

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

A "Canadian" Story

by
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EXT. THE ROAD - NIGHT

A Taxi with a Nova Scotia licence plate is travelling down a road through the northern woods in the dead of winter as the credits roll.

INT. THE TAXI - NIGHT

Kenneth McAllister is in the back seat - late 20-something, tall, a little geeky, collar-length reddish hair and fashionable stubble, intense blue eyes, but, we sense, deeply troubled, apprehensive yet excited, about something...

DRIVER

(when credits are over)

Guess you don't remember me.

Kenneth, startled, shoots a glance at The Driver - around Kenneth's age, short, balding, a bit plump, with a brown goatee and metal-rimmed glasses.

KENNETH

(Staring at driver)

Doug? Doug Stanyk?

DRIVER

(Smiling grimly)

Try again.

KENNETH

His little brother. What... was his name?

DRIVER

Jim.

KENNETH

Jim. Jim Stanyk. Yes. You were the one who...

He doesn't want to say it.

JIM (THE DRIVER)

Yeah. The one who.

They drive on in silence through the leafless trees, as snowflakes start to fill the air.

JIM

(After a minute)

So. Kenny. Back for the... Sorry,
man.

KENNETH

(After a pause)

Yeah.

Jim shrugs and turns on the radio. 80s metal blares out.
Jim looks back at Kenneth and starts wildly air-guitaring.

JIM

Oh oh oh oh sweet chiiild of miii-
iine ooh...

KENNETH

Hey, watch out!

Jim swerves back to the wheel.

JIM

(slamming the brakes)

What? The? Fuck?

On the road straight ahead, bathed in the cold white
moonlight, a mighty MOOSE, white as the swirling snow,
stands motionless. The Taxi skids to a halt just short of
The Moose, who seems to stare deep into Kenneth's eyes.

From The Moose's POV, Kenneth stares back, as if
remembering...

The Moose turns and walks away slowly into the forest.
Kenneth and Jim are shaken.

JIM

Did you see that?

KENNETH

(Shaking his head to
dispel the spell of the
Moose)

You almost killed me!

JIM

What do you care? You've got nothing
left to lose now.

KENNETH

The house. And the land.

JIM

You haven't been home for a while,
huh?

KENNETH

7 years. It feels like...

He stops.

JIM

I hear that.

They drive on, hair metal anthems blaring into the cold winter night. The snow flies thick and fast.

EXT. THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

The Taxi comes to a small bridge over a raging, ice-filled river. There is a sign bearing a US flag: Welcome to Christmas Island, Minnesota. It is riddled with bullet holes. The Taxi crosses the bridge.

EXT. THE MAGIC PATHWAY - NIGHT

Finally Jim turns onto a narrow road winding deep into the bush.

KENNETH

Yes! I remember this, the Magic Pathway. It's the one thing I missed since I... escaped.

JIM

Escaped? Geez, I never found it that bad here.

EXT. THE GATE - NIGHT

The Taxi pulls up to a metal gate blocking a narrow driveway. The sign on the gate says "GO AWAY!".

KENNETH

Here is fine. How much?

JIM

\$73.25

KENNETH

Are you kidding me? It's like 5 miles.

JIM

Nope.

Kenneth stares at him.

JIM

That's what happens.

Kenneth sighs, pulls out his wallet and offers Jim a credit card.

JIM

What am I supposed to do with that?

He points to a handwritten sign taped to the window:
"CASH" ONLY, Arrange Fair Before Ride.

KENNETH

Fuck. Look, I'll owe you, ok?

JIM

I'll add it to your tab.

KENNETH

(opening the door)

What? I don't...

Kenneth sticks his head out the door into the moonlit snowscape. He starts to get out slowly.

JIM

Don't forget your bag.

He grabs Kenneth's backpack from the seat and tosses it out the door. But it falls to the ground unnoticed. Kenneth is transfixed by the snowflakes falling all around him, like tiny phantasms glimmering accusingly in the pale moonlight...

JIM

Door!

Kenneth comes back to himself and slams the car door. Jim does a u-turn and speeds back down the dark lonely road.

Kenneth picks up his bag and approaches the gate. Padlocked. He throws the bag over and tries to climb up and over it himself, but slips and falls on his face in the snow on the other side. An unseen hand slips his phone out of his pocket into the fluffy snow. A GIRL'S GIGGLE rings out though the night.

He stands up painfully, wiping the snow from his face and looking around wildly. No one.

KENNETH
I'm really losing it.

He slings his bag on his back and trudges off up the driveway.

EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Kenneth's childhood home is a rundown bungalow on a small lot surrounded by the ever-present menacing woods, which seem to be closing in on it, saying wordlessly: "We were here before you, and will be yet when you're long gone!".

A rusty dead pickup truck stands on concrete blocks amidst mysterious lumps covered with snow. Most of the windows are boarded up. Kenneth hesitates, then walks up to the front door and pushes it open.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Kenneth enters the dimly lit kitchen.

KENNETH
Hello?

No answer. He throws his bag on the floor and his coat on a chair, and looks around the kitchen. It's a mess! Empty liquor bottles and beer cans, unwashed dishes coated with half-eaten food, are strewn over the counter and dirty floor. By the back door is a painting of this very house, these very trees shading it from a burning white sky.

Instinctively Kenneth starts tidying up while calling...

KENNETH
Hey, anybody home!?

There's a stirring in the next room, and Kenneth's father Bill (maybe 60, but looks twice that old) shuffles out. Unshaven, with long wild white hair, he is dressed only in a dirty dressing gown, open at the front exposing his shrivelled naked body, and worn-out slippers with faded red pompoms. He peers around with bleary, bloodshot – blank – eyes. Kenneth is shocked to see his once-strong father in such a state.

BILL

Who's there?

KENNETH

Dad, it's me.

BILL

Who?

Kenneth goes up to him, gently closes his dressing gown and ties the belt, then gives him a hug. Bill doesn't respond, but seems confused.

KENNETH

It's Kenny, Dad. Don't you know me?

Bill's eyes open wide in recognition and a big smile crosses his ancient face.

BILL

Kenny, Kenny. Where have you been?
Your mother will be so glad to see
you!

KENNETH

(Recoiling)
But... I thought...

BILL

(Pointing to a closed
door)
She's just having a little rest. Oh,
she's been waiting so long.

KENNETH

You mean you haven't called the...
She's still...?

Bill just smiles mysteriously as Kenneth cautiously approaches the door. He looks back at Bill.

BILL

Go on. She's not going to bite.

Kenneth isn't so sure! He apprehensively opens the door.

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kenneth's parents' bedroom is pitch dark. The door opens slowly as Kenneth enters, and the light from the kitchen reveals his mother DORIS lying on the bed, covered with a cheerful, if faded, quilt, hand-sewn by herself in happier times. She is dead - but not at peace!

Her white, pinched face, framed by long jet-black hair, is drawn back in an agonized rictus; the stiff hands crossed over her breasts look like claws, ready to rip the life out of anyone who gets too close to her. But Kenneth must. A single tear leaks from his right eye as he comes near to the tragic figure on the bed, though his actual feelings are ambiguous - at best!

KENNETH

Oh Mom.

He bends down to kiss her cold forehead. Suddenly her pale blue eyes flash open and impale him with a glare of pure hatred! Kenneth starts backwards with a yell.

KENNETH

Fuck!

But when he looks back, those icy eyes are closed again. Does she look more peaceful now? Did it ever even happen?? It's hard to tell...

INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kenneth comes out of the bedroom, obviously shaken. Bill is sitting at the table, downing a beer and rolling a joint. He looks at Kenneth disapprovingly.

BILL

Did I hear you raising your voice to your mother? You never did have any respect...

KENNETH

Dad, I don't know how to break it to you. She's dead.

BILL

(with a knowing laugh)

Well of course she is. It's the only thing that would bring you home. God knows you wouldn't come back for me.

Kenneth doesn't deny it. Bill finishes rolling, lights up and takes a deep draw, then offers it to Kenneth, who holds up his hand in refusal.

BILL

What's the matter? Big city turned you into some kind of God damn vegan? You weren't thinking that way when you were 16.

KENNETH

Dad, that stuff's not good for you. Especially now, when you're grieving...

BILL

(taking another toke)

Right, you know all about grieving. Away in Chicago with your high-tech job and your high-class girlfriend, and me out here alone with...

He jerks his head towards the bedroom.

KENNETH

I'm so sorry Dad. I didn't mean...

BILL

(offering Kenneth his half-finished beer)

Well if you don't want the good stuff, at least go with second-best. Or is that gonna kill you too?

Kenneth sighs, takes it and drains it. He pops open another can and slumps back in the 30-year-old recliner with the cracked leather and the stuffing hanging out. For a minute, they are lost in thought, remembering the woman who was such a part of their lives - for good or for bad! - each in his own way.

BILL

You know I got a prescription.

KENNETH

Yeah, from some Rasta at the
(air quotes)
"clinic". Gimme a break.

They lapse into silence again, indulging their respective vices, until...

KENNETH

So what, you're just going to leave her there? Like Norman fucking Bates? Maybe get her stuffed, so she can never leave you again?!

BILL

Well you know, I did consider that...

KENNETH

What?

BILL

...but when she got really sick, near the end you know, I had to call the medics, and they were here when she... passed.

INT. THE BEDROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK: Bill and 2 PARAMEDICS are looking down at Doris's just-deceased body.

PARAMEDIC 1

Are you sure? We can take her if you like.

BILL

I just need a little more time.

PARAMEDIC 1

Of course. I'll let Cribben's know.

PARAMEDIC 2

So sorry for your loss.

They shake hands with Bill and leave.

Bill looks round to make sure they're gone, then bends and whispers in Doris's ear.

BILL

Doris.

No answer. He looks around, apparently confused, then bends and kisses Doris's lips.

BILL

I'm going now. See you soon, my
love.

He picks up a rope from the dresser and leaves the room.

O/S, the back door SLAMS.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

PRESENT DAY.

BILL

...so everyone knows she's gone, and
they might find it kind of weird if
I...

KENNETH

Are you fucking serious?

BILL

What do you think?

They stare at each other for a second, then as one they burst out laughing. Great cathartic laughter, that fills that dark lonely house and seems, for one tiny moment at least, to drive away the ghosts of the past that haunt the two men. But they will return!

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

Bill and Kenneth's laughter echoes through the shadowy woods outside the house, gradually drowned out by the wail of the rising wind. It sounds like a woman in mourning - or a hungry child! The snow is getting really heavy now too.

The camera moves up above the treetops, to reveal a vast snowstorm moving in rapidly, smothering everything in its path.

It reaches The House, and without hesitation swallows it whole in its frigid embrace.

INT. THE HOUSE - MORNING

Sunlight through the chinks in the boarded-up windows reveal the true state of the kitchen: even worse by day than it appeared by night. Kenneth is passed out in the recliner, a spilt can of beer in his lap. Bill is nowhere in sight.

A stray sunbeam hits Kenneth's eye. It opens. He groans.

KENNETH

Oooaah... Ow! What the...?

He pulls his leg up to reveal that it's bleeding: a broken spring has been poking into it all night.

KENNETH

Dad!

No answer. He pulls himself painfully to his feet and looks over at the closed door to his parents' bedroom - he shudders to think what he'll see if he opens that. He heads for The Kitchen.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

He staggers over to the kitchen counter, puts the filthy coffee pot in the sink, and turns on the tap. Nothing. But Kenneth has lived through too many Christmas Island winters to let a frozen pipe faze him. He limps over to the front door.

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY

A bright sun in a clear sky reflects blindingly off the drifting snow half covering The House, coming halfway up the front door. The door opens, to reveal Kenneth's head peering out over the snowdrift into the cold blue light of day.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Kenneth stands on tiptoes to survey the scene outside. Then, almost mechanically, he fills the pot with snow, brings it back to the coffeemaker and dumps it in, and puts in a filter of new coffee from the large Tim's can on the counter.

He flips the switch. No light. He looks around the room. Lamp, clock, TV, stereo, all dead.

KENNETH

(Cheerfully)

Shit.

(Then worriedly)

Shit.

He starts rummaging through his pants and coat pockets.

Shit, shit, shit...!

Bill emerges from The Bedroom. He looks refreshed, hair tied back in a ponytail, though he's still wearing that same dressing gown.

BILL

Lose something?

KENNETH

My phone. I gotta call Jessica.

Fuck. It must have dropped out when I went over the gate.

BILL

Use ours.

Kenneth looks at the ancient pastel-green rotary phone on the wall by the fridge.

KENNETH

Yabba dabba doo.

BILL

Laugh it up, buddy. That'll be going strong when your intershit gadgets have all gone tits-up.

KENNETH

(picking up the receiver
and listening)

Not this time. All the lines must be
down.

BILL

(thoughtfully)

That was quite a storm, all right.
Yump. Haven't seen one like that
since...

KENNETH

What do we do now?

BILL

What we always do. Sit and wait.

KENNETH

(suddenly furious)

Sit and wait. You're the fucking
Einstein of sitting and waiting. If
I'd taken after you, I'd have never
gotten out of this fucking shack. I
wouldn't have my "high-tech job" and
my "high-class girlfriend". I
wouldn't have shit. I'd still be
sitting here, waiting.

BILL

Actually, you are still...

KENNETH

No. I'm not. I'm going to find my
phone. Where are the snowshoes?

BILL

Out in the shed maybe, unless...

He glances over at the bedroom door and lowers his voice.

...unless she threw them out. She
threw out a lot of stuff after
you...

KENNETH

Come on, not those. They were
antiques.

BILL

You know what she's like when she gets upset.

Kenneth doesn't correct his use of the present tense, just nods. He goes over to the wood stove in the corner, throws in a small log and some kindling, lights it and sets the pot of snow on top.

KENNETH

I need to clean up.

He picks up his bag and goes to open the door of his former bedroom. Suddenly he stops. A FAINT BUZZING SOUND is coming from behind the door.

KENNETH

What's that noise?

BILL

Say, did I mention...?

Kenneth opens the door.

INT. THE OLD ROOM - DAY

The Old Room is totally bare, except for 2 metal-framed single beds. Only some random holes in the walls, and the occasional scrap held up by a lone thumbtack, bear witness to the athletic and musical heroes of Kenneth's youth that once adorned them. But it's not his mother's ruthless attempt to delete every last trace of his existence that transfixes his attention now.

SISSY

Kenny? Oh my God! Get out!

Kenneth's sister SISSY - slender, with punk-style hair dyed black with brown roots, could be nice-looking if not for that stupid makeup - frantically pulls up the sheet to cover her tattooed body, naked from the waist down, and the large, colorful vibrator dancing between her thighs.

BILL

(from The Kitchen)

...your sister's here too!

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

Kenneth is seated at the kitchen table as Bill pours thick black coffee into their mugs.

BILL

There you go. Christmas Island Espresso. Doris always says I brew it too strong, but I heard all the hipsters like it that way now. Bill McAllister, trendsetter, that's me.

He picks up the sugar bowl and dumps about half of it into his mug. Kenneth takes a sip from his and screws up his face in disgust.

KENNETH

Got any milk?

BILL

Nah, milk's for pussies. Sugar?

KENNETH

I'm good. When did Sissy get here?

BILL

Couple hours before you. Blew in and had to crash right away. The jet lag was killing her.

KENNETH

Jet lag? LA is like 2 hours difference.

BILL

I guess it really brought her down. She always was a sensitive girl.

Kenneth snorts.

KENNETH

And you didn't think to tell me.

BILL

Well you know, we were having such a good time bonding. I figured there'd be time enough for the two of you to... get together. How's the coffee?

KENNETH

(looking for a chance to
secretly dump it)

Great. Dad, you never answered me.
What are you going to do about Mom?

BILL

Sam Jr was supposed to pick her up
yesterday, but he called and said
the brakes on the hearse were
fucked. Said he'd be out first thing
this morning.

KENNETH

That's not happening. They won't
even have the main roads ploughed
today, let alone out here. We could
be here for days.

As he speaks, Sissy bursts out of the bedroom, face
plastered in white foundation, black lipstick and red
eyeshadow. Her impeccably spiked hair contrasts oddly with-
mercifully—both halves of her pink Hello Kitty jammies.

SISSY

No no no, that's not right. ¿No es
posible, comprende? I can't be stuck
in this hole. I'm seeing people
Tuesday, important people... is that
coffee?

She grabs a mug, fills it and takes a big swig, then spews
it out into the sink.

SISSY

What is this shit? Jesus Kenny,
don't you even know how to make
coffee yet?

Kenneth starts to protest, but realizes it's a lost cause.

KENNETH

Hey, can I use your phone? I need to
call Jessica.

SISSY

Oh right, Little Ms Perfect. Has she smashed through any glass ceilings lately?

KENNETH

(proudly)

Actually yes. She just became the first female VP Acquisitions at Loginomicon.com, beat out 5 men...

Sissy mutters under her breath.

KENNETH

What...? I don't want to know. Speaking of, how's Pablo, Pedro...?

SISSY

Paolo. Wow, you really are out of touch. I dumped him like 6 months ago. Can you imagine, he was going to leave his wife and kids for me! I don't need that kind of drama. Anyway I've got this new friend now, Jack. A bit older, kind of looks like Daddy...

KENNETH

Eww, gross!

BILL

Sounds like a keeper to me.

SISSY

It's not like that. He's just a very nice man who wants to help me get on my feet...

Kenneth's turn to mutter.

SISSY

He found me a cute little place on the Strip, swimming pool and everything...

KENNETH

I think you mean "cee-ment pond".

(to the tune of The
Beverly Hillbillies)
"Come and listen to my story
'Bout a gal named Sis..."

SISSY
Fuck off. I'm helping him with his
business, OK? Customer relations.
He's got inside info on some
investments that are really going to
take off...

KENNETH
Uh, Sissy...

SISSY
Stop right there. I know what you're
going to say. What everyone says.
But I'm a big girl now, and I just
wanna have fun before I get... old.
If it doesn't work out, fuck him.
There's lots more where he came
from.

BILL
Can't argue with that. You go girl!

And indeed, Kenneth can't argue with that.

KENNETH
So... your phone?

SISSY
Sure, knock yourself out.

She pulls it out of her pyjama pocket and tosses it to him.

SISSY
Don't stay on too long. I don't have
a plan.

KENNETH
What a surprise.

He looks at the screen: 1 bar, 1% power. He hastily starts
dialing, then stops.

KENNETH

Have you got Jessica's number on here?

SISSY

No, why would I?

KENNETH

Wait, I think I know it.

He dials. The other end rings.

CRACKLING MALE VOICE

(on phone)

Hello?

KENNY

Shit. Sorry, wrong number.

He hangs up.

KENNETH

Was that 3-2 or 2-3?

SISSY

Or maybe Perfect Jessie has a new friend too!

He glares at her and dials again, but just as it starts to ring, the screen goes blank.

SISSY

Ah well. She's just going have to live without your fascinating repartee for a little while longer. Let's see, where can I plug in?

KENNETH

(maliciously)

You can't.

He waves his hand round the powerless House. For once Sissy is speechless.

BILL

You know back in the day, we used to write down important numbers, or even memorize them, instead of trusting them to...

SISSY

(head in her hands,
wailing)

What am I going to do?

KENNETH

I was just going to look for the
snowshoes. Maybe you can walk back
to town. I'm sure you can find a
nice old man on the way to give you
a ride.

She gives him 2 fingers, one on each hand.

KENNETH

But as long as you're here...

He looks over at The Bedroom.

KENNETH

Have you seen Mom yet?

SISSY

No... she's here?

KENNETH

Oh yeah. And she's not going
anywhere for a while.

Sissy sits down and pulls out a pack of smokes. She lights
up and offers the pack to Kenneth. He hesitates...

KENNETH

Ah, fuck it.

... takes one and lights up. Bill reaches for one too, but
she ignores him and sticks them back in her pocket, staring
at The Bedroom door.

SISSY

In there.

Kenneth nods.

KENNETH

(hastily)

But maybe you shouldn't. She's...

SISSY

No. I have to do this.

She takes a deep breath, stands, tosses her butt in the sink and enters The Bedroom. Bill looks at Kenneth. Kenneth takes a drag from his cigarette and passes it to Bill. They pass it back and forth, silently watching the door.

Sissy comes out. Her head is down. She sits down, lights another one.

SISSY

(thoughtfully)

I never thought... I was so scared.
I never saw anyone dead before. But
then when she was lying there so
peaceful like, with that sweet
little smile on her face...

KENNETH

Huh?

SISSY

...like she just had a nice cup of
tea and drifted off to sleep, and
now she's dreaming with the angels.
No more pain, no more sorrow...

Kenneth jumps up and runs into The Bedroom.

INT. THE BEDROOM - DAY

Doris looks, if possible, even more tortured, even God damn angrier than she did the night before. Her clenched hands are now hard fists, long nails digging deep into her withered palms. Her sunken eyes bulge wide open, glaring at the ceiling in silent rage at the world that has treated her so unfairly, doomed her to an agonizing death amid the ruins of her girlhood dreams.

KENNETH

Mom...

DORIS

(raspingly, through
frozen, snarling teeth)

What do you want? Go away. You're
good at that.

KENNETH

Mom... I'm sorry.

Doris laughs a hollow, humourless laugh.

DORIS

Little late for that, don't you think?

KENNETH

I never wanted... I just had to get out. You understand. You're the one who told me go to school, get a good job, far away...

DORIS

Oh, I understand. You know I understand. How I wanted - yearned - to leave this godforsaken place, to leave... him!

KENNETH

You could have. I told you. If you really wanted.

DORIS

And go where? Do what? An old woman on her own, no skills, no friends, no family...

KENNETH

You had me.

DORIS

Oh yes. That fancy girl of yours would have really loved to see me show up in rags, scrounging a handout and a bed for the night. I couldn't do that to you. I'd rather die.

KENNETH

(bitterly)

So you did. But Sissy...?

DORIS

That slut. I was glad when she left.
She'd have had me begging on the
street so she could buy drugs. But
you, my son...

Her dead eyes turn slowly to meet his horrified gaze.

DORIS

...my dear, my only son... you're
back now. Say you'll stay. Never
leave me again. Stay with me
forever...

Kenneth stares at her.

KENNETH

No... I can't...

He turns and stumbles out of The Bedroom.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

Sissy and Bill look at him in astonishment as he throws on his boots and coat and flings open the front door. He jumps up and tries to scramble over the top of the drift blocking it, knocking chunks of snow into The Kitchen.

SISSY

Hey, what the hell, man?

KENNETH

Got to go. Can't stay here. Got to go.

He drags himself out onto the snow.

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY

From the POV of the frigid sun, we see Kenneth lying atop the massive drift covering the front of The House. He desperately struggles to pull himself to his feet and stumble away from that cursed place, but every step only sinks him deeper into the white mass. Up to his knees, his waist, his neck... finally he just gives up, and lets the cold and the all-consuming snow swallow him whole.

INT. THE DRIFT - DAY

It's like Kenneth is floating in an infinite white cloud. Vague flashes of light in the distance surround him, and voices, re-animated memories from a long-forgotten past, call out mockingly.

DORIS

Forever!

KENNETH

(Voice muffled by the
snow)

Yes Mom. I guess you win. Are you
happy now?

Suddenly a hand comes out of the snow and grabs his wrist! He cries out in horror and tries to pull it away.

KENNETH

Get off me!

SISSY

Kenny, it's me. Get in here!

She has tunneled through the snow from the door.

KENNETH

Sorry, sorry...

Sissy pulls him back to the house. He doesn't resist.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

Bill is nowhere in sight. Sissy emerges into The Kitchen in a shower of snow, dragging Kenneth behind her. White from head to toe, they look like ghosts, or some kind of monster born of famine and despair from the wild woods that threaten to envelop them.

Sissy looks around and finds a broom in the corner. She sweeps them both off. Kenneth collapses onto the sofa.

SISSY

Look what I found!

She holds up Bill's baggie of weed.

KENNETH

Just a beer for me.

SISSY

Wimp.

She pops one and tosses it to him, then sits beside him and starts to roll up.

SISSY

What just happened?

KENNETH

I couldn't stay. You know what I mean.

SISSY

Hmm. You know what? I think I'm starting to get into this. No phones, no computers, no whole fucking world trying to get a piece of me 24/7. Just us. It's nice. And it's ours.

KENNETH

You know what? I think you're right.

They smoke and drink in silence.

KENNETH

I wonder where Dad is.

SISSY

Do you care? Probably with...

KENNETH

With?

SISSY

You know who.

KENNETH

Nope.

SISSY

Yes you do. Jesus, Kenny, his... the one from the... you told me...

Kenneth doesn't want to talk about that.

KENNETH
(sniffing)
You smell that?

SISSY
Yeah... what the...?

As one, they turn to look at The Bedroom.

SISSY
Mom?

She rushes to open the door and recoils.

SISSY
It's her all right.

KENNETH
What are we going to do?

SISSY
Move her outside.

KENNETH
Dump her in the snow?

SISSY
The shed.

KENNETH
It doesn't seem too dignified.

SISSY
It's cold. And a lot more dignified
than lying in there stinking up the
place. Come help me.

KENNETH
I'm not going in there again. Cover
her up first.

Sissy pops back into The Bedroom.

INT. THE BEDROOM - DAY

Sissy pokes her head inside the dark bedroom.

SISSY
Hi Mom.

DORIS

(unheard by Sissy,
or is she?)

Go away.

Sissy pulls open the curtains. The dingy room is purified in cold lumination.

From Sissy's POV, Doris has an angelic smile on her pale drawn face, like she could just open her eyes and everything would be all right...

SISSY

We're going to take you someplace
you'll be comfy.

She starts tucking Doris's sheets around her body.

DORIS

I'm comfy here. In my own bed.

SISSY

It'll keep you looking beautiful.
You'd like that.

DORIS

I'm dead, what more do you want from
me?

SISSY

Say... Hold on, have you got...

She looks around the room and finds some half-used cosmetics on the dresser.

SISSY

(giggling)

All right. Let's get you ready for
your closeup.

She holds some of the containers up to the light.

SISSY

Kissable Coral, expiry June 2016.
Peachy Passion, 2015, mascara 2017,
perfume eww! what is that? 2013... I
guess you just gave up, huh?

DORIS

Don't you dare. Get away from me.

Sissy makes a lipstick selection and sets to work.

SISSY

On the bright side, you don't have to worry about skin reactions... shit.

The dried-out lipstick breaks off in her hand, leaving a big passionately peachy smear all over Doris's mouth. Doris CACKLES gleefully. Sissy looks at it a moment.

SISSY

So much for that. Unless you want to try mine? Blink once for yes.

DORIS

You'll regret this, you...

SISSY

Didn't think so. Ok, if you want to let yourself just fade away, don't bitch if people think you look like a ghost. Of a clown.

Doris's POV: Sissy pulls the quilt up over Doris's head.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

Kenneth nervously waits in his coat and boots, unconsciously biting apart his manicured nails, a long-forgotten habit from unhappier times.

SISSY

(O/S)

She's ready.

INT. THE BEDROOM - DAY

Kenneth enters. Doris is completely wrapped up in sheets and quilt. He bends and picks her up. She is totally stiff, and he has to manoeuvre awkwardly out the door, almost dropping her. He hugs her close as Sissy opens the back door.

EXT. THE BACK YARD - DAY

The snow in the wind-sheltered Back Yard is not as deep as in front of The House. Kenneth carries his grisly burden carefully down the slippery steps, followed by Sissy, and heads for a wooden Shed a few feet away.

DORIS

(in Kenneth's ear)

I'm cold, Kenny. Take me back where it's warm.

KENNETH

It's not for long.

SISSY

What?

KENNETH

Nothing. Get the door.

Sissy runs ahead, flips the latch and enters The Shed. Kenneth follows with Doris.

INT. THE SHED - DAY

The cold interior of The Shed appears bigger than it seems from the outside. It is illuminated by 2 small windows, cracks in the walls and holes in the roof, but still exudes an atmosphere of gloom and oppression. Against one wall is a workbench, where Bill and Kenneth used to work on manly woodworking projects together in happier days, before...

Sissy clears away the rusty tools and scrap-ends of wood, and Kenneth carefully deposits Doris on the workbench. The siblings look at her in silence.

SISSY

We should say something.

KENNETH

Like a prayer? She doesn't believe in anything.

Sissy bows her head.

SISSY

Dear God...

Kenneth looks at her in surprise, but bows his head too.

SISSY

(with heartfelt solemnity)

... if you're there, if Mom's there with you, please don't be too hard on her. You know she was a shit mother, turned me into a total fucking mess and Kenny into whatever the fuck he is, but I mean look at this place, it's enough to drive anyone fucking bongos. If you want to let her suffer in Hell for a couple million years, go for it. But after that, please let her come join you in Heaven and sit around playing harps all day or whatever. She deserves... That's all. Amen.

KENNETH

Amen, sistah! Can we go now?

But Sissy is looking speculatively at the tarpaulin that completely covers the back wall. She pulls a corner of the tarp, but it doesn't move. She tugs harder. No luck.

SISSY

Help me here.

KENNETH grabs the other corner.

KENNETH

One, two...

They give a mighty tug. The tarp rips free and falls to the floor in a cloud of dust, which clears to reveal a multi-tiered rack of memories.

SISSY

Oh my God! Windy!

She snatches down a mouldy old teddy with antlers, big shiny round eyes and sharp icy teeth, and hugs it tight.

SISSY

I thought... she said you had to go to the dump because I lost my shoe...

She looks up at the shelves full of forgotten toys, clothes and other paraphernalia that Doris "threw out" over the years, when she was in a particularly bad mood over some real or imagined offence.

SISSY
The fucking bitch.

KENNETH
Come on, you just forgave her, sort of. Let it go.

SISSY
Yeah, but... Windy!?

She holds Windy tight as they explore the trove of long-lost treasures.

KENNETH
Hey, remember this?

He holds up a Boston Bruins hockey jersey with an illegible signature in marker on the front.

SISSY
No.

KENNETH
Santa brought it when I was 13.
Felix Potvin. The Cat! But then I failed math. Christ, what a...

SISSY
Uh-uh. You said Amen too.

Kenneth suppresses his response.

KENNETH
Where'd you hide your good stuff?

SISSY
There was a loose baseboard in the closet. I kept cheap junk on the night-table for her. You?

Kenneth starts to answer...

SISSY

Just joking. It was under your
mattress with your crusty socks.
Hey, what's in that?

She points to a large wooden crate balanced precariously on
the very top shelf.

KENNETH

Let's find out.

He gets up on an old chair and reaches up to pull down the
crate, but loses his balance and narrowly leaps out of the
way as it crashes to the ground, splitting open and
spilling out a whole bunch of painted canvases. Sissy picks
one up.

SISSY

What the... D. Kloss, 1987. Holy...
that's Mom!

KENNETH

Yeah, she took art in college. That
one in the kitchen is hers.

SISSY

I never knew that. Did she tell you?

KENNETH

She told me lots of stuff. But I
never saw these.

SISSY

Wow, she was good!

Not really, but their mother's lack of technique is more
than made up for by the exuberance of colour and sheer
emotion that bursts from every painting.

In the one Sissy holds, a young woman with long black hair
sits in the window of a grey brick apartment building,
looking yearningly out over a misty Tuscan landscape. In
others, she rides a black stallion, galloping over a
deserted white beach at sunrise, or runs...

SISSY

Ha! Don't look!

...naked, free and wild through a floral fantasy forest, illuminated by surreal sunbeams, or scoots on a moped through the streets of Rome, surrounded by crowds but always alone. Until...

SISSY

'92. That's when she met Dad.

KENNETH

He had black hair.

SISSY

So who's that?

They examine the red-haired man sharing a cigarette and a cappuccino with Doris's avatar at a Parisian sidewalk café.

KENNETH

Maybe Dave.

SISSY

Who?

KENNETH

A guy she knew before. They were supposed to get married, but he wimped out at the last minute. Next thing she knew, she was living with Dad, then married and here and us.

Sissy looks speculatively at Kenneth's hair, the same colour as "Dave's" in the painting.

SISSY

She told you that.

KENNETH

Yeah, she used to come to my room at night and tell me all about her life before, how she felt about...

SISSY

About...?

DORIS

(Hissing)

Tell her nothing, take her nowhere.

SISSY

Come on, gimme the dirt.

KENNETH

Later. Hey, is that still working?

He squats to examine a box containing a portable cassette player and several tapes.

KENNETH

Remember this? The Worst of the 70s,
Abba, Dancing Queen? She loved that,
the only times she was ever happy...
what's in here now?

He presses Play. The sweet sounds of [Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians](#) fill the shed.

SISSY

No!

She stares at the player in horror as The Song begins.

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

(on tape)

How'd you like to spend Christmas...

SISSY

Turn it off!

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

On Christmas Island...?

Sissy grabs the player and hurls it at the wall. It keeps playing as it hits the ground.

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

*How'd you like to spend a holiday
Away across the sea...?*

Sissy runs over, snatches up the player and ejects the cassette. She tries unsuccessfully to break it in half, then rips the tape out of the case, strews it over the floor, and stands breathing heavily.

KENNETH

I thought you loved that song.
Remember Dad used to play it on
Christmas morning, and you'd dance
around like a hula-hula girl...?

SISSY

I hate that song.

Kenneth awaits her clarification.

SISSY

When I was a little girl, I used to
dream about going there some day, to
the real Christmas Island, not this
shithole. Hang my stocking on a
coconut tree and wait for Santa to
show me a festive good time, just
like in the song. So last year
around now, I had some extra bucks
and I just said fuck it, I'm going.
And I started looking for flights.

KENNETH

And it didn't exist.

SISSY

I could have handled that. Oh, it
exists. And maybe when they sang the
song, it was like I imagined. But I
found out in the 50s the military
took it over, and you know what they
did? They fucking nuked it. 40 atom
bombs in 5 years, and now it's a Mad
Max wasteland, nothing but mutated
crabs and giant snails and ants that
spit poison, and if you get within
100 miles, you'll be dead of cancer
in a month.

KENNETH

So even worse than here.

SISSY

Pretty close anyway. Jesus, Kenny,
they murdered Christmas Island! And
you know when they did that, they
murdered me too!

Kenneth doesn't know what to say. Should he hug her or what? He desperately looks around for an excuse to change the subject.

KENNETH

There they are!

He drags an ancient pair of snowshoes from behind the shelf.

KENNETH

All right!

He sits and starts strapping them to his boots.

SISSY

Where are you going?

KENNETH

To find my phone.

SISSY

It's been out in the cold all night.

KENNETH

I have to try.

SISSY

Not like that.

She squats before him.

SISSY

Look. Round there, then through there. Your way, your feet won't know which way to go.

She pulls the straps tight and looks up at him. For a moment their eyes meet, and Kenneth feels a sudden...

DORIS

Dirty whore! Leave my boy alone!

Kenneth looks away.

KENNETH

Let me try.

He straps on the other snowshoe as Sissy watches critically.

SISSY

Hmm, not bad.

Kenneth stands and starts shuffling stiff-legged to the door.

KENNETH

Wish me luck.

SISSY

Break a leg.

KENNETH

Good one.

He heads out into the cold sun.

EXT. THE FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Kenny treads carefully down the drive towards the gate. He hears a faint sound: the RINGTONE from his phone. He starts to go faster but almost trips over the snowshoes.

KENNETH

Shit. Keep ringing.

He reaches the gate and starts scrabbling desperately in the snow. The ringing gets louder, then suddenly stops. He digs some more and finds the phone, snatches it up, presses the screen frantically.

KENNETH

Hello? Jess? Hello!

Dead.

KENNETH

Naturally.

He sticks it in his coat pocket. Suddenly the same LAUGHTER he heard when he arrived rings out. He looks around.

A beautiful young ABORIGINAL WOMAN is looking at him, naked and unashamed, almost floating on the surface of the snow.

He rubs his eyes and looks again. She's still there.

WOMAN

Got a smoke, Kenneth?

KENNETH

You're not here. Go away.

WOMAN

I'm here. Are you?

KENNETH

Believe me, if I could be anywhere else... Aren't you cold?

WOMAN

Sometimes... How's your mother?

KENNETH

Still dead.

The Woman looks confused.

WOMAN

Dead? I don't think so. I'd have heard.

KENNETH

You'd think so, but here we are. She died like 3 days ago, I just...

Suddenly the whole situation proves too much, and Kenneth collapses to his knees from exhaustion and grief. The Woman squats and holds him in a tight embrace as he pours out years of conflicted feelings in deep sobbing.

Finally he stops, and looks up at The Woman. She takes his head in her hands and kisses him deeply. His arms go round her willing body, she reaches down to stroke his responsive crotch...

KENNETH

(Massaging her breasts)

Mmm, that's so hot.

WOMAN

Better than last time?

KENNETH

So much better. I can see you.

The Woman pulls away, leaps to her feet and looks down at him accusingly.

WOMAN

You remember.

KENNETH

(confused)

Of course. Wasn't that a party?

The Woman suddenly shudders.

WOMAN

You're right. I am cold. Gimme your coat.

He struggles to his feet, pulls it off and holds it as she slips into it.

KENNETH

I didn't see you after. Did you get home ok?

WOMAN

Not exactly.

KENNETH

Shit, what happened?

She stares at him. Her eyes bulge out and her mouth opens wider than any mouth should, and she SCREAMS A SCREAM OF TERROR that rings through the woods, causing birds to fly up and small animals to take cover.

KENNETH

Oh my God, that was you.

She pulls his phone from his coat pocket and hands it to him.

WOMAN

Here. You got what you wanted.
Better get back inside. You could catch your death.

She turns and starts walking down the road.

KENNETH

But... hey! My coat...

If she hears she doesn't show it, and the blowing snow soon hides her from sight.

He starts running after her.

INT. THE SHED - DAY

Sissy looks around the shed for more memorabilia.

She pulls open a bottom cupboard. It's filled with boxes of personal and financial records, as well as some ancient-looking volumes.

SISSY

Hey! My books!

Her eye is caught by a set of notebooks. She pulls one out at random and squats on the floor.

SISSY

Yes! Journal time!

She looks up at Doris.

SISSY

You don't mind?

DORIS

You'll suffer for this!

SISSY

Great. Let's see what you didn't want the world to know.

She opens the journal. The pages are covered in barely-legible scrawls and esoteric diagrams. She starts reading the entries, which we hear in Doris's voice from her workbench bier:

DORIS

"Today we uncovered the key to the Third Gate. Will soon traverse the Philonian Gulf!"

SISSY

Huh?

DORIS

"Bill useless as always."

SISSY

Ha, no surprise there.

She flips through the Journal.

DORIS

"The Keeper of the Portal still
hungers. What does He crave?"

SISSY

Damn. You got to the Portal.
Respect.

She looks up at Doris.

SISSY

You went through with this for real.

She flips some more.

DORIS

"At last! Just for a second, we
pierced the Veil! I saw myself
through his eyes, and he himself
through mine! Another rendering...
and we shall never die!"

Sissy looks up at Doris's quilt-shrouded corpse.

SISSY

Yeah, looks like that worked out
great.

Doris is pointedly silent.

EXT. THE WOODS - GETTING DARK

Kenneth stumbles clumsily after The Woman in just his shirt
and jeans.

KENNETH

Wait...

No response. He stops, surrounded by blinding snow,
freezing his ass off in the middle of fucking nowhere, with
not a clue how to get home.

He lets out a ROAR OF FRUSTRATION.

He's answered by what sounds like a LOUD FOGHORN. Suddenly, through the billowing snow that surrounds him, he sees a dim light, getting brighter fast. He leaps out of the way, just in time to avoid getting sucked into a massive snowplow as it lumbers past him.

He struggles to his feet, only to be completely buried by the snow from the side blower.

He pulls himself out of the new drift, brushing himself off, looking after the plow.

KENNETH

(teeth chattering)

Ok, this is the road, so home's either there, or...

Neither direction appears promising. Shivering in his wet clothes, he starts walking back and forth looking for the driveway.

In the woods across the road a faint reddish light is barely visible in the snowy mist. He looks both ways, then runs towards it.

As he comes close, the light is revealed as the snout of the White Moose he saw in the taxi, illuminating the woods all around in a deep red glow.

It turns and moves into the woods. Kenneth follows. He reaches out to touch the Moose.

KENNETH

Wow, you're hot! Can I...?

He tries to warm himself on the Moose's broad side, but she kicks him away and keeps walking. He has no choice but to follow, turning blue with cold.

A truck horn HONKS, and a sudden light floods them from behind. Kenneth turns to see Bill waving at him from the old pickup.

BILL

There you are. Jeez. Get in.

The Moose watches as Kenneth runs and jumps into the truck.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

The snow is gone; it seems to be early fall. A somewhat younger Bill drives at top speed along a forest road, radio blaring the hits of his youth.

Teenaged Kenneth, dressed in the style of whenever he was 16, fidgets in excitement, drumming on the dash to the beat of the radio.

BILL

Hey, take it easy there, buddy.

He passes Kenneth a spliff. Kenneth tokes deeply and passes it back, flops back in his seat. Bill does likewise.

BILL

16, whoa! I remember when I heard you were born... and now you're almost a man! Now I don't know what kind of experience you've had already...?

He turns quizzically to Kenneth, who looks away shyly.

BILL

Didn't think so.

He slaps Kenneth's knee.

BILL

All right! Ok, you gotta be nice. People are sensitive these days.

KENNETH

(spacedly)

I'm the nicest guy you know.

BILL

This is true. You'll do great, kid.

He turns off into a concealed driveway.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE DRIVEWAY

Bill drives a twisting gravel road through dense woods.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE FRONT - NIGHT

Bill pulls up at a suburban-style industrial unit. It is dark and silent, though the parking lot is full of vehicles.

Bill and Kenneth get out of the truck.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE BACK - NIGHT

Bill leads Kenneth round back, which is dark save for an illuminated keypad by a door. Bill enters a code. The door opens. They enter.

INT. PARTY HOUSE FOYER - NIGHT

The outer door closes behind them. They are in a small entryway as dark and silent as outside.

Suddenly the inner door slides open to reveal

INT. THE PARTY ROOM - NIGHT

Tonight's Party Room is a small, brightly-lit warehouse, still strewn with souvenirs of last night's rave. The walls are draped in garish pornographic tapestries, and 90s dance music throbs from the sound system. There are numerous dark numbered cubbies for private interactions. Everywhere people are drinking, dancing and getting it on.

Host VAL, a smartly-dressed middle-aged woman, comes up smiling.

VAL

Bill!

BILL

Val!

She and Bill kiss-kiss and embrace, maybe a little too close and definitely too long.

VAL

And this is Kenny. Good-looking kid.

BILL

I guess.

VAL

What are you drinking, Kenny?

BILL

He'll have a beer.

KENNETH

I can't, I'm only...

VAL

You're old enough here.

(raising her hand)

Beer, and a rum and coke for Bill.

The drinks appear. Val passes them to Kenneth and Bill.

VAL

Have fun, guys.

(whispers in Bill's ear)

Number 3.

(aloud)

See you later!

She touches Bill's shoulder suggestively, and hastens off to greet new arrivals. Bill raises his glass.

BILL

Up yours!

KENNETH

Yeah...

They clink glasses.

BILL

Fun place.

Kenneth looks around nervously.

BILL

Let's take a look round.

He leads Kenneth to Number 3 and opens the door.

BILL

This is you.

He pushes Kenneth inside and closes the door behind him.

INT. NUMBER 3 - NIGHT

The room is in almost total darkness.

KENNETH

Hello?

No answer. He takes out his phone and turns on the flash. Lying on a mattress on the floor is The Woman, half naked and totally wasted.

KENNETH

Shit, sorry.

He turns the flash off.

THE WOMAN

(slurring)

Who's that?

KENNETH

It's Kenneth.

THE WOMAN

Got a smoke, Kenneth?

KENNETH

No...

THE WOMAN

It's ok, I got some. Here.

A pack of smokes emerges from the dark. He hesitates, then reaches out to take one. The Woman grabs his hand and drags him down into the darkness.

INT. PARTY ROOM - NIGHT

Bill stands outside Number 3, reveling in the shenanigans going on around him. Up comes Val.

VAL

How's he doing?

BILL

He ain't begging for mercy yet.

VAL

More than I can say for you.

BILL
I told you, I'll go again, any time.

VAL
(winking)
Maybe later.

BILL
Who is she?

VAL
We picked her up in town, I forget
her name. Fresh off the rez. Cute
though, and real accommodating when
you get her liquored up. She'll show
him a good time.

BILL
Atta boy... no, he's a man now!

INT. NUMBER 3 - NIGHT

Kenneth fucks The Woman with gusto; she moans and sighs
obligingly to match his passion.

Finally he comes loud and hard inside her, and falls back
on the mattress, panting.

KENNETH
(after catching his
breath)
That was great, thanks.

THE WOMAN
Real good.

KENNETH
Did you...?

THE WOMAN
Oh yeah, a couple times.

KENNETH
Nice. Listen, do you want to, maybe,
sometime...

THE WOMAN
For sure, ask the lady.

KENNETH

No, not here, like outside, go...

THE WOMAN

On a date? This is a date. And it only lasts 10 more minutes, so if you want some more, tell me now.

KENNETH

No, I'm good.

He lays back on The Woman's breast and closes his eyes, starts to drift away...

DREAM (BLACK AND WHITE - KENNETH'S POV)

INT. "CHRISTMAS ISLAND" - DAY

On a 1940s film set representing a tropical beach, burlap-wrapped palms provide little shade from the burning spotlight suns, as painted plywood waves undulate beyond the sawdust sand.

At a thatched cabaña, several TOURISTS, including Kenneth, are drinking fancy cocktails topped with little paper umbrellas, served by native WAITERS.

On the main stage, The Andrews Sisters continue [The Song](#):

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

*How'd you like to spend Christmas
On Christmas Island?*

Kenneth watches A YOUNG COUPLE, who look like Doris and Dave in those paintings, seated at a table by the beach. They are holding hands, obviously lovers.

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

*How'd you like to hang your stocking
On a great big coconut tree?*

Suddenly "Doris" draws her hand away and speaks seriously, eyes downcast. She touches her belly; she is pregnant.

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

*How'd you like to stay up late
Like the islanders do?*

"Dave" is incredulous. He gestures:

"DAVE"

"Is it mine? Or whose???"

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

*Wait for Santa to sail in
With your presents in a canoe?*

Before "Doris" can answer, the music stops, and the BLARE OF A CONCH SHELL HORN rings through the sound-stage. All eyes turn to the sea, where a large Polynesian canoe, rowed by dark-dyed OARSMEN, bears an obese SAMOAN SANTA, naked but for a strategically-placed Santa hat, up to the beach. He sort of looks like Bill.

Santa and his Oarsmen leap out onto the beach. The music resumes and they start dancing:

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

*If you ever spend Christmas
On Christmas Island...*

Tourists and islanders join in.

But not "Doris". She walks away, downcast. "Dave" watches her a moment, then turns and rejoins the festivities.

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

*You will never stray, for every day
Your Christmas dreams come truu...*

Santa reaches into the canoe, grabs some presents, and throws them high in the air. Everyone rushes to catch them...

THE ANDREWS SISTERS

...uuuue!

A SUDDEN FLASH OF LIGHT bathes the whole scene in radioactive brilliance, then total darkness.

(SCENE SWITCHES TO NIGHT VISION CAMERA LIKE IN THOSE HAUNTED HOUSE SHOWS, OR STROBE LIGHTS WOULD BE COOL TOO)

Santa seems to grow, his arms mutating into something monstrous...

Tourists and islanders hit the floor and scramble for cover.

"Dave" tries to run to "Doris", but a great claw swats him aside and snatches her away into the night.

Kenneth dives under the bench, where

a human-size glowing ant with clacking mandibles sprays his face with burning goo. He kicks it away and wipes his eyes with a napkin.

When he opens them, Sissy's doll Windy is lying on the ground before him, glaring up at him with those big shiny eyes. He reaches down to pick it up...

CRASH! Kenneth and Windy look up to see a gigantic CRAB, bearing Bill's face, emerging from the darkness. He carries "Doris" in one deformed claw, and a little girl in the other. Doris looks down on Kenneth and Windy in demented glee, like some evil Disney Queen.

(SCENE SWITCHES TO 90S VIDEOGAME PIXELATION)

Windy emits a high-pitched howl and begins to grow, its limbs and body elongating to skeletal lengths, icy teeth flashing in gaping bloody jaws.

The Crab deposits Doris and the girl carefully on the "sand" and snaps his claws at Windy, which leaps on him and wraps him in its bony arms. They commence epic battle, kaiju-style. "Doris" watches with feverish eyes, but the little girl stares at Kenneth.

Kenneth turns away and walks away down

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

the beach, which is now a real one, lapped by gentle moonlit waves. Kenneth has 2 stones in his hands, and is monotonously clacking them together to the rhythm of "Christmas Island".

Ahead of him walks "Dave", who seems to be leaving 2 sets of footprints, one big, one small. Kenneth starts running after him.

KENNETH

Hey!

"Dave" starts to turn around...

INT. NUMBER 3 - NIGHT

BZZZZ! Kenneth is rudely awakened by a buzzer and a flashing light. The Woman pushes him off her.

THE WOMAN

Time to go.

Kenneth struggles to stand and dress in that black room.

INT. PARTY ROOM - NIGHT

Kenneth exits Number 3 and stands in front of the door, looking around. Bill is nowhere in sight.

A MAN approaches. He is short and balding, with a little moustache, suit and tie, looks like an accountant or something. He seems angry.

THE MAN

Excuse me.

Kenneth looks at him, but doesn't move.

THE MAN

(annoyedly)

Number 3?

Kenneth stares at him. Something about this guy ain't right.

KENNETH

Yeah, I'm next.

THE MAN

I do not think so. Show me your booking.

Kenneth pats his pockets, then shrugs. The Man brandishes his phone.

THE MAN

Here is mine. "Number 3. Midnight."
That is now.

KENNETH

I hear Number 6 is pretty hot.

THE MAN

I require what is behind this door.
Not that one. I have a booking. You
do not. Please step aside.

Kenneth hesitates for the last time, then steps away from the door and holds it open. The Man scurries in. Kenneth closes the door behind him, then opens it a little and listens.

It sounds like The Man is speaking angrily. The Woman seems to be crying.

BILL

(O/S)

Kenny!

Kenneth looks round to see Bill across the room, with his arms around Val and a younger woman.

He turns back and listens again. Number 3 seems silent now.

He eases the door closed and hurries over to join them.

BILL

Hey Kenny, meet... what was your
name, dear?

BRITNEY

(simpering)

Britney.

BILL

Lovely name. Real friendly too.

KENNY

(whispering)

Dad, I just...

BILL

No problem. Have a drink, a dance,
you're young...

Val leads them past the dance floor back to the bar.

BILL

...second, third time lucky? If age
only could...

Britney snuggles up to Kenneth, and he smiles and puts his arm around her waist. Tonight's going to be even better than he...

A SCREAM OF TERROR rips through the Party Room. It sounds just like The Woman in The Woods. Everyone freezes and looks around.

VAL

Shit.

She gestures to a nearby SECURITY GUARD, who hurries off to investigate.

KENNETH

What is it?

VAL

Hopefully nothing.

The Guard returns and whispers in Val's ear.

VAL

Damn it.

She taps her phone. The music stops.

VAL

(over the speakers)

All right everyone. Party's over.
Thank you all for coming. Please
make an orderly line for the exits.

Security Goons move in and encourage the grumbling patrons to clear the Room.

EXT. THE PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Kenneth, Bill and Britney are herded out into the parking lot with the rest of the partiers.

KENNETH

I hope nobody got hurt.

BILL

It's all good. Val said she's got it covered. She's a hell of a girl.

BRITNEY

Who's going to take me home?

Kenneth is not listening. His attention is attracted by a red light moving through the woods beyond the cars.

He sets off in pursuit.

As he runs, the all-consuming snow blows up around him and swallows him whole.

INT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Sissy is still sitting on the floor, surrounded by Doris's notebooks and her own antique books of magical lore. She is perusing one by a big battery-powered lamp.

SISSY

(to Doris)

It does sort of make sense. Rami says the spirit can travel from body to body by reincarnating, so why not... hey!

A sudden draught causes several pages of the book to flip over.

SISSY

Where was I? Doesn't matter, what's this?

One of the spells on the page is slightly glowing. She starts reading it, in an unknown tongue. As she reads, her voice transforms into Doris's.

SISSY/DORIS

"*the first 3 lines of the spell*"

Sissy stops reading.

SISSY

...and yada yada yada. I can't believe I was into this.

INT. QUILT - NIGHT

We are inside the quilt with Doris. Her eyes are wide open, every dead sinew straining to free her from the terrible prison of her own decaying flesh.

DORIS

Don't stop! Just 1 more line, finish
it, bitch!

INT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Sissy tries to look away from the page, but can't.

Slowly she is feels compelled to finish reciting the spell.

SISSY/DORIS

"*the last line of the spell*"

DORIS

And?

SISSY/DORIS

"*the Word*"

Unseen by Sissy, Doris's quilt twitches slightly.

SISSY

That was weird.

She yawns and looks up at Doris.

SISSY

Well, Mom, it would have been cool
if it worked, I'll give you that.
I'd love to try it with... yeah.

She stands up.

SISSY

Beddy time. You want the light on?

The light turns off by itself.

SISSY

(bemused)

Ok, whatever...

She quickly exits the Shed, still clutching Windy.

EXT. THE BACK YARD - NIGHT

From the window of the Shed, something watches Sissy cross
the yard and climb the back steps.

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

Present-day Kenneth is back to staggering coatless through the snowy forest, as the bitter wind howls around him.

THE WOMAN

Did you know how old I was?

Kenneth looks up to see The Woman looming above him like an avenging Fury.

KENNETH

(through chattering teeth)

I didn't know anything. I was just a kid.

THE WOMAN

So was I.

KENNETH

But... Dad said nobody got hurt.

THE WOMAN

Yeah, that was me. Nobody.

Kenneth can only huddle up tighter.

THE WOMAN

And you know who saw any trace of me ever again after that night? Nobody. Not my mother, my sisters, my friends. Nobody. It's like I never was.

KENNETH

I am so sorry.

THE WOMAN

You saw him. You knew. You did nothing.

KENNETH

I know, God, I know. But please, don't let me die out here.

THE WOMAN

You let me die in there.

No answer to that. Kenneth stops and stands up straight, head back, ready to meet his just reward.

A crooked smile crosses The Woman's face.

THE WOMAN

You know what? Freezing dead's too good for you. You really want to go home.

KENNETH

Yes.

THE WOMAN

You don't know what's waiting for you. You might wish you froze.

KENNETH

I don't care.

THE WOMAN

Your choice.

She reaches down, grabs Kenneth by the hair, and starts dragging him through the Woods.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Sissy comes in from outside and flops down on the sofa.

SISSY

Kenny?

No answer. She stands, goes over and looks in Kenny's room.

SISSY

Are you here?

EXT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

The Woman drags Kenneth across the yard to the front door.

THE WOMAN

Say hi to your loving parents for me.

She pulls him up in the air by his hair...

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Sissy is on the sofa sipping a cup of coffee. She looks down at Windy, which is sitting beside her.

SISSY

Right about now, you said. 5. 4. 3.
2...

A mighty gust of wind blows the front door open, and Kenneth comes flying into the House, landing with a thud on the hall rug.

Sissy runs over and kneels beside him. He's like ice. She feels his pulse, then slaps his face.

SISSY

Kenny, wake up! I know you're there!

Kenneth moans faintly, deliriously.

Sissy shuts the door, then drags Kenneth onto the sofa, covers him with a blanket and tucks him in.

SISSY

Coffee.

She stands and hurries to the Kitchen.

BILL

(O/S)

I should have mentioned, them squaws can be trouble. They know things.

KENNETH

Them

SISSY

(kneeling to offer him a
mug of coffee)

Them what?

KENNETH

Thanks.

She holds his head up as he takes a big gulp and almost chokes.

SISSY

Slowly.

He takes a couple of sips of the healing brew.

SISSY

Where were you? What happened to
your coat?

But he has already sunk into deep, dreamless sleep.

INT. THE KITCHEN - MORNING

Kenneth opens his eyes on the sofa. He is encased in several blankets. Sissy is looking down at him, holding Windy. She wears no makeup, and her hair falls naturally.

SISSY

Is there any food?

KENNETH

Since when do you eat?

SISSY

Since about 2 minutes after I got
out of here. Christ, this place did
a number on me.

She hugs Windy.

SISSY

But Windy helped me. Didn't you
Windy?

KENNETH

It used to be a bear. When you...
weren't eating.

SISSY

A boring old Christmas bear. I fixed
it up like it really was.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. THE WOODS - DUSK

It's winter. 15-year-old Sissy wanders through the snowbound woods, holding a pre-Windy BEAR by one arm.

BEAR

Right here.

Sissy stops and looks up in the air.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - DAY

SISSY

It said you had a dream about it. So you know what it was like. It saw I was hungry and helped me.

KENNETH

Helped you eat? All I saw was you getting thinner.

SISSY

No, it helped me not eat. When I was so hungry and trying not to, it would make you and Dad and Mom look like a bacon double cheeseburger with fries and a chocolate shake. And it made real food look like you guys. I couldn't eat anything, in case it was you. I didn't want to eat you, Kenny!

KENNETH

It doesn't sound like a very good friend.

SISSY

It was all I needed. Then. Something to fight against. Something I could control. Anyway, food?

KENNETH

Check the fridge.

SISSY

I did. I can still smell it.

KENNETH

How about the pantry.

SISSY

How about someplace I don't know.

KENNETH

Maybe the shed, Mom used to store
jam and stuff there.

SISSY

I don't want to go back there. Where
were you last night anyway?

KENNETH

Same answer.

SISSY

You have to tell me something. I'm
always telling you my shit. What
about Mom's mysterious red-haired
lover?

KENNETH

Is it cold in here?

They look at the wood stove. Dark. And the wood in the box
down to a couple of bits of kindling.

SISSY

I'll go. I need some air. You rest.

Kenneth lies back and closes his eyes. Sissy feels his
forehead, then goes to the hall cupboard and pulls out a
deadly-looking axe.

EXT. OUT BACK - DAY

A sudden thaw has turned the world from purest white to
dismal grey. Everything is enveloped in a soft mist, trees
and structures are dripping torrentially, and yesterday's
deep snow is now a lunar mudscape, studded with 30 years of
cast-off memories.

Sissy emerges from the back door in knee-high rubber boots,
carrying the axe. She squelches across the yard to the
chopping block, grabs a log, sets it on the block, and
raises the axe.

Her attention is caught by something at the far end of the
yard.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

The Flintstones phone RINGS. Kenneth opens his eyes and looks around in surprise. The power is on again too. He disentangles himself from the blankets, stands and picks up.

KENNETH

Hello?

SAM JR

(on phone)

Bill?

KENNETH

No, it's Kenneth. Who's this?

SAM JR

Hey Kenny. Sam Cribben Jr. Sorry for your loss. We'll be out for your mom in 45. How's Bill holding out?

KENNETH

Uh, we'll talk. See you soon.

He hangs up, then pulls out his own phone and plugs it in.

EXT. OUT BACK - DAY

The Big Maple Tree Down Back's POV: Sissy approaches across the yard. First she walks, then she runs.

Sissy's POV: A distorted shape on the tree reveals itself as Bill, hanging by his neck on a rope from a dripping branch! His eyes bulge, his mouth gapes in a silent frozen scream, tongue black and protruding.

Sissy recoils in horror, dropping the axe.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

Kenneth is dialing the phone. Bill enters from the bedroom.

BILL

Who was that?

KENNETH

Cribben's. They're on their way. I gotta call Jess.

BILL

Bring your mother in first. I'll
tidy up here.

Kenneth pauses, then sighs and hangs up.

EXT. THE BACK YARD

Sissy runs round the side of the house, sobbing. Kenneth is opening the shed door. She grabs his arm.

SISSY

Oh my God... Kenny...

KENNY

Hold on, I gotta get Mom. Sam Jr's
coming.

INT. THE SHED - DAY

Kenneth and Sissy enter.

KENNETH

... hope he gets here soon. It'll be
so nice to see someone who's not
famil...

They stare at the workbench. Quilt and sheets are scattered about, but Doris is gone! Kenneth looks around wildly.

KENNETH

Mom?

SISSY

Uh, Earth to Kenny? Wherever she is,
she can't hear...

The door slams behind them. They spin round to hear the outside padlock snap shut. Kenneth leaps for the door but it's locked tight.

KENNETH

Hey!

He rushes to the tiny window to see Bill heading back to the house, carrying Doris over his shoulder.

KENNETH

Dad! Open the door!

Bill ignores him, just plods up the steps and into the House. Kenneth looks at Sissy. She is looking at him strangely.

SISSY

What do you mean, "Dad"?

KENNETH

Our Dad. Bill McAllister. He just locked us in.

SISSY

Dad's dead. I just found him.

KENNETH

I just left him.

SISSY

What?

KENNETH

In the kitchen. Tidying up. Right.

SISSY

So where's he been for the last 2 days?

KENNETH

Here, where else? You were talking to him.

SISSY

No I wasn't. I couldn't have been, because he's hanging by his neck from the big maple down back, and he's been there a while.

KENNETH

What are you talking about? He's been in the house since we got here. You saw him. He just took Mom and locked the door. He's not dead. Fuck. Shut up.

Kenneth wildly looks around the shed for something to bust out with. His eyes fall on a chainsaw. He snatches it up, pulls the cord frantically. No fuel, no power, no luck. He stands panting in frustration.

SISSY

You've been talking with Mom too.

KENNETH

That's different. She really was dead.

SISSY

That's different. Uh huh. You knew Mom was dead. But not Dad. But you had lovely chats with both of them.

Kenneth struggles to respond.

SISSY

It's ok, I believe you.

KENNETH

You believe I believe it. You still think I'm hallucinating. But... he was making coffee, smoking weed... you saw him...

SISSY

No I didn't. But I believe he was there. Sit down.

She squats on the floor and picks up an ancient volume. He sits cautiously. She passes him the book, open to a strange engraving of male and female bodies apparently exchanging souls.

SISSY

These were my books.

KENNETH

Yeah, I remember you were into that witchy sh... stuff. This looks pretty advanced though.

SISSY

They, well she, took it a lot further than I ever dared. She was trying to find out how to come back from the dead, sort of like a ghost.

KENNETH

Ghosts don't make coffee.

SISSY

Something stronger, solider I think.
Yeah, here, look.

She points to the cryptic text under the picture.

KENNETH

I can't read that.

SISSY

Need glasses now, old man?

KENNETH

No, what language is it?

SISSY

How should I know? "To drop thy
fleshly mud and truly become the
Other, from thine own divine spark
deep inside thee, fashion a New Self
to live and breathe and... be...
again. But by seven nights must thou
find thyself secure within the
chosen..."

(pointing at the text)

What's that word?

KENNETH

You can't be reading that.

SISSY

I got 93 in Spanish.

KENNETH

It's not Spanish.

SISSY

My prof said languages are all the
same basically. He said I had a
natural aptitude for shut up.

Kenneth does.

SISSY

He really did. Mom had her opinions
about me. I hoped you didn't.

KENNETH

I thought I didn't.

SISSY

Hmm. Anyway, that's what it says. They can live as a kind of a body for maybe a week after they die, even move between different bodies, but then they have to settle in a... not guest... a host!

KENNETH

Us. Great. Our own parents want to bodysnatch us.

SISSY

What? No. They wouldn't. You think?

KENNETH

Have you ever met them? Sure they would. Lure us back saying Mom died, then grab our young flesh. Party on for another 30 years. But why haven't they done it already?

SISSY

I think something went wrong. Dad controlled how he died, but she went before everything was ready, so she got stuck in her old body.

KENNETH

Looks like they're back on track now.

SISSY

Yeah, but how...? Fuck. It was me. I didn't want to read that prayer-spell to the end, but I think she made me. And now they're both... We've got to get out of here.

EXT. THE FRONT YARD - DAY

A hearse marked "Samuel Cribben's Funeral Home" pulls up at the gate.

Undertaker SAM CRIBBEN JR and his wife SHIRLEY, both 50+ and overweight, get out.

Bill comes out of the House to meet them.

SAM JR

Bill!

BILL

Sam!

They shake hands.

SAM JR

How are you holding out?

BILL

Great. Hey Shirl, what are you doing out on these roads with this maniac?

SHIRLEY

(hugging him)

Oh Bill, I'm so sorry. I can't imagine... all this time out here, all alone with...

She starts unloading plastic food containers from the back seat.

SHIRLEY

You need to keep up your strength. Everybody sent something...

BILL

You shouldn't have. I'm great, really. Come on in, the coffee's on.

He ushers them up to the House.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Carrying their food packages, Sam and Shirley enter, followed by Bill. They look around at the untidied mess, then at each other. Shirley heads for the fridge.

SHIRLEY

I'll just put these...

BILL

Better not.

Shirley opens the fridge door.

The fridge is a decomposing mass of dead vegetables, rotten meat and rancid God-knows-what. She slams the door shut, but the stink of corruption lingers.

Bill swoops round and grabs the goodies, sets them on the counter.

BILL

Here's fine. Take the load off. How do you like your coffee?

Sam and Shirley sit carefully on the sofa.

SAM JR

Just milk for me.

SHIRLEY

Double double.

BILL

(looking at the fridge)
No dairy.

SHIRLEY

Black is good.

SAM JR

Me too.

BILL

You got it.

He pours the coffee and brings them their mugs. They gaze into their thick "expresso".

SAM JR

Where are the kids?

BILL

Fuck knows.

He stands and walks towards The Bedroom.

BILL

(going in)
I'm really sorry...

SAM JR

That's OK, I've seen lots worse.
Time like this, cleaning up's the
last thing...

BILL

(O/S)

No.

SAM JR

Eh?

BILL

(O/S)

What I meant to say was...

Bill comes out of The Bedroom, holding a cadaverous Doris
in his arms, a peachy smear across her mouth, staring at
them with her wild dead eyes.

BILL

...I'm sorry you had to come all
this way for nothing. She's not
dead.

SAM JR

Bill, I know when someone's dead.
And she's...

DORIS

Alive.

Shirley screams.

SAM JR

(to Shirley)

It's all right.

(to Bill)

Now Bill, I don't know how you did
that, but you've got to accept it.
She's gone.

DORIS

I'm right here, you moron.

SAM JR

(standing)

Sure you are. Bill's just doing a bit of ventriloquism, aren't you Bill? Everyone grieves in their own way. It's ok, I can take her from here.

Sam reaches for Doris, who suddenly whips out her head and bites his hand hard. Sam recoils with a cry of horror.

DORIS

Told you.

SAM JR

(nursing his bleeding hand)

Bill, this isn't funny. You got some more time with her, that's cool, but it's been four days. I gotta take her, man.

BILL

She's not going anywhere.

DORIS

And neither are you.

She slips out of Bill's arms to stand beside him.

Sam and Shirley are frozen in horror as Bill and Doris come closer, seeming to slide across the floor.

Bill and Doris stop just in front of Sam and Shirley, and raise their hands over their heads.

Sam and Shirley turn as one, blank-eyed, and walk out of the room.

EXT. THE FRONT YARD - DAY

Sam and Shirley walk to the hearse, get in, and wait.

INT. THE SHED - DAY

Kenneth and Sissy search for something, anything, to get them the hell out of there.

KENNETH

Excellent!

He pulls a double-barreled shotgun out of an old case.

SISSY

Any shells?

KENNETH

A whole box, right here. Ok, let's
blow this joint.

He loads the gun and points it at the door handle.

But before he can fire, they hear the PADLOCK BEING
UNLOCKED. Kenneth lowers the gun.

The door swings open. Bill and Doris are standing outside
the Shed, staring at them. They start to slide across the
floor towards Kenneth and Sissy.

KENNETH

(raising the gun)

Get back!

They keep moving, raising their hands.

KENNETH

I'm warning you!

They ignore him. He fires twice, but the shots pass
harmlessly through them, blasting holes in the wall
instead.

Bill and Doris reach out for Kenneth and Sissy, who try to
duck out of the way, but trip and fall over each other.
Their parents lunge at them.

KENNETH'S POV: A ghostly finger touches his forehead, and
he seems to fly away out of himself, through a whirling
tunnel, out through the shed wall, over the back yard,
heading straight for Bill's hanged body...

EXT. DOWN BACK - DAY

Through Bill's blurry blank eyes, Kenneth looks back at The
House and The Shed.

KENNETH
 (from Bill, mentally)
 Shit.

SISSY
 (O/S)
 Kenny? Is that you?

KENNETH
 Hey, where are you?

INT. THE BEDROOM - DAY

Doris's body, eyes wide open, is laid out on her bed.

SISSY
 (from Doris)
 On their bed. In Mom.

KENNETH
 (O/S)
 I'm in Dad. This is so weird. How
 are you doing?

SISSY
 Just lying here rotting. I'm glad I
 can't smell me.

EXT. DOWN BACK - DAY

KENNETH
 At least you don't have something
 chewing on your ass. Get off! Hey!

Bill's thawing corpse twitches, and something furry jumps
 off him and scurries away into the bush.

KENNETH
 I moved!

SISSY
 (O/S)
 Can you get free?

Kenneth strains to raise Bill's dead hands, but they flop
 back down uselessly.

KENNETH
 Damn. I can't do it.

SISSY

(O/S)

Totally stiff here. It's got to be
you.

Kenneth tries again. With great effort and CRACKING OF JOINTS, he manages to move Bill's hands up to the rope around his neck, but there's no way he can untie it and free himself.

KENNETH

It's no use.

He spies his own and Sissy's bodies leaving the Shed and heading for the House.

KENNETH

Holy crap, they did it... Watch
out, they're coming back.

INT. THE BEDROOM - DAY

SISSY

Keep trying.

The back door handle RATTLES.

SISSY

And hurry.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

The back door opens. Kenneth and Sissy's bodies enter. Kenneth's body is carrying the book of spells, Sissy's the shotgun.

DORIS

(in Kenneth's body)

Trust you to mess it up!

BILL

(in Sissy's body)

You got in my way.

DORIS

But I so wanted... My own dear...

BILL

So did I. But hey, we can still...

DORIS

That's disgusting. I can't be the man. And to do... that... with your...

Doris in Kenneth's body goes into the Bedroom and returns with Doris's body. She lays her on the kitchen table, puts the book on her chest and opens it to the page with the spell Sissy read before.

DORIS

We've waited so long. It has to be right.

BILL

Come on, let's give it a try first. I always wondered what it's like to be the woman.

DORIS

It sucks.

BILL

Exactly. Think of all the times I took you when you didn't want to. Rape me, baby! Make me your bitch!

KENNETH

(O/S)

What's happening?

SISSY

You won't believe it. They got mixed up! He's in me, and she's in you, and now he wants to... Jesus!

Bill is shimmying up to Doris, rubbing Sissy's body lewdly against Kenneth's.

BILL

You may be a woman in there, but it's still a man's body. You like that, babe?

DORIS

Yes...

BILL

Yeah, you do. I can feel it.

Bill wraps Sissy's arms around Kenneth's body and kisses Doris insistently. She starts to resist, then responds with passion.

SISSY

Kenny! Get in here!

EXT. DOWN BACK - DAY

Kenneth is still vainly tugging at the noose with Bill's stiff fingers. Suddenly Bill's body jerks, and he hears a GNAWING SOUND above his head. The rope starts swinging, and Bill's body starts spinning wildly.

KENNETH

Hey!

The rope gives way. Bill's body crashes to the ground.

Kenneth raises Bill's head to see the axe on the ground right in front of him.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

The clothes are coming off and Doris and Bill are smooching hot and heavy, as Kenneth's body grinds Sissy's up against the wall.

Sissy's body disengages.

BILL

Let's take this to bed. That...

He indicates Doris's corpse staring at them from the table.

BILL

... 's giving me the creeps.

From Kenneth's body, Doris gazes down on her former self.

DORIS

That used to be me. Your wife.

BILL

Not any more. Right now you're my lovin' hubby. Let's go.

He takes Kenneth's hand in Sissy's and starts to pull Doris towards the bedroom.

SISSY

Are you getting this? Where are you?

EXT. OUT BACK - DAY

Kenneth in Bill's body shambles unsteadily across the muddy yard, barely managing to hold onto the axe with two hands.

He lurches up to The House, struggles up the back steps, and collapses on the doorstep with a THUMP.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

Bill in Sissy's body drops Kenneth's hand, runs to the door and looks out the window.

BILL

Doris, put out the potato salad.
It's a family reunion!

He starts to open the door, and jumps aside to avoid the axe blade as it CRASHES DOWN and buries itself in the linoleum floor. The withered hand holding the axe flops onto the floor beside it.

Bill in Sissy's body opens the door wide, revealing his own body slumped on the porch. He pulls the axe out of the floor and throws it in the corner.

BILL

Good plan. Cut your own head off.

Doris in Kenneth's body strides over, grabs the rope and drags Bill's body into the kitchen, then ties his neck tight to the fridge handle.

DORIS

Now you stay right there. Your
parents need to talk in private.

Kenneth's hand grabs Sissy's wrist as Doris drags Bill into the bedroom.

BILL

Be good, kids!

The door closes behind them, leaving their children trapped in their parents' corpses.

SISSY
 (from Doris)
 Kenny! Can you talk?

KENNETH
 (from Bill)
 Yeah. I think we're fucked.

SISSY
 I mean really. Out loud. Try.

Bill's swollen tongue struggles to respond, but can only manage a tortured growl.

SISSY
 Hmm. Again.

KENNETH
 ah shug a se

SISSY
 One more time.

KENNETH
 Wha' shou' I saaay?

SISSY
 Good enough. Listen, I'm going to send you something, and you have to say it the best you can. Ready?

Kenneth grunts assent.

The book on Doris's chest glows as Sissy starts to recite an alternate version of the previous spell.

SISSY/DORIS
 ``*the first line of the spell*``

KENNETH
 (out loud)
 ``*a garbled variation*``.

SISSY
 Not quite. ``*the first line again*``.

KENNETH
 ``*a more intelligible repetition*``

SISSY
I think that's ok.

She sends the second line. Kenneth gets it not badly.

She has to repeat the third line, but the fourth is quite well done indeed.

SISSY
Wow, you've improved. Ok, now the
final Word that makes it all happen.
We only get one shot at this. Ready?

Kenneth grunts assent. Sissy sends the Word. Kenneth pauses, then repeats it, almost eloquently.

For a second nothing happens. Kenneth looks at Sissy, then WHAM!

Their selves go flying again

out of their parents' bodies

through the bedroom door

A momentary vision of writhing, naked bodies, Bill and Doris expelled though the tunnel through the wall into the Front Yard...

INT. THE BEDROOM - DAY

Back in their bodies again, Kenneth and Sissy open their eyes. They are naked on the bed in a 69 position, each with a definitely too close view of the other's genitalia. They leap away to opposite sides of the bed and start rummaging for their clothes, back to back.

SISSY
Now that was fucked.

KENNETH
Is my underwear over there?

SISSY
Yeah.

She tosses it over.

SISSY

How about my...?

Her bra comes flying back. They continue dressing.

KENNETH

Where'd they go?

SISSY

The nearest body. A bird, a squirrel, do you care? They're gone.

KENNETH

Yeah... Nice job with the spell.

SISSY

(in a posh accent)

Your enunciation was perfect, sir.

KENNETH

We make a good team.

SISSY

We do, don't we?

Dressed, they turn and face each other across the bed.

KENNETH

You know, you have a great body. Any guy would be proud to get a piece of that.

SISSY

Thanks bro. You're pretty ripped yourself. Been working out?

KENNETH

Yeah, an hour in the condo gym before work and...

Sissy laughs.

KENNETH

What?

SISSY

Ah, Kenny, never change.

EXT. THE DRIVEWAY - DAY

In the hearse at the gate, Sam Jr and Shirley are sitting staring with unblinking eyes.

Both come to life suddenly with a jolt. From inside their bodies, Bill and Doris look at each other, trying to figure out what the hell just happened.

BILL

(from Sam Jr)

Those little fuckers. Let's take them back right now!

DORIS

(from Shirley)

I told you 100 times. You can't take a body that's been taken, unless they let you.

BILL

But we can still trade up in town.

DORIS

Yes. Let's just go. There's nothing left for us here.

BILL

Not until... Sam Sr always kept...
(reaching into the glove compartment)
...for zombies maybe...?

He pulls out a large pistol.

BILL

They're ours, God damn it. We made 'em, we can unmake 'em. Nobody screws over Bill McAllister.

He starts to open the hearse door. Shirley's hand restrains him.

DORIS

Not now. Wait until dark and catch them off guard. That little bitch of yours is tricky.

BILL

(closing the door)

Fine with me. Meanwhile, wanna pick up where we left off?

He reaches into the glove compartment again and pulls out a bottle of good Scotch whisky.

BILL

Sam's Special. We even got a nice place to lie down in back.

He indicates the vacant coffin, intended for Doris's slight frame.

DORIS

(eying Sam Jr's ample physique)
Have you seen yourself?

BILL

Hey, you're no prize pig yourself, but what else have we got to do?

He uncaps the bottle and takes a swig, passes it to Doris, who does likewise. He reaches over and massages Shirley's plump thigh with Sam Jr's pudgy hand.

DORIS

Keep going.

She pulls him on top of her.

INT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Kenneth and Sissy rummage through a box of family documents.

KENNETH

Here's the mortgage.

SISSY

It better be paid off.

KENNETH

Free and clear.

SISSY

Cool. What shall we do with the old place? So many possibilities.

KENNETH

Jessica thought maybe a bed and
breakfast, after they both passed.

Outside the shed window, something moves.

SISSY

Yes! The Family Values Inn! Come in
and get up close and personal with
your nearest and dearest! Thanks,
Jess, great idea. I have a better
one. Burn it to the fucking ground,
then spend the insurance money on a
lobotomy and forget it ever existed.
Let's see, did they even have
insurance...? What's that?

Kenneth is staring at a paper in his hand.

KENNETH

Remember Karen Gillis?

SISSY

Yeah, from the Co-op. She died. Her
and Mom couldn't stand each other.
What about her?

He passes her the document.

SISSY

"Attestation of Live Birth." At
last, the truth about that red
hair...

"Given names: Cecilia Joy." Huh?
Father: James William McAllister
Mother: Karen Ann..."

Jesus.

She drops it and starts scrabbling through the box.

SISSY

And here's yours: "Father: David
Allan Butts." Big anti-climax. Good
thing you didn't get stuck with that
name. Hey, we're both bastards. Look
at this: "Certificate of Adoption"

They both examine the certificate.

SISSY

No wonder she hated me. Talk about wicked stepmothers.

And then the awful, or possibly awesome, truth hits them.

KENNETH

But that means...

SISSY

We're not related. At all. Different mothers, different fathers.

They stare at each other. The lights go out, leaving them in total darkness.

EXT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Sam Jr & Shirley's bodies are peering in the windows of the shed.

BILL

Light 'er up.

They step back to a safe distance. Doris pulls a lighter from Shirley's purse and flicks it, to reveal Bill with a gas can in each of Sam Jr's hands. She ignites a gas-infused rag and throws it on the Shed. All four walls go up in flame.

INT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Kenneth and Sissy are snapped out of their shock by the sudden WHOOSH of flames outside the windows, casting a sinister flickering red light throughout the Shed. They start to jump into each other's arms, then pull back awkwardly.

SISSY

Uh, we're not dealing with that right now. Let's just hug.

They hug.

KENNETH

Ok.

He runs over and tries the door. Unlocked. He eases it open, to see Sam Jr aiming Sam Sr's gun right at him. Bill fires.

Kenneth ducks back in as the SHOT WHISTLES by his face.

KENNETH

They're in Sam Jr & his wife. He's got a gun.

BILL

(O/S, shouting drunkenly)
"Burn it to the fucking ground!" You always were the bright one, my girl!

SISSY

Fuck off Daddy!

O/S, Bill laughs.

KENNETH

Where's the shotgun?

He gets down on the floor looking for it.

KENNETH

They took it. Left the shells. Idiots.

SISSY

Now Kenny, you shouldn't talk like that about your, uh, parent and step-parent. They do appear to have the upper hand.

KENNETH

Well yours are idiots. And so are we if we can't get the better of them.

The flames are licking round the doorframe from outside, and starting to breach the holes left by the shotgun.

SISSY

Suggestions welcome.

EXT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Bill & Doris squirt more fuel on the flames, which flare up even higher.

KENNETH

(O/S)

Mom! Dad! Why are you doing this? We took ourselves back, so what? You've still got days to find a new body. There's lots better than ours!

EXT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Sissy is flipping through Doris's notebooks by the light of her phone.

SISSY

Not around here.

DORIS

(O/S)

Oh how I wanted...

SISSY

(shouting)

It's ok, Mom, we get it, we know what you wanted! And if you couldn't get it from Kenny, you'd just murder us both. And Daddy just wanted to be me! His little girl! He did that on purpose, isn't that right Daddy, you fucking perv!

EXT. THE SHED - NIGHT

Bill doesn't answer.

DORIS

Bill? Is that true?

BILL

You were into it too.

DORIS

Yes. I was...

KENNETH

(O/S)

Don't do this, Mom!

DORIS

And I promise we'll try it again soon...

KENNETH

(O/S)

We're going to die in here!

DORIS

...but not before my ungrateful son
and your dirty spawn know how it
feels to be totally abandoned.

(shouting)

Karen was my best friend! And a
month before the wedding, Bill and
her dropped that one on me! He said
if he was going to take my sweet
boy, I had to take his demon child.
So I gave you all my love, Kenneth,
all of it, and you threw me away!

BILL

And you fucked me!

INT. THE SHED - NIGHT

SISSY

Jesus, what a pair. I'm glad we're
both just half them.

They look up as the ceiling CRACKS, raining burning embers
on them and the documents. They frantically brush them off.

Sissy turns the page of the notebook and pauses at one
diagram, next to a spell transcribed in English phonetics.

SISSY

Maybe this.

Kenneth examines it.

KENNETH

Yeah, like a pool shot. Go?

Sissy nods. Kenneth goes and peeps out the door. Bill fires
another SHOT.

BILL

(O/S)

Hot enough for ya, kids?

Kenneth comes back and sits at Sissy's right. They hold the book together and recite the spell hastily, as the cinders shower all around them. On the last Word,

(MATRIX-STYLE EXTREME SLOW MOTION, IN TOTAL SILENCE)

Kenneth and Sissy fly out of their bodies in battle mode
 through the shed wall
 through the flames

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Sissy & Kenneth head straight for Shirley and Sam Jr's bodies.

Bill notices them coming. He raises his gun and fires. The bullets fly through them slowly without effect.

As Sissy approaches Shirley's body, Doris fills Shirley's face with crazy rage.

Bill in Sam Jr takes a defensive stance. Kenneth zooms through an opening in his fingers and right in through his eyes.

INT. SHIRLEY'S HEAD - NIGHT

Sissy bursts into Shirley's head. Doris leaps on her, screaming silently. They wrestle fiercely.

INT. SAM JR'S HEAD - NIGHT

Kenneth enters Sam Jr's head. Bill tries to back off, holding out his hands imploringly. Kenneth grabs him by the collar and, with a mighty effort, tosses him out of Sam Jr, spinning slowly back towards the House.

INT. SHIRLEY'S HEAD - NIGHT

Doris has Sissy pinned down, clawing at her viciously. Kenneth enters Shirley's head and drags her off. She kicks and bites, but together the two of them manage to subdue her and heave ho, send her flying back to the House after Bill. The momentum propels them back towards the Shed.

INT. THE KITCHEN

Doris's body is on the table, Bill's on the floor, still roped by the neck to the fridge.

Bill's body jerks as he flies back into it, followed by Doris's a couple of seconds later.

BILL

God damn it.

INT. THE SHED

Kenneth and Sissy's bodies sit staring, surrounded by a raging inferno. They come to life simultaneously and look around. Kenneth grabs the smouldering box of documents.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Sam Jr and Shirley are standing dazed in the muddy yard. Sissy and Kenneth come racing out of the burning shed with the box, just as it collapses completely in a heap of flaming embers.

Kenneth runs over and takes the gun from Sam Jr's hand.

KENNETH

Sam? Are you there?

SHIRLEY

(blinking to life)

Sam Jr!

Sam Jr slowly comes back to himself.

SAM JR

Shirley?

They embrace, then look round at Kenneth & Sissy.

KENNETH

Ok, you're probably wondering what's going on.

SISSY

But you might not believe it.

Sam Jr and Shirley look at each other.

SAM JR

I think right now, we'd believe anything.

INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

The gang is sitting round the kitchen table, dining on Shirley's treats and Sam Sr's whisky. Doris is in the coffin on a gurney, Bill is untied on the floor.

SISSY

...so when we got here, Mom was dead and Daddy had gone crazy, burned down the shed and hanged himself.

KENNETH

And something bit him down, so we took him inside.

SHIRLEY

And then the storm and you couldn't call anyone.

SAM JR

And then the thaw and we arrived. Sounds plausible to me.

SISSY

I hope the sheriff agrees.

KENNETH

It's all true, just... rearranged.

They look down at Bill.

KENNETH

You're taking them both, right?

SAM JR

I don't know, I only brought one coffin. Anyway I should probably leave Bill for the examiner.

Kenneth jumps up and disappears into his bedroom. He emerges dragging a mattress.

KENNETH

Would this help?

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Kenneth helps Sam Jr fold up the gurney and stow it in the back of the hearse. Sam Jr slams the door, and they walk wordlessly back to the house.

INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sissy and Shirley are in the kitchen. Kenneth and Sam Jr come in the front door.

KENNETH

Coffee for the road?

SAM JR

(shuddering)

No, thanks. We'd better be heading back.

SHIRLEY

Now we've only got the one guest bed, but I can pull out the rec room sofa for Kenny. There's lots of blankets in the...

Kenneth is staring at her.

SHIRLEY

You weren't thinking of staying here.

KENNETH

SISSY

(simultaneously)

Yes.

God no.

They look at Kenneth. He looks at Sissy. She looks away.

KENNETH

No. I mean no. No way. You'd have to be crazy.

Sissy refrains from commenting.

SHIRLEY

All right then. I'll let you get your things.

Kenneth's phone, now fully charged but forgotten in the excitement, RINGS. Everyone freezes and stares at it. Kenneth snatches it up.

KENNETH

Jess?

JESSICA

(on phone)

Ken! My God! Where are you? Is everything all right?

Sissy mouths silently to Shirley: "Ken!" Shirley giggles.

KENNETH

We're still here. There was a storm and we got totally cut off. The power just came on now.

JESSICA

When will you be home? I miss you so much!

KENNETH

Yeah, you too. It'll be nice to be back in civilization. We're staying in town tonight...

He notices Sissy slipping out of the room.

KENNETH

I'll call tomorrow when I know more. See ya.

JESSICA

Wait, I want to hear all about...

Kenneth hangs up and follows Sissy into the Old Bedroom.

INT. THE OLD BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sissy is packing her bag. Kenneth comes in and starts doing the same on the other bed.

SISSY

Hey "Ken", how's Jess? Bet you can't wait to get back together, huh?

KENNETH

She's fine.

They pack in silence.

Sissy picks up Windy, turns and holds it out to Kenneth.

SISSY

Kenny, say thank you to Windy.

KENNETH

For what?

SISSY

What do you think made you move? And chewed through your rope? It never forgave Mom for separating us.

Kenneth looks at Windy skeptically, then shrugs.

KENNETH

Not the craziest thing I've heard today. Thanks Windy. I owe you.

He starts to reach out and shake its paw, but thinks better of it.

Sissy hugs Windy, then packs it away carefully in her bag.

She turns. Kenneth is standing right behind her, staring at her, reaching for her...

She pirouettes out of range and looks at him sternly.

SISSY

It can't work.

KENNETH

(sulkily)

Why not? We're free now. You know we like each other.

SISSY

Free? You're not free.

KENNETH

I know, fuck, but *can't you see, we're meant to be, star-kissed lovers, you and me.*

SISSY

Huh?

KENNETH

(moving closer)

Sorry, that's how I feel. We're supposed to be... We're physically attracted, that's a given. But we've also been through so much together. We know each other better than anyone else ever could. And you said yourself we made a great team!

SISSY

(backing away)

All totally true. And the next time someone tries to snatch my body, you'll be first on my call list. But normally when people enter into... whatever the hell you think this is, they're supposed to start from basics and learn about each other as they go. We already know much too much... Ok that's lame. But this may help:

She holds up her phone, displaying a PowerPoint presentation. Appropriate imagery illustrates each bullet point.

SISSY

- You've got a good thing--well, a weird symbiotic type of thing but whatever--with Jess, and I for one don't want to risk wrecking that.
- Not even with a quick one in Shirley's rec room, however hot that bod of yours may be.
- Anyway, if we did do it, I'd probably trap you in my sexual web and you could never satisfy another woman ever again.
- And meanwhile back in the real world:
 - Everybody we know would be like whoa, what the fuck man???

- o You'd hate my degenerate lifestyle.
- o I'd despise your goody-goody bullshit.
- o I'd never be faithful.
- o Though it doesn't look like you would either.

I can go on.

KENNETH

I know, I know.

He looks at her.

KENNETH

So what are we?

SISSY

No idea. We'll figure it out.

She snaps her bag shut and slings it over her shoulder.

SISSY

Better call Jess. If she even picks up, after how you just told her to fuck off.

She blows Kenneth a kiss. He catches it and sends it back, then watches as she leaves the room and closes the door.

Kenneth sighs and pulls out his phone.

EXT. THE ROAD - NIGHT

The hearse rolls down the road from Christmas Island to town.

INT. THE HEARSE - NIGHT

Sam Jr is driving, Shirley by his side. Kenneth and Sissy are in the seats behind them. In the back, Doris is in her coffin, Bill is wrapped up on the mattress, with Sissy & Kenneth's bags and documents stuffed in between them.

SAM JR

You know at some point, we need to talk final arrangements. But if you need more time...

SISSY

Let's get it done.

SAM JR

All right. They had a joint plot picked out at St Ephraim's, but they hadn't paid the installments for a while. It might be a couple of thousand...

He looks back expectantly.

KENNETH

I think we can swing that.

DORIS

(from Doris)

No! Kenneth!

BILL

(from Bill)

Not underground!

If any among the living hears them, they give no sign.

SISSY

I think we should bury them on their own land, our dear family home, surrounded by their beloved woods. It'd be so nice.

KENNETH

Oh my God, they'd love that! Summer after summer, winter after winter. Christmas Island... forever!

SISSY

Plus Jack says real haunted houses are a hot market these days. We could make a killing!

BILL

(desperately)

Come on kids, quit your fooling! Stick me in a dog, a bug, anything, not in the ground!

DORIS

Kenneth, I really think it's time
you set your dear mother free.
Haven't I suffered enough?

Kenneth thinks a moment.

KENNETH

You know what? Just keep them on ice
for a few days, make sure they're
settled in, then cremate them.
Destroy the host. Let them feel what
we felt...

SISSY

... then finally go where they
should have gone all along.

KENNETH

Just don't let anyone else come
anywhere near them till then.

SISSY

We don't want a Part 2.

SAM JR

You got it.

DORIS

Bless you, my son. I'll gladly
suffer one last time for you!

Bill growls UNINTELLIGIBLE PROFANITIES.

The hearse rolls on.

SISSY

Listen you guys, I have to ask.
Where did you go? I mean when
they... took you over.

Sam Jr and Shirley look embarrassed.

SHIRLEY

Nowhere?

SAM JR

We were there the whole time.

SHIRLEY

Your parents... oh my gosh...

BILL

Hey Shirl, nice tattoo!

Doris snickers.

SAM JR

I don't think we should talk about that.

SHIRLEY

All right.

She gives him a poke.

SHIRLEY

Later.

SAM JR

Shirley!

Sissy and Kenneth exchange a smile, then turn away to gaze out opposite windows into the passing woods and the clear, starry sky, lost in their own--at this point, rather complex--thoughts.

A red light in the woods flashes by, but Kenneth doesn't notice. Somehow his upturned hand has managed to brush Sissy's. Without looking, she takes it and squeezes it. He squeezes back. Their hands relax, still holding each other lightly.

EXT. THE ROAD - NIGHT

The camera moves out the back window, and follows the hearse as it rolls down the road and into the night.

THE END