

THE COMPANY TOWN

Written by

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INT./EXT. TRUCK/COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The WHOOSH of wind and HEAVY DOWNPOUR of rain slams against the windshield of a delivery truck.

DALE CROWDER, male, 35, scruff, trucker hat, overworked, but wired, clenches the steering wheel and stares out at the darkening skies ahead.

There's a logo on the side of the truck - A running stick figure. Next to the logo, the words: "VENTUS online."

Dale lets one hand off the wheel to grab a drink of Red Bull. STATIC, and then a voice comes over his CB radio.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Warehouse B-G thirteen to Truck
forty-two. Gettin bad out there
Crowder? Over.

Dale puts his Red Bull back in the cup holder and picks up the radio mic.

DALE
(clears throat)
Yeah, man. I got that tornado alert
on my phone like thirty minutes
ago. You never told me what to do.

A pause. Only the wind and the rain.

DISPATCH
Okay yeah, uh, how far out are you
again? Just go to a designated area
or, uh, head home. Over.

Dale rolls his eyes.

DALE
Well I'm right up the road from the
warehouse now dammit. I'll just run
in there.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Dale walks into CHAOS at a sprawling warehouse full of every product you could possibly find on a site like Amazon. A MANAGER is frantically speed-walking around, gabbing at employees that are scattered throughout.

MANAGER
(over the noise)
Everyone shelter at the severe
weather assembly area.

Dale finds STEPH and BILL.

DALE
Bill. Steph.

They nod, but keep walking.

STEPH
This way.

They reach an area underneath a banner hanging from the
rafters. Its got a tornado image on it.

Dale notices stacks of refrigerators and treadmills on the
pallets around them.

DALE
Screw this. We're surrounded by
heavy bulk shit.

BILL
Could go into the bathroom.

The three of them ditch the others.

A TORNADO SIREN BLARES from the outside.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - EVENING

The wind and rain have died down a little. There's an eerie
calm under the siren, as the sky gets darker and clouds move
in.

A TOWERING GRAY TORNADO appears in the warehouse parking lot.
Loose corn husks and other debris are sucked toward it.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Dale, Steph, and Bill are huddled in the corner. The lights
flicker. The VIOLENT SOUND of the tornado gets closer. They
look up. WHOOSH.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. BARRINGER - DAWN

A brisk Autumn morning. Elderly Oak and Maple trees with beautiful leaves of orange and red. OPENING TITLES BEGIN.

Shimmering dew on overgrown grass. The stillness of small dilapidated shacks. Their yards cluttered by the likes of beer cans, gardening tools, and discarded scrap wood. A sad unlit jack-o-lantern on every other porch.

Now on to well-preserved civic buildings. A spooky old Neo Classical, red brick and limestone. A sign that reads: "Patrick R. Boyle Library." Lights out.

The majestic and ominous red brick Barringer City Hall. Steeple, giant clock tower, and all. Not a soul in sight.

A beautiful, red brick, American Queen Anne style mansion. Straight out of the Gilded Age. Rough around the edges. And eerie. The Mystery Gang's wet dream. On its porch...

A wooden swing hanging from chains, creaks back and forth, to and fro. **All by itself.**

On the other end of town: Boring, newer, pristine, modern homes with freshly mowed yards. A different world just next door. Decked out in the trendiest Halloween decorations. Obnoxiously giant lawn skeletons. And inside one of these sterile homes...

Hanging on a child's bedroom wall: Amateurish but entrancing pastel drawings done with muted, dusty tones. Within them, we recognize the library, city hall, and the haunting red brick mansion.

Past the newer neighborhood...

Two signs on the side of a country road.

One is busted, lying on the ground from the storm. It is old, wooden, and painted, and reads: "Welcome to Barringer, IL. Home of the famous luxury rail car. Population 3,100." Covered in fading FFA and Lion's Club logos.

The other sign stands strong, sleek, and digital, flashing HD images of "Ventus Company Town" and happy employees in polo shirts.

Across the road, a towering seven-story office building and...

A bird's eye view of a sprawling warehouse next to a harvested corn field. A section of the warehouse roof is CAVED IN. Debris litters its parking lot. OPENING TITLES END.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

MIKE PUTZ, Caucasian Male, late 50s, a brunette toupee-wearing sharp-dressed sleaze, speaks into four microphones at a podium.

PUTZ

And thank you Pastor Bea, our own company Chaplain, for leading that prayer.

He motions to PASTOR BEA, Caucasian Female, late 40s, boyish, short hair, glasses, a cardigan over her clergy dress-blacks and collar, standing behind him. She's absurdly happy to be there.

PUTZ

(melodramatic)

Again, it's a regrettable situation. A very somber time for the company. And to our shareholders... I assure you that together, we will get through this.

Before he can leave, a REPORTER calls out--

REPORTER

Mr. Putz, what do you say to those questioning the existence of severe weather protocols at your shipping centers?

PUTZ

We have, uh *had*, a designated severe weather assembly area in this warehouse. I have been told that some employees chose not to--

REPORTER

One of the victims was crushed by items that were stacked in that designated area.

PUTZ

Our warehouses have always had guidelines in place and I am sure that after an investigation, we will know if a mistake was made.

He walks away from the podium as reporters yell at him. Pastor Bea does a double take and follows.

REPORTER

With six deaths reported, do you--

INT. ELECTRIC ESCALADE - DAY

The rear door SLAMS shut and the car starts moving. Pastor Bea sits next to Putz in the back seat. She stares him down while he loses himself in his smartphone.

He throws the phone on the floor and leans his head against the window.

BEA

Guess they think you cause tornados
now eh?

He ignores her.

BEA

Some of em think *I* can stop
tornados with prayer.
(forced chuckle)
How about we fire up the spa
tonight. What do you think? Kick
back a couple of margs.

PUTZ

After my call with the Interior
Secretary. This is not what I
needed right now. You know
Barringer used to lose two men a
month? Just gives a little
perspective.

BEA

I like to think the quality of life
has improved a bit since the
eighteen hundreds Mike.

Putz grins.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - NIGHT

The old red brick Queen Anne style mansion we saw before.

A string of orange lights glows in the front window.

There's a moving truck parked in the driveway.

INT. BARRINGER HOUSE - NIGHT

ALEX JENNINGS LOPEZ, Latino Male, 12, scrawny, black baggy t-shirt, jeans, and a black sweat band on his wrist, carefully removes a sloppily painted porcelain ghost figurine from a cardboard box. It smiles up at him.

LAURA (O.S.)
 Dammit. Come over here and help me
 honey.

Alex looks over at his mom LAURA LOPEZ GARCIA, Latina Female, 40s, still wearing her work pant suit. She's struggling to drape a string of bright orange lights across their window facing the front yard. Alex sets his porcelain ghost down on a coffee table and rushes over to her.

He grabs the opposite end of lights that fell onto the floor and stands on his tip toes to reach them to the top of the window.

Laura tacks her end of the lights up and then tacks Alex's.

LAURA
 Gracias papito.

DAVID "DAVEY" JENNINGS LOPEZ, Latino Male, 8, runs through the living room wearing a Monster Mask and knocks Alex's painted porcelain ghost onto the floor. It SHATTERS in half.

ALEX
 Son of a bitch!

Alex rushes over, shoves Davey out of the way, and picks up his ghost.

LAURA (O.S.)
 Language.

TIM JENNINGS, Caucasian Male 40s, loose flannel, sleeves rolled up, joins them. He takes a look at the ghost.

TIM
 Oh bud. When we're done unpacking
 I'll find some glue.

ALEX
 (to Davey)
 I painted that with Aunt Julie you
 moron.

He smacks Davey on the back of the head.

DAVEY
 Ow.

TIM
 (to Alex)
 Stop that. Your brother's restless.
 He *should* be in bed right now.

Davey runs off. Laura rummages through some boxes in the kitchen nearby.

LAURA

Did you see that hand anywhere? The one that grabs people when they reach for candy.

TIM

We should have waited until we were unpacked to put up decorations.

She walks over to him.

LAURA

(stressed whispers)

We've got to make this fun for them.

TIM

Tell me again why you were given this decaying pile of bricks when the other execs all have new houses?

Laura ignores this and reaches into a box. She pulls out a vase with a white skull and a bunch of colorful flowers painted on it.

She sets the vase on the table and then gets closer to him. She puts her hands on his shoulders and looks into his eyes.

LAURA

They're building more next year.

BACK ON Alex running his hand along the fireplace mantle. Dust comes off into his face. He coughs.

CRUNCH. He looks down and lifts up his foot. He just stepped on a cockroach.

ALEX

(to himself)

Yuck.

(to parents)

This place is gross!

Tim gestures toward him from the kitchen. Laura sighs.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Five executives and Pastor Bea sit at a long table in the penthouse of the Ventus office building, overlooking the town. Among them are STEVE ALMAS, caucasian male, 40s, an aging frat guy, and VIV TIMMONS, Caucasian Female, 50s, short and frail.

Pastor Bea has her legs crossed and is reading a "Book on Crypto."

Putz paces in front of them.

PUTZ

You know, we were finally getting past that bullshit Frontline documentary.

(mocking voice)

The bathrooms are too far. The quotas are too high.

He SLAMS his hand against the giant glass window.

BEA

(without looking up)

Good heavens.

PUTZ

When you're the biggest employer in the country and have the reach that we do, there will always be some issues.

STEVE

Here, here.

Putz adjusts his toupee.

PUTZ

(clears throat)

I want the internal research department turned inside out. Make sure there are no records of that emergency response audit we blew off. And find whatever rat bastard leaked our turnover rate to the press.

Steve types on his laptop.

STEVE

Will do.

VIV

People don't want to work anymore.
And the ones who do, expect too
much. What if Ventus didn't exist?
What then? These jobs would be
gone.

PUTZ

Exactly. Take a week on the yacht
next month Viv.

Viv smiles.

STEVE

Very true. The family restaurant
isn't even open on weekdays anymore
because no one wants to work.

Putz leans on the back of a chair.

PUTZ

Alright, so as usual, the feds will
send their hound to sniff around.
Ventus security will put together
our own internal report. We'll say
what we're gonna do better, and
nail that coffin shut.

STEVE

Amen.

Putz's attention shifts to a broken sprinkler on the ceiling.

PUTZ

And leave the sprinkler system out
of it. Still not up to code. I
can't be bothered.

Laura and Alex walk through the door. Alex has his backpack
on. Laura notices his black pentagram wristband and takes it
off him.

LAURA

(to Putz)

Ope, sorry we interrupted. Steve
mentioned I should show Alex my new
office before school.

STEVE

I did.

PUTZ

All good, all good. Welcome!

LAURA
 (nudges Alex)
 Say hello. This is my boss, Mister
 Putz.

ALEX
 Hola Mister Putz.

LAURA
 (to Putz)
 I told him I'm so special, that you
 came to town for my first day.

PUTZ
 I *wish* that were the reason. Alas,
 we've got a crisis of angry
 employees on our hands. Hope you
 brought your A-game.

LAURA
 Angry employees are my specialty.
 (to Alex)
 Alright honey, have fun at school.

She kisses him on the head.

ALEX
 Goodbye Mamá.

He leaves through the door. Putz calls after him.

PUTZ
 Adiós!

Laura shoots Putz a painful smile.

INT. SEVENTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

We catch the tail end of a video that Alex and his classmates
 are watching on a projector screen with the lights off. Most
 aren't paying attention.

The video ends with a drone shot of the beautiful Barringer
 City Hall building topped by its clock tower and steeple.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And in two-thousand and one,
 eighteen years before ground broke
 on the Ventus Headquarters, old
 Barringer town was made a National
 Monument, ensuring that James
 Barringer and his legacy would live
 on.

The video ends and MISS TAYLOR, early 30s, Alex's teacher, turns the lights on.

RYDER CROWDER, Caucasian Male, 12, greasy brown hair, and worn blue Vans sneakers, appears from hibernation within his hoodie on his desk with a groan.

RYDER

Miss Taylor, is that the last time?

MISS TAYLOR

Ryder, we'll continue to watch it every time we get a new student, just as the school requires.

RYDER

Let *me* tell the damn story next time. I'll shorten it up.

MISS TAYLOR

Excuse me?

RYDER

Darn story.

Alex laughs with the rest of the class.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

As Alex leaves school, he sees ZANDER ALMAS, Caucasian bleach-blonde Male, 12, handing party fliers to some friends. They ignore Alex as he passes by.

He jogs to catch up with Ryder.

ALEX

You going to the party?

RYDER

Zander's? Nah, his parents do a bunch of Halloween stuff. They all get scared together and act like sissies.

ALEX

Sounds cool.

They walk off the school grounds and continue down the street, passing the modern pristine executive homes.

RYDER

Yeah, handing out paper fliers his mommy made is so cool.

ALEX

I heard he sent invites on Discord too.

RYDER

K.

He thinks.

RYDER

So you like being scared huh? Come hang with me this weekend.

ALEX

Okay. And do what?

RYDER

You remember the stupid video? How families used to live here to make train cars? I live by the old factory building. They say kids died in it.

ALEX

Oh over by the shacks. Yeah okay let's do it.

RYDER

Do what?

ALEX

Camp out in there?

RYDER

In the building? Nah, you wouldn't last.

(hiding his own fears)

I'll show you the outside.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alex stops walking. Ryder follows suit.

RYDER

Damn. You're in the Barringer house?

ALEX

(not enthused)

Yeah, its a dump compared to the new ones like Zander's.

RYDER
Those are boring. You know
Barringer himself lived in that
right?

ALEX
Yeah. Barringer House? Kinda
figured.

Alex walks toward the front door and realizes Ryder isn't
leaving.

ALEX
Well, I gotta finish unpacking and
stuff.

RYDER
Cool.

He doesn't leave.

ALEX
I could ask my parents if you can
come over tomorrow?

RYDER
For sure! I mean yeah, that'd be
cool.

ALEX
Bye?

RYDER
See ya.

Alex disappears inside.

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex is sitting on his bed. He opens a pocket-sized leather-bound book and scoots closer to his lamp to read it.

There's a handwritten note inside the cover: "To my favorite nephew... They can hear us! Love, Aunt Julie"

The first page reads "Seances: Contacting the Dead. The lights will give you signs."

His lamp dims in and out startling him.

And again.

His little brother Davey throws the door open, amused with himself. He's swiping up and down on a smart phone.

DAVEY

Hehehe.

Alex stomps over to him.

ALEX

Give me that.

He takes the phone and swipes up and down on the screen controlling the lamp bulb. It's a smart home app.

ALEX

Mom, Davey has your phone!

DAVEY

I do not!

Davey grabs the phone back and runs off.

INT. RYDER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ryder lies on a tattered couch. He stares at an old Zenith tube television with nothing but screeching gray noise on the screen. An obnoxious bouquet of flowers sits in the middle of the room, next to a photo of truck driver Dale Crowder.

A knock at the door. It opens. SHIRLEY HORNER, African-American Female, 70s, walks in relieved.

SHIRLEY

I was waiting an hour for you.

He ignores her. She turns the TV off.

RYDER

Sorry.

SHIRLEY

If you're not going to come stay at mine, then I'm staying here.

RYDER

Fine.

She walks over to him.

SHIRLEY

You doing okay being back at school?

A tear runs down Ryder's cheek. She joins him on the couch and gives him a side hug. He buries his face in her shoulder and sniffles.

SHIRLEY
I'm not going anywhere.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - EVENING

Alex and Ryder rock back and forth on a porch swing. It CREAKS loud. Alex winces.

ALEX
It kinda hurts my ears.

RYDER
(louder over the noise)
I like it.

Alex stops the swing by putting his feet down.

ALEX
I'm good.

RYDER
I forgot Zander's party is tonight.
We should go spy on them and go to
the old factory after.

ALEX
I don't think--

The swing SWAYS back and forth with its unbearable creaks.

RYDER
Thought you wanted to stop.

Alex stares at him as the swing keeps rocking.

ALEX
It's not me.

RYDER
Very funny. C'mon.

He gets up, walks off the porch, and makes his way to the sidewalk.

The swing keeps swinging all by itself. Alex jumps off of it and runs after Ryder.

ALEX
Dude, I'm serious. Something's up.

RYDER
Maybe it's the Rascals.

ALEX
The Rascals?

RYDER
Yeah. The kids who died in the
train factory. Miss Taylor says
they like to haunt Barringer's old
house cause they think he's still
there.

As they walk, Alex looks back at his new home and doesn't say
another word.

EXT. ZANDER'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Alex and Ryder stalk Zander and the other boys and girls from
the forest. Zander's house is one of the new ones. A palace
compared to the shacks.

RYDER
Ha. They're making s'mores.

ALEX
(squinting)
I like s'mores.

The TORNADO SIREN BLARES throughout town.

Alex looks up at the sky.

ALEX
Is that... Another tornado?

The siren ends.

RYDER
Nah, it's the nine o'clock whistle.
Curfew.

Alex steps on a branch with a loud CRACK. The kids at the
party all look toward them from the fire pit. Zander walks
over.

RYDER
(whispers to Alex)
Don't move.

A phone light shines in their faces. Alex covers his eyes.

RYDER

Shit.

ZANDER

(authoritarian)

What are you guys doing back here?

ALEX

We got lost. S-sorry.

ZANDER

Hey, you're new.

ALEX

Yeah.

ZANDER

Want a s'more?

Alex turns to Ryder. *How bout it?*

RYDER

You guys have fun with your kiddie
shit. I'm out.

He disappears into the woods.

ZANDER

(to Alex)

Coming?

Alex follows Zander to the house.

EXT. ZANDER'S BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Alex sits around the fire pit in silence with the others,
eating a s'more. COLLEEN, African-American Female, 12,
wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, comes out of the house and
joins them.

The only seat open is next to Alex on a little bench. She
takes it.

COLLEEN

You're Alex right?

ALEX

Yeah. You?

COLLEEN

Colleen.

ZANDER

His mom works for my dad. Ryder was here too, but he ran away.

COLLEEN

Figures.

ALEX

Why?

ZANDER

His dad was one of the ones who died in the tornado.

ALEX

(holy shit)

Oh.

COLLEEN

So do you like it so far?

ALEX

Besides the deadly tornado? Yeah.

(pause)

Do you guys know about the Rascals?

ZANDER

The ones that haunt your house?

(he smiles)

Maybe.

The others snicker.

ALEX

What happened to them?

The kids all exchange nervous glances.

COLLEEN

(pre-lap)

Well, when they used to build Barringer train cars here, there were some workers as young as us...

EXT. OLD FACTORY - NIGHT

Ryder exits the forest and comes upon the old burned out factory. It looks more like a charred barn. A chunk of wall is missing. Piles of rubble and old tools litter the yard around it. He hesitates and looks through two big open doors... Then walks in.

INTERCUT CAMPFIRE/OLD FACTORY

COLLEEN

Some were even younger. One time,
the kids were made to take night
shifts and paint while the grownups
slept.

Back on Ryder in the old factory. Faint cheerful voices of
children start to chant around him.

CHILDREN (V.O.)

(sing-song)

*Round and round the house we go,
will it burn? No one knows. Up,
down, round again, not enough to
save our friend.*

Ryder shines his phone flashlight around the room, attempting
to find the source of the voices.

COLLEEN

A girl named Holly Giddens was
tired of working, so she started
dancing in the rafters.

An orange translucent light swirls like a swarm of fireflies
from the ground of the factory up into the air, illuminating
the room around Ryder. The building is no longer in shambles.
The chunk of wall isn't missing.

The faded ghostly figures of child laborers appear out of
thin air and dance around him as he gasps, staggers, and
falls onto his butt.

CHILDREN (V.O.)

(louder now)

*Round and round the house we go,
will it burn? No one knows. Up,
down, round again, not enough to
save our friend!*

Ryder looks up to the rafters and sees the ghostly figure of
HOLLY GIDDENS, Caucasian red-head female, 12, dancing
playfully on the beams.

Back at the fire pit, Zander gets up.

ZANDER

I'm going inside.

COLLEEN

Scared?

ZANDER
(clears throat)
Bathroom.

He hurries away. Alex waits intently for more.

COLLEEN
Anyway, the other kids cheered
Holly on. She grabbed a rope
hanging from a hook and tied it
around her neck while balancing
with one foot on the beam and one
in the air. And then with a smile
she said--

In the factory, Ryder's eyes widen as ghostly Holly balances
with the rope around her neck.

HOLLY
Look! I'm a hangman.

COLLEEN
Look! I'm a hangman.

Holly loses her balance and FALLS. Her neck SNAPS as her body
is caught by the rope.

COLLEEN
And then she slipped.

The ghostly children SCREAM around Ryder.

COLLEEN
The kids below trembled at the
sight of her lifeless body hanging
from the rafters. While some rushed
to get her down, others ran to get
help. In the chaos, they knocked
over an oil lantern and the
building caught fire.

The mystical orange swirls of light shoot down to the ground
of the factory, and then sprout back up into FLAMES. Ryder
picks himself up and runs to the doors.

COLLEEN
As they all tried to escape, they
found that the doors were jammed.

Ryder reaches the doors. They are bolted shut now. *How?* He
looks over his shoulder and sees the fire closing in on him.
He shakes the doors as hard as he can.

RYDER
Help!

COLLEEN

And they all burned alive.

Silence. The doors are gone. The flames are gone. The factory is dark again. Ryder points his phone flashlight up at the rafters. Holly Giddens' ghostly body is gone too. He runs for his life.

EXT. ZANDER'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Zander returns from the house, just in time for the story to be over.

ZANDER

Crazy stuff right?

Colleen smirks.

ALEX

And everyone says they haunt *my* house cause Barringer lived there?

ZANDER

Yeah. They're looking for the boss so they can make him *pay*.

Alex takes this in.

ALEX

(sarcastic)

That's actually really cool. In fact, I'm gonna head home right now and check it out. Thanks guys.

ZANDER

Lame. The party's just getting started.

COLLEEN

(to Alex)

You walking?

ALEX

Yeah...

COLLEEN

I'll give you a ride.

ZANDER

Wow. You two have fun.

EXT. OAK STREET - NIGHT

Alex rides on the pegs of Colleen's bike as she pedals them up the street. He holds on to her shoulders.

ALEX

So what do you like to do?

COLLEEN

What do I like to do?

ALEX

Yeah. Around here. For fun.

COLLEEN

(sarcastic)

Everything I do is with strict purpose. I don't do fun.

ALEX

Oh. Okay.

COLLEEN

I don't really like people. I just try to be nice.

ALEX

Damn.

COLLEEN

Sometimes I'd rather hang out with people in a book, than go to shit like that.

ALEX

I've definitely been there.

COLLEEN

(grins)

I can't tell if you're gullible or you're just an asshole like me.

Ryder comes RUNNING from the nearby forest. He stops at them in the street, out of breath. Colleen hits the breaks. Alex steps off her pegs.

RYDER

Alex.

They stare at him, confused.

RYDER

Colleen?

COLLEEN

Yes?

RYDER

Never mind.

He turns around and his eyes glow orange as he walks up the street in the other direction like a zombie.

COLLEEN

Okay?

ALEX

Is he always... like that?

COLLEEN

We haven't talked in awhile. Last summer most of my friends were out of town and we hung out a few times. He was cool then.

ALEX

I guess if *my* dad...

COLLEEN

Yeah, same.

A pause.

ALEX

I'm gonna go get him.

He sprints up the street. Colleen sighs, and rides after him.

He stops in front of Ryder. Ryder freezes in place.

ALEX

You cool?

Colleen pulls up next to them. Ryder blinks. He looks from her to him.

RYDER

Yeah? Yeah, I'm cool.

ALEX

We'll walk you home.

COLLEEN

(with care)

Yeah, come on.

RYDER

Okay.

Colleen gets off her bike and walks beside them.

ALEX

You guys got any plans for Halloween? I was gonna take my brother trick-or-treating if you wanna come...

COLLEEN

(smiles at Ryder)
I could be persuaded.

INT. BARRINGER HOUSE - NIGHT

Alex walks in through the front door. Tim is sifting through a box.

ALEX

Did you get my bike out yet?

TIM

It's still buried. I'll take a look in the morning. Did you guys have fun?

ALEX

Yeah. We did.

He runs upstairs.

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex sets a box in his closet. His eyes catch an old framed black and white photo in the corner. He picks it up and takes it over to his bed to look at under the lamp light.

It's a photo of his house. The Barringer house, dated 1880. He rubs some dust off of it with his thumb.

The lamp light dims down and back up.

He looks to the door. No sign of Davey. He sets the photo on his bedside table.

The light dims down and back up again. He freezes.

ALEX

Davey stop.

He waits for an answer. None.

He walks to his bedroom door and swings it open. Just a dark hallway. And silence. When he turns around he sees--

TWO GHOSTLY CHILDREN, translucent and white, ten years old, sitting on his bed. His eyes widen. He's too spooked to speak or move.

Both children wear worn out work pants and stained button down shirts. A girl, FANNIE, African-American, and a boy, CLEO, Caucasian, with a little Irish wool cap on his head.

CLEO
Is he here?

Alex is still too stunned to move. Fannie fades away and reappears in front of his face. Toe to toe.

FANNIE
Tell us.

ALEX
Wh- who?

Fannie fades away again and reappears behind him.

FANNIE
(yelling whisper)
Tell us!

Alex jumps at the sound of her voice over his shoulder.

CLEO
We know he's back. We can feel it.

ALEX
Ba-- Barringer? He's very dead. I
just moved here.

Fannie and Cleo glide up into the air and hover above him, arms folded and angry.

Alex's body shakes. He staggers backward and TRIPS onto the floor.

The ghostly children DIVE down through the floor and disappear.

Alex gets to his feet and grabs his seance book. He takes a DEEP breath, wipes the sweat from his forehead, and RUNS out of his bedroom and down the stairs to--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alex looks up at the ceiling and then around the kitchen, expecting to see the ghost children. Nothing.

He runs to the cellar door right around the corner. He opens it, and stands at the top of the stairs.

He stares down into the darkness. And then takes a step.

And another.

And another.

And then like tearing off a bandaid, rushes down the rest.

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

Alex pulls the string of a light bulb that illuminates the cellar.

It's empty. And silent. Until a voice at the top of the stairs--

LAURA

Honey. What are you doing down there?

Alex looks around once more. Nothing.

ALEX

I'm... Going back to bed.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Laura sips a cup of coffee. Alex walks in.

ALEX

Mom, we have to move to a different house.

LAURA

Papito, not you too.

Alex grabs a Pop-Tart.

ALEX

Mom. Please. This house is messed up. There's...

LAURA
There's what? I've about had it
with you and your papá.

ALEX
Nothing.

EXT. RYDER'S HOUSE - DAY

Alex knocks on a window.

ALEX
Ryder? I can hear the TV.

He knocks again.

ALEX
I gotta talk to you.

Shirley comes out of the house next door and stands on her porch.

SHIRLEY
He hasn't been doing too well hun.
I think he needs some time.

ALEX
I'm Alex. We hung out yesterday.

SHIRLEY
Wow, I didn't expect he'd be making
new friends right now. I'm his
Grandma Shirley.

ALEX
Oh.

SHIRLEY
(chuckles)
Not by blood. Just looking after
him until his mother-- Well for
awhile.

ALEX
Can you tell him I came?

SHIRLEY
Okay, I'll do that. You take care.

Alex picks his bike up off the yard and rides away.

INT. COLLEEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Colleen focuses on the laptop computer screen at her desk and types while Alex walks around her room.

Hanging on the wall behind him are the pastel drawings of Barringer landmarks.

ALEX

(nearly hyperventilating)
And when I turned around, these two kids were sitting on my bed. Clear as I can see you now. But, well... see-through.

COLLEEN

(still typing)
Like translucent?

ALEX

Sure? Yeah.

COLLEEN

Okay, keep going.

ALEX

And they were angry. Looking for Barringer. Anyway, Ryder wasn't answering and you seemed to know a lot about them...

Colleen concentrates even harder on her computer now. Her typing quickens.

COLLEEN

I love what I'm hearing. Just a sec. I'm almost finished.

Alex notices the drawings on the wall.

ALEX

These are really cool.

He puts his hand up to the drawing that resembles his new home. The Barringer house.

COLLEEN

Annd done.

She shuts her laptop. Just then, her phone starts beeping.

COLLEEN

Like clockwork.

She answers a video call. It's her mother. DEIDRA, African-American Female, mid 40s.

DEIDRA
Hi baby. We made it to D.C.

COLLEEN
Thanks for the invite.

DEIDRA
Don't be silly. You've got school.
You do your coding today?

COLLEEN
Yep.

DEIDRA
Okay baby. Just wanted to check in.
Love you.

COLLEEN
Bye. Love you.

Deidra ends the call and her face disappears from Colleen's phone.

COLLEEN
Sorry, my mom is obsessed with me
being a programming genius like
her. So you saw *the Rascals*? That's
wild.

ALEX
Yeah. Well, I think I did. And they
think Barringer is here. Like
alive. And they're out to get him.

Colleen fans herself off with her hands theatrically.

COLLEEN
Sorry just let me... Take a moment.
(she sighs)
I've always believed. I just never
thought they'd really appear.

She stands up.

COLLEEN
Take me to them.

INT. ALEX'S HALLWAY - DAY

Alex has a hand on his bedroom doorknob, delaying Colleen from entering.

ALEX

I was kind of hoping not to see them again.

COLLEEN

I don't think they're going anywhere.

He takes a deep breath and opens the door.

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boxes have been unpacked. The bed is made. The black and white framed photograph of the house is right where Alex left it on the bedside table.

He stands still with caution while Colleen snoops around. She looks in the closet.

No ghosts anywhere.

Alex points at the old framed photograph.

ALEX

There's the picture I was looking at before--

COLLEEN

--Oh I've seen it.

Alex crosses his arms. *Huh? When?*

COLLEEN

(on his confused silence)
I hung out in here a few times.

Alex stares at her.

COLLEEN

While it was vacant.

He raises his eyebrows.

ALEX

Gotcha. Well it seems all clear.
You want to do something else?

COLLEEN

No, no. I think we should stick around.

ALEX

Listen, I've never had a girl in my room before... I don't know if my mom--

COLLEEN

Just let her know we're waiting for the ghosts.

ALEX

I'm not telling my parents I saw ghosts. They already think I'm a freak.

COLLEEN

Makes three of us. Give me your phone.

He hands it to her. She texts.

COLLEEN

Hi mom. My friend Colleen and I are doing a project in my room. Done.

She hands it back.

ALEX

What exactly are we going to do if the Rascals do come back?

COLLEEN

You tell me. You're the one with the I see dead people vibe.

He takes offense and pulls off his black pentagram wrist band. She plops down on his bed.

ALEX

I just like reading about it okay? I've never seen a dead person until now. I've never even been to a funeral.

He sits down next to her.

The door SWINGS OPEN.

ALEX

Ah!

It's his mom.

LAURA

Oh dear.

(Smiling at Colleen)

Hi there.

(to Alex)

You two want some snacks?

ALEX

We're good mom. Thanks.

She walks away leaving the door open. Colleen bursts into laughter. She notices the little leather book next to his pillow and picks it up. She opens it.

COLLEEN

Seances? You didn't tell me you summoned them.

ALEX

I didn't. And my Aunt Julie gave that to me before she died.

COLLEEN

I thought you've never been to a funeral.

ALEX

I didn't go. My parents thought I was too young.

A pause.

COLLEEN

I've never met someone who just casually reads about talking to dead people.

ALEX

Some people do it every Sunday.

COLLEEN

True.

She grins.

ALEX

They went down.

COLLEEN

Huh?

ALEX

The rascals. They went through my floor and so I checked down in the kitchen. And then the basement. But they were gone.

COLLEEN

C'mon then.

She walks out, leaving him there.

INT. CELLAR - LATER

Colleen and Alex sit at a round wooden table. Alex leans on it, resting his head in his arms, while Colleen lounges comfortably reading his little book.

COLLEEN

It says here that skeptics can lower the energy of a seance. Imagine that.

She flips the page.

ALEX

(over it)

I told you I didn't summon them. They just showed up. They'll come back while I'm trying to sleep. Watch.

Colleen stands up and sets the book on the table.

COLLEEN

Okay you had me going for a bit. I thought you'd put more effort into it and use your little brother or something.

Alex perks his head up.

ALEX

What?

COLLEEN

I thought you were actually going to try and scare me good.

ALEX

You don't believe me?

COLLEEN

Hey I like to have fun. I was
waiting for something to happen.
Was that all?

Her chair SLIDES back against the concrete wall. Alex's chair
does the same, making him fall to the floor.

COLLEEN

(impressed)
Okay, I'm into it.

Alex trembles as he picks himself up.

ALEX

That wasn't me.

Colleen's chair comes sliding back at her so that she's
sitting in it backwards, then scoops her up into the air.

The chair drops to the floor leaving her body hanging upside
down as if there's an invisible hand holding her by the
ankle. She SCREAMS. Alex watches, stunned.

COLLEEN

Make it stop!

ALEX

Ma!

He gulps and then runs to Colleen. Just as he gets to her,
she falls on him, sending them to the ground.

Laura opens the door, comes down a few stairs, and sees them
intertwined.

LAURA

You need something honey?

Colleen sits up, in shock. She puts her hands on her forehead
and breathes deep. In and out.

ALEX

We have to move. There are
literally ghosts trying to kill us.

Laura sighs and goes back up the stairs.

LAURA (O.S.)

I'm keeping the door open.

Alex looks at Colleen. *I tried.*

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex sits up in his bed, reading the little leather book. He runs his hand along the note his Aunt Julie wrote him.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing denim overalls, opens the door. It's AUNT JULIE.

JULIE

Hey buddy. What'd ya think?

Alex smiles.

ALEX

It's cool. Real cool. I think it works actually.

JULIE

Oh really?

He flips the book to a specific page.

ALEX

(realization)

Wait... Aunt Julie?

He looks back up with dread. She's gone. He scans the room--

JULIE'S FACE is right in front of him. BRUISED, BLOODIED, AND BATTERED. Cockroaches crawl all over it. She's crouched next to his bed.

He SCREAMS in absolute horror.

ALEX

No!

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex JOLTS awake, covered in sweat. The little book is on his chest. His jittering hand puts it over on the nightstand.

EXT. RYDER'S HOUSE - DAY

Alex throws a wood chip at Ryder's window while Colleen knocks on the front door over and over again.

ALEX

I'm telling you, it was my aunt's face. But it was a dream. I think. Or a nightmare. Maybe the others were too.

Colleen walks over to the window and peers inside.

COLLEEN

I'm damned sure that what *I*
experienced was real. Too real.

ALEX

Who skips school on Halloween?

Next door, Shirley walks out onto her porch and sets a bowl of candy on the top step.

SHIRLEY

He left me a note.

She sits down in a chair, nonchalant. Colleen and Alex rush over to her.

COLLEEN

Yeah?

SHIRLEY

Sorry. No costumes, no candy.

Really?

SHIRLEY

Ah I'm just messing. He said he
needed a couple of days.

ALEX

Oh.

COLLEEN

(looking at Ryder's house)
Uhm... what's that?

Alex and Shirley turn their attention to the side of Ryder's house and see a sloppily painted red rose.

Colleen walks over and examines it up close. The paint drips down the siding and into the grass.

Shirley's gaze freezes.

ALEX

Is that a uh Halloween prank they
do around here?

She walks out into the yard and looks at the side of her own house. Another painted red rose.

SHIRLEY

Guess so.

COLLEEN
Why'd it spook you?

A pause.

SHIRLEY
You never been to the cemetery?

They shake their heads.

SHIRLEY
(checks her watch)
Eh, I've got a minute. Come on.

Alex stares at Colleen, unsure. *Is she cool?* Colleen nods.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Fallen leaves of brown and red are piled in front of a gravestone that reads: "Timothy Colander, 1873-1885. Beloved Son."

Colleen and Alex stand before it next to Shirley.

ALEX
Are you related or something?

The wind blows away the leaves, revealing:

A rose. Engraved in the bottom right of the stone.

ALEX
Oh, that's cool.

Colleen walks over to a grave next to it and rubs off some dirt. Another rose.

COLLEEN
1885.

She rushes to another. Alex follows.

COLLEEN
1885.

ALEX
1885.

Their eyes meet.

SHIRLEY
All the Rascals were memorialized
with a rose.

INT./EXT. SHIRLEY'S SEDAN - DAY

Colleen and Alex sit in the back of Shirley's 1970s Ford Sedan. Trick-or-treaters have begun filtering out into the streets.

SHIRLEY
(upon seeing them)
I hope I didn't miss too many cutie pies.

ALEX
Miss Shirley, you can drop us at the next street if that's cool. We'll grab our bikes later.

SHIRLEY
Grandma Shirley dear. No shame in being an old lady.

Colleen and Alex grin.

Shirley drives to the corner and stops the car.

SHIRLEY
Alright. Have a nice time now.

Colleen follows Alex out of the back seat, then turns back to Shirley.

COLLEEN
Tell Ryder sorry we missed him.

ALEX
(to Shirley)
If you need help getting the paint off--

SHIRLEY
Nah. I'll have the little assholes do it when I find them.

She smiles. They smile back and start up the street.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - EVENING

Alex and Colleen arrive just as Davey is leaving the house dressed as a little vampire.

ALEX
(to Davey)
Hey, hold on. I'm gonna grab a mask.

DAVEY
(totally lying)
Dad said I can go by myself this
year.

He reveals his fangs and hisses at them. They watch him run into the street, disappearing in a crowd of trick-or-treaters.

ALEX
Alright then.

COLLEEN
Get the mask. I have an idea.

EXT. PUTZ'S BACKYARD - EVENING

Pastor Bea sips on a margarita in the hot tub behind Putz's mansion on the outskirts of town. She's wearing one of those t-shirts that has a cartoon torso and bikini drawn on it. THE MONSTER MASH plays through speakers mounted to the house.

Putz's mansion is an upgrade from the other executive homes. Three floors, a basketball half court and tennis court in the side yard, and a putting green.

He lines up a golf ball to hit into the nearby field. WHACK. It pops straight up in the air and doesn't go very far.

BEA
(between sips)
Fore!

Putz turns and walks toward the hot tub.

PUTZ
I'm not feeling it. You hit a few
balls.

BEA
Hell yeah.

She sets her margarita on the edge of the tub and gets out. Her bikini bod t-shirt and swim shorts drip as she walks over to him and grabs the golf club.

PUTZ
Just keep your eye on the ball.

She lines up a ball and gets in a golf stance.

BEA
 Top Golf is my go-to date night
 Mike.

Putz folds his arms and analyzes.

PUTZ
 Didn't know you could go on dates.

Bea swings and CRUSHES the ball three hundred plus yards.

PUTZ
 Damn.

BEA
 I'm a Lutheran Mike. I love how you
 hired me and you still don't know
 my denomination.

PUTZ
 Does it matter?

Bea lines up another ball--

BEA
 Nah.

And crushes it.

MONSTER MASH (V.O.)
 (song)
*The monster mash! It was a
 graveyard smash.*

Bea does a little dance. Putz checks the time on his phone.

PUTZ
 Alright, dry off and get your
 costume on. We've got work to do.

Bea puts the golf club in its bag and walks over to him.

BEA
 Huh. Okay. This is all I've got for
 a costume.

She points down at her bikini bod shirt.

PUTZ
 No, I meant your priest clothes and
 whatnot.

Bea grabs a towel and dries off.

BEA
 Alright. Where we going?

PUTZ
 I'm going to show you why I really
 brought you here.

BEA
 Color me intrigued. B-R-B.

She heads to the house.

PUTZ
 Bring a bible. And a crucifix.

BEA
 (chuckles)
Lutheran, Mike.

DAVEY (PRE-LAP)
 Trick-or-treat!

EXT. ZANDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zander's dad, Steve from Ventus, answers the door dressed in a top hat, black coat with tails, and a spectacle on one eye like the Monopoly man. He's got a bowl of candy in his hand.

He looks down at Davey, who reveals his fangs and holds out a plastic jack-o-lantern bucket.

STEVE
 Well hello there little Dracula.
 Take a handful.

Davey grabs a big handful of candy.

DAVEY
 (loud and clear cause his
 dad told him to)
 Thank. You.

He pivots and skips away. As he disappears, we switch to the POV of someone else carrying a pillow case full of candy. Not much taller than Davey. We see that Steve leaves the door open as he steps inside.

Our POV sneaks in behind him.

INT. ZANDER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We walk in ever so quietly. Steve sits down on a couch in the living room, facing a smart TV mounted to the wall.

We scan the entry way and spot a bowl of candy, a framed tee-ball photo of Zander, and a decorative candelabra. We pick it up.

Steve chuckles at a Late Night talk show host doing a bit on the TV. We walk up behind him one slow step at a time and...

BLUDGEON him on the back of the head. His top hat falls to the floor as he slouches over on the couch, out cold.

We walk around the couch, stepping on the top hat, and stare down at our unconscious victim.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - NIGHT

Colleen hands out candy to a little ninja, a ghost, and a pirate. There's a rustle in the bushes nearby. Everyone's head turns toward it.

COLLEEN

(smiles)

You know what, I think there may be some more candy hidden over there.

Alex stalks them from behind the bushes in a witch mask, ready to scare. He hears a rustle next to himself. He turns. No one's there. There's a giggle. He shrugs it off and looks back out at the little ninja, ghost, and pirate. They walk over with their chests out and--

WHAH! A grotesque orange-glowing face protrudes from the bushes at them with a gust of air that knocks them to the ground. They get up and run away screaming.

Colleen steps off the porch with caution. Alex staggers out of the bushes and trips onto the ground in shock. He rips the witch mask off.

ALEX

Let-- Let's go somewhere else.

COLLEEN

Wait a minute.

She walks over, fixated on the bushes.

COLLEEN
Hello? Holly...
(to Alex)
What was one of the other names on
the graves?

ALEX
Uh... Uhm, Tim-- Timothy?

COLLEEN
(into the bushes)
Timothy?

No answer. Alex gestures up the street, totally done with this shit.

ALEX
Come on.

COLLEEN
No. We're staying.

EXT. TIMMONS HOUSE - NIGHT

We're back in the POV of the mystery trick-or-treater, walking down the street.

As we head up the sidewalk of another big new executive house, some kids snigger at our costume.

The camera cuts out of POV and reveals that we have been following a barely recognizable Ryder wearing a creepy vinyl President Trump mask and a blood stained shirt. The mask's lips are fixed in a puckered mocking manner.

As masked Ryder reaches the house, a girl dressed as a ballerina runs out with a pillow case in hand.

BALLERINA
I'm wearing the other one Granny!

She passes and Ryder walks up to the door. He opens it.

INT. TIMMONS HOUSE - NIGHT

Down a hallway, Ryder sees Viv Timmons, from Ventus, seated in the kitchen sewing a ballerina tutu. She's about the same size he is, and frail. Ryder approaches. Viv senses his presence.

VIV
(without looking up)
Almost done honey.

Ryder PULLS his pillow case over her head. His candy spills out onto the floor as he YANKS her down. She hits the ground with a THUD. He gets on top of her and tightens the pillow case around her face. Her arms flail, attempting to grab him.

Through his creepy mask, Ryder looks up at the table and grabs a thimble from the sewing kit. He puts it on his thumb and PRESSES it into her right eye socket through the pillow case while still suffocating her, tightening the grip with his other hand.

Viv manages a muffled SCREAM with the little air she has left. He JABS her eye with the thimble. She starts to slap the floor with her hands. Her head SMACKS against the floor... and she stops moving.

Ryder drops the thimble and rises emotionless like the Terminator. He exits through the sliding door to the backyard.

Viv is left whimpering on the floor, the pillow case still over her face, and a blood stain for a right eye.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alex and Colleen sit on the couch in the dark watching "When Harry Met Sally."

COLLEEN
Why are we watching this on
Halloween?

Alex is hugging a pillow. He glances out the window every few seconds.

ALEX
My mom always says this is her
comfort movie.

COLLEEN
It needs to feel welcoming for the
Rascals.

ALEX
Look, I was really into death and
stuff... But I don't wanna see them
anymore.

COLLEEN

You want to be on their good side
don't you?

SIRENS sound and blue lights flash outside the window. They follow the noise out the door.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alex and Colleen walk out onto the porch and see people scattering. They hear a BOY as he passes by--

BOY

Someone's house got busted into.

A GIRL walking with a couple of friends passes him and chimes in--

GIRL

I heard someone got stabbed.

The kids walk their separate ways.

Alex processes what he just heard.

ALEX

Davey.

He runs off.

COLLEEN

Wait up!

She chases after him.

EXT. CITY HALL - NIGHT

Bea and Putz stand on the sidewalk in front of the old Barringer City Hall. It's clocktower and steeple make for a very Gothic silhouette against the moonlight. Crickets drone on the lawn.

BEA

Cool place. You throwing a company party?

PUTZ

(eyes on the building)
I've got some documents I need help retrieving.

BEA

Why do you need to get documents from City Hall in the middle of the night? Unless you don't want anyone to-- Ohhh.

PUTZ

It's the building you're here for. Last time I was in town, I had some difficulties here. An unexplained... eeriness. Like it wanted me gone.

BEA

(teasing)

Like your ex-wife Carla.

PUTZ

Haunted Bea. I'm saying the place is haunted. Possibly.

BEA

(presents bible in hand)

Ahh. The bible and the cross. Okay, I follow. Breaking into a haunted building on Halloween night. Nice. Is it a bad time to ask for a raise?

PUTZ

Always.

(gestures toward the building)

Go ahead.

BEA

(clears throat)

Alright, here we go.

She takes one step at a time. Putz follows.

PUTZ

We'll need to pick up the pace. I don't want to be here long enough to draw attention.

BEA

Right. Okay.

They walk faster and reach the front doors. Putz pulls up a security application on his phone and touches a couple of buttons. A notification banner pops up.

PUTZ
That's strange. Security had a
couple of calls. Probably little
vandals.

He puts the phone in his pocket and hands a key to Bea.

PUTZ
Here. Open the door with this.
Cameras should be off.

Bea uses the key to open the door and walks in.

Putz puts a hand on her shoulder and follows.

PUTZ
(whispers)
Get the cross out.

INT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

BEA
Sure, sure.

Bea searches her jacket pocket.

BEA
I'm not finding it. Hold on.

PUTZ
(groans)
Just hold up the bible then. Lead
me up those stairs.

Putz holds onto the back of Bea's jacket, using her as a sort of riot shield as she leads him up a beautiful marble staircase with an oak bannister. She holds the bible out in front of them.

BEA
Spirits, if you are there, *heed* the
word of the Lord.

They reach the second floor. Putz points at a door to their left.

PUTZ
That's where I'm headed.

BEA
I think the coast is clear.

Just as she lowers the bible, a glass sconce falls off the wall and SMASHES on the floor.

Bea jumps. Putz looks down the stairs behind them. No one's there. He hurries to the door on the left.

PUTZ
Find your cross.

He disappears into the next room.

Bea checks all her pockets.

BEA
Ah-ha.

She pulls the cross out and then looks down at the shattered glass.

BEA
Hmmm.

She walks down the hallway in the opposite direction and stops at a door. She readies her bible and cross, and swiftly OPENS the door to--

What seems to be a small closet. It's dark. She takes a deep breath and rummages around. *There*. She pulls out a broom.

Bea starts to sweep the glass into a dust pan when--

Putz comes scurrying back out to the hallway with some folders in his hand. He's heaving and fanning himself with his shirt.

PUTZ
Did it get hot out here too?
(looks down at her
sweeping)
What are you? Get the bible out.
And the cross. Did you find the
cross?

BEA
(looks up at him)
Yeah, yeah. Just thought I'd get
rid of this mess.

She dumps the glass into a nearby trash can. Putz waits by the stairs.

PUTZ
Let's go. Let's go.

Bea takes the broom and dust pan back over to the closet and opens the door.

A SWIRL OF ORANGE LIGHT SHOOTS OUT into the hall. It JUST misses her face as she staggers backward into Putz, sending them both toppling down the first few stairs.

PUTZ

The cross. Give me the cross!

Bea pulls out the cross. Putz takes it from her and starts running down the stairs.

BEA

My bible.

She runs back up and grabs her bible off the floor. The trash can down the hall topples over all by itself, sending the glass back onto the ground.

BEA

Rats.

She rushes down the stairs and sees Putz already running out the front door. He's holding the cross out in front of his face.

EXT. CITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Bea high-tails it out of the building.

Putz gets into the Escalade and starts the engine. Bea opens the passenger door.

BEA

Did you lock up? Should we lock up?

PUTZ

Get in.

She hops in and they speed away.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

There's a DAD crouched on the floor, squeaking a rubber ducky at a TODDLER BOY playing in the bathtub. The boy splashes water all over Dad and the floor.

The Dad sighs, shakes his hands off, and hurries out of the room.

The Boy squeezes the rubber ducky himself, and it squeaks. He giggles.

DAD (O.S.)
Be right back buddy!

In the doorway, we see RYDER, stalking stoically, in his Trump mask. We wait.

And wait.

Until--

The sound of SIRENS passes the house. Ryder looks up. He turns and runs down a set of stairs out of sight.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Colleen and Alex scan the area for Davey. The streets are empty now.

ALEX
Davey!

COLLEEN
Davey.

RYDER walks past them out of nowhere, wearing the Trump Mask. Alex notices his worn blue Vans sneakers.

He doesn't stop. They follow him.

ALEX
Ryder? Is that you?

No response.

ALEX
Thought you weren't trick-or-treating.

He keeps walking.

COLLEEN
Are you okay?

ALEX
We heard someone got attacked.

Ryder stops and shoves Alex to the ground.

Colleen walks up to Ryder and DECKS him in the face. He staggers back and takes his mask off. His eyes flash a momentary orange glow.

Colleen and Alex stare at him, spooked.

COLLEEN
(to Ryder)
You have blood on you...

Ryder looks down at his hands and shirt. He looks back at his friends, trembling.

RYDER
Did I-- Did I hurt someone?

He tries to wipe the blood off himself. It won't come off.

RYDER
(voice cracking)
Holy shit. Holy shit.

ALEX
All we heard is that some houses
were broken into... and someone
might have been attacked.

Ryder starts hyperventilating and walks in a circle with his hands on his head.

COLLEEN
Let's go to my place. Now.

INT. COLLEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex and Ryder plop down on the bed. Ryder cradles his face in his hands. Colleen shuts the door and goes straight to him.

She stares at the blood on his shirt. He looks up at her.
What?

She leans over, grabs hold of his shirt, and smells it.

COLLEEN
That's paint.

ALEX
You painted the roses?

RYDER
I didn't paint shit.

COLLEEN
(cautious)
He was possessed.

Ryder backs himself up on the bed against the wall and wraps his arms around his knees.

RYDER
It was *them*.

ALEX
Wait, the Rascals? We saw them. We tried to come tell you.

RYDER
I saw them too. At the old factory.

Colleen sits down at her laptop and starts typing away.

ALEX
What are you doing?

COLLEEN
I'm crashing the security cameras to cover his butt.

ALEX
Like their doorbell cameras?

COLLEEN
All of it.

ALEX
You can just do that? They're all linked?

COLLEEN
Welcome to living in a town owned and operated by your parents' boss.

ALEX
That's creepy as hell.

COLLEEN
Weird. The City Hall cameras were off for the past hour. It was Putz? And the pastor lady. What the hell were *they* doing...

She saves the last existing clip of Putz and Bea at the door of City Hall to her desk top.

After a few clicks, she watches some of the footage of Ryder being violent.

COLLEEN

Well, I don't think you killed anyone. You fucked some people up though. Including Zander's dad. Hold on.

She squints at the screen and clicks a few times.

COLLEEN

And both people you attacked were executives.

ALEX

What?

Ryder looks up.

RYDER

Shit.

COLLEEN

Yeah, it looks like they lived. I think. The lady might be blind.

Ryder gulps, like he's about to get sick. Colleen closes her laptop.

COLLEEN

(to Ryder)

Look, you weren't you when you did it. We know you weren't. Tonight's footage is gone and I gave the system a lil virus.

ALEX

So you don't just learn that coding stuff for your mom.

COLLEEN

If I'm gonna do something, I'm gonna be bomb at it.

Alex pulls out his phone.

ALEX

Damn it. My phone's dead. Can you tell my mom I'm here?

Colleen tosses Alex her phone.

COLLEEN

(to Ryder)

What are we going to do with you?

CLOSE ON Ryder's somber face.

Alex sends a text: "This is Alex... We are safe hanging at Colleen's. I will come home soon." He looks up at Ryder.

ALEX

We gotta be able to *un-possess* him right? Like the exorcist or something.

BUZZ. He looks back down at the phone. "Ok and what about Davey?"

ALEX

Shit!

COLLEEN

What?

RYDER

What?

Another text: "Ur lucky he made it home."

ALEX

(exasperated)

Nothing. Davey's fine.

Alex texts back: "Going to charge my phone now."

COLLEEN

I read some "Myths of Barringer" book when I was hanging out at the library all summer.

She crouches down in front of Ryder and examines him. Alex joins her. She pulls Ryder's eyelids wide open with her thumbs.

Ryder swats her hands away. He turns over onto the bed and buries his face in his arms with a groan.

ALEX

What'd it say?

He hands her phone back to her.

COLLEEN

Eh, I just remember some people claimed they were possessed in the years after the fire.

She stands up.

COLLEEN

(to Ryder)

You stay here. We'll be back.

ALEX

What? Are you trying to go to the library right now? It's not even open. And we can't just leave him here.

COLLEEN

What if it happens again?

ALEX

(alarmed)
Our parents.

COLLEEN

Your parents. Mine are out of town, but yeah.

Ryder turns over and looks up at them.

RYDER

How are you going to get in?

COLLEEN

I don't know, we'll get creative.

RYDER

My Grandma Shirley has a key.

COLLEEN

Right. Duh. Librarian.

RYDER

I can take you to get it.

ALEX

Colleen's right though... You could hurt more people.

RYDER

Just jack me in the face again or something if the demons take over.

Ryder stares up at Colleen.

COLLEEN

Alright.

She grabs his arm and pulls him out the door. Alex follows.

INT. PUTZ'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pastor Bea relaxes on a lazy boy chair in her bathrobe. She's holding a big bowl and chomping on popcorn while she watches *The Exorcist* on a smart TV hanging over a flaming gas fireplace.

BEA

I tell ya, I've never been so scared and thrilled at the same time. That was something Mike. There's gotta be an explanation though. Definitely have someone check it out.

She looks over at Putz, immersed in his smart phone. He's lying in a hammock that hangs from the ceiling.

On the TV, a cab drops off a fedora-wearing PRIEST in front of a house. The cab drives away and a street light silhouettes the priest in the surrounding fog.

BEA

(mouthful of popcorn)

I gotta get me one of those hats. Do you guys sell those? I need--

She looks back at the TV and JUMPS, spilling popcorn when the ghoulish possessed girl with green eyes appears on the screen.

BEA

Jesus christ.

PUTZ

Hello?

BEA

Hi?

Putz isn't talking to her. He's got his ear phones in.

PUTZ

Jesus.

BEA

That's what *I* said.

Putz places a finger on his lips. *Shh*. And then points at his phone.

BEA

Ah.

She YELPS as a DEAFENING GROAN comes from the TV. It's the possessed girl in the film.

Putz looks back at her, annoyed.

PUTZ

(to his phone)

No, I'm fine. I'm fine. Alright I will. Bye.

FATHER MERRIN (V.O.)

(in *The Exorcist*)

...Gather Up a cassock for myself, two surplices, a purple stole, some holy water--

PUTZ

--Some fishy shit is going on around here. There were some break-ins and attacks and whoever did it is still at large.

BEA

Good heavens.

Putz stands up.

PUTZ

All of them were executive homes. I've dealt with disgruntled employees before, but this is on a whole other level. What's your hypothesis?

BEA

On what we saw at city hall? I dunno, I think maybe you ought to get the furnace looked at. As for that broken light, well those things are old.

PUTZ

Something's up Bea. Something supernatural. I saw what came at you from that closet. And I'm not the spiritual type. Tonight's attacks. This city hall business. It's all gotta be connected, I just need to figure out how.

BEA

Oh, well I know I sometimes get a little delusional if I get over heated.

Putz squats down in front of her and stares through her soul like she's just another one of his lowly employees.

PUTZ

I brought you here for your faith, Pastor. What's going on? You scared? You should be. I've learned over the years that this town is a monster, and it's gotta be wrangled. I've got too much money tied up in it now. Are you going to lend me your services and earn that tax-deductible donation, or are you out?

Bea blinks twice.

BEA

If you can get me one of those fedoras. I am in. Absolutely.

Putz pats her on the knee.

PUTZ

Good.

EXT. SHIRLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Shirley opens the door. She gasps at the sight of Alex, Ryder, and Colleen.

She pulls Ryder in for a hug. When he pulls away, she notices the red paint on his shirt.

SHIRLEY

Which is it? Paint or blood.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Shirley leads Alex, Ryder, and Colleen inside.

SHIRLEY

Sit. Sit.

RYDER

Can we have some cookies and pop?

SHIRLEY

Sure honey. Get you some in the kitchen. And change outta that shirt.

He rushes away.

Shirley sits down in a chair across from Colleen and Alex as they plop down on the couch.

SHIRLEY

I was worried sick, thinking about you kids out there after I heard about the attacks.

COLLEEN

Did they catch whoever it was?

SHIRLEY

No, but I'll tell you what, if they get near my boy I'll take my hatchet to their neck.

Colleen and Alex lock eyes.

IN THE KITCHEN

Ryder examines Shirley's keys hanging on hooks next to the refrigerator. "Buick." "House." No library. *Groan.*

He opens a drawer stuffed full of old receipts, pens, and scissors. Shuffles them around. No keys.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

You see the pop honey? I put em on the top shelf so they keep colder.

He opens the fridge and pulls out a couple cans of SevenUP.

A manila envelope on the counter catches his eye. It has the Ventus logo on it.

RYDER

Found it!

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Alex perks up from the couch. Colleen gives him a side-eye.

SHIRLEY

So ya'll didn't get enough candy?

ALEX

Ryder just mentioned how good your cookies were.

Shirley grins.

SHIRLEY

They are.

Ryder comes in with a Halloween tin full of snickerdoodle cookies and three cans of SevenUP. He sets it all on the coffee table between them.

Colleen makes a "?" Face at Ryder. He mouths *wait*.

Alex pops open a SevenUP and starts eating a cookie.

COLLEEN

You still work at the library right?

SHIRLEY

Oh, til I die hun.

COLLEEN

Well you remember last Summer how I basically lived there.

SHIRLEY

Yes I--

RYDER

Hey Colleen, come help me get plates. Alex eats like a pig.

COLLEEN

(raises eyebrows)
Ookay.

She follows him out.

Alex washes his mouthful of cookies down with a drink and clears his throat.

ALEX

Do you get to like go to the library whenever you want?

Shirley leans toward him with interest.

SHIRLEY

You're a bookworm like me eh? The only thing I can get Ryder to read is those gory picture books.

ALEX
Graphic... Novels?

SHIRLEY
Damn right they are.

She holds back for a moment and then--

SHIRLEY
(sly)
I sneak in on a Sunday from time to time to have the place all to myself.

ALEX
They let you keep a key?

SHIRLEY
Nah, I keep one of the cellar doors open over there cause I was always losing my keys. Don't be telling anybody though.

ALEX
(shakes his head)
Oh.

IN THE KITCHEN

COLLEEN
Hey. It's still you right?

She looks into Ryder's eyes.

RYDER
Yeah.

He grabs the manila envelope from the counter.

RYDER
Check this out.

Colleen pulls a bunch of papers out of it. She reads one of them, stunned. Alex walks in with a cookie in his hand and crumbs on his mouth.

ALEX
This is weird. What are you guys doing?

He burps. Colleen stuffs the papers back in the envelope.

COLLEEN
Nothing, we're good.

ALEX

So she doesn't have a key to the library, but she keeps one of the cellar doors open over there.

Colleen gives Ryder a hard look.

COLLEEN

You should stay here.

RYDER

I feel fine now.

ALEX

(apologetic)

She's right. And I can't think of a reason they'd want to hurt Shirley.

Ryder's spirit droops, and they walk back into the living room.

ALEX

Hey, uh thanks for the cookies. Colleen and I forgot we left our bikes over here earlier. We're just gonna ride home before it gets any later.

SHIRLEY

You're very welcome. Your parents will be wanting you home with all this madness, I'm sure.

Colleen keeps the manila envelope hidden behind her back. Ryder goes and lays down on the couch without making eye contact with them.

COLLEEN

Bye.

RYDER

Bye.

Colleen keeps the envelope out of sight as she and Alex walk out the front door.

SHIRLEY

(looking at Ryder)

Yeah, you better get some rest. You got paint to scrub off tomorrow.

EXT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

BEHIND THE BUILDING, HIDDEN BY SHRUBS...

Alex pulls on one of two wooden storm cellar doors that protrude from the grass, but it doesn't budge. Colleen peers over his shoulder, shining her phone light down onto them.

COLLEEN

I didn't even know these were here.

Alex tries the other door. He yanks on it and it WHIPS open smacking him in the face with a thud. He groans. Colleen giggles.

COLLEEN

You can follow me when you're good.

Alex rubs his forehead as Colleen goes down the cellar steps.

INT. LIBRARY CELLAR - NIGHT

Colleen looks around with her phone light and sees mostly gardening tools. Some rakes. A hoe. A bunch of watering cans. She walks toward another room and hears a CRASH behind her. She turns.

Alex has stumbled over some of the tools. He squints at her phone light shining in his face.

ALEX

(whispers)

Sorry.

COLLEEN

This way.

She continues ahead. He follows.

The next section of the cellar is a time warp of audio visual artifacts. A phonograph. Cassette tape players. Some CD Walkmen. Old computers. Seemingly ancient to these kids.

COLLEEN

Whoah.

She walks up to one of the computers and types.

ALEX

Wonder how you carry that thing.

COLLEEN

You don't.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ryder is lying on Shirley's couch, reading a gory graphic novel. We hear the kitchen sink running in the other room.

His eyes flash a soft orange glow.

He sits up, stiff, as though rising from the dead. The graphic novel slides onto the floor.

He walks slowly to...

THE KITCHEN

He stands in the doorway, stalking Shirley from behind. She's washing dishes.

He stands there... Waiting... And waiting... AND--

He turns and leaves.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

The main floor isn't quite as dark. A bit of moonlight and a street lamp spill in through the library windows. Colleen runs her finger along a row of books in a section labeled "Local." Her finger stops.

COLLEEN

Here.

She grabs the book and flips through it. Alex rushes over.

COLLEEN

Murders... Hauntings...
Possessions. Here.

She points to a paragraph--

COLLEEN

(reading)

"One first such person was Agatha Taylor, who ran the Barringer Barber Shop. She claimed that spirits possessed her in nineteen fifteen while giving a haircut to then-mayor, Clyde Sterling, in the old Barringer Mansion. She cut his neck, just missing his jugular. When questioned, she blamed it on spirits."

ALEX
Nothing else?

Colleen turns the page to a paragraph lead by the photo of an African-American boy who looks about twelve years old.

COLLEEN
(paraphrasing)
Look. This one's our age. In nineteen sixty-seven. Ralph Horner. He started beating a cop who showed up while he was playing at the burned out factory. He claimed he was made to do it by his imaginary friends, and was sent away for good.

ALEX
Damn.

Colleen hands the book to him. A note card falls out of it. He holds it up so that the light coming through the window catches it. The top of the note card text reads: "Accompanying Audio" typed by a typewriter.

COLLEEN
That's strange. I didn't see that when I read it before.

ALEX
What do the numbers mean?

He turns to Colleen, but she's already run over to the analog audio section in the back corner. He hurries after her.

COLLEEN
I'll grab the first one. Match the second set of numbers to the ones on the shelf.

He squints to look at the shelf labels. Colleen seems to have already found something and zips away out of sight.

ALEX
Hey wait!

COLLEEN
(running away)
Downstairs.

Alex goes back to looking. He runs his finger along a row and stops at the number he's looking for. He reaches for a small plastic casing. It's a cassette tape.

ALEX

Huh.

He takes it and runs down to the--

INT. LIBRARY CELLAR - NIGHT

Colleen is kneeling in front of the old phonograph. Alex stops in his tracks behind her when she scratches the needle across the vinyl. He cringes.

ALEX

Ow.

COLLEEN

Oops. I guess that's why my dad never lets me touch his.

From the phonograph, they hear:

AGATHA TAYLOR (V.O.)

(shaky and frail)

I don't want Mayor Sterling dead, no sir. Whatever compelled me had motives of its own. Spirits? Can't explain it. Only feel it. I'll miss cutting hair. Can't say I blame him for giving me the boot.

Colleen sighs at the lack of new information. She starts trying buttons on the cassette tape player next to the phonograph.

COLLEEN

I think your tape goes in here. Somehow.

Alex examines it and then guesses at a button. It pops open. He tries jamming the tape in the slot upside down. Fail. Flips the tape. It slides in. He clicks it shut. Colleen presses the play button. They hear a fuzzy stoic masculine voice...

DETECTIVE (V.O.)

Three, November. Nineteen sixty-seven. Horner. Ralph.

The voice pauses. Alex and Colleen watch each other listen.

DETECTIVE (V.O.)

Now son, do you stand by the statement that you were acting on your own accord?

A new voice, young and innocent comes through the tape.

RALPH (V.O.)
Yes sir.

DETECTIVE (V.O.)
Did someone tell you to beat the officer?

RALPH (V.O.)
It was a feeling. Well, at first.

Then there's an elderly voice, raspy and urgent.

PRIEST (V.O.)
That feeling, did you hear it? In a voice perhaps? In your mind?

RALPH (V.O.)
My friends thought I should act on it, but I don't wanna talk about them.

PRIEST (V.O.)
Why not?

RALPH (V.O.)
I'm the only one who can hear them.

DETECTIVE (V.O.)
(annoyed)
We already know the kid's mental, Father.

THUD.

RALPH (V.O.)
(robotic)
They deserve it.

THUD.

RALPH (V.O.)
They deserve it.

PRIEST (V.O.)
Oh dear, boy.

THUD.

Alex takes a step back.

The tape recording stops. Alex and Colleen stare blankly at the cassette player.

EXT. SHIRLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

When Colleen and Alex arrive, they run into Shirley heading to her car.

COLLEEN
Miss Shirley!

Shirley stops midway opening her car door.

SHIRLEY
It's Miss *Horner*. But Grandma
Shirley to you. Like I said.

Colleen's mouth drops open.

ALEX
(to himself)
Oh shit.

SHIRLEY
Come on. I'm headed to the security
office. I'll drop you two at home.
Just leave your bikes here. Your
parents gotta be losing their
minds.

Colleen and Alex head toward her car.

COLLEEN
Security office?

ALEX
Is that where Ryder is?

They all get in the car and slam the doors shut. Shirley starts the engine.

Alex checks his phone. He has a missed text from his mom:
"I'm coming to get you. Send address."

SHIRLEY
I don't know what you kids have
been getting into, but you need to
get home and stay home.

COLLEEN
If you're going to Ryder, we *have*
to go with you.

Shirley starts driving.

Alex texts his mom back: "Sorry. Getting a ride from Ryder's grandma. Be home soon." He looks up.

ALEX

We think he's possessed.

COLLEEN

We're pretty damn *sure* he's possessed.

Shirley looks at them in the rearview mirror and then back to the road.

ALEX

Whatever happened tonight, he didn't mean to do it.

COLLEEN

Like your brother.

Shirley SLAMS on the brakes. The car stops, rocking them all forward.

They sit in silence until--

SHIRLEY

The only demons here are people. Nobody's possessed, and you go in there saying those things, they're gonna think you're fools. They'll send you away.

Alex blurts out as though speaking faster will make it sound less absurd--

ALEX

We think that ghosts of the Rascals are going after Ventus executives. And if we're right, our parents are in danger.

Shirley takes a deep breath.

SHIRLEY

I'll take you. But if anyone asks, you tell em Ryder was with you all night.

INT. SECURITY STATION - NIGHT

Colleen and Alex follow Shirley into Ventus Security. Putz is standing next to OFFICER NEWMAN, Caucasian, Male, 40s, mustache, wearing jeans and a button-down shirt. They're looking through a big glass window into an interrogation room.

Newman hears them and looks over. Shirley means business.

SHIRLEY

I'm here for Ryder Crowder. The little boy. I'm his guardian.

NEWMAN

He's in here.

He looks down at Colleen and Alex, confused. Shirley walks past him and stands next to Putz. She looks through the window and sees...

Ryder handcuffed to a small table. Head down looking at the table top. Gloomy.

PUTZ

Little shit is mental.

SHIRLEY

Watch your mouth.

Putz jumps and takes a step away from her. Newman joins them.

NEWMAN

I picked him up on the road outside of town. He's the only current suspect in the attacks this evening. We think he may have been after Mr. Putz next.

SHIRLEY

That's a lot of assumptions. He wasn't even out during the trick-or-treating. He was with these two.

She turns to Colleen and Alex.

NEWMAN

That's why you dragged these kids out here? Do their parents know they're out right now?

ALEX

He was... he was with us. We were watching a movie.

PUTZ

Oh yeah? What movie?

COLLEEN

When Harry Met Sally.

Putz breaks into laughter. He keeps laughing sarcastically with his arms folded, looking back and forth from Colleen to Newman, making everyone uncomfortable.

Shirley rolls her eyes.

NEWMAN

That doesn't explain why he was walking outside of town alone after we issued a curfew. By Putz's home.

SHIRLEY

Home? That jackass only ever sets foot in this town to cover his own ass.

Putz steps toward her.

PUTZ

Watch it.

Newman cuts in.

NEWMAN

Okay, okay--

ALEX

He's possessed.

Putz and Newman turn to Alex and Colleen. Shirley sighs. *Dammit.*

NEWMAN

That's real cute.

COLLEEN

It's happened here before.

She looks at Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Alright we're going. Get the boy out of there.

PUTZ

No, no. Wait. I want to hear this.

ALEX

We think he got possessed in the old factory. By the kids who died there. And they're after Ventus executives.

PUTZ

The kids who died in that building don't have shit to do with my company kid. And that's beside the point.

ALEX

He didn't mean to hurt anyone.

COLLEEN

(correcting him)
Doesn't want to hurt anyone.

Shirley's eyes widen. Newman walks into the room behind the window and un-cuffs Ryder from the table.

PUTZ

Whoah, whoah. What's going on?

NEWMAN

Well, there's no evidence at the moment. The cameras all went offline. No one's able to i-d the attacker.

PUTZ

They admitted the kid is after executives. I'd say that's a confession.

SHIRLEY

And you're trying to tell me this kid hacked your security system too?

Colleen and Alex lock eyes.

COLLEEN

So all the cameras are really down huh?

(turns to Putz)
City Hall too?

Alex crosses his arms and stares Putz down. Putz turns red and inhales, about to speak, but holds himself back.

Newman leads Ryder to Shirley. She gives Ryder a hug and leads the kids to the front door.

NEWMAN

The kids are scared Putz, that's all. Been a crazy night.

PUTZ

Wait.

They stop and turn to him.

PUTZ

(to Alex and Colleen)

If he's possessed like you say he is, then he's still dangerous. You'll need to get... whatever it is out of him. Keep him here for the night where he's safe, and tomorrow I'll have my chaplain perform an exorcism.

SHIRLEY

You're full of it. He ain't staying here. Good. Bye.

They start to walk away again.

PUTZ

If they're right, he'll be freed.
If they're wrong... no harm done.

Ryder stops, shakes his head, and then follows the rest of them out.

INT. SHIRLEY'S SEDAN - NIGHT

Shirley drives away from the security station. Colleen sits shotgun. Ryder and Alex ride in the back.

COLLEEN

Alright so now that that's taken care of, can you tell us why Putz is tearing down all our old buildings?

SHIRLEY

What now?

RYDER

I found those papers in your kitchen.

She clenches the steering wheel.

SHIRLEY

Nobody was supposed to see that. What you doing snooping?

Colleen folds her arms and stares at her.

SHIRLEY

(exhales)

The executives left those papers behind when they toured the library last week. You can imagine I wanted to read into the details considering my home and my workplace are included in the things that might get bulldozed.

COLLEEN

Replacing the shacks could make sense, but the library... I don't understand.

Ryder and Shirley's eyes meet in the rearview mirror.

SHIRLEY

What so I get crammed into a little apartment building? Lose my autonomy. Or have to leave the community I've called home my whole life.

Colleen softens.

ALEX

They're really tearing them all down? The Barringer house too?

Shirley nods.

COLLEEN

(whispers)

Maybe that's why they're after Putz.

They reach--

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Laura is waiting when the car pulls up.

LAURA

(to Shirley)

Thanks for getting him home.

She puts her hands on her hips as Alex gets out of the car.

LAURA

(at Alex)

Incluso si debería haber llegado hace horas. Vamos.

SHIRLEY
 (cordial)
 Welcome to the neighborhood. Oh you
 forgot this.

She holds Alex's little book out to him. He takes it.

ALEX
 Thanks. Bye guys.

He and his mom walk up toward the house but--
 Ryder pops the car door open and walks swiftly TOWARD LAURA.
 Colleen jumps out after him, and grabs his arm.
 Laura and Alex turn around, confused.

COLLEEN
 Sorry. We're all kind of out of it.

Laura accepts with a half smile.

LAURA
 Goodnight.

Alex stares at Colleen. *SHIT*. She leads Ryder back to the car.

INT. SHIRLEY'S SEDAN - NIGHT

Shirley drives Ryder and Colleen up the street. Ryder looks out the car window in a trance.

COLLEEN
 Do you think I could maybe stay at
 your place?

SHIRLEY
 Yes hun. I can make room for the
 both of you.

RYDER
 I want to sleep in my own bed.

SHIRLEY
 I know you didn't paint those roses
 on your own accord. I'm not about
 to be letting you out of my sight.
 We'll sleep over at yours.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Laura swallows a pill and takes a drink of water. Alex walks in.

ALEX

Is there any candy left?

Laura nods toward the counter. Alex swipes the plastic jack-o-lantern full of candy. He takes it to the kitchen table and digs in.

LAURA

Why were you out all night papito?

He chews on a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup.

ALEX

I figured it was safer staying where I was instead of trying to get home.

LAURA

Next time I'm coming out to get you. I didn't think you'd be out this late. There could be a killer on the loose.

ALEX

No one died mom.

Laura takes another pill and washes it down.

ALEX

Did you know Ventus is gonna tear down our house? And all the other old buildings? My friend Ryder's house too.

She gulps one last drink and sets her glass on the counter.

LAURA

They might. It's not for sure yet.

ALEX

Seriously?

LAURA

I found out just after my first meeting... Yesterday you were begging me to move us.

ALEX

You're just going to destroy Ryder and Shirley's houses? And what about like the library and city hall. They're monuments right?

LAURA

The company needs more space. I'm sorry you got so attached all of a sudden. I'm happy you're--

ALEX

Those are the coolest parts of this town. The rest is kind of crap.

LAURA

(cross)

Mister Putz makes the calls. I just work for him honey.

ALEX

Yeah, well he sucks!

Alex storms off in a huff.

LAURA

(calling after him)

You're grounded by the way.

INT. RYDER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Shirley, sitting upright on the couch passed out. She's got a blanket up to her neck and she's snoring.

INT. RYDER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ryder is lying on his back staring up at the ceiling in the dark. Colleen lies next to him, her upper body propped up by her elbow.

COLLEEN

You can't sleep either?

No response.

COLLEEN

You seem chill now. Maybe it's over?

Ryder shakes his head slowly. No.

Colleen places a hand on his. She puts her arm across him and falls asleep. He lies there awake, too terrified to close his eyes.

INT. RYDER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Colleen squints at the harsh sunlight coming through Ryder's window when she wakes. A cool breeze blows in. She shivers. The window is open.

She holds her hand up to block the sun and notices the empty space next to her on the bed.

Ryder is gone.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Colleen pokes her head in. Shirley is still asleep on the couch. She writes a note on a napkin and quietly sets it on the coffee table.

She texts Alex: "Meet me at my house in 30. Bring the book. I'll bring your bike."

EXT. COLLEEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Colleen rolls the bikes out to Alex. He takes his.

COLLEEN

I stayed at Ryder's. He was gone again when I woke up.

ALEX

Damn... Well, my mom admitted she knew about Putz's plans.

COLLEEN

So it's for real?

ALEX

(ashamed)

Yeah. And she tried to ground me, but I told her we still have a project to work on. Plus tomorrow is her Day of the Dead dinner so...

They hop on their bikes and ride.

COLLEEN

...So I'll be on my own. Got it.
(grins)

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

Our *project* went real well last time. I left a note for Shirley saying we were all hanging at your place. Hope she buys it. You bring the book?

ALEX

Yeah.

COLLEEN

Do you remember which part we were reading when the Rascals appeared in your basement?

ALEX

Pretty sure they show up whenever they want.

COLLEEN

I figured there might be a way to force them out. And no, not exactly.

ALEX

Not exactly what?

COLLEEN

So far they've only appeared in the old factory and your house.

ALEX

What about when they forced Ryder to attack people?

COLLEEN

That's gotta be why they're using him. They can only haunt places from *their* time.

She brakes. Alex looks ahead and realizes they've come upon the--

EXT. OLD FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Alex puts his feet down and brings his own bike to a stop.

ALEX

That's why you brought us here.

There are FIGURES talking up ahead in the old factory yard.

COLLEEN
(whispered)
Come on.

Alex follows her as they crouch and wheel their bikes to a cluster of bushes off the road. They stash the bikes and run up behind a rusted piece of old machinery near the building to get a better look.

The figures are none other than Pastor Bea in her clergy dress blacks, frantically flipping through religious texts, and Putz gripping a struggling Ryder's forearm. Ryder KICKS him in the shin.

PUTZ
Ow.

RYDER
Let me go asshole.

Putz BACKHANDS him in the face. Ryder falls onto the dirt and cups his hand over his cheek. Bea looks over at them.

BEA
Is that necessary?

PUTZ
The kid wants to kill me for all we know. You said you always wanted to do an exorcism? Hurry it up.

Bea starts flipping through the texts faster.

BEA
A lot of us dream of doing it sure,
but it's really only something we
see in the movies Mike.

Ryder gets up and starts to run until--

Putz pulls out a gun and TASES HIM. Ryder falls back to the ground and tenses up.

From behind the bushes, Alex stands up ready to charge. Colleen grabs his arm and pulls him back down.

COLLEEN
(whispered)
Wait.

Putz looks back in their direction. Sees nothing. He walks over to Bea, and starts reading over her shoulder.

CLOSE ON Colleen and Alex.

COLLEEN

(to Alex)

Don't we want him unpossessed?

ALEX

Does it look like that lady knows what she's doing? Putz is just going to beat him up. We need to convince the Rascals to leave him ourselves.

COLLEEN

Just wait a minute. They can haunt Putz here. They don't even need Ryder.

Putz stops Bea from turning the next page in her book. He puts his finger on it.

PUTZ

There.

BEA

The Baptismal Rite?

Putz starts reading from the page.

PUTZ

"I adjure thee, thou unclean spirit..." Come on.

Bea furrows her brow, but obliges him.

BEA

"...Unclean Spirit, by the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost--"

PUTZ

--Wave your hand over him or something.

Bea walks over to Ryder and places a hand over him. He's slowly coming to, from being tased.

BEA

"...That thou come out of and depart from this servant of Jesus Christ, Amen."

(looks down at Ryder)

I'm not sure he's a servant of Jesus.

PUTZ
Shhh! Wait.

He walks over and squats down in front of Ryder.

PUTZ
He does look different than before.

RYDER
You just tased me.

PUTZ
Do you still want to kill me?

RYDER
Yeah.

Putz walks over to a big old tire and kicks it.

PUTZ
Dammit.

BEA
We don't know it *didn't* work.

PUTZ
We kidnapped the kid Bea. We gotta
keep him now. We don't know what
he'll tell people.
(scratches his head)
Killing someone who's possessed has
gotta be self-defense.

BEA
(trying not to piss him
off)
Very likely not, Mike. That sounds
like a dead end.

Putz looks at her. *Really?*

BEA
Sorry.

Alex attempts to leave the bushes again, but Colleen YANKS
him back down. A giant GUST of wind blows through the yard.

COLLEEN
What are we *actually* going to do?

ALEX
Call 911.

COLLEEN

It's just going to go straight to
Ventus security.

Alex pulls out his phone.

ALEX

Good. That security guy didn't seem
to like Putz anyway.

COLLEEN

Putz literally owns him.

ALEX

(looks down)
Do you have service?

Colleen rolls her eyes and pulls out her phone.

COLLEEN

No.

ALEX

Me neither.

Drops of rain begin to fall one after another onto his phone
screen.

The drops turn into a steady drizzle. Ryder looks up at the
sky. Putz wipes the rain from his eyes.

PUTZ

Ah shit.

The wind BLOWS HARD. Putz starts pacing with his hands on his
hips.

PUTZ

What do we do Bea? What do we do?

A funnel of wind CRASHES down on him, knocking him to the
ground. Dirt BLOWS UP in his face. He YELPS.

Bea staggers toward him through the wind, barely holding her
footing. She squints through the dirt blowing up around them.

BEA

I'm coming!

THUNDER BOOMS and the steady drizzle turns into a DOWNPOUR.

BEA

Oh lord, oh lord.

She starts to sing-song chant a Lutheran hymn.

BEA
 (under the sounds of the
 storm)
*Satan, I defy thee; Death, I now
 decry thee; Fear, I bid thee cease.
 World, thou shalt not harm me. Nor
 thy threats alarm me while I sing
 of peace!*

Meanwhile behind the bushes--

ALEX
 Let's get him.

Colleen sighs. They grab their bikes and RUN FOR IT.

Bea helps Putz off the ground.

PUTZ
 Where is the little shit? I'm gonna
 kill him!

BEA
 It's your word against his. Let's
 get outta here.

Alex rides his bike straight at Ryder, flanked by Colleen.
 They're all drenched now. LIGHTNING FLASHES. THUNDER BOOMS.

ALEX
 Hop on!

Putz sees them.

PUTZ
 What!

He runs at Ryder and reaches out to grab him. Just as he does--

Alex holds a hand out. Ryder grabs it and pulls himself onto
 the back of the bike, standing on the pegs.

Alex, Ryder, and Colleen ride away, lost in the gray of the
 rain.

PUTZ
 No. No. No. No!

Across the yard, Bea's eyes widen at the sight of the old
 factory ENGULFED BY GLOWING ORANGE FLAMES, rain be damned.

BEA

Mike...

Putz looks at it over his shoulder. THE FLAMES SWELL AND TRAVEL TOWARD HIM.

His eyes open wide in horror and...

HE RUNS.

PUTZ

Ah!

Bea swings the driver's door of the Escalade open. She climbs in and starts the engine.

Just as the flames reach Putz, he THROWS himself into the back of the vehicle and Bea drives them away.

The ghosts and glowing flames disappear. The old factory sits dormant in the rain, once again.

EXT. BIKE PATH - DAY

Alex pedals hard through the downpour. He feels the weight of Ryder hanging onto his shoulders and standing on the pegs protruding from his back tire.

Colleen realizes she's overtaking them and circles back.

COLLEEN

This way.

She pulls off the road and leads them onto a gravel bike path in the forest.

COLLEEN

(to Ryder)

You okay?

RYDER

I've never been tased before.

ALEX

(sarcastic)

She was gonna let him keep kicking the shit out of you, you know.

COLLEEN

I was not!

ALEX

Where's this go?

RYDER

It's the old train tracks.
(looks over his shoulder)
I wonder if he came after us.

Alex looks down and sees the remnants of old railroad tracks barely visible beneath the gravel path they're biking on.

COLLEEN

I don't want to find out.
(to Alex)
There's a tunnel up ahead we can
hide in for awhile.

Alex sees it. Getting closer and closer in front of them.

INT. TRAIN TUNNEL - DAY

Colleen and Alex walk their bikes now, with Ryder alongside them. The cold light cutting through the overcast sky gets fainter as they walk further into the tunnel. The pattering of the rain echoes around them.

Colleen leans on her handle bars and flips through Alex's little leather book as they walk.

COLLEEN

Here we go. That bit about "*How skeptics ruin a seance.*"

ALEX

I think it's safe to say none of us are skeptical about ghosts now.

COLLEEN

I'm just trying to recreate that energy we had when they appeared in your basement.

ALEX

What, when you were telling me you didn't believe a word I said?

COLLEEN

Exactly.

ALEX

Let me look.

Colleen hands it to him.

Ryder stops walking.

RYDER
I could use a breather.

Colleen stops.

COLLEEN
(to Alex)
Hey hold up.

Alex stops too. He's a few feet ahead of them, trying to read his book by the glow of his phone light.

The overwhelming CHOO CHOO of a train whistle. A look of realization on Alex's face when he notices something in his book. Colleen and Ryder look past him.

RYDER
Train!

An old STEAM TRAIN barrels out of nowhere. They SCREAM. It comes at them HEAD ON, it's headlight blinding. They black out and then--

INT. BARRINGER RAIL CAR - DAY

ON BLACK. The RUMBLING sounds of train cars rolling on tracks. CLACK. CLACK. CLACKING over rail ties.

Colleen, Alex, and Ryder wake up in an old luxury rail car. They're hunched over in pristine velvet chairs. This rail car is one big open parlor room.

Ryder walks through it. The walls and windows have an eerie warm lantern-like glow. He peers outside. Darkness.

RYDER
It's night? And we're on a train.

A groggy Alex gets out of his chair.

ALEX
We're probably dead.

Colleen heads for the door at the end of the room. She shakes it. It's locked.

Fannie, the ghost girl, appears in front of Alex. He falls back into his chair.

Cleo, the ghost boy, appears in front of Colleen.

ALEX
 (terrified)
 Rascals.

Ryder backs away from everyone else.

The translucent ghost of Holly Giddens, a scar around her neck, zips up to Alex's face from out of nowhere.

HOLLY
 Barringer's word, not ours!

COLLEEN
 (to Alex)
 It's totally your book.

Holly whips around toward Colleen.

HOLLY
 What book?

ALEX
 (leans back stuttering)
 A s-seance book.

All visibility in the rail car disappears, and through the darkness they see:

FIFTEEN GLOWING CHILD SKELETON apparitions flicker around them.

Visibility returns with only Fannie, Cleo, and Holly present among them again.

HOLLY
 This is our home. We appear when we please.

RYDER
 Stay out of my head.

COLLEEN
 (in awe)
 You're Holly Giddens.

Holly ignores her and zips over to Ryder. He freezes in place as she raises her translucent hand to his face and pushes his hair to the side.

HOLLY
 We protected you.

Alex rises from his seat and slowly maneuvers away from Cleo.

ALEX

That was real nice and all, but using him to try and kill people was kind of shitty.

COLLEEN

And it got him locked up.

Fannie and Cleo circle them like sharks.

ALEX

(to the ghosts)

Putz isn't your boss. He's not Barringer.

CLEO

Same soul. Same sins.

FANNIE

Round the circle, back again.

ALEX

But why the others?

RYDER

Because they deserve it too.

Holly, still facing him, tilts her head and smiles with approval. She holds her translucent hand to his cheek, and then floats off in the other direction.

ALEX

What?

RYDER

My dad. My dad died because of all of them really. He's just another body to them.

COLLEEN

Ryder I'm sorry, but my parents didn't kill your dad.

ALEX

Or mine. I just moved here!

RYDER

(to Colleen)

You know your parents are in D.C. to get the buildings torn down quicker right?

Colleen stares him down with hardened disappointment.

RYDER

I live in a shack. And I'll always
live in a shack. Unless they tear
it down. I'll work and go nowhere
like dad. I have no future like
you.

Holly sits cross-legged hovering in mid-air, amused by this
argument between the living.

COLLEEN

(sympathetic)
Ryder--

RYDER

(to Holly)
Use me. Kill the asshole. Burn it
all to the ground.

ALEX

Now wait.

Holly grins. Flames appear in her eyes.

The flames are all around them. Crawling up the walls of the
train car.

Fannie and Cleo skip around the room.

FANNIE & CLEO

(sing-song)
*Round and round the house we go,
will it burn? No one knows...*

COLLEEN

What the hell?

FANNIE & CLEO

*Up, down, round again, not enough
to save our friend.*

COLLEEN

(begging Holly)
Stop. Please. I might not love
Ventus but it's peoples' lives. Our
parents' lives...

ALEX

(steadfast)
We'll help you. We'll get Putz
somewhere you can have him
yourselves.

HOLLY
We already did that, and you ruined
it!

ALEX
What?

FANNIE
The factory!

CLEO
Yeah, the factory!

ALEX
Barringer's house. Tomorrow night.

Holly considers.

HOLLY
Tomorrow.

COLLEEN
(to Alex)
But your fam--

DARKNESS. SILENCE. The rumbling sounds of the rolling train
are gone.

EXT. BIKE PATH - EVENING

Alex, Colleen, and Ryder are on the floor of a decaying rail
car, overgrown with tall weeds, next to the bike path. Part
of the ceiling is missing. The furnishings are gone. It is
part of the forest.

They spot their bikes and retrieve them, and then ride back
up the path toward town.

COLLEEN
Are you gonna explain what that was
about? Your house tomorrow night?

ALEX
I found something in my book before
we got... hit by the train.

COLLEEN
And?

ALEX
I'm going to distract the Rascals
with Putz, while you give them what
they've forgotten.

Colleen looks over at him. *Yeah?*

ALEX

Peace. They need peace. We need to go to Shirley's. I'll show you there.

COLLEEN

Isn't your mom's day of the dead dinner tomorrow?

ALEX

Yep. I'm gonna make her invite Putz.

RYDER

(so over it)

Why can't we just let them have him?

ALEX

Because history says they won't stop there.

Ryder skids his bike to a halt.

RYDER

Stop making bosses pay for not caring about people like my dad?

Colleen stops in front of him. Alex stops too.

COLLEEN

If we put the Rascals to rest, like Alex says we can... We could show Putz's plans to everyone... And focus on turning them against him.

ALEX

Change things ourselves.

COLLEEN

Our parents too.

Alex looks from Colleen to Ryder, and then puts a hand on Ryder's handle bar.

ALEX

(heart-to-heart)

How bout it?

Ryder stares back at him. Stern and unwavering.

INT. PUTZ'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Pastor Bea lounges on the sofa and reads on her smart tablet. Putz paces in front of the TV.

BEA

I think you gotta bring in a higher authority.

Putz stops pacing.

PUTZ

That's exactly what I'm gonna do. I'll contact the Vatican.

Bea looks up from her tablet.

BEA

Good luck with that. They'll take *months* to get back to you.

PUTZ

I thought you kept going on about how you're Lutheran.

BEA

(passionately)

Movies may tell us that only Catholics get to exorcise demons, but I've tried to score an invite to forums on the subject. Gotta change the narrative on your own sometimes.

Putz starts pacing again.

PUTZ

Now wait a minute. I can streamline this. We know that the demons haunt the old factory and the city hall, and I need all the monument land. What could another disaster hurt?

(grins)

A couple of happy accidents.

BEA

(cautious but aroused)

Oh dear. Oh dear me.

EXT. SHIRLEY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Shirley is on the porch in her chair when Colleen, Alex, and Ryder pull up. They drop their bikes in the yard and join her.

RYDER
(to Shirley)
Sorry I had to leave. They took
over me...

She's eerily calm. Alex pulls out his book.

ALEX
I saw your note.

He opens the book and beckons Colleen and Ryder to look at it. They lean in.

ALEX
(looks up at Shirley)
I knew it was you. It was never
there before.

Colleen reads the handwritten note on the page.

COLLEEN
"...Specifically the souls of
children who suffer an untimely
death are most often filled with
turmoil. To give them true peace,
burn the flower of death and lead
them with letters of love."

Below the note: A sketch of a rose.

COLLEEN
(perplexed)
Where did you find--

SHIRLEY
As you well know, this ain't the
first time the Rascals possessed a
child.

Ralph.

ALEX

Ralph.

COLLEEN

Shirley's gaze hardens.

SHIRLEY

It was a piping hot summer. The Barringer police kept beating on the boys who stayed out past curfew. They couldn't bear to be playing out in the sun during the day. I joined em for a ball game one night. Outside the old factory.

INTERCUT OLD FACTORY YARD(1967)/SHIRLEY'S PORCH(Present)

RALPH, 12, and a YOUNG SHIRLEY, 10, both African-American, play baseball with ten other children.

SHIRLEY

The police showed up, as usual. I was one of the ones they hit... To get us to scram.

SLOW-MOTION now. Three cops show up. One of them whacks Young Shirley on the shoulder with a baton, as other children scatter.

SHIRLEY

My big brother Ralph... He got different then. We always looked out for each other sure, but when he saw them hit me that night, there was a fire in his eyes.

Ralph's eyes glow orange and he becomes enraged. He runs at the cop who hit Young Shirley.

SHIRLEY

A real orange glowing fire like I'd never seen. And he lost it. Went at em like some jacked superhero. Took our bat to the officer's head. Knocked the sucker out cold.

Ralph picks up a baseball bat and DEALS A BLOW to the cop's head.

BACK ON THE PORCH, TODAY.

SHIRLEY

The officer was dead. Ralph's life ended that day too.
(out of breath)
They sent him away.

COLLEEN

But you knew he wasn't a killer.

SHIRLEY

I knew it was something else.
Everyone thought I was nuts.
Obsessing over ghosts and shit.
Trying to figure out why. But I
learned real quick that talking
about that stuff doesn't get you
anywhere. And eventually I
convinced myself that maybe he *did*
do that for me... That he decided
himself that night how justice was
going to be served.

Alex is stunned. Ryder puts a hand on Shirley's.

RYDER

Did the Rascals ever possess you
too?

SHIRLEY

Not that I have any memory of.
Once I found out how to put em to
rest though, they couldn't if they
tried.

ALEX

But when?

SHIRLEY

A very long time ago.

The kids are speechless. *Huh?*

SHIRLEY

I was real sad about how they got
my little brother sent away, but I
started to enjoy watching them hand
out punishment to the greedy
bastards ruining this town.

COLLEEN

And what made you decide to tell us
now?

SHIRLEY

Seeing how they used him.
(looks at Ryder)
It reminded me how they used Ralph.
And we don't need those poor souls
fighting for Barringer. In the
three of you, I started to see a
sense of community I'd nearly
forgotten.

Alex, Colleen, and Ryder all glance at each other.

ALEX

Is it a rose then? The *flower of death* in the ritual.

SHIRLEY

In this instance, yes. It is.

COLLEEN

How did the flower on the rascals' gravestones just so happen to be the same as the one in the ritual? Am I missing something?

SHIRLEY

Cause the man who oversaw their funerals, was the man who learned it. Father Patrick Boyle.

ALEX

Boyle Library.

COLLEEN

The hell?

RYDER

(to Shirley)

And he chose to let them punish people. Just like you did.

SHIRLEY

B-I-N-G-O.

RYDER

Are there obituaries of the rascals in the library?

SHIRLEY

Yes there are.

ALEX

Letters of love.

(pats Ryder on the back)

Alright, here's what we're gonna do.

INT. BARRINGER HOUSE - NIGHT

Laura and Alex sit at the kitchen table making tamales. Laura places masa and filling on corn husks. Alex wraps one and struggles to tie a corn husk string around it.

LAURA

Watch.

Laura takes the corn husk string in her fingers and ties it with ease.

LAURA

There.

ALEX

You know Mister Putz pretty well right?

LAURA

Mostly from emails. But we've had a few meetings while he's been in town.

ALEX

We should invite him to our dinner tomorrow.

Laura is taken aback.

LAURA

That's very sweet. Maybe not appropriate? He isn't here very long.

ALEX

Well that's why I thought it'd be cool. It's your chance to make a good impression before he leaves.

Laura scoops masa and filling onto two more corn husks and sets them in front of him. He ties them.

LAURA

(skeptical)

You seemed so angry before.

ALEX

(full of shit)

I just want you to shine mama.

She stands up.

LAURA

Uh-huh. Re-tie those. I'll invite him.

ALEX

Can Ryder come too?

LAURA
 (walks to the sink)
 Sure.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Colleen pulls up on her bike with a bouquet of roses. She walks toward the the front steps... And stops in her tracks.

There's a car parked in the lot next to the building. It's Putz's black Escalade. She runs to the cellar door around the corner.

The car drives away.

INT. LIBRARY CELLAR - DAY

Colleen walks slowly up the cellar stairs. When she reaches the first floor she finds...

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Shirley staring at two big jugs of gasoline. She's got a small piece of paper in her hand.

COLLEEN
 What's that?

Shirley doesn't answer.

COLLEEN
 Shirley?
 (clears throat)
 Grandma?

SHIRLEY
 (entranced)
 Gasoline, honey.

COLLEEN
 In your hand.

Shirley turns to her. Now in focus, we see that the piece of paper is a banking check.

COLLEEN
 Is he paying you to burn down Boyle
 freaking library? *Our* library?

SHIRLEY
 The old factory too. And city hall.

COLLEEN

Is this a joke?

SHIRLEY

He said he can either have Ryder
taken care of, or I can accept this
two-hundred thousand dollars...
burn the Barringer landmarks, and
leave town. Ryder would come, safe
with me.

COLLEEN

You can't.

SHIRLEY

Of course not darlin.
(sly grin)
I've got a better use for this.

She looks at the gasoline.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON a thumb striking a lighter. Over, and over again.

It's Putz standing on the porch. The lighter in one hand, and
a plastic container in the other.

INT. BARRINGER HOUSE - DAY

Davey looks out the living room window.

DAVEY

Mom, there's a weirdo with a wig
outside!

Laura checks on the tamales steaming in a pot on the kitchen
stove. She puts the lid back on.

LAURA

Ese es mi jefe. Recuerda
comportarte.

She walks to the door and opens it before Putz can knock.
Davey runs up behind her and looks at the plastic container
in Putz's arms. It's labeled "Ventus Fresh Foods."

PUTZ

Hey there fella.
(to Laura)
I brought something.

DAVEY
White people taco salad?

Laura looks at it and does a half-assed awkward smile.

Davey takes it from him. Inside it is a pile of lettuce topped with shredded cheddar cheese and crunched up Doritos. He disappears with it.

LAURA
(apologetic)
He thinks out loud.

A pause.

LAURA
Well come in, come in.

Putz follows her inside.

LAURA
Watch your step near the Marigolds.

She gestures to a trail of Marigold flowers on the floor that lead to a small shrine of candles and photographs of her deceased mother, father, and sister.

PUTZ
Is that where you say adiós?

Alex and Ryder join them in the living room.

ALEX
(cross)
Those are ofrendas. The marigolds lead our ancestors to them.

Putz's eyes meet Alex and Ryder. They stare each other down like it's the shootout at the O.K. Corral.

LAURA
Alrighty then. I'll finish setting the table.

Alex pulls his phone out. There's a text from Colleen: "Change of plans. Kinda."

And texts back: "He's here. Wdym?"

He waits for a reply. Colleen's text bubble shows that she's typing.

...

...

No response. He puts the phone back in his pocket.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Tim sits next to Davey and puts rice and beans on his plate.

DAVEY
Double rice, no beans.

TIM
Try your mother's beans today.

Davey crosses his arms. *Hmf.*

Alex and Ryder sit down on each side of Putz. He pulls out a handkerchief and dabs his forehead nervously.

Laura brings in a hot plate of tamales and sets them down in front of him.

Putz holds out his bowl of white people taco salad to Alex.

PUTZ
Taco salad?

Alex looks at it.

ALEX
Is that Doritos? I'm good. I'll have a tamale though.

PUTZ
Right.

He takes two tamales off the plate and then passes it to Alex.

Laura finally sits down at the head of the table.

LAURA
Alright.
(sighs)
God of the living and the dead,
today we remember our ancestors who
have gone before us in death. Their
lives added to the richness of
ours...

Alex pulls out his phone. There's a response from Colleen: "Not going to the cemetery. Follow the smoke to Ventus." He looks closer. *What!?*

The knife next to Putzs' plate rattles ever so slightly. Putz looks down at it over his folded hands. An earthquake tremor?

LAURA

Their gifts were gifts to--

The knife RATTLES with even more intensity. Putz and Ryder lock eyes.

Alex looks from the text, to the rattling knife. To the text.

LAURA

What's going on?

The knife SPINS and points directly at Putz.

Putz scoots his chair back just as the knife SHOOTS at him, SLICING the side of his abdomen. He groans. A close call.

Laura SHRIEKS. Tim rises from his chair, eyes wide. Davey lets out a terrified whine.

ALEX

(under his breath)

Shit, shit, shit.

Ryder shrugs at him. *What's going on?*

Alex starts a text: "Hurry," but doesn't get to send it as--

Putz and his chair are SWALLOWED BY THE DINING ROOM FLOOR. LOUD CRACKS AND SNAPS. Splinters shoot up.

Alex drops his phone and backs away. Putz is gone. In the cellar?

RYDER

Get outside!

Laura, Tim, and Davey rush out the front door. Alex leaps over the hole in the floor and follows them but--

The door SLAMS shut before he can make it outside.

LAURA

(from outside)

Alex? Alex!

Alex attempts to twist the door knob LEFT and RIGHT. It won't budge. He goes to unlatch the lock but it's NOT EVEN BOLTED.

He tries the knob again, SHAKING the door violently to no avail.

VIOLENT HISSES AND GROANS emanate from the cellar. He looks back over his shoulder in horror. The house SHAKES and Ryder falls through the hole in floor.

ALEX

They're supposed to be gone by now!

ON THE PORCH OUTSIDE

Laura pounds on the door. Tim attempts to open the living room window. It won't budge.

Upon hearing more violent rumblings from the house, Tim looks at their big front porch swing. *Alright*. He unhooks it from the porch ceiling, lifts it with a grunt, and heaves it at the window. The window mystically absorbs the blow. No marks.

BACK INSIDE

Terrified stuttering comes from the shredded hole in the dining room floor.

PUTZ (O.S.)

P-please. I- What are you--

Alex walks cautiously back into the dining room, eyes on the hole, entranced by the sounds coming from it.

He gets closer. And closer. And closer--

PUTZ (O.S.)

AH!

Alex's body jolts at the scream and he slips and FALLS through the hole and into the cellar.

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

He hits the floor with a thud, and exhales in pain. Ryder is on the floor next to him, rubbing his own neck.

Looking up with blurred vision and then slowly in focus, Alex sees Putz levitating in the chair. He's tied to it, and unable to move. Putz and the chair FLIP upside down.

Ryder watches in awe.

PUTZ

Stop it you evil little shit!

RYDER

(under his breath)

I *wish* it was me.

Alex's body goes limp and he closes his eyes for a moment...

And opens them. The translucent ghost of HOLLY GIDDENS is swinging to and fro in the air in front of Putz, with an equally translucent rope around her neck.

HOLLY
(smiling big)
Hey there chum! Wanna dance?

EXT. VENTUS OFFICES - EVENING

Shirley's car drives past the towering office building and into the attached parking garage.

IN THE GARAGE

Colleen unlocks the office door manually with a key.

INT. VENTUS HALLWAY - EVENING

Colleen leads. Shirley lugs the jugs of gasoline. She looks around sporadically making sure the coast is clear.

COLLEEN
Okay. Everyone's off today, and the camera system should still be down.

They reach a big copy and printing machine in the hallway. Shirley sets the gasoline jugs down, out of breath. Colleen sets her backpack on the floor, pulls out the manila folder, and puts the Ventus documents on the feeder tray.

SHIRLEY
So if anyone saw us, I was--

COLLEEN
--Taking me to use the printer, because I had a lot to print and the library's was broke.

SHIRLEY
Uh huh. And your mother's key?

COLLEEN
(duh)
Couldn't get a guest pass with the security system down.

The printer starts printing a bunch of copies of the plans for tearing down all the monument buildings and the shacks.

Shirley starts dousing the hallway in gasoline. Colleen puts the stack of papers in her backpack and walks to the end of the hall to wait for her.

INT. CELLAR - EVENING

Putz is spinning mid-air in the chair while the ghosts of the Rascals circle him in their most demonic form. Translucent corpses as we briefly saw them on the haunted train.

PUTZ

I'll destroy the damned house *for*
you if that's what you want! I was
going to anyway!

In the center of the circle, next to Putz, the ghost of Holly Giddens completes the gleeful dance that she never had the chance to finish in her past life.

Putz's face and neck strain. Rash-like blotches of blood appear under his eyes as though he's just forcefully vomited.

RASCALS

(chant)

Kill! Kill! Kill!

The cellar walls VIBRATE and begin to crack. More pieces of the dining room floor fall from above. Ryder ducks and dodges debris.

Alex is on all fours now, crawling as best he can. One. Hand. And leg. At a time.

ALEX

(to Holly)

Don't take away my home...

Up in the air, Putz's arms are stretched outward and flexed back by an invisible force.

PUTZ

(to Holly)

I'll do whatever you want. I'll do
whatever--

He passes out. The cellar ceiling bursts into FLAMES. Ryder gazes up at them.

The floating translucent corpses of the rascals start skipping around him.

RASCALS

*Round and round the house we go,
will it burn? No one knows. Up,
down, round again, not enough to
save our friend!*

ALEX

Hurry up Colleen...

INT. VENTUS OFFICES - EVENING

Colleen is holding the bouquet of roses in her hand when Shirley joins her. Shirley pulls out a box of matches. Colleen holds out her hand.

COLLEEN

I'll do it.

Shirley gives her a match. She strikes it and lights one of the roses on fire. Shirley takes an old newspaper from her purse.

COLLEEN

Read Holly's.

Shirley exhales... and then reads from the Rascals' obituaries.

SHIRLEY

"Holly Giddens was silly. She was always making her friends and teacher laugh. Father Boyle will remember Holly's light-hearted spirit fondly, and she will be forever missed by all those who loved her."

(to Colleen)

Light the others.

Colleen lights them as quick as he can.

SHIRLEY

"The town of Barringer will never be the same. This week it lost its innocent and along with it, its innocence. The lively souls that contributed so much to Mister Barringer's..."

(clears throat)

Skipping that.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

"As they begin the journey to their next life, it is important that the souls of our dear children know that they are loved and take our love with them wherever they go."

INT. CELLAR - EVENING

Alex struggles to his feet next to Ryder, in front of the circle of flying Rascals. Putz is still passed out in his levitating chair, and is now being violently jolted around every which way AND THEN--

The ghosts stop circling. The anger on Holly's face fades away. The rascals' eyes all become empty. They hover in place. Putz and his chair DROP to the concrete floor.

Alex and Ryder stagger back, waiting for their next move.

INT. VENTUS OFFICES - EVENING

Shirley's eyes well up. She puts the newspaper in her purse.

SHIRLEY

Well go on.

Colleen strikes one last match, and hands it to Shirley. Shirley tosses it down the hallway. TIME SLOWS DOWN AND... The carpet BURSTS into flames and spreads to the walls.

CLOSE ON a sprinkler on the ceiling. It drips a few drops of water, but fails to fully activate.

Colleen and Shirley turn and strut out of the building together.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - EVENING

Holly and the other rascals appear on the sidewalk outside. They exchange confused looks. *We're not... contained?*

Tim and Laura, their arms around Davey, back away petrified.

IN THE HOUSE

Ryder and Alex reach the living room. Alex stops at the ofrendas. Thinks. He scoops up a bunch of the marigolds into a basket.

ALEX

Grab my bike.

OUTSIDE

Ryder BURSTS out the front door. Alex trails behind him with the basket full of marigolds. They look back at the house. No cracks. No flames. That was all an illusion.

Alex looks up the street. THERE. Smoke coming from the Ventus office building.

Ryder grabs the bike. Alex hops on the pegs, and they ride.

ON THE STREET

Ryder pedals and pedals. Alex tosses marigolds on the road behind them as they ride.

The rascals follow, flying through the air. Smoke billows from the burning Ventus building in the distance.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - EVENING

Putz staggers out the front door, sore and trembling. He sees that Alex's family has begun walking up the street toward the smoke. He follows them.

Officer Newman rolls up in a security car and pokes his head out the window.

NEWMAN

Putz?

Putz ignores him and keeps walking. Newman drives away toward the smoking building.

EXT. VENTUS OFFICES - EVENING

Ryder rides like the wind while Alex throws more marigolds into the air as they go. The Rascals follow in a flurry of orange glowing light above them.

They reach the front yard of the office building where Shirley and Colleen stand watching it burn. The translucent figures of the Rascals land around them, entranced by the burning building.

The Rascals - Holly, Fannie, Cleo, and all the rest - turn and face our heroes. They nod in thanks and then fade away. Freed.

Other townspeople show up to watch the spectacle. Among them are Zander's family. Miss Taylor. And Viv Timmons. She's got a bandage over her right eye and is led by her granddaughter.

Colleen hands out stacks of the document copies for them to pass around.

COLLEEN
 (acting so surprised)
These were flying out of the building.

They murmur in disgust and disbelief while reading Putz's plans.

Not far beyond the crowd, Putz watches his building burn.

Colleen, Alex, Ryder, and Shirley meet up. Putz hobbles toward them.

PUTZ
 (exhausted and damaged)
 Th-- They did this? Did they do this? Where are they?

The kids and Shirley stare at him without saying a word. Alex picks up one of the document copies from the ground and hands it to him.

ALEX
 (to the others)
 I could sure use some of Grandma Shirley's cookies.

SHIRLEY
 (smiles)
 I can make that happen.

She steps closer to Putz.

SHIRLEY
 Officer Newman and I share a theory that your Halloween attacker is also an arsonist.
 (looks at the smokey building)
 And that they're probably on the run now.

Putz scrunches up his face in rage.

PUTZ
 I gave you--

SHIRLEY
 Gave me this?
 (waves the check at him)

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

You can discuss the future of our town with us, or I can give this to the Feds.

Shirley and the kids walk away, leaving Putz surrounded by angry townspeople.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - THE NEXT DAY

Three public workers finish repairing the old Barringer sign on the outskirts of town. It now stands strong and freshly painted, next to the Ventus digital sign.

"Welcome to Barringer. A proud community for generations."

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

Putz is spaced out at the microphones on the podium in front of him. He looks up.

PUTZ

We are pleased to confirm that no one was hurt in yesterday's fire. The perpetrator, also presumed to be behind the attacks on Halloween, was found dead about forty miles south of town. We've chosen not to disclose their identity, in order to give their family privacy at this time.

Townspeople scoff and murmur in the crowd before him. He tugs at his collar.

PUTZ

I want to... What I... Well I just want to say again that for the failed safety protocols that lead to the deaths recently at the warehouse, I am sorry. And it is with humility that I would like to announce that Ventus employees at all levels will be receiving a whole slew of new benefits next month.

(clears throat)

As for the rumors regarding the possible demolition of Barringer's oldest and most cherished buildings...

PUTZ (CONT'D)

I assure you that it was merely one of many options considered and will not be happening. Not as long as I lead this company. On that note I am pleased to say that an expansion of this beloved town *will* be happening, as I have just closed a deal to purchase Paul Crotty's field next to the warehouse. Thank you Paul. And thank you *everyone* for making the future of Ventus so bright.

Putz sees Shirley, Ryder, Alex, and Colleen out in the crowd staring at him with their arms crossed. He raises an index finger--

PUTZ

(soulless)

--And it is with great excitement that I announce the first Barringer city council election since Ventus made this town home.

SHIRLEY

Tell em about the oversight.

Ryder, Alex, and Colleen smile at her.

PUTZ

(like someone has a gun to his head)

All residents of age are eligible to run, and will serve as an oversight board for *all* matters of the town including Ventus business within city limits.

He nods and dips away from the podium. Reporters start yelling questions.

ACROSS THE YARD

Putz reaches Pastor Bea, who has now added a fedora and a purple stole to her getup. They continue toward his Escalade.

BEA

Well this was a trip.

PUTZ

I'm convinced you've been putting shit in my margaritas every day since we got here.

BEA

If that were true I wouldn't be
embarking on my new path as an
exorcist.

PUTZ

Be serious.

BEA

Don't worry, I'll be back soon.
You're clearly a very cursed man
Mike.

PUTZ

Yeah, cursed by the shareholders
when I direct those benefit
rollouts. Stupid, stupid, stupid.
It better buy us a few years from
becoming a union town.

He stops as they reach the car, and pulls at his collar. Bea starts to get in and then turns to him.

BEA

Mike?

PUTZ

I'll meet you at the airstrip.
(looks up the street)
I need to think about who all I'm
going to pay off to run for this
council.

Bea tips her fedora to him. Putz walks away, checking his surroundings every few steps.

INT. BARRINGER HOUSE - DAY

Alex glues the final piece of his broken porcelain ghost figure back together and places it next to his Aunt Julie's framed photo in the ofrendas.

Creak. Creak. Creak. He turns to the window and then runs out to the porch.

EXT. BARRINGER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Colleen and Ryder are swinging back and forth on the porch swing.

ALEX

Alright, let me on.

Just as he sits between them, Ryder LEAPS UP.

RYDER

Ah!

He runs off the porch and into the yard. Alex and Colleen follow suit, frantically looking all around them for ghosts.

RYDER

(laughs)

Gotcha!

He picks up his new bike and rides off.

COLLEEN

You're sooo funny!

Alex and Colleen grab their bikes and ride after him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alex, Colleen, and Ryder bike past the library.

Past City Hall with its beautiful red brick clock tower and steeple.

And past Shirley, who smiles and waves at them from her porch.

They turn off onto another street.

RYDER

We shoulda let Putz die before we torched the place.

ALEX

I kinda thought that's how it was gonna go down with Colleen taking so long.

COLLEEN

Bullshit.

RYDER

So my mom called back. First time in a long time.

ALEX

Wow. That's great right?

COLLEEN

You leaving?

RYDER
I'd never leave Grandma Shirley.

COLLEEN
How bout us?

ALEX
Your parents wanna stay after
coming home to all that?

COLLEEN
(thinks she's funny)
They wouldn't be caught leaving
their company stock options while
the price is so low.

A pause. The two boys don't know what the fuck stock options are.

ALEX
My mom actually does want to
leave...

Colleen keeps her eyes ahead on the road.

RYDER
Damn.

ALEX
I'll change her mind.

He grins and rides up closer to Ryder, then reaches over and gives him a noogie on the head. Colleen giggles at them.

They bike past the...

OLD BURNED OUT FACTORY

And continue up the road.

But WE lag behind them and veer off into the old factory yard.

We move silently into the ruins... Then hear a creak. Creak. Creak.

We halt in the doorway and see:

Mike Putz, hanging from the rafters, a rope around his neck.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END