY MILLER

Now wait just one goddamn minute. He just admitted to being a lycanthrope, and I don't care about no truces or no fancy bloodlines, and I don't care if he's a wolf, a leopard, or a goddamn orang-oo-tang. As a member of both the Sheriff's office and this community, I call for an emergency council session to determine his fate, as stated in Section Five of our local bylaws. And until council reaches a verdict, as someone with a formal accusation against him, he must remain behind silver bars.

Faye sighs, acknowledges the points with a nod.

FAYE

The Deputy has a point. We have to abide by local procedures.

Jerome doesn't look fazed despite the circumstances.

FAYE

(to the Sheriff)

Please alert the council of the call for an emergency session.

Sheriff nods. Deputy smiles wide.

INT. COUNCIL MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Jerome stands in a silver-barred cage at the side of the room. Sheriff and Deputy flank either side of the cage. Faye stands behind a podium in the center of the room.

At the front of the room, five seats, dimly and spookily lit, like something straight out THE PARALLAX VIEW. Allan, Elizabeth, Maya and Elena shuffle in and take their seats. Gordon walks in last and sits in the center.

GORDON

This emergency meeting of the
Hallow Corner Village Council is
now in session.

He bangs a gavel.

GORDON

Why have we been summoned on this
most holy of evenings, Magistrate?

FAYE

Yes, I do apologize for the
emergency session on such an
important night for all of us, but
hopefully this is resolved quickly.
The Deputy here has called this
meeting because of a discrepancy in
the local bylaws that needs to be
addressed immediately. The young
man behind silver bars here happens
to be a lycanthrope.

The council members whisper and murmur. Gordon holds up his
hand to quiet them.

FAYE

However, he is not a werewolf.

GORDON

What is he then?

FAYE

His blood belongs to the Pride of
Justice, a group of were-leopards
part of a society known as the
Anyoto. Now, the bylaws state that
werewolves are banned from Hallow
Corner, but there's nothing in them
about other lycanthropes. There's
also no recorded truce between this
council and the Anyoto. So, we're
here tonight to determine how to
handle this matter.

GORDON

I can see the conundrum, but
precedent has already been set in
matters such as this.

FAYE

It has?

GORDON

Yes. A couple centuries ago a group of frogmen were captured and went through this same process.

FAYE

I wasn't aware of that. What was the result?

GORDON

Council voted unanimously to boil them to death. Slowly.

FAYE

I see. Does council think this situation tonight falls under the same precedent?

GORDON

We'll take a vote. All in favor?

All ayes.

GORDON

Five to zero in favor.

FAYE

How do you wish to proceed?

GORDON

Again, punishment was execution of the accused. All in favor?

All ayes again.

GORDON

Five to zero in favor. The accused will thus be executed for violating Section Four of the local bylaws of this council.

Jerome -- somehow still unfazed by it all.

FAYE

(frustrated)

And when and how is the execution to be performed?

GORDON

Tonight. By fire.

INT. BONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bonnie enters her room hastily, locking the door behind her. She's visibly shaken but determined. She grabs a backpack and starts filling it with essentials. Suddenly, her computer chimes with an incoming instant message.

CLOSE ON COMPUTER SCREEN: An ICQ instant message from a user with no name, just a series of numbers -- *You're in danger. Meet me at the Crow statue.* -A

Her eyes widen in recognition and disbelief, then slings the backpack over her shoulder.

As she moves to leave, she catches her reflection in a mirror on the back of the door. For a split second, her eyes seem to glow silver. She blinks, and her reflection is normal again.

Shaking it off, she unlocks the door and walks out.

EXT. SMITH FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Smith pulls into the driveway of his family's century-old farmhouse. His truck hauls a trailer with his giant, prize-winning pumpkin.

He pulls the truck up near a barn behind the house, backs the trailer up near a field next to the barn, then electronically lifts the trailer up. The pumpkin slides down to the ground with a thud!

He lowers the trailer back down, kills the engine, gets out and walks up to the pumpkin. He pulls a black magic marker out of pocket and writes HALLOWEEN '98 on the pumpkin.

INT. SMITH LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Smith plops down on a recliner with a beer in hand and flips on the TV with a remote. He reclines as A HORROR MOVIE plays on the TV. Focus on the scene on the TV, then back to Smith as we hear FAINT SHOUTING outside.

He lowers the volume on the TV to hear better, but hear nothing out of the ordinary. He turns the volume back up. A few beats, then SOMEONE BANGS ON HIS FRONT DOOR!

He spills his beer, then jets to his feet, grabs a shotgun propped up by the door, and peeks out the window. He loosens a bit, then opens the door to a bloody, disheveled Julie!

JULIE

Please help me, oh my God, please help me! I don't know what --

SMITH

(interjecting)

Whoa, whoa, whoa, what's going on? Is this real blood?

JULIE

Yes, it's real blood! I'm lost and people are chasing me!

Smith looks outside, past her, sees nothing.

SMITH

Okay, okay, come in.

He ushers her in with the tip of his shotgun. She walks in. He closes the door behind her.

SMITH

How'd you get all the way out here?

JULIE

I was at the Ball and--

SMITH

(cutting her off)

You were at the festival earlier. I had the giant pumpkin.

JULIE

Oh! Oh, right! Thank God! You have to help me.

SMITH

I will. Just slow down. You want something to drink? Water? Beer?

JULIE

Water would be fine.

SMITH

Sit down in the living room over there. Or stand, actually. Antique furniture. Can't risk the stains.

Smith sets the shotgun down and walks to the kitchen. Julie walks into the living room, where the horror movie still plays on the TV. She looks around the room. A bit of a creepy, rural, backwoods vibe in the décor. Taxidermy, etc.

Smith comes back with a glass of water, hands it to her.

SMITH
Fresh well water. Next best thing
to a spring.

Julie's a bit hesitant to sip it. He grabs it from her.

SMITH
Ain't nothing funny about it. Look.

He sips from it, hands it back to her.

SMITH
See. Harmless.

She takes a big sip from it and hands it back to him.

JULIE
Thank you.

SMITH
That your blood then?

JULIE
No.

SMITH
You kill someone?

JULIE
I...I don't know.

SMITH
Either you did or didn't.

JULIE
You said something earlier, at the
festival, about--

SMITH
(cutting her off)
Bloodsuckers. Vampires. Whole town
is infested with them. That what
you killed?

JULIE
I don't know. Maybe.

He whistles.

SMITH
Lord, you better hope they don't
find you. Them things is vicious.
(MORE)

SMITH (CONT'D)

But you're safe here, if you're inclined to stay. I got silver bullets in the shotgun.

No other options for her and she knows it.

JULIE

Okay.

SMITH

You wanna get cleaned up a bit? Got plenty of towels and hot water.

JULIE

Uh, yeah, that'd be nice, but I don't have any other clothes.

SMITH

I got some old clothes in the closet somewhere.

(catching her hesitancy)

Wife passed on last year. Haven't got the heart to part with her things just yet.

JULIE

Oh. Sorry to hear that.

SMITH

Yeah. Good woman. Anyway, shower's upstairs. Towels in the cabinet next to the door. I'll lay some clean clothes out for you.

INT. SMITH BATHROOM - NIGHT

Julie rinses off the blood in the shower. Red liquid mixes with the water and circles down the drain as much as it can. Small pieces of gore and viscera clog some of it.

She turns off the water and hears carving equipment outside. She steps out and wraps herself in a towel, then slowly pulls back a curtain over a window. She sees Smith carving out the top of the giant pumpkin.

She creeps to the door and opens it. A t-shirt and sweatpants lie folded on the floor, topped by a pair of underwear. She wrinkles her face at the panties, but grabs the pile anyway.

EXT. SMITH FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Julie walks out a backdoor into the backyard.

Smith continues to carve the top off the pumpkin. He stops when he sees her.

SMITH
Biggest one in the county this year. Won first place.

JULIE
Congratulations.

Smith pries the top off the pumpkin with a hand shovel.

JULIE
What can I do about these vampires?

SMITH
I wouldn't worry too much about all that right now.

JULIE
Why not?

SMITH
Me and the vamps, we got an understanding of sorts. They learned their lesson out here. They don't bother me, I don't bother them. Call this neutral territory.

She looks around. Kind of spooky this deep in nature this time of year.

JULIE
What happened to your wife?

SMITH
Lost her head. Alzheimer's. Came on quick and didn't last long. Buried out back, actually.

JULIE
She's buried here?

SMITH
Sure is. This is our home. You always bury your dead at home.

JULIE
Where is she?

SMITH
Back around the barn.

Julie walks around the back of the barn. She sees ANOTHER GIANT PUMPKIN with words written on it -- HALLOWEEN '97. No grave, though.

She sees a few other giant pumpkins, all first place from various years. And then it sinks in. Her eyes get big, her anxiety rises. She takes a couple steps backward, then turns and runs right into SMITH'S HAND SHOVEL! Down and out!

INT. GIANT PUMPKIN - NIGHT

Julie comes to inside the giant pumpkin, a makeshift coffin. She gasps, the musty, earthy smell of pumpkin overwhelming her senses. Her fingers sink into the slimy, fibrous interior as she desperately feels around her confinement.

The sticky pulp clings to her skin and seeds scatter as she moves. In the pitch darkness, every sound is amplified. Her ragged breathing, the squelch of pumpkin flesh, the faint echo of her own terrified heartbeat.

She bangs on the inside of the pumpkin and yells and screams!

EXT. SMITH FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Smith stands and stares at the pumpkin, admiring his work, not paying any mind to Julie's muffled wails.

SMITH

Welcome to Hallow Corner.

He looks up at the moon as her desperate pleas continue.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Bonnie moves swiftly through the shadowy streets, less busy this time of night, her backpack slung over her shoulder. She frequently glances over her shoulder, paranoid.

Bonnie picks up her pace, her breath quickening. She rounds another corner and sees the town square ahead, the silhouette of the Crow statue looming in the moonlight.

As she approaches, she notices a FIGURE standing in the statue's shadow, dark hooded sweatshirt pulled up over its head, dark pants, dark shoes. She creeps closer.

BONNIE

Ash?

Before the figure can respond, a van screeches to a halt nearby. The side door slides open, revealing FIVE PLAGUE DOCTORS! The figure near the statue turns at the commotion!

FIGURE

Bonnie, run!

Bonnie hesitates for a split second, torn between the mysterious figure and the approaching threat. She makes a split-second decision and sprints away from both, veering down a narrow side street!

She sprints down the street, her footsteps echoing off the buildings! The sound of multiple pursuers grows behind her!

She darts around a corner, nearly colliding with a PLAGUE DOCTOR emerging from an alley! Without missing a beat, she grabs a nearby trash can lid and swings it with all her might. It connects with the Plague Doctor's mask with a resounding CLANG, sending the figure stumbling backward!

She runs again, the sounds of pursuit grow closer! She spots an open cellar door and dives in, pulling it shut behind her!

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

Bonnie crouches in the darkness, trying to control her breathing. Above, she hears the heavy footsteps of the Plague Doctors passing by. She waits, heart pounding, until the sound fades. Cautiously, she emerges from the cellar.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Bonnie looks around, trying to get her bearings. In the distance, she spots the spire of a church piercing the night sky -- THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED FLAME. She breaks into a sprint, racing towards it!

EXT. HALLOW CORNER EXECUTIONER GALLOWES - NIGHT

Sheriff leads a cuffed Jerome up to the gallows. A hooded EXECUTIONER waits near a FIRE PIT, not yet lit.

Council members fill in the area in front of the gallows. Other vampires seen earlier at the Ball make up a crowd in front of the gallows.

Sheriff Miller and Deputy Miller walk up and stand at the back of the crowd. Deputy shoots Jerome a shit-eating smile!

Faye walks onto the gallows and reads from a scroll.

FAYE

Welcome to the execution of prisoner number six-one-six, otherwise known as just Jerome. Prisoner has been convicted of and condemned to death for trespassing, a violation of Section Four of the local bylaws of the Hallow Corner Village Council. It is customary to grant a soon-to-be executed prisoner a final statement before his death. Do you have a statement to make, prisoner?

JEROME

I hereby reserve and invoke my right to *duellum pro omnibus creaturis noctis* in this matter.

Faye's face goes slack. The council members do too.

DEPUTY MILLER

What the hell'd he say?!

FAYE

He has reserved and invoked his right to *duellum pro omnibus* --

DEPUTY MILLER

(cutting her off)

I heard that! What does it mean?!

FAYE

The accused, as a creature of the night, has the right to face his accuser, if also a creature of the night, in a trial by combat.

Murmurs and whispers spread through the crowd!

SHERIFF MILLER

Your Honor, this ritual hasn't been observed in thousands of years.

FAYE

But it will be observed tonight. Deputy Miller, step forward.

Sheriff and Deputy look at each other.

SHERIFF MILLER

Your honor, this is my son. Surely, we can talk --

FAYE

Is this the accuser or not?

SHERIFF MILLER

He is the accuser, yes, but --

FAYE

No buts, Sheriff. He made an accusation and he must defend it.

Deputy steps up to the front of the crowd, arrogant.

DEPUTY MILLER

Does this mean I have to fight this *thing* to the death?

FAYE

It does. Sheriff, uncuff the accused, please.

Sheriff walks up to Jerome and does so. Jerome walks down and stands face to face with Deputy in front of the gallows.

Faye steps between them as the crowd surround the gallows like a wrestling ring.

FAYE

This is *duellum pro omnibus creaturis noctis*, a trial by combat to the death. Only physical force is allowed and all magic is prohibited. If you use any type of magic, you will be immediately disqualified and decapitated by the Executioner. Are these rules clear?

Both nod.

FAYE

Very well. May the best creature win. You may transform!

The Deputy's body elongates and becomes gaunt, with pale, ashen skin stretched over sharpened features. His face contorts, eyes blood-red, and mouth revealing razor-sharp teeth. His hands become spider-like with claw-like nails.

Jerome's body expands with bulging muscles, growing taller and more massive. His face elongates into a feline muzzle with golden eyes and vertical pupils. His skin becomes covered in tawny fur with leopard-like spots and rosettes. He develops paws with retractable claws and a tail.

Faye steps away from the creatures and creates a circular ring of fire around them by drawing her finger in a circle, much to the delight of the crowd!

FAYE

Let the trial commence!

The two creatures circle each other, then slug it out for a few beats, both getting slashed by each other's claws! Jerome gets burned by the ring of fire when Deputy overpowers him to the edge, but then turns the tables and overpowers Deputy!

The vampires looks none too pleased at the shift in the fight and begin to boo! Sheriff acts like he's going to jump in the ring of fire, but Faye steps in between him and the ring!

The momentary distraction allows Gordon to sneakily toss a METAL WOLFSANGEL into the ring! Deputy and Jerome both reach for it, and the Deputy gets there first!

He slugs Jerome in the lower back with the metal hook and HIS FLESH TEARS OPEN IMMEDIATELY! BLOOD SEEPS OUT OF THE WOUND!

Jerome howls in pain and drops to his knees! Deputy then mounts him and presses the wolfsangel to his neck and draws more blood! He readies his fangs, dripping with viscous saliva, and is about to tear through Jerome's neck when --

Jerome shoves a clawed fist into the side of his ribcage! HE PULLS OUT ONE OF DEPUTY'S RIB BONES AND SHOVES IT THROUGH THE SIDE OF HIS NECK AND OUT THE OTHER SIDE!

Deputy topples over and struggles with the bone for a few beats before pulling it out! Meanwhile, Jerome gathers himself, grabs the wolfsangel and slings it at Deputy just as he pulls the bone out!

The metal catches Deputy in the throat and, together with the bone wound through the side, CREATES A CROSS-LIKE WOUND IN HIS NECK!

Deputy drops to his knees! Jerome grabs him by the hair, his neck hanging on by only a few tendons, then drags him to the fire ring and holds his neck to the flames!

The fire melts whatever neck flesh is left and JEROME RIPS OFF DEPUTY'S HEAD! He stands, panting, severed head in his hands. The crowd falls silent. The fire ring extinguishes.

Sheriff scrambles over to the headless body of his son! He looks down at it in disbelief, solemn and beside himself.

FAYE

Jerome, you've won your trial by combat, and with it, your freedom in Hallow Corner.

The Sheriff jumps to his feet.

SHERIFF

That wasn't part of the deal!

FAYE

It is now. And my verdict is final.

(to Jerome)

Do you need a ride home?

JEROME

(hoarsely)

My car...it's--

He's cut off by the sound of THREE SHOTS FIRED by the Sheriff! Jerome sees them in slow motion and gracefully ducks as the bullets whiz by him and --

STRIKE THE EXECUTIONER in the chest, then BOOM-SPLAT! Gore and viscera shower other nearby spectators!

Jerome turns toward the Sheriff and jumps at him, clawed hand curled up like a Superman Punch, then hurls his clawed fist into the face of the Sheriff!

He yanks out his claws, the Sheriff's eyeballs coming with them! The eyeless Sheriff falls forward onto the Deputy!

The crowd gasps collectively, a mix of shock and fear rippling through them. Some exchange worried glances, while others nod grimly, acknowledging the Divine justice at play.

Jerome slowly transforms back to human form, the eyes plopping to the ground next to the Deputy's severed head. He grimaces in pain from the combat. Faye walks up by his side.

FAYE

C'mon. I'll take you to your car.

EXT. RURAL ROAD OUTSIDE HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Faye drives up beside Jerome's car and parks. Jerome, still in pain, begins to get out but stops when --

FAYE

Wait.

She hands him the wolfsangel, stained with blood.

FAYE

This was meant for you.

JEROME

Thank you.

He gets out of the car, slowly, and limps towards his car as Faye drives away. He gets in his car.

INT. JEROME'S CAR - NIGHT

Jerome pulls out his cell phone, wincing as he does so.

CLOSE ON: the phone screen. Two missed calls from BONNIE BABYSITTER'S HOUSE.

Jerome's fingers hover over the call back button. His brow furrows. He hesitates for a couple beats before he flips the screen shut, his jaw tightening.

He starts the car and drives off. The road falls quiet, crickets chirping in the distance.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE SACRED FLAME - NIGHT

Bonnie reaches the church, its Gothic architecture looming ominously. She yanks at the heavy wooden door, managing to open it just enough to slip inside.

INT. CHURCH OF THE SACRED FLAME - NIGHT

Bonnie closes the door behind her, leaning against it as she catches her breath. The interior is dark, dusty, and filled with shadows. Moonlight filters through stained glass windows, casting eerie patterns on the floor.

As her eyes adjust to the darkness, she realizes she's not alone. TWO PEOPLE sit in a pew up near the altar, staring up at a FIGURE on the cross.

BONNIE

Ash? Is that you?

They turn their heads back at the sound of her voice -- her parents, Bram and Babs.

BRAM

Bonnie?

BABS

What are you doing here? Aren't you babysitting?

BONNIE

I...something happened. The boys went missing and then I got--

She stops herself. Something feels off.

BONNIE

Why are you here?

BRAM

We come here every All Hallows' Eve to pray. You know that.

BABS

Bon-Bon...what happened exactly?

The church doors burst open! ASH, early 20s, the same athletic build from his basketball photo with shaggier hair, rushes in!

ASH

Bonnie!

The Bardots stand up at the sight of him.

BABS

What is he doing here?

ASH

Don't trust them, B! They're part of this!

BRAM

Part of what?!

ASH

Bonnie! We have to go! Now!

Bonnie is torn between Ash and her parents. Not the first time, either. Ash pulls something out from under his hoodie -- a COPPER AMULET on a copper chain around his neck.

ASH

Your amulet! Use it!

BRAM

Don't do that! Don't!

Bonnie pulls her amulet out from underneath her shirt. It begins to glow with an intense silver light. Ash's amulet matches it with an intense copper glow.

Energy builds up in the church, the crackle of electricity, the humming of magnetism! The combined charge of the amulets create a CANOPY OF ENERGY crawling across the church ceiling!

The energy rumbles and builds quickly to a BOLT OF LIGHTNING that strikes the cross on the altar!

The impact is deafening, sending shockwaves through the church! The stained glass windows explode inward, showering the room with a kaleidoscope of sharp, colorful shards! All four of them shriek and duck!

As the echoes of the thunderclap fade, an eerie silence falls over the church. Slowly, everyone begins to rise, looking around in shock at the destruction.

Before anyone can make sense of things, the figure on the cross, previously hidden in shadow, slithers down off its perch. As it slides down from the cross, we can see it clearly for the first time --

The PLAGUE DOCTOR SCARECROW -- *Medicus Stramineus*, the STRAW DOCTOR -- from John's notes and the underground lab. Dressed in the long, dark robes of a plague doctor, straw poking out from its joints, its face a horrifying fusion of burlap and leather fashioned into a long beak, its eyes dark, empty sockets, its hands twisted claws of straw and twine.

The Straw Doctor's head swivels unnaturally, focusing on Bram and Babs. Its movements become a blur of unnatural speed, and it's on Bram before he can even fully turn, its straw-twisted claws plunging towards his chest. At the last moment, Bram's hand comes up, gripping something small and silver.

There's a flash of blinding silver light as the Straw Doctor makes contact with Bram. When the light fades, Bram is gone, leaving only a scorch mark on the floor.

BABS

No! Bram!

She lunges forward, a similar silver object in her hand. The Straw Doctor's hand shoots out, grabbing her by the throat. Another flash of silver light engulfs them both.

When Bonnie and Ash can see again, Babs is gone too, with only another scorch mark remaining.

The Straw Doctor stands there, motionless for a moment, before turning its attention to them, its empty eye sockets now glowing with an eerie silver light.

BONNIE
(voice trembling)
Mom... Dad...

ASH
(grabbing Bonnie's arm)
We have to go! Now!

He pulls her towards the exit as the Straw Doctor takes a menacing step in their direction, its beak beginning to open, flashing rows of jagged, obsidian-like teeth.

ASH
(grabbing Bonnie's arm)
B, let's go!

BONNIE
(resisting)
But...my parents!

ASH
(pulling harder)
They're gone! Let's go!

Finally, she allows him to pull her away and out of the church, but not before she cranes her neck and gets one last glance at the scene, the Straw Doctor standing in the middle of the aisles between the pews, menacingly motionless.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE SACRED FLAME - NIGHT

Ash leads Bonnie to a parked car. They jump in, Ash gunning the engine before Bonnie's door is even closed.

As they speed away, Bonnie looks back. In the rearview mirror, she sees a group of FIVE PLAGUE DOCTORS standing in the street, watching their departure.

BONNIE
(voice shaking)
Ash...what's happening? Where are we going?

ASH
Somewhere safe.

The car speeds out of Hallow Corner, leaving behind the town and its dark secrets.

As they pass a "Now Leaving Hallow Corner" sign, we pan up to see a MURDER OF CROWS taking flight, following the car into the night.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - DAWN

The first light of dawn breaks over Hallow Corner. The streets are eerily quiet, remnants of Halloween festivities scattered about. Puck walks alone down the middle of the empty street.

PUCK

Ah, Hallow Corner as All Hallows'
Eve comes to a close. A night when
the veil between worlds grew thin
indeed, and souls stood at
crossroads they never imagined.

He pauses by a fallen Halloween mask, picking it up and studying it.

PUCK

Choices were made, as they always
are. Some stepped into the light,
others embraced the shadow. Tricks
and treats, both sweeter and more
bitter than anyone could have
foreseen.

He drops the mask and continues walking, passing houses with jack-o'-lanterns now extinguished.

PUCK

The old ways reasserted themselves,
and some remembered the power their
choices truly hold.

He approaches the Crow statue in the town square, now eerily illuminated by the rising sun.

PUCK

Each decision nudged us toward
light or shadow. And on this night,
more than any other, those choices
carried such great weight.

He looks up at the statue, a knowing smile on his face.

PUCK

Some emerged from this crucible
transformed, while others...

He turns, looking back at the town, his expression somber.

PUCK

Well, not all who wandered in
darkness found their way back to
the light.

Puck begins to walk away from the town center, his form
seeming to fade as he goes.

PUCK

But the story of Hallow Corner is
far from over. The night may have
ended, but the echoes of the
choices made will resound for years
to come.

He disappears completely, leaving the town square empty as
the new day begins.

CUT TO:

FIRST END CREDITS, then --

INT. OCKERMAN ATTIC - NIGHT

A dimly lit, cluttered attic space. Furniture, moving boxes,
forgotten knick-knacks. James and Jacob poke their heads out
from behind a tower of stacked boxes.

JAMES

(whispering)
You think she's gone?

JACOB

(also whispering)
Yeah, no one ever checks the attic.

They high-five quietly. As they wait, Jacob pulls out the
crow-shaped chocolate on a stick and unwraps it. A piece of
paper falls out, fortune-cookie-like.

JAMES

Bro, you gotta share!

Jacob bends down and picks up the paper, unfolds it.

JACOB

What is this?

He shoves it into James's face. All that's printed on it is a
phone number -- **1-900-U-BEG-4-IT.**

JAMES

I think that's a phone number.

JACOB
It has letters, dumbass.

JAMES
Yeah, but the letters are the
numbers on the phone.

Jacob looks it over for a beat.

JACOB
Let's call it, bro!

INT. OCERKMAN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James grabs the cordless phone off the couch and dials the
number, Jacob at his side.

JACOB
Put it on speaker.

He does. The line rings once, then --

SEDUCTIVE FEMALE (V.O.)
Hey, baby. Thanks for calling 1-900-
U-BEG-4-IT. You're sure in for a
treat. Or maybe you'd rather have a
trick. It's your choice. So what
will it be? Press one for trick, or
press two for treat.

James and Jacob stare at each other, dumbfounded, curious.

JAMES
What do we do?

JACOB
I don't know. Press one.

James presses 1 on the phone pad.

JACOB
I meant press the one for treat!

JAMES
That was two!

SEDUCTIVE FEMALE (V.O.)
Mmm, honey, do I have a trick for
you. Close your eyes for me.

The boys look at each other. Jacob raises his hands. WTF?

SEDUCTIVE FEMALE (V.O.)
Are those eyes closed yet, baby?

They prod at each other for a beat, then close their eyes.

SEDUCTIVE FEMALE (V.O.)
Good boy. Now repeat after me.
Midnight crow with eyes of coal.

JAMES	JACOB
Midnight crow with eyes of coal.	Midnight crow with eyes of coal.

SEDUCTIVE FEMALE (V.O.)
Pierce the veil and claim my soul.

JAMES	JACOB
Pierce the veil and claim my soul.	Pierce the veil and claim my soul.

SEDUCTIVE FEMALE (V.O.)
Black feathers fall and dark
secrets rise.

JAMES	JACOB
Black feathers fall and dark secrets rise.	Black feathers fall and dark secrets rise.

SEDUCTIVE FEMALE (V.O.)
Transform me now, under these
Hallow skies.

JAMES	JACOB
Transform me now, under these Hallow skies.	Transform me now, under these Hallow skies.

The boys' noses start to bleed black blood. They dab at it, then start coughing it up! James drops the phone, a couple more beats and they're full-on vomiting BLACK POOLS OF BLOOD!

The veins in their necks turn BLACK and the color runs up their faces, then to their eyes! All other color disappears from their eyes and they turn PITCH BLACK!

THE END