

SOULS

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is low, behind the trees on the far side of the cemetery. Tombstones cast long shadows.

TICKET SELLER (O.S.)
You're the last group of the day.

A fierce pumpkin on the seller's table glows in the dusk.

The ticket seller looks up. He sees nine-year old witch ALLISH REGAN in a black cloak and pointed hat holding the hand of her willowy mother, MARA, in a black body stocking and wearing a Greek theatrical mask.

TICKET SELLER (CONT'D)
Uh... The actors get a little carried away this late in the afternoon. And it is Halloween.

MARA
She'll be fine.

MICHAEL DONNELLY, 35, his forelocks sprayed a florescent green, and DOROTHY DUNN, a stout, older woman in a heavy sweater, a little pumpkin around her neck that periodically lights up and emits a tiny cackle, step up to the table.

They pay the seller and continue on.

FOLLOW the group of four into the cemetery.

They see a MAN in a frock coat standing, head bowed, beside a large headstone.

As they approach, the man slowly raises his head and turns toward them as if coming to life.

MAN
William G. Oglethorpe, mayor of Cold Waters from 1859 until my death in 1867.

ALLISH
How did you die?

Allish already loves this game.

OGLETHORPE
The consumption, young witch.

ALLISH

Did it hurt?

Mara tugs Allish's cloak to quiet her.

OGLETHORPE

Spent my last year trying to catch my next breath. Death finally came. Not cold. A warm blanket pulled up under my chin.

MICHAEL

Tell us, mayor, was the Hagarty fire an accident?

OGLETHORPE

Let me recall the event. January 16, 1863. Union forces rout a contingent of Confederates near Miller's Creek, a rare engagement in Northern territory. On the 18th, six Johnny Rebs who survived the decimation of their unit enter Cold Waters in the dead of night. Disoriented, looking for food or out for revenge for the loss inflicted on them, no one knows. Three witnesses see them on the main street. No one sees them fire their weapons. In fact, they probably have no ammunition left. A fire starts in the Richard Hagarty residence that night and he, his wife and two children burn to death. The town folk assumes the Rebs started it. But there are no eye witnesses to that effect. Five townsmen catch up with three of the Rebs a mile south of town and execute them.

DOROTHY

(authoritatively)

A witness said he spoke to the Rebels.

OGLETHORPE

Abel Cranor. Slept in the livery. I remember his exact words:
 "Rebel fellers said they was lookin' for somethin' to eat. Told 'em I hadn't et for twenty-four hours and good luck."

MARA

So the fire could have been a tragic coincidence.

OGLETHORPE

Yes. The Rebs, the fire, just a tick of the clock in the war. But how the town folk took sides on it! Those who thought the Rebs responsible called it "The Confederate Arson".

Allish listens wide-eyed.

ALLISH

Which side were you on?

OGLETHORPE

The Hagarty fire was coincidental. Never mind. The town remained divided for years afterward. Made the last three years of my mayoralty a living hell.

DOROTHY

Have a town meeting and sort it out!

OGLETHORPE

We tried. But the war had aroused people beyond any reason.

MARA

Oblique question. Before the war, what was the ethos of Cold Waters?

OGLETHORPE

Ethos? Woman, I have no idea what you mean.

MARA

Did the people of Cold Waters look to a brighter future or were they concerned with surviving in a grimmer present?

OGLETHORPE

We felt God's presence in Cold Waters.

DOROTHY

Nineteenth century Providence!

MICHAEL

God's proverbial love of mankind.

Mayor Oglethorpe slowly reassumes his posture of inertia.

Allish looks at her mother.

ALLISH

He turned himself off.

Michael looks out into the cemetery. He sees a figure of a woman seventy-five yards away standing by a headstone.

The group moves on to the next character, a lanky male in his mid-twenties, modestly attired, who stands head bowed.

As the group gathers round him, the man suddenly looks up, his eyes wild. Everyone takes a step back.

DOROTHY

Let me guess. A school teacher.

MAN

School master, ma'am. Noah Brown.
Twenty-four students, ages seven to sixteen.

ALLISH

(showing off)

Do you use the rod on your students?

Mara gives her a warning look.

BROWN (MAN)

Uh... no. My students are always on their best behavior.

MARA

Are any of your students exceptional?

BROWN

Just one. Kenneth Crumley. Truly gifted. I struggle to keep ahead of him in Latin.

DOROTHY

Aut viam inveniam aut faciam.

BROWN

(embarrassed)

I am a little rusty.

DUNN

"I will either find a way or make one." Hannibal. You left yourself open, Mr. Brown.

Brown glowers at Dorothy.

BROWN

Most of my students are there at the behest of their parents.

MARA

Do any share their dreams?

BROWN

Ma'am, life during the war holds little room for dreams.

ALLISH

Do you inspect their fingernails every day?

BROWN

My students know the meaning of the word hygiene, but most have trouble associating it with their fingernails.

MICHAEL

Where do you stand on the Hagarty tragedy?

BROWN

An accident. But don't tell that to the likes of Sam Hart. He found the makeshift grave of one of the Rebels, dug him up, propped his corpse against a tree and used it for target practice.

DOROTHY

Sounds apocryphal.

BROWN

Goodbye, Lady of the Little Pumpkin.

Brown reassumes his inanimate posture.

Dorothy shakes her head. The group moves to the next character, HETTY SHOEMAKER, a woman in her 60s in a hoop skirt and vest, who smiles vacantly in their direction.

SHOEMAKER

I am Hetty Shoemaker, widow of the Reverend Elihu M. Shoemaker.

ALLISH

What does the M. stand for?

SHOEMAKER

Matthew, my husband's father.

ALLISH

Did you ever have a dog?

Mara has given up on her daughter.

SHOEMAKER

Why... I don't think I ever did.

DOROTHY

You'd remember if you had a dog.

Hetty gives Dorothy a thin, icy smile.

MARA

Your husband looked into the souls of Cold Waters. What did he see?

SHOEMAKER

Shallow pools of clear water he used to say. Until the fire. Then the pools darkened. The shallowness remained.

MICHAEL

What did the Reverend make of the Hagarty fire?

SHOEMAKER

The murder, that's what it was, of the three Rebel boys left him heartsick until his death.

DOROTHY

Did his congregation split over the fire?

Hetty has become still.

The group continues on.

They see a girl, MARY FAWCETT, thirteen, wrapped in a cloak. She regards them indifferently.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
And who may you be?

FAWCETT
What impertinence!

Dorothy is taken aback.

DOROTHY
I'm sorry.

FAWCETT
(to group)
Have you a valid question make it
now, for it's late.

ALLISH
What was it like to go to the
dentist in Cold Waters?

FAWCETT
What nonsense! I'm getting chilled
to the bone. Had I not died of
typhoid surely I will of pneumonia.

DOROTHY
You saw the Rebs, didn't you?

FAWCETT
(begrudgingly)
Under my window. They started all
the dogs barking.

MARA
Were you afraid?

MARY
'Til one spoke, I didn't know who
they were.

MICHAEL
What'd he say?

FAWCETT
"God damn the Billy Yanks."

DOROTHY
Did you know the Hagarty's?

FAWCETT
I --

She freezes.

Dorothy, Mara and her daughter reluctantly turn back.

MICHAEL

Wait. There's one more.

MARA

Oh? Where?

MICHAEL

That woman over there.

He points.

He sees the woman.

DOROTHY

Enough already.

She wags a hand.

MARA

Come on, Allish.

The three head back toward the ticket seller's table.

Michael walks toward the figure.

The figure stands beside a headstone. She is pretty, wears a simple dress and a wool shawl around her shoulders.

Michael walks up to her.

MICHAEL

The others didn't want to come.

FIGURE

They couldn't see me.

MICHAEL

I saw you.

FIGURE

Maybe you needed to see me.

MICHAEL

Who are you?

FIGURE

Elizabeth Hogue. Lizzie. I come back every... what you call Halloween. No one ever sees me.

MICHAEL
You're a character in this Cold
Waters history thing?

LIZZIE (FIGURE)
Most certainly!

Michael cocks his head in doubt.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
I killed the Hagarty's.

Michael is nonplussed.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Wasn't the Rebels. Though they
walked right by me when I was
leaving the Hagarty house.

MICHAEL
But historically --

LIZZIE
I'm real. Not one of those actors.
And who are you?

MICHAEL
Er, Michael Donnelly.

LIZZIE
My pleasure, Mr. Donnelly.

MICHAEL
Jesus...

LIZZIE
Oaths are not necessary.

MICHAEL
Why did you "kill" the Hagarty's?

LIZZIE
It wasn't intentional. They were my
close friends.

MICHAEL
You're putting me on.

LIZZIE
What does that mean?

MICHAEL
Please continue.

LIZZIE

Richard and Emma had the grippe. I made supper for the children. After putting them to bed I put logs on the fire. Steven wanted a glass of water. I forgot to reposition the spark screen against the fireplace.

MICHAEL

That was what happened?

Lizzie looks him in the eye.

LIZZIE

"Spark screen tight/or start a fire in the night."

Michael cannot believe what he is hearing, seeing.

MICHAEL

How did you die?

LIZZIE

Diphtheria, I think. A cold rain not long after the Hagarty fire.

MICHAEL

If you've been under this headstone for one-hundred thirty years, how can you be standing before me?

LIZZIE

I know now there are mysteries, but I don't know why they are.

MICHAEL

And why in this particular dress?

LIZZIE

Tell me what shirt you wore five days ago. You cannot. That is no mystery. Even so, you have no idea about it.

MICHAEL

Where do you go when you're not here?

LIZZIE

Where do you go when you are in a dead sleep?

MICHAEL

You're spouting sophistry.

Lizzie puts her hands over her heart.

LIZZIE

I finally acknowledged my guilt in
the deaths of the Hagarty family. I
am free.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A couple sits at a bar. The bartender, bored, aligns newly
washed glasses on a shelf.

Michael sits at a corner table, staring at his drink.

Lizzie Hogue, in jeans and a flannel shirt, enters the bar,
hesitantly.

She looks around, sees Michael.

She walks to his table.

He looks up. He sees her smiling at him.

He smiles nervously.

She sits stiffly opposite him, taking his hand in both of
hers.

LIZZIE

Oh, my God, Michael. I have so many
questions.

CUT TO BLACK.

