

THE MIDNIGHT SEASON

written by

Chad Michael Ward

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - PARLOR - NIGHT**

Blood.

It's everywhere.

It SPILLS from the expensive oak table at the center of the dim room. DRIPS from the chandelier above. STREAKS across damask-papered walls.

FRESH and STICKY and WET. A horrible red haze hangs in the air.

ELIZA (early 20s, a nice, polite woman of means) claws her way across the room, inch by painful inch. Her evening gown is splattered in viscera. Her face, a mess of torn skin.

She WHIMPERS as she slides through the gore. DESPERATE to escape her fate.

SOMETHING...

...GRABS her from behind!

DRAGS her back into the shadows.

Her screams--

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

--echo in FINN's head. Once a charming pretty-boy, years of booze and drugs wear heavily on his 40-something face. A rockstar past his prime.

He stands in a dirty bathroom. Hands gripped on the edge of the sink. Eyes shut. Teeth clenched.

A small groan escapes his lips.

He tosses a pair of pills into his mouth. Chews them down. His legs threaten to give out from under him.

He pushes through the pain until...

...it passes. He opens his eyes. Stares at his reflection in the shattered mirror.

FINN

Who are you?

The reflection doesn't respond.

FINN

Who are you? Who the FUCK are you?

No answer comes.

His head sinks. He looks down at his exposed wrists, each tattooed in thick black rectangles.

He splashes water on his face. Pulls his sleeves down. Regains his composure.

He opens the door...

**INT. PUB - NIGHT**

...to reveal that he's in a drowsy, under-lit pub.

Finn returns to his seat at the bar where an empty glass waits for him. He waves down the BARTENDER (50s, wise and wistful).

The bartender pours three fingers. Watches Finn down the drink in one gulp like a seasoned alcoholic.

Finn motions for another.

BARTENDER

Night's still young, friend.

FINN

Night can get fucked, far as I'm concerned.

The bartender nods. Pours a shot for each of them.

BARTENDER

To the night, then.

The men down their drinks. Finn lights up a cigarette. Takes a long drag.

He spins the cigarette between his each of his fingers like a street magician's sleight of hand. Fixates on the red cherry tip.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Gonna keep that all to yourself?

The cigarette snaps to a stop between his fingers.

Finn glances over to see CLAIRE (40s, drunk, former beauty queen treated poorly by both time and men) sat next to him. The light glints off the shine of her hairspray and overdrawn lips.

She flashes a smile full of perfect, bright teeth. Motions to his cigarette.

Finn hands off the cigarette. Pulls another from his pack.

CLAIRE

Keep telling myself I'm going to quit...ex-husband used to get up my ass about it, you know? Probably doing it out of spite now.

Finn smiles. Polite. Disinterested.

CLAIRE

What about you? Ever been married?

Finn has to think about it.

FINN

A...very long time ago.

CLAIRE

Yeah? What happened?

Finn struggles with the answer. *What DID happen?*

FINN

I think I screwed it up.

CLAIRE

Most men do. No offense...

FINN

None taken.

CLAIRE

Mine...he was a real righteous dickhead. Only thing I miss about that asshole is his money.

Claire takes a long drink from her glass. Devours Finn's face with her eyes.

CLAIRE

Don't take this the wrong way or nothing but you look really familiar. We met before?

Finn shakes his head. No.

CLAIRE

No? What about TV? Ever been on TV, maybe?

FINN  
Not as I recall...

CLAIRE  
Well you sure got a face for it,  
you don't mind me saying.

FINN  
I don't mind.

CLAIRE  
So what do you do then?

FINN  
Retired.

Claire raises her glass.

CLAIRE  
Cheers to that. Before?

Finn thinks carefully on his response.

FINN  
Salesman.

Claire leans closer to him. Smiles another shark-toothed grin.

CLAIRE  
And already retired? Must have  
been real good at what you did.

FINN  
I am. Was.

CLAIRE  
I'm Claire.

FINN  
Finn.

CLAIRE  
Finn. That's a nice name.

FINN  
Thanks, thought it up all by  
myself.

Claire smiles.

CLAIRE  
You're a funny guy, Finn. Buy a  
lady a drink?

Claire's hand brushes against his.

Finn jerks his arm away, as if burned.

CLAIRE  
Oh! I'm sorry--

Finn stands. Drops a few bills onto the bar.

FINN  
Enjoy your evening, Claire.

Claire watches him go. Confused and hurt by his departure.

**EXT. LOWER DISTRICT - CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

The city is a dark, crumbling place. Overcast and wet.

The slums known as the Lower District are infected with blight and decrepitude that seeps from every shadow.

Finn takes in the night air. Sighs to himself.

**EXT. LOWER DISTRICT - CARNIVAL ROW - NIGHT**

The perpetual street festival that runs alongside a massive homeless camp is busy with food carts, eager buskers, and the destitute. All smothered together in the oppressive night heat.

Children chase each other along the sidewalks. A painted lady on stilts blows majestic fireballs above the crowd. Sad clowns stomp about. Homeless men argue over space on stoops.

Finn pushes through the crowd. Ignores the shouts from barkers and hucksters.

A CHERUBIC BOY (barely 8, innocent face and smile) steps in front of him. Directs his attention towards--

--a BOMBASTIC and LOUD street magician.

THE GREAT RASPUTIN (50s, as charming as he is fake) looms over the crowd with his psychedelic robes and tiny top hat. His long beard is sticky with sweat and face-paint.

RASPUTIN  
For my next trick, I--the Great  
Rasputin--will RISK my SAN-ITY for  
the sheer amusement of all you  
here tonight. Prepare yourselves  
as I read...your...FORTUNE!

A chorus of approval and disbelief courses through the onlookers. Rasputin raises his hands.

RASPUTIN

A feat this complicated...this  
DAN-GEROUS...requires immense  
concentration, lest I injure one  
of you...with the power of my  
mind!

He shakes the sweat from his hands. Cracks his neck. Presses his fingers to his temple. Squeezes his eyes shut.

RASPUTIN

The veil remains nigh-  
impenetrable. I must push it aside  
to reveal its secrets to me. I  
think...yes...

Rasputin's eyes JERK open. He points to the crowd, searches through them with his outstretched finger. Comes to a stop on--

Finn.

RASPUTIN

You. There!

Heads turn to stare at Finn. Rasputin waves him forward.

RASPUTIN

I KNOW you felt the PULL! Step  
forward, my friend...

A chant rises among the crowd.

CROWD

Do it! Do it! Do it!

Finn is shoved forward. He stumbles to the curb in front of the magician. Shrugs in resignation. This is going to happen whether he wants it to or not.

RASPUTIN

Good sir, what is your name--WAIT!

Rasputin presses one hand against his forehead.

RASPUTIN

...your name, is it...Finn?

All eyes on Finn. He shifts his feet. Uncomfortable. He nods.

The crowd ERUPTS into a raucous cheer. Rasputin's smile twists into a smirk. Taps his temple.

RASPUTIN

The mind does not lie!

(MORE)

RASPUTIN (CONT'D)

I sense a powerful force in you,  
Finn. You sir, are a man of means.  
I see...a large sum of money, a  
beautiful woman...

The crowd erupts in cheers.

RASPUTIN

But wait! This woman, she is your  
past. And the future...the future  
brings a great darkness. It will  
come when...when...Wait! The veil  
is closing. I've seen all I can.

Rasputin collapses into his chair. Exhausted. Gives a wave of  
thanks in response to the applause.

**EXT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - LATER**

Rasputin stands in front of his tent. Watches Cherubic Boy and  
DIRTY BOY (same age, far dirtier) separate cash from pilfered  
wallets.

RASPUTIN

Stingy fucking crowd tonight, you  
ask me. You little shitheels  
didn't pull in half as much as you  
used to.

CHERUBIC BOY

Fuck you, Randy! Most these gumps  
ain't even have nothin'!

DIRTY BOY

'Sides, there's enough in that  
Finn fellas wallet, last us a good  
month!

Rasputin snatches the wallet from Dirty Boy's hands.

RASPUTIN

What makes you think either of you  
are seein' a penny of this? You're  
barely earnin' your keep--

The boys see something behind Rasputin. Scamper away.

Rasputin turns to see--

Finn.

CRACK!



Finn lands a solid hook across Rasputin's face. Catches the wallet with a deft, practiced grace.

Rasputin drops to his knee. Grasps his broken nose.

FINN

Your boys work the crowd. Grab whatever they can get their fingers on. Use whatever's inside the wallets and purses to "read minds". Crowd gets a show, you get all their money...

RASPUTIN

My fuckin' nose!

Finn stands over the fallen grifter, his face a dark storm.

FINN

I can see your future...

Rasputin's screams--

**EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

--echo across the block.

Finn sits on the edge of a curb, wallet in hand. Stuffed between the large sum of cash: a faded photograph.

Eliza. Young, beautiful. Happy.

He pulls the photo out. Stares at it between bruised knuckles and bloody fingers. His lips tremble. A sad smile.

He puts the photo back into the wallet. Stands.

A HOMELESS WOMAN watches from a nearby stoop. Finn locks eyes with her. Pulls the money from his wallet and gives it to her.

Eyes wide, the woman's smiles up at him. Finn nods.

**EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT**

Finn works through the labyrinthian maze of alleys. Finds the one that dead-ends at a concrete staircase.

He descends down the stairs to a red metal door.

Inside--

**INT. THE SHOP - NIGHT**

--the place is a workshop full of industrial torture machines covered in rust and oil, shelves of loose parts, and a grime-stained glass counter topped with gruesome devices.

Behind the counter stands ENZO (60s, gruff, seen it all and done twice as much), a sweaty queer giant in leather suspenders and weighted nipple rings. His grizzled face is a patchwork of faded green-black tattoos.

He squints at Finn through thick glasses and the acrid smoke that wafts from the cigar clenched in his teeth.

ENZO  
Mr. Finn!

FINN  
Evening, Enzo.

ENZO  
Some heat, huh? Thick enough to choke a rat out there. You believe some goddamned kids stole my condenser couple nights ago?

FINN  
City's gone to hell.

ENZO  
Never been nothin' but.

FINN  
Room open?

ENZO  
Ain't no one use it but you.

Enzo rummages under the counter. Pulls up a large set of ancient keys on a ring. Uses them to unlock the large metal door behind him.

Behind the door--

**INT. THE SHOP - CORRIDOR - NIGHT**

--a long corridor extends into darkness.

Finn follows Enzo down the hallway. Sounds of deviancy and torture come from behind the closed doors they pass by.

Enzo stops at one of the doors. Unlocks it.

ENZO

Violet's a no-show, so Kumi's  
runnin' it tonight.

He leads Finn--

**INT. THE SHOP - MACHINE ROOM - NIGHT**

--into a sterile, tiled room lit by ancient fluorescent tubes.

The centerpiece of the room is a large, caged apparatus made of steel, wire, coil, straps and gears.

ENZO

Enjoy!

Enzo exits the room.

Finn removes his coat and buttoned shirt. Leaves his undershirt on. Folds the clothes neatly and places them on the counter top. Takes a seat inside the machine.

KUMI (older than you think) hobbles in. Both legs of her 6-foot frame are bound in leather and metal braces that match the medical halo screwed into her bald head. The rest of her body is hidden behind a thick leather body and neck corset.

KUMI

How are we doing tonight,  
handsome?

FINN

Better now that you're here.

KUMI

Charmer.

Kumi tightens a series of straps across Finn's body. Makes a dramatic performance out of each yank of the strap.

KUMI

Mind if I?

She taps the crotch of her zippered leather panties. Winks.

FINN

Knock yourself out.

Kumi gives him a warm smile. Pulls down a large metal helmet cage made of coiled rods. Straps it onto Finn's head. Fits a large rubber bit into his open mouth.

KUMI

All set.

She grabs a metal chair. Drags it to the front of the torture machine. Sits. Her legs splay out beneath the stiff braces.

She unzips her crotch.

KUMI

See you on the other side.

She presses the wired button in her hand.

ZAP!

Electricity COURSES through Finn's brain. He GRIPS the chair arms and CLENCHES his teeth on the rubber bit.

Kumi pleasures herself as Finn's body shudders.

Finn tries to hold the pain in...

..until a scream ERUPTS from his mouth.

Kumi climaxes. Her screams of ecstasy join Finn's ROAR of pain.

#### **EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

Claire stumbles along the city street towards her apartment.

Alone. Drunk. She mutters to herself.

CRASH!

Claire glances over her shoulder at the noise. Nothing.

She picks up the pace. Behind her comes the sound of footsteps, just out of synch with her own.

Claire looks back. *Is someone following her?*

She squints. There might be someone just out of sight in the shadows. It's impossible to tell.

Her stumble turns into a determined walk.

The footsteps behind her grow LOUDER. Faster. Claire peeks over her shoulder again.

There's definitely someone behind her.

Claire breaks into a DASH. Ten paces and then she's up the stairs to her front door. She FUMBLES with the keys.

Drops them!

She GRABS for the keys and JAMS one into the lock--  
Success!

She slides through the doorway--

**INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

--and SLAMS the door behind her.

She checks the peephole out onto the street.

No one's there. No one walks by. *Was it all in her head?*

Claire breathes a sigh of relief. She's safe.

**INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Claire staggers about her bedroom, strips naked.

She stops at the mirrored vanity. Examines her drooping breasts. The flab of her belly. The cellulite on her thighs.

CLAIRE

I'd still fuck me.

She smiles to herself. Sits. Removes her makeup...

And then she sees IT. In the mirror, hidden in the shadows--

THE MONSTER.

At nearly seven feet, the creature is an androgynous and hairless thing with a beautiful, delicate face almost alien in its perfectly proportioned features.

Its taut, wet porcelain skin frames dark, crimson eyes. A black, eldritch sigil is burned into its pale forehead.

The Monster steps fully from the shadows. The long, black coat of leather that hides its taut frame takes on the consistency of black smoke whenever the creature moves.

THE MONSTER

Hello, Claire.

Claire freezes. Stares wide-eyed at the evil in her mirror. A whimper escapes her lips.

The Monster reaches out with long, sharp fingers. Drags them down the sides of Claire's cheek.

It's enough to send Claire into motion. She BOLTS for the door.

The Monster SNATCHES her by the hair. JERKS her back. WRAPS her head in plastic bag with one violent motion.

Claire KICKS and SCREAMS against the tight plastic. Gasps for air before--

SLAM!

The Monster BASHES her face down on the vanity.

CRUNCH!

Again.

And again.

And again.

CRACK!

The plastic runs RED with BLOOD.

The Monster releases its grip. Jerks the bag from her head.

Claire falls to the ground. Still conscious, if only just. She makes a feeble attempt to crawl away. Gurgles and whimpers through broken teeth and mangled lips.

CLAIRE  
...please...why?

The Monster leans down. Whispers into her ear.

THE MONSTER  
I have come to witness you.

The Monster JERKS her up to her knees. Opens up its coat to her.

THE MONSTER  
To witness your pain and your  
suffering. Is that not what you  
want? To be seen for who you are  
and were?

With the one good eye she has left, Claire sees something inside the coat that we can't.

Something horrible.

CLAIRE  
...oh god...oh my god...

## THE MONSTER

No gods here, Claire. Just an angel sent to deliver you to your sisters.

The Monster pulls her into the open folds of its coat. Leans its head back and releases an audible sigh of pleasure.

## THE MONSTER

Let it all go and know that here, in your final moment, you have been witnessed.

Claire's body struggles and convulses...

...goes limp.

The Monster releases the body.

Claire crumples to the floor. Her lifeless eye stares up at The Monster, frozen wide in terror.

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Finn PUKES into the toilet. RETCHES and DRY HEAVES.

He rinses his mouth out at the sink. Stares in the mirror. He looks like death warmed over.

A cabinet slams shut in the kitchen. Finn tenses up.

He's not alone.

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Finn CREEPS down the dark hallway towards the kitchen.

Turns the corner to find--

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

ROYAL (late 50s, formerly British, brutally honest, fiercely loyal) stands in the middle of the dirty kitchen, two coffee cups in hand. The bodyguard-turned-detective is built like a brick shithouse.

## ROYAL

Oh good, you're awake. Saved yourself a swift kick.

Finn relaxes.

FINN  
The hell are you doing here,  
Royal?

ROYAL  
Ask myself that a lot these days,  
mate.

He hands him a hot mug.

ROYAL  
Sorry, it's instant. Couldn't find  
the real stuff in all this  
rubbish.

Finn rummages around in the cabinets.

FINN  
It's fine.

ROYAL  
It's hot piss is what it is. What  
happened to that gal I hired to  
clean up after you?

Finn shrugs.

ROYAL  
Listen, mate. You can't stay  
hidden away in this slum forever.  
There's a whole world out there  
gonna pass you by, you let it.

Finn finds a bottle with a bit of booze still in it.

FINN  
Nothing out there I need.

Royal notices the bruises on Finn's knuckles.

Finn raises the bottle to his cup.

Royal snatches it away.

ROYAL  
I need you sober.

FINN  
The hell for?

ROYAL  
Because I'm not here to do you a  
kindness. There's something I need  
to show you.



**INT. UPTOWN - INDUSTRIAL CLUB - NIGHT**

The warehouse club is a circus of freaks and debauchery punctuated by an industrial rock band that BLASTS away at ear-bleed levels.

ASH (early 20s, female, apex predator, mood always set to a low simmer) stands hidden in the shadows of the room.

She watches beautiful YOUNG GOTH GIRLS--IMPALED on FLESH-HOOKS and little else--spin and swing in the air above the THRASHING dance floor crowd.

Admires the masked GO-GO DANCER who JAMS a GRINDER against her metal cod-piece on stage. A shower of sparks explodes from her crotch.

Spies on the harnessed CLUB BOYS who make out and all but fuck in the dark recesses of nearby booths.

She steps out of the shadows. Smokey eyes and full, dark red lips. Blue-black hair with blunt bangs and tattoos up the back of her neck. Just another goth girl in the crowd.

Her eyes flit from the screaming band to the frenzied dancers to the group of men at the bar. It's there that she finds:

JONES, a 30-something charmer in leather and metal. The man eyeballs every piece of ass that strolls by and smirks at his pals.

Ash struts across the room towards Jones. Shoves past his friends. Glances at the skull tattooed across the top of his hand. Flashes a bashful smile at him.

Jones looks her over. His stupid smirk remains.

ASH

Jones, right? I've heard about you.

JONES

Heard? What'd you hear?

Ash smiles. Coy. Flirty. She leans in, whispers into his ear.

Jones' grin widens. He waves his friends away.

**EXT. UPTOWN - CITY STREET - LATER**

Jones leads Ash away from the bustle of the club. Keeps his arm tight around her. Ash stumbles and slurs like someone who's been drugged.

JONES  
My place is just up here around  
the corner.

ASH  
I should go home...

JONES  
I'll get you fixed up. Promise.

**INT. JONES' APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Jones half-drags Ash into his richly decorated apartment.

He pulls off her coat and purse.

Ash reaches for the purse.

Jones smiles, holds the bag away from her. Grabs her throat  
when she reaches for it. Forces his tongue between her lips.

He pushes her towards the bedroom.

**INT. JONES' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Ash lays on her back. Eyes closed. Voice distant.

ASH  
...don't...

A naked Jones sits on top of her. Fumbles with the buckles of  
her outfit.

Jones frees the last buckle. Beneath him, Ash's lips move in a  
rhythmic pattern, like a whispered song with unintelligible  
words that repeat over and over.

ASH  
...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...

JONES  
What's that baby?

Jones leans in. Brings his ear closer to her lips. It's still  
not enough to understand her whisper.

ASH  
...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...

Jones gags on his words. Stares down at the SPASMS in his arms  
and chest.

JONES  
Ow! The hell?!

ASH  
...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...

Jones' body stiffens and locks in place.

JONES  
I can't move. Why can't I move?

ASH  
Because I don't want you to.

Her voice is strong, confident.

**EXT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Royal leads Finn up the stairs to Claire's door. A uniformed cop, OFFICER CARMICHAEL (30s), stands guard.

ROYAL  
Got you on door duty, Carmichael?

OFFICER CARMICHAEL  
Beats the desk.

Royal chuckles.

OFFICER CARMICHAEL  
Who's the civ?

ROYAL  
He's with me.

OFFICER CARMICHAEL  
C'mon, Royal, you know I can't let him in.

Royal gives him the once over with his eyes.

Carmichael remains unmoved.

ROYAL  
Right.

Royal descends the stairs back to the street. Turns to regard the cop.

ROYAL  
Say Carmichael...your wife know about that gal you're sweet on down at the docks?

Carmichael glares at Royal.

OFFICER CARMICHAEL  
You wouldn't dare...

Royal jabs his thumb at Finn.

ROYAL  
Me? Nah. But him? Who's to say...

**INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Royal navigates with apartment with his flashlight.

ROYAL  
These goddamn blackouts are gonna  
be the death of me.

Finn follows him--

**INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

--into the bedroom.

ROYAL  
Watch your step. It's a goddamned  
horror show in here.

Royal doesn't exaggerate.

The room is painted with Claire's blood. The buzz of flies and smell of offal attacks Finn's senses.

Claire's body, covered in a sheet wet with blood, is slumped over the vanity.

Finn winces at the scene. Covers his nose and mouth with the back of his hand.

ROYAL  
You'll excuse the body. Morgue  
boys are backed-up as usual.

FINN  
You want to tell me why we're  
here?

ROYAL  
Best I just show it to you.

Royal turns his flashlight to the wall behind the bed. There, painted in blood:

A SIGIL. Identical to that of The Monster's.

Finn doesn't quite recognize what he sees. It's a hazy memory he can't quite grab ahold of.

ROYAL  
Remind you of anything?

FINN  
No.

ROYAL  
C'mon mate, tell me you remember this, at least. It's Edenwood all over again.

An explosion of sounds burst through Finn's mind. A man's voice. The roar of applause. Screams of terror.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Ladies and gentleman! I give you...Billy the Black!

Finn REELS from the sudden, intrusive memory.

FINN  
Edenwood was...

ROYAL  
Twenty years ago, I know. But tell me I'm wrong.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Finn...

Finn stares at the bloody sheet that covers the body. It rises and falls as if Claire were still breathing.

He lifts the stained sheet. Beneath it--

ELIZA'S FACE. She stares up at him with dead white eyes.

Finn looks away. Catches the pained gasp in his throat. He dares a second glance. The face...

...is Claire's brutalized visage once more.

The piercing whine of a migraine rises in Finn's head.

FINN  
Claire...

ROYAL  
You know her?

FINN  
We met. Last night...

Royal studies his friend. Concerned.

ROYAL  
Here?

FINN  
At a pub.

ROYAL  
And?

FINN  
And nothing. I left her there.

ROYAL  
After that?

FINN  
You interrogating me, detective?

ROYAL  
Where did you go?

FINN  
Nowhere.

Royal stares at Finn. Unsatisfied with the answer.

FINN  
Nothing. Nowhere. I...went home.

Finn pulls a pill bottle and flask from his coat pocket and chases two pills with a deep swig of whiskey.

FINN  
We done here?

ROYAL  
Christ mate, I'm just--

Finn turns his back on his friend. Stumbles out of the room into the dark.

ROYAL  
Finn...fuck!

**INT. JONES' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Jones lays on his back, frozen in place by Ash's spell. Watches her strip out of her clothing.

Much of her body is inked black with tattooed sigils, runes, and indiscernible writings. She pulls the wig from her head to reveal a close-shorn cut beneath.

JONES

What are you doing?

Ash climbs on top of Jones. Mounts him.

JONES

Say something you fucking bitch!

ASH

Told you...I heard about you.  
About the things you did to all  
those girls.

JONES

No. No no no no. That's not me.  
They're lying! Those fucking  
bitches lie! Let me go! Let me--

ASH

Quiet now.

Ash flicks her finger. Jones' voice becomes a strained gasp.

She thrusts harder and harder against the man's stiff body.

Ash slides the BISHOP'S BLADE from its sheath. The dagger is etched in silver markings similar to her tattoos. A faint hum emanates from the arcane blade.

Jones' eyes go wide.

Ash thrusts the dagger down into his chest.

Again.

And again.

And again.

She grinds to a climax as a GEYSER of BLOOD sprays across her.

The blood runs upwards across the blade. Envelopes her hands.  
Her arms. Her neck. Into her open mouth.

Ash closes her eyes. Whispers the singsong sound of an incantation.

ASH

...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...

Her eyes snap open. Pupils dilate. A gasp of ecstasy escapes her lips.

The world disappears in a black haze.

BEGIN MONTAGE

...the sound of a rhythmic HEARTBEAT against darkness becomes...

...Twelve women in black cloaks stand in a windy field at night. Ash stands among them, cloaked in red. Lips whisper in unification. Cloaks drop in synchronicity. The moment blurs...

...a dozen nude bodies, WET with sweat. The bodies GRIND together in a sensual orgy...

...a black snake SLITHERS between cherry lips...

...white roses and lilies BLOOM above root tendrils that slither along a decayed body. Washed over by...

...an ocean of BLOOD. Ash rises from the water. Arms outstretched. The crimson tide recedes up into her...

...the coven, covered in blood, DANCE nude around a dead man tied to a maypole...

...darkness. A heartbeat matches the sound of Ash's breath-- shallow, heavy. She's knelt nude in the void that splashes around her like murky water. A second heartbeat joins hers...

...THE MONSTER. It emerges from the black water of darkness. Slithers through the void towards Ash.

THE MONSTER

...let...me...out...

Its words are a venomous hiss.

Ash looks up as it--

--LURCHES forward like a cobra strike!

END MONTAGE

Ash falls off the bed. Slides on the bloody floor. Chokes up bile.

ASH

No...



**EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT**

Finn emerges from a liquor store set along a busy street in the seedy vice district. Takes a long swig from a fresh bottle of booze. Chases it with another long drink.

He wanders through the loud neighborhood. Past neon signs that promise pleasure and peepshows. Past CORNER BOYS that hawk illicit substances and deviant experiences.

SEX HAWKER (O.S.)  
Hey! Hey buddy! Buddy!

An overzealous SEX HAWKER (young, dumb, and full of meth) falls in step next to Finn.

SEX HAWKER  
Whatcha lookin' for tonight,  
buddy? I got girls in here that'll  
do you anything you want. Serious,  
man. ANY. THING.

Finn shrugs him off.

SEX HAWKER  
C'mon, buddy. Whatcha into? A  
little rough and tumble? A German  
handshake? Fiddler's Delight?  
Chocolate Railroad?

FINN  
Not interested.

SEX HAWKER  
Don't be like that, buddy. You  
tell me what you need, buddy. I  
got you. Whattabout a Cornish  
finger blast?

Finn snaps.

He grabs the young pimp by his throat and shoves him up against the wall.

SEX HAWKER  
Whoa, buddy! Whoa!

Finn snarls in his face.

FINN  
I'm not your fucking buddy, you  
little parasite.

The kid throws his hands up in defeat.

SEX HAWKER  
Cool cool cool. Cool. Cool.

Finn stares at the boy. Down at his hand around the boy's throat. His anger floods away.

FINN  
...go home.

He lets go of the kid. The boy promptly falls on his ass.

SEX HAWKER  
Fuck! You got some serious problems man...

Finn turns away and disappears down an alleyway. Finds himself--

**EXT. RED LIGHT ALLEY - NIGHT**

--in a corridor lined with neon lights and red lanterns that illuminate the HALF-NUDE WOMEN that writhe behind glass windows.

Finn wanders along the alley. His gaze falls to the women that beckon to him.

His vision blurs and distorts. The path stretches out in front of him, as if to extend forever. The red neon arcs over him in bright arches.

Finn hastens his pace. Breath heavy. Desperate to find the end of the alley.

**INT. ASH'S LOFT - NIGHT**

Ash bursts through the front door of her richly decorated artist loft apartment.

An exotic array of lush plants grow along the tapestry-covered walls between overstuffed bookshelves that end in a massive ALTAR at the far side of the room.

Ash pulls several handwritten codexes from the shelves. Throws them onto the floor. Flips through them in quick succession.

The pages are scrawled in an unknown language, occult symbols, and drawings of strange flora and fauna. On the final page is a poorly drawn but unmistakable sketch of--

The Monster.

Ash's eyes go wide with recognition.

She slams the book shut. Shoves it and the others into her satchel. Adds several ornate tools and ampoules to the bag.

She stops in front of the altar. Kneels.

The candle and flower-filled altar is centered around a heavy porcelain sculpture of a plaintive woman. A crown made of twelve sharp thorns rest atop the figure's head.

Ash lights the candles. Draws her blade. Cuts a deep gash across the palm of her hand. Presses her hand against the woman's face.

The rivulets of blood travel along the edges and curves of the statue. Disappears into unseen crevices.

ASH

Mother. Sisters. All you've warned  
has come true. The Heretic's taint  
plagues the Lööma. Gift me your  
guidance...how I might stop this  
prophecy from coming to pass.

Tears of black blood stream down the statue's face. Ash watches the statue--

--BURST into flames.

**INT. THE SHOP - NIGHT**

Enzo bangs away on a disassembled chrome torture device. Looks up when Finn stumbles through the door.

ENZO

Bit early, ain't it?

Finn paces the room. Unable to stand still.

FINN

I need the room.

ENZO

No can do. Too soon.

FINN

I'll double the fee.

ENZO

Money ain't worth a shit if you up  
and die, boy.

FINN

Fine. I'll go to Gustav.

ENZO

Gustav? That Swedish cunt's a bloody hack job. Ain't no one'll tell you different. He sets you up, you're dog meat for sure.

FINN

Then do me the fucking favor.

Enzo chomps on his cigar. Sighs and relents.

ENZO

Sweet Mary, fuck me backwards. Fine. You go sideways, I'll tell them bluebacks you snuck down here and I ain't knowin' you.

**INT. THE SHOP - CORRIDOR - NIGHT**

Enzo unlocks the door to electric chair room.

ENZO

Don't die.

FINN

I owe you.

ENZO

You owe me double.

Enzo smacks Finn on the back.

**EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT**

A rusted bucket of a BUS pulls away from the dilapidated station. Reveals...

...Ash, stood in its wake. Face almost hidden by a large black hoodie, a massive backpack strapped to her back.

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

The tiny motel room is the kind you pay for by the hour.

Ash dumps the backpack onto the well-worn mattress. Removes a giant piece of chalk from the bag.

She uses it to draw symbols and arcane words across the walls, the floor, the ceiling.

She finishes with a large circle at the room's center. Lights several candles. Places them at nexus points around the circle.

She removes her clothes and kneels at the circle's center.

Her fingers slide between her legs. Her lips whisper an incantation in time with the thrust of her hand.

ASH  
...æððøçæ...

Around her, the chalk symbols glow bright with power.

**INT. THE SHOP - MACHINE ROOM - NIGHT**

Kumi straps Finn into the electric torture machine.

FINN  
Can I ask you a question?

KUMI  
Sure.

FINN  
You got someone? At home?

Kumi frowns at the personal question.

KUMI  
Enzo says you get thirty seconds on the merry-go-round tonight.

She flips the switch.

ZAP!

BEGIN MONTAGE

...Finn on a theater stage. He's twenty years younger, dressed in a tux and all smiles. The image washes away...

...a torrent of blood...

...Finn and Eliza, embraced in a kiss. The image burns away...

...fire, its flames green with magic...

...a grimoire with pages of blood-stained words and symbols. The image burns away...

...a human heart, misshapen, black, and decayed. It beats like a metronome...

...Finn stands alone in the void. His mouth open. The sound of a crying baby comes from his throat. Louder and louder and louder until it...

END MONTAGE

...becomes Finn's own terrified SHRIEK. His body CONVULSES inside the torture contraption.

Enzo grips him while Kumi undoes the machine's restraints as fast as she can.

ENZO  
Hurry up! Cut him loose!

KUMI  
He wasn't even in the full thirty seconds!

Finn's screams are replaced with hyper-ventilation.

Enzo pulls him out of the machine. Slaps his face.

ENZO  
Hey. Hey! What's your name?

Finn slurs an incomprehensible response. Shakes his head.

ENZO  
Your name!

FINN  
...Finn...

ENZO  
Where are you?

A moment of tense silence, then--

FINN  
Your mother's bed.

Enzo snorts. Drops Finn to floor.

ENZO  
He's fine.

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Ash sits on the floor with a codex open in front of her.

She examines the old news clippings glued to the book's pages.

On first page: A headline that reads "BILLY THE BLACK: THE REAL DEAL OR AN ELABORATE FAKE?", paired with a faded photo we can't see much of.

Another page: "BILLY THE BLACK THRILLS WITH AMAZING FEATS OF THE IMPOSSIBLE!"

More pages, more clippings: "TRAGEDY AT EDENWOOD!", "FIRE CLAIMS DOZENS OF LIVES", "FAMED ILLUSIONIST PRESUMED DEAD".

One of the photos is of billionaire HARRISON MARIGOLD (60s, the perfect portrait of ego and decadence).

The final page: "LOCAL MAN SOLE-SURVIVOR OF EDENWOOD DISASTER" and a photograph:

Royal. Twenty years younger.

**INT. DINER - NIGHT**

Royal drinks coffee while he waits for his meal. Contemplates the case files spread out in front of him.

In the folders are police reports, photos from the crime scene at Claire's apartment, photos of other victims.

All woman. All disfigured. All dead.

**EXT. DINER - NIGHT**

Across the street, Ash stands in the shadows. Watches Royal through the blunt bangs of her blonde wig.

Her gaze shifts to a group of MASKED STREET PUNKS--leather jackets, plastic Halloween animal masks--on a stoop down the block.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

Ash walks at a quick pace along the sidewalk. Clutches her satchel close to her chest.

She passes the stoop where the masked punks smoke and chide each other.

THE WOLF (head asshole, wolf mask) notices her. Perks up.

THE WOLF  
Hey! Hey rabbit!

Ash doesn't pay him any attention. Keeps her head low.

The Wolf slides off his perch and jogs to catch up with her.

THE WOLF

Rabbit!

He gets in front of her. Slows her down. The other punks approach from behind.

THE WOLF

I'm talking to you lil Rabbit. You can't say hello?

ASH

I'm just trying to get home.

THE WOLF

We'll walk you home. Keep you safe from all the monsters out there.

ASH

No thanks.

Ash tries to walk around. Is blocked by the boy.

THE WOLF

You're not being very nice, rabbit.

She glances over her shoulder. The others have blocked the sidewalk behind her.

THE WOLF

What's in the bag?

ASH

Nothing.

THE WOLF

Lemme see.

The boy grabs at the bag. Ash tightens her grip.

THE WOLF

Gimme the bag, bitch!

#### **INT. DINER - NIGHT**

Royal devours his dinner. Notices the commotion outside. Sees the punks push Ash around as she clings to her bag.



**EXT. DINER - NIGHT**

The Wolf frees the bag from Ash's grasp. The boys behind her shove her to the ground.

ROYAL (O.S.)

Hey!

The Wolf spots Royal.

THE WOLF

This ain't about you, old man.

The other boys laugh.

Royal remains unmoved.

The Wolf squares up to him.

THE WOLF

You got a hearing problem,  
motherfu--

The GUN comes out of Royal's pocket so fast, the boy barely has time to register it. He stares down the barrel pointed at him.

ROYAL

Piss off now, you little shits.

The boys don't need to be told twice. The satchel is dropped and they scatter away down the street.

Royal extends his hand to Ash.

ROYAL

You okay?

Ash gets to her feet without assistance.

ASH

Yeah, great.

Royal picks up her bag. Hands it to her.

ROYAL

Need help getting home?

Ash looks around. Shoulders low. Defeated.

ASH

Just got to town last night. Not  
sure where home is right now...

ROYAL  
Well you picked a real shit place  
to start.

Royal studies her.

ROYAL  
You hungry?

Ash eyes him warily.

ROYAL  
It's just that...well, I've got a  
meal over there gettin' cold.  
Could always use some company.

Ash hesitates.

ROYAL  
Place is a shithole, I know, but  
they make a mean slice of pie...

**INT. THE SHOP - MACHINE ROOM - NIGHT**

Kumi watches Finn redress.

KUMI  
Used to think you came here to get  
your rocks off. But that's not it  
is it?

Finn shakes his head.

KUMI  
What, then?

FINN  
To forget.

KUMI  
Forget what?

FINN  
All of it.

KUMI  
It true you paid Enzo to build the  
machine for you?

FINN  
Something like that.

Finn collects his coat. Kumi follows him--

**INT. THE SHOP - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

--out into the corridor.

KUMI  
Does it work?

FINN  
Can't remember.

He flashes her a soft, wry smile. Starts down the hall.

KUMI  
You asked me earlier if I had  
someone at home.

Finn stops.

KUMI  
I do. She means everything to me.

Finn flashes another smile. Genuine and kind.

**INT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT - PEEPSHOW - NIGHT**

VIOLET (20s, seen too much shit in her short life) enters the tiny stage room.

She removes her coat to reveal the barely-there lingerie beneath. Checks her makeup, primps her hair in a hand mirror.

She sets a small boombox down. Presses play. A classic rock jam echoes against the walls.

The red light on the wall buzzes and lights up.

Violet presses the button next to the opaque glass window in front of her. The window turns transparent. Reveals the dark room beyond.

The Monster watches her from the shadows.

Violet squints. Tries to get a good look at her new customer.

VIOLET  
Hello darling. What can Violet do  
for you tonight?

THE MONSTER  
Oh there is so much you can do...

Violet fakes a smile.

VIOLET

Do tell...

She runs her fingers along her body. Slides them along her inner thighs.

THE MONSTER

I want to see you bleed.

Violet's smile falters.

VIOLET

I'm sorry baby. That's not really my--

THE MONSTER

DO IT.

Violet's face flushes with anger

VIOLET

Hey, fuck you man. Who do you--

Her words choke in her throat. Her body goes rigid.

THE MONSTER

If you won't show me yours, then I'll show you mine...

The Monster opens its coat to her. Reveals:

A pair of long, swollen lips that run sideways up its distended belly. A ROTTEN GASH of STICKY FLESH that PULSES and opens up like a hungry pink maw.

Violet's eyes go wide in horror.

The Monster runs its finger along the edge of the open folds on its belly. Fondles itself. Coos at its self-pleasure.

Violet struggles to turn away from the graphic scene in front of her.

The Monster waves its hand.

Violet's hand finds her mirror. SMASHES it against the chair.

The Monster smiles.

Violet's fingers wrap around a loose shard. Brings it up to her body. Her eyes go wide.

Her hand TREMBLES. She fights the urge to cut into her flesh.

The Monster draws a line in the air with its finger.

Violet DIGS the shard into her thigh. DRAGS the sharp edge up her leg. Leaves rivulets of blood in its wake.

VIOLET

...please...

THE MONSTER

You let them watch your every  
impure act. Every indiscretion.  
But they don't really see you, do  
they, Violet?

Violet brings the shard to her belly. CUTS into it. Up and up and up until the broken mirror reaches her neck. The flesh of her torso folds open as if unzipped.

Violet gasps in pain but is unable to scream. Tears stream down her face.

THE MONSTER

I want you to see what I see...

A flick of the wrist.

Violet jams the shard into her eye.

**INT. DINER - NIGHT**

Ash cuts into a messy slice of cherry pie. Forks a massive bite into her mouth.

Royal watches her with intent.

ASH

You were right. It's a damn good  
slice of pie...

ROYAL

Royal.

ASH

Fancy.  
(beat)  
So I gotta know, Mr. Royal--

ROYAL

Just Royal.

ASH

So I gotta know...you always pick  
girls up off the street?

ROYAL  
What? No! Of course not...I mean,  
not...no. Not like this.

ASH  
So some other way?

ROYAL  
Hold on now, you're twisting my  
words around. I don't pick up  
girls.

ASH  
Just me?

ROYAL  
Yes. No...Christ. I mean...

Royal's voice trails off when he catches the smile on her face.

ROYAL  
You're fucking with me.

A wider smile now. Royal grins like a fool back.

ROYAL  
Yeah, you got me alright...

ASH  
Ash.

ROYAL  
Ash. Nice to make your  
acquaintance.

ASH  
What's in the folder?

Royal looks down at the folder. Straightens up the photos  
inside of it.

ROYAL  
Homework.

ASH  
Teacher?

ROYAL  
Detective.

ASH  
Right. Duh. Got a good case going?

ROYAL

It's all a bit gruesome, really.  
Not something to share over a meal  
with a pretty girl.

ASH

Oh please. Offend me.

Royal hesitates. Ash dares him with a coy smile.

Royal's gaze falls to Ash's finger as she draws it in circles  
around the lip of her coffee mug. The mug vibrates and hums.

Royal leans in. A conspiratorial smile on his face.

ROYAL

Alright, let's just say there's a  
real fucking nutter. Done horrible  
things to the girls here in the  
Lower District.

ASH

Horrible things?

ROYAL

I'd rather not go into the  
details...

ASH

You're such a tease. Show me.

Her finger continues to circle around the mug.

The sound of passionate breathing is faint in Royal's ear.

Slow...gasping...moans.

Royal's eyes travel up her body. Stares at her flush skin...the  
curve of her neck...her full, lush lips...

The breathing in his ears grows...louder...faster...

He slides the folder over to her.

Ash opens the folder. Flips through the photos. Ghastly image  
after ghastly image reflects in her eyes.

Royal snaps out of it. Pulls the folder out of her hands.

ROYAL

I dunno what's gotten into my head  
showin' you these.

Royal tucks the folder away.

ROYAL  
What about you? What brings you  
down here?

ASH  
I'm looking for Billy the Black.

Royal stops mid-drink. Stares at Ash. She smiles back politely.

ROYAL  
Billy the Black.

ASH  
You were his fixer for a bit,  
weren't you?

Royal shifts in his seat.

ROYAL  
Who the hell are you?

ASH  
Someone who wants to know about  
Edenwood.

**EXT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

On the front steps of the mansion, a mid-30s Royal smokes. He's interrupted by the screams of terror that ring out within.

Royal--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

--dashes down the long hallway to the parlor.

The door won't open. Royal bangs his fists on it.

ROYAL  
Billy?!

**INT. DINER - NIGHT**

Royal fumes. Slams his coffee cup down on the table.

ROYAL  
Get something in your pretty  
little head right now, girly. What  
happened at Edenwood was a real  
tragedy. Billy's dead and gone.

Ash locks eyes with the man. They stare each other down.



She stands abruptly. Collects her bag.

ASH  
Thanks for the pie.

Ash strolls to the exit. Royal calls out to her.

ROYAL  
You're chasing a ghost...

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Finn lets himself into his apartment. Drunk.

He sees Royal on the couch. Ignores him. Pours himself a fresh drink.

ROYAL  
You know a gal named Ash?

FINN  
She one of your dead bodies?

ROYAL  
This ones' alive and well and  
asking about Edenwood. About Billy  
the Black.

Finn collapses onto couch. He lets out a long sigh.

FINN  
What'd you tell her?

ROYAL  
The truth. That he's dead.

Finn gulps down his drink. Watches Royal stare at him.

FINN  
What?

ROYAL  
Nothing.

Royal struggles with his next question. Musters the courage to ask his question.

ROYAL  
What really happened that night?  
To Eliza?

Finn's face darkens.

FINN

Go home.

ROYAL

You weren't the only one who loved her, y'know.

FINN

Get. Out.

Royal sighs. Gets to his feet. Sulks to the door. Stops. He doesn't look back at Finn.

ROYAL

There's a reckoning coming. For both of us, I wager.

Finn watches him leave. Throws his glass across the room when the door closes.

**EXT. FINN'S APARTMENT - ROOFTOP - NIGHT**

Finn stomps across the rooftop. Steps up onto the edge.

He lights up a cigarette. Looks out over expanse of the city spread out in front of him.

ASH (O.S.)

If you're gonna jump, leave the smokes behind.

Finn glances at Ash as she emerges from the shadows beneath the building's massive neon sign. The blond wig's gone.

FINN

You followed Royal here, I'm guessing. Man's getting sloppy in his old age.

Ash hops up onto the ledge next to him.

ASH

People don't much notice me if I don't want them to.

Finn hands her a cigarette. They smoke in silence for a moment.

FINN

Why are you looking for Billy?

ASH

Is it true he was using real magic?

FINN

Billy was as fake as the rest of them. It was always just an act.

Off Ash's expression:

FINN

Sorry to disappoint you.

Finn flicks away his cigarette. Steps away from the ledge.

ASH

I don't believe you.

FINN

Goodbye Ash.

Finn heads towards the stairwell. Ash follows.

ASH

...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...

Finn freezes, unable to move his legs. Realization dawns over what she is. He looks back at her.

ASH

What happened at Edenwood? What did Billy do?

Finn's body trembles. His face darkens.

FINN

**æðøçæ!**

His voice is a SONIC BLAST.

Ash tumbles backwards across the rooftop. She rolls back up to her knees, dagger ready to strike...

Finn is gone.

**INT. PEEPSHOW - NIGHT**

Fresh blood drips from broken glass.

Royal stands in the doorway. Watches the forensic team document the crime scene.

FLASH!

Violet's DECAPITATED BODY. Legs open. Exposed to the room.

FLASH!

Her SEVERED HEAD sits on a chair outside the booth. Stares back at the vulgar display. Her eyes GOUGED from her skull.

Royal examines the body and scene. Unsatisfied with what he sees until--

--he glances upwards to see:

The Monster's sigil, spattered across the mirrored ceiling.

**INT. PUB - NIGHT**

Finn sits at his usual spot at the bar. Nurses a double.

He glances around the crowded room. At the happy couple in the booth across from him. At the flirtatious girl and her date at the end of the bar. At the TV set on the wall.

The NEWSCASTER on the muted television talks in silence over a headline that announces political unrest before it transitions to the next story: another local woman found brutally murdered.

Finn looks away. Downs his drink. Orders another.

**INT. THE SHOP - MACHINE ROOM - NIGHT**

Enzo kneels beside the machine with his toolbox.

THE MONSTER (O.S.)  
She's quite a beauty.

Enzo spooks at the intrusion.

ENZO  
Jesusfuck!

It takes a moment to find the source of the voice. Spots The Monster stood in the shadowed corner of the room.

THE MONSTER  
The machine, I mean.

ENZO  
And who the hell are you?

THE MONSTER  
You don't know me. But I know you,  
Enzo. You might say I'm...quite  
the fan of the work you do here.

Enzo pulls himself up off his knees. Clutches a large wrench.

ENZO  
 Fuckin' great. Now if you don't  
 mind...shop's closed.

THE MONSTER  
 Oh but we haven't yet started...

ENZO  
 I ain't gonna ask again.

The Monster remains unmoved. Its lips curl into a smile.

ENZO  
 Your funeral...

Enzo SWINGS the wrench at The Monster. Catches only empty air.

The Monster is behind him now. Enzo spins to confront him.

Another SWING. Another miss.

The Monster appears in front of him. Catches Enzo's arm as the burly man swings again. SNAPS it in half. Enzo's broken bone tears through the flesh of his forearm.

Enzo yells out in pain.

THE MONSTER  
 He comes to you to forget her. To  
 bury it away in the heart-shaped  
 coffin of his broken mind. It's  
 time he remembers the pain of it  
 all.

The Monster SHOVES Enzo backwards into the machine. A flick of its wrist and the straps slide like snakes around Enzo's wrists and body.

THE MONSTER  
 And you, Enzo. A lifetime spent  
 exploring the suffering of others.  
 How will your own taste, I wonder.

KUMI (O.S.)  
 Enzo?

The Monster turns on the woman. Smiles at her.

Kumi SCREAMS.

**INT. THE SHOP - LATER**

Finn stumbles into the empty shop.

Finn sees that the metal door is wide open. He creeps through the door--

**INT. THE SHOP - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

--into the corridor.

It's quiet save for the occasional burst of electricity that comes from the machine room.

Finn approaches carefully. Chokes when he gets to the door.

Inside, he finds--

**INT. THE SHOP - MACHINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

--Enzo's body in the chair, charred and covered in viscera.

Above the dead man--

Kumi.

Wired to the ceiling above the machine. Slit from throat to crotch. Skin wired back. The cavity of her body hollowed out.

Finn recoils in horror.

**INT. ROYAL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Royal startles awake in bed. Someone pounds at his front door. His nude LOVER (20s, a professional one night stand) stirs next to him.

Royal grabs the pistol from beneath his pillow and--

**INT. ROYAL'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT**

--throws open his front door.

Finn stands at the threshold. Hands bloody.

ROYAL  
Fucking hell...

FINN  
They're gone, Royal. They're all gone.

Royal--

**INT. THE SHOP - CORRIDOR - NIGHT**

--exits the machine room. Face twisted up in worry.

ROYAL

The hell you even doing in a place  
like this?

FINN

You wouldn't understand...

Royal paces around the hallway.

ROYAL

What I understand is that you're  
not telling me the whole truth  
about nothin'.

FINN

I didn't do this.

ROYAL

I don't believe in coincidences.  
First the symbol, then the gal  
asking about Billy...

FINN

About that...

Royal raises an eyebrow.

FINN

She followed you back to me. She's  
got magic, too. Just like Billy's.

ROYAL

Christ. It's gettin' thicker by  
the minute. We need to find her,  
figure out what her game is.

FINN

I need the trunk. You still have  
it?

**INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

Royal flips on the light. The fluorescent bulb sputters to  
life. Casts the room in a sickly blue-green hue.

ROYAL

Haven't been back here in a dog's  
age. Was hoping to never have to,  
neither.

Finn follows Royal through the warehouse. Glances at the car hidden beneath a dusty car cover.

Royal tosses a half dozen boxes and an old, musty sheet aside to reveal a weathered CARNIVAL TRUNK.

He watches Finn stare at it with a mix of nostalgia and horror.

FINN

I need some time alone with it.

ROYAL

This the right move?

FINN

Has to be.

ROYAL

I'll buy you some time, but I have to call this in sooner than later.

FINN

I know.

Royal hesitates.

ROYAL

Finn?

FINN

Yeah?

ROYAL

Be careful.

Finn looks at his friend. Nods.

Royal makes his exit.

Finn kneels down in front of the trunk. Runs his fingers along the aged wood. Finds the secret latch.

CLICK!

The spring-loaded lid pops open to reveal the trunk's contents:

...a moth-eaten tux and top hat...

...white and black candles...

...glass jars of sage and mushrooms and unidentified herbs...

...a stack of old photos.



Finn flips through the photos. Him and Royal, decades younger, smartly dressed and without a care in the world and...

...Eliza. Her smile is bright and genuine.

Finn forces himself to set the photos aside. Digs deeper into the trunk. Finds a battered black metal box.

Inside: chalk, a medical kit, a musty pack of cigarettes, a golden Zippo lighter engraved with a sigil...

...and a blood-flecked scalpel.

**INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER**

Finn removes his jacket and shirt.

Reveals a jigsaw puzzle of white-pink SCARS slashed across his bare torso.

He kneels inside a chalk triangle drawn on the floor.

His breath slows. Becomes deep and rhythmic. Falls in time with his heartbeat.

He draws the scalpel across his chest. It opens the flesh in a bloody line.

He WINCES beneath the dulled edge of the blade. Uses the blood to paint sigils on each of his palms.

He lights a cigarette with the lighter. Inhales deeply. Uses the cigarette like a paintbrush to draw runes that hang in the air around him.

Finn closes his eyes. Whispers an incantation.

FINN

...œǎǎøçœ...œǎǎøçœ...œǎǎøçœ...

Nothing happens.

Finn repeats the mantra. Louder. Forceful.

FINN

...œǎǎøçœ...œǎǎøçœ...œǎǎøçœ...

He opens his eyes.

The runes glow bright and fade until a single rune is left suspended in front of him. It grows. Changes into a neon signpost of--

**EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT**

--the motel signage.

Finn stares up at it. Then at a room on the second floor.

He--

**EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

--approaches Ash's room. Reaches for the handle.

The door opens before he touches it. Ash stands on the other side of the threshold.

Finn eyes the dagger in her hand.

ASH  
Wondered when you'd be back...

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Finn circles the room. Stares at the sigils on the wall.

FINN  
Been a long time since I've used.  
Thought I was the only one. Didn't  
know there were others.

ASH  
There aren't. I'm the last Bishop.

Off Finn's confused expression:

ASH  
You'd call us witches.

FINN  
Witches. Right.

ASH  
Is that so hard to believe?

FINN  
Not sure what I believe anymore.

ASH  
And Edenwood?

FINN  
It's just this horrible feeling in  
the back of my head now.

(MORE)

FINN (CONT'D)  
I'd almost convinced myself it was  
all a bad dream.

Finn is mindful of the dagger still held tightly in her hand.

FINN  
So now what?

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER**

Ash lights the candles around the chalk circle.

ASH  
Take off your clothes.

Finn hesitates.

She stares him down.

Finn relents. Undresses.

Ash follows suit.

She stares at his scars. Finn stares at her tattoos.

Ash motions to the circle drawn at the center of the room.

ASH  
Sit.

Finn sits. Ash joins him.

She SLICES her thumbs open with the dagger. Draws SIGILS in  
blood across the scars on Finn's chest. Slow and sensual.

ASH  
This will help let me into your  
mind and unlock what you've hidden  
away. I will see what you see.  
Know what you know.

She stares into his eyes. He stares into hers. Their breath  
grows heavy. Synchronized.

ASH  
What do you remember about that  
night?

Finn searches his thoughts.

FINN  
My wife's face. Her smile...

ASH  
Focus on that. Do not let your  
mind wander beyond this circle.

Ash takes Finn's hands in hers. Presses her bloody thumbs in his palms.

ASH  
...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ....

The tattoos on his wrists bleed away. Reveals the scarred sigils carved into his skin.

Finn is surprised to see them again.

ASH  
Close your eyes. Remember what  
came before...

Finn closes his eyes.

BEGIN MONTAGE

--Eliza's face. All smiles.  
--Finn. Young and smug. Dressed in a tux. Arms outstretched.

FINN  
...æððøçæ...

--Fire. Loud and ominous.  
--Eliza's face. Dead.

END MONTAGE

Finn struggles against the memories. Grimaces in pain.

ASH  
Embrace the pain. Let it guide you  
in...

Finn's memory goes black. The darkness gives way to--

**EXT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

--Edenwood Manor.

The ostentatious mansion is set deep in the heart of the Edenwood Forest miles outside the city.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - GREEN ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

Finn is twenty years younger. Dressed in a tux and groomed to perfection. He sits in front of a large makeup mirror.

In front of him rests an open grimoire, thick with yellowed pages. Finn's fingers trace the symbols and spells written in dried blood.

He looks up. Sees the reflection of Eliza in the doorway.

She's dressed in an expensive evening gown. Immaculate and gorgeous.

Eliza crosses the room. Rests her hand on his shoulder.

Finn watches her gaze fall to the open book. He closes the book. Pockets it.

ELIZA

You don't have to do this, you know.

FINN

Of course I do.

ELIZA

You've never attempted something this big--

FINN

Marigold isn't paying us a fortune to deliver cheap parlor tricks. We need to impress the hell out of him and the rest of his rich cronies. We need the finale.

ELIZA

And if it goes wrong?

Finn stands. Turns to face his wife. Kisses her forehead.

FINN

I'm Billy the Black. Nothing can go wrong.

Behind them, Royal, dressed in a smart black suit, appears at the doorway.

ROYAL

Natives are gettin' restless out there, chief.

FINN

We'll be right out.

Royal nods and exits.

Finn takes Eliza's hands in his.

FINN  
Shall we?

Eliza musters a smile. Hugs him tightly.

ELIZA  
I love you, Billy.

FINN  
Let's go knock 'em dead.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - PARLOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

Dozens of WEALTHY MEN and their WIVES are gathered around a massive oak table inside the exquisitely decorated parlor. A heavy red velvet cloth covers the expanse of the table.

At the head of the table sits billionaire Harrison Marigold, surrounded by a dozen of his closest friends.

Royal enters the room. Raises his hand. The room quiets to a dull murmur.

ROYAL  
If I may have your attention,  
please welcome...Billy the Black,  
Master of Illusion!

Royal exits.

A large ball of smoke explodes in his place. Reveals Finn.

The magician levitates several feet off the ground. Floats to the table.

Gasps of awe fill the parlor.

FINN  
Ladies and gents, I thank you for  
joining me this evening to honor  
our host, Lord Harrison Marigold  
on his birthday.

Polite applause. Harrison smiles, waves to his friends.

Finn produces a cigarette. Lights it with a small green flame that appears in his palm. He inhales deeply and exhales a large plume of smoke.

The smoke floats across the table. Forms a circle in front of Marigold. Turns into a shower of golden sparks.

The crowd murmurs and claps their approval.

Harrison's son, LEON (30s, spoiled, rude), leans over.

LEON MARIGOLD  
THIS is the magician everyone's  
raving about?

Harrison shushes him with his hand.

HARRISON MARIGOLD  
Pay attention, boy. Perhaps you'll  
learn something.

Finn rolls the cigarette across his fingers, flicks it up into the air. It explodes into a big ball of fire.

He motions to his wife.

Eliza struts to the edge of the table. Grips the velvet cloth and with a hard yank, pulls the fabric from the table to reveal a large circle and dozens of symbols drawn on it on chalk.

FINN  
Tonight, for the very first time,  
I, Billy the Black, will Summon.  
The. Dead!

Finn helps Eliza ascend the table top. She centers herself in the circle.

Finn stretches out his arms. Each wrist reveals a freshly branded sigil burned into them. With a flick of his hand, the candles around the room burst into flames.

The crowd gasps with horror and delight.

FINN  
Let's have a round of applause for  
my beautiful and talented wife,  
Eliza, who has graciously agreed  
to assist me in tonight's  
ceremony.

The room applauds Eliza. Several men wink and smile at her. She smiles politely in return.

FINN  
Let's begin.

Finn whispers the first incantation. His hands remain outward, palms up.

FINN

...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...

LEON MARIGOLD

What's he saying? I can't hear him.

HARRISON MARIGOLD

Quiet!

Finn's incantation continues. The lights in the room dim and flicker in time with his words.

A faint green light builds in his palms. Rolls off his hands like fog. Across the table until it surrounds Eliza. She closes her eyes as the green light fades into her.

FINN

Spirit hear me. We seek an audience with you.

The room remains still. Silent.

Finn recites another whispered incantation.

FINN

Spirit hear me. Let us know if you are here.

A low, guttural growl rumbles in Eliza's throat.

FINN

Spirit--

ELIZA

I am here.

Her voice is not her own.

Eliza's eyes snap open. Pale and sightless. Her head snaps towards Finn.

The room gasps.

Finn takes a moment to find his voice.

FINN

Tell me, spirit, of what name might we call you.

ELIZA

I have no name.

FINN

I ask again, what--



ELIZA  
 Usurper! Thief! Free me from this  
 prison!

Finn hides his confusion behind a nervous smile.

HARRISON MARIGOLD  
 I've seen enough--

Eliza turns her unseeing gaze to Harrison.

ELIZA  
 Hold your tongue, you bloated  
 fleshbag!

Gasps and indignation.

HARRISON MARIGOLD  
 How DARE you!

Finn holds up his hands to placate Harrison.

FINN  
 It's okay...

ELIZA  
 LIAR!

Tremors form in Eliza's hands...arms...legs...until her whole  
 body convulses under the pressure. She chokes up blood that  
 spills onto her evening gown.

ELIZA  
 LET ME OUT!

Eliza's joints TWIST and SNAP by an unseen force.

FINN  
 Eliza!

Finn rushes to his wife. Pulls Eliza from the circle.

She collapses into his arms. Her eyes flutter open.

ELIZA  
 Billy?

FINN  
 I've got you...

Eliza's body SEIZES.

FINN  
 No!

She jerks out of his embrace. Crawls along the floor. She glances back at Finn. FEAR and TEARS in her eyes.

ELIZA  
It's coming...

Finn--

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

--snaps back to reality.

FINN  
No!

Finn JERKS away from Ash. Breaks their connection. RETCHES up bile. GASPS for air.

ASH  
Breathe. Breathe...

Finn shrugs her off. Gets to his feet. Pulls his pants on.

FINN  
This was a mistake.

**EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

Ash rushes to catch up with Finn.

FINN  
I should have never come here.

She falls in stride next to him.

ASH  
We have to go back in. I need to know...

FINN  
Find another way. I can't get involved.

ASH  
But you ARE involved, Billy.

FINN  
Billy's dead.

Ash grabs Finn by the jacket. Catches him off guard. Drags him--

**EXT. CITY STREET - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT**

--into the alley beside them. Shoves him up against the wall.

ASH

Stop saying that! What happened really fucking happened. You did that. YOU. You need to face it!

FINN

It won't bring her back!

Ash lets go of him. Finn slides to the murky wet ground.

FINN

It won't bring her back...

Ash kneels in front of him. Stares into his eyes.

ASH

I'm sorry...

Ash leans in. Kisses him. Presses her fingers against his face.

Finn's vision explodes into white...then darkness.

The darkness gives way to--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - PARLOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

Oil lamps explode around the room.

Eliza VOMITS a viscous black goo across the carpet. Her head JERKS back. Mouth wide open.

SOMETHING works its way through her. She claws at her neck as her throat EXPANDS and DISTENDS. Something WRIGGLES to her open mouth--

**A MASSIVE MAGGOT-LIKE WORM.**

The bloody, black thing TEARS her mouth open as it passes her lips and lands on the floor with a moist thud.

Eliza collapses.

The worm grows ever-larger as it moves along the carpet. Its flesh tears apart to reveal the humanoid shape within.

The crowd stares on in horror at the newly-birthed creature as it mewls at them like a newborn calf. Stretches its new limbs. Reaches upwards with its long, wet fingers.

The thing pulls itself to its feet. Reveals its true form--

The Monster.

Naked and wet, it looms over the crowd. Peers down at them with its red eyes.

HARRISON MARIGOLD

My god...

The Monster snaps its attention to Harrison. Leaps at the old man. Tackles him against the table and digs its fingers DEEP into Harrison's eye sockets.

Blood GEYSERS from Harrison's skull, sprays across The Monster's face.

The room erupts into screams and terrified gasps. The guests burst from their chairs. Stampede towards the exit.

The Monster swipes its hand across the air. The doors slam and lock shut.

Another wrist flick and a SOCIALITE bursts into flames.

FINN

Stop!

The Monster turns to confront Finn.

THE MONSTER

You! You found my book. Called me back to this world...

It steps towards Finn.

CRASH!

Leon smashes a heavy chair across The Monster's head.

Undeterred, The Monster waves its hand.

Wine glasses rise and SMASH into Leon's face. The shards SHRED his face to ribbons. He collapses.

The Monster turns his attention back to Finn.

Finn whispers an incantation. The Monster--

FINN

...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...

--grabs Finn by the throat. Cuts off the incantation with a squeeze of his hand.

The Monster lifts Finn up into the air.

THE MONSTER  
My grimoire. Give it to me!

FINN  
...fuck...you...

ELIZA (O.S.)  
Leave him alone!

The Monster turns its attention to Eliza.

FINN  
Eliza...run...

The Monster drops Finn. Swoops across the room in a cloud of smoke. SMASHES Eliza to the ground. TEARS at her with its taloned-fingers.

FINN  
No!

Finn pulls the grimoire from the folds of his coat. Searches the pages with DESPERATION. Every scream from his wife runs through his body like a lighting bolt of PAIN.

Finn stops on a page. *Found it!*

He recites the words as fast as his lips will move.

FINN  
...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...æðøçæ...

Finn's memory stutters. Fuzzes out.

Everything goes black.

ROYAL (O.S.)  
Billy!

The memory reappears. Comes into focus on the parlor door.

Royal crashes through it into the room. FREEZES in his tracks.

The parlor is a SLAUGHTERHOUSE.

On the giant oak table, a still-burning scorch mark. Its shape...the same sigil seen on The Monster's head.

He spots Finn huddled in the corner, awash in blood. The magician stares at the room with vacant eyes.

He rushes to Finn's side.

ROYAL  
Where's Eliza, Billy?

Finn blinks. Slow. Lost.

ROYAL  
Billy! Where is she?

Finn's gaze breaks.

FINN  
She's gone, Royal. They're all  
gone...

**EXT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

Finn stands in the driveway. Shivers in the cold night air.

Royal emerges from the manor, gas cans in both hands. He sets them down on the porch. Joins Finn at the bottom of the stairs.

ROYAL  
Do it.

Finn looks at him with haunted eyes. Royal nods.

FINN  
...æðøçæ...

The porch ignites into flames. The fire spreads into the house within seconds.

Edenwood Manor becomes a ROARING FIRE.

**EXT. CITY STREET - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT**

Ash pulls away from him. Exhausted. Eyes wet with tears.

ASH  
That's how you learned our magic.  
The Heretic's grimoire...

FINN  
I thought...

Ash points an accusatory finger at Finn.

ASH  
You thought you could use magic  
like a fucking party trick.

FINN

It wasn't supposed to work that way...

ASH

That spell, every spell in that book, was written by the Heretic. Including the resurrection spell you were fool enough to cast.

The weight of it all hits Finn.

FINN

I need a fucking drink.

**INT. PUB - NIGHT**

Finn and Ash sit with Royal at a table in the back of the pub. Royal looks like someone's just punched him in the gut.

ROYAL

Bloody hell. Eliza...

FINN

It killed her. Marigold. All of them.

ASH

And you two covered it up.

ROYAL

Didn't really have a choice, did we now? Who'd believe him? But if Finn stopped this creature twenty years ago, how's it come back? Why now?

ASH

Every hundred years, the space between our world and the Lööma thins.

Royal rubs his temples.

ROYAL

Hold on. Loo-what?

ASH

Think of it like an ocean of untainted magic.

(MORE)

ASH (CONT'D)

In order for Bishop magic to work,  
we must regularly commune with the  
Lööma through blood sacrifice.

ROYAL

You mean murder.

ASH

Only men who deserve it...

Royal bristles.

ROYAL

Who decides--

Finn waves Royal's concern away.

FINN

And this cycle?

ASH

Started again thirteen days ago.  
If the Heretic was going to find a  
way back to our world, it'd be  
now. I need to see what's written  
in the grimoire.

FINN

Too late. It's gone.

ASH

Gone how?

FINN

I destroyed it.

ASH

It can't be destroyed, not without  
this...

She sets the Bishop's Blade on the table.

Finn and Royal share a glance.

ROYAL

Then it's at--

FINN

Edenwood.



**INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

Ash and follow Finn and Royal across the warehouse.

Finn WHIPS the dirty cover off of--

A 1950 MERCURY CUSTOM COUPE. Matte black exterior, cherry red leather interior. Tinted windows.

Royal holds out his hand.

ROYAL  
I'm driving.

Royal slides behind the driver's wheel. Fires up the car.

The engine ROARS to life.

**INT./EXT. FINN'S CAR - LATER**

The car speeds down the two-lane highway. Through the dense forest on either side of the road.

ROYAL  
Tell me more about this Heretic.  
What are we up against?

ASH  
It is said that Bishops only bear daughters to keep the bloodline pure and protect the Lööma.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

**EXT. FOREST - NIGHT**

THE BOY, a filthy runt, hides among the trees. Watches the naked coven dance and chant around a bonfire that burns around a DEAD MAN's hung body.

Ash's voice is joined by that of THE OLD CRONE (withered, powerful). Their voices weave in and out of each other.

ASH / OLD CRONE (V.O.)  
A hundred years ago, a baby boy was born. The coven wanted him put to death but his mother begged for his life. He was spared, but would not be granted a name. Would not be permitted to journey beyond his home. Would never be allowed to access the Lööma.

(MORE)

ASH / OLD CRONE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 But the boy was a curious and  
 rebellious creature...

**INT. COVEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Several years have passed.

Through the slats of the wooden walls, The Boy watches young Bishop daughters practice spellcraft under the tutelage of the Old Crone.

The Boy scribbles incantations into a book with his own blood.

LATER

The Boy carves deep cuts into his skin. Watches the rivulets of blood drip down his skin with morbid curiosity.

He reads from the grimoire. Whispers an incantation that ignites flames from his fingertips.

He smiles to himself.

**INT. COVEN HOUSE - CRONE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The Boy, a TEEN now, sneaks into the Old Crone's room. Removes the Bishop's Blade from its place next to the sleeping woman.

The Boy removes the blade from its sheath. Admires the sigil work engraved on its surface. GASPS when--

--The Crone's gnarled hand GRABS his wrist!

OLD CRONE  
 ...æåøçæ...

His wrist burns and bubbles beneath her grasp.

He struggles to break free from the woman. Whispers his own incantation at her.

THE BOY  
 ...æåøçæ...æåøçæ...

Her bed BURSTS into FLAMES.

The Crone SHRIEKS and bats at the fire.

The Boy SLASHES the blade down through the flames. BURIES it in The Crone's heart.

Blood runs upwards across the blade. Envelopes his hand. His arm. His neck. Into his open mouth.

Skin RIPPLES. Bones SHIFT. His eyes fade from blue to white.

The fire engulfs the room. Spreads through the small house.

BEGIN MONTAGE

The Boy moves from room to room.

--A young Bishop's throat is SLICED open.

--The blade is jammed into a ribcage.

--Arterial blood turns white walls red.

--The Boy's face changes. Distorts in the fiery light. Close now to The Monster's visage.

END MONTAGE

**EXT. COVEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

The Boy, now The Monster, emerges from the burning house. The air around him SPARKS with power.

**EXT. FOREST - NIGHT**

The last three ELDER BISHOPS usher a TEEN BISHOP away into the depths of the forest.

**EXT. FOREST - LATER**

The Elder Bishops sit in a circle, their nude bodies adorned in bloody sigils. Hands clasped together.

Their voices hiss and build into a thunderous chant.

THE BISHOPS

...æåøçæ...æåøçæ...æåøçæ...

The Monster emerges from the tree-line.

THE MONSTER

...æåøçæ...æåøçæ...æåøçæ...

The creature swings at them with the dagger--

--which SLASHES through EMPTY AIR! The Bishops fade to nothing.

Too late, The Monster understands the trap it's ensnared in. It looks down to see the sigil painted on the ground in blood.

The Bishops emerge from their hiding place in the trees. The air around them crackles and erupts into green sparks.

Step by step, the women close in on The Monster until they're close enough to hold hands with each other.

THE BISHOPS

...æåðçæ...æåðçæ...æåðçæ...

The Monster struggles against the invisible prison. SNARLS and SNAPS at the women.

The Bishops tighten their circle. Embrace The Monster between them. The sparks in the air become FLAMES. Engulfs them.

From the tree-line, the Young Bishop watches the trio and their captive burn to cinder and collapse into ash.

She approaches the pile of dust. Takes the Bishop's Blade and FLEES into the dark forest.

END FLASHBACK

**INT. FINN'S CAR - NIGHT**

Ash stares out the car window.

FINN

If the Heretic was able to destroy your entire coven, how will we be able to stop it ourselves?

ASH

If we can get its grimoire, there might still be a chance.

**EXT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHT**

Finn's car pulls up to the overgrown driveway in front of Edenwood Manor.

The mansion remains intact. Black with soot and half-hidden in a patchwork of vines and bushes that have overtaken the manor over two decades.

ROYAL

We burned this place to the ground. How--

They exit the vehicle.

Finn sniffs the air. Wrinkles her nose.

FINN  
Sulfur.

ASH  
There's magic at work here.

Finn takes in the ominous mansion that looms over him.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - FOYER - NIGHT**

The giant entrance doors swing open on rusted hinges. The damaged wood cracks and echoes through the dark foyer.

They step over the threshold. Slow. Cautious.

Royal turns in circles. Takes in the impossible sight: The mansion is frozen in time. Everything is--

ROYAL  
...just like it looked that night.

The familiar whine of a migraine pierces Finn's temples. He clutches his head.

ROYAL  
Finn?

Finn straightens up.

FINN  
I'm...fine. This way...

Finn leads Ash and Royal out of the foyer--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - PARLOR - NIGHT**

--and through the doors of the parlor.

Ash wanders around the room. Her fingers trace along the big oak table.

FINN  
This is it. The book should be here somewhere.

They search the room. Come up empty handed.

ASH  
I don't see it.

FINN  
It should be here.

It's not.

ROYAL  
We need to check the rest of the house.

Ash--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - FOYER - NIGHT**

--motions towards the massive staircase.

ASH  
You two take the upstairs. I'll finish down here.

ROYAL  
You good to go it alone?

ASH  
You just look out for yourself, old man.

Royal glares. Follows Finn--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

--to the top of the staircase. The hallway before them is still dark. A void that beckons to them.

ROYAL  
She's a real piece of work, that one.

FINN  
Reminds me of you.

Royal snorts. Finn allows himself the smallest of smiles.

ROYAL  
Let's find the book and get the hell out of here. I reckon you don't want to be here any longer than I do.

Finn lights his zippo. A foot-long FLAME erupts from the lighter, casts a green hue across the space.

They creep down the hall. Try several doors.

Locked.

Whispers rise in Finn's ear. The migraine buzzes in his temple.

FINN  
Something's wrong...

Royal doesn't hear him. Instead, he's focused on the open door ahead of them.

He--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

--steps through the threshold.

The door slams behind him!

ROYAL  
Bollocks! Finn!

Royal bangs on the door.

ROYAL  
Shit.

Finn--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHTMARE PARLOR - NIGHT**

--finds himself back in the parlor. Only this version of the room is a hellish mirror image.

Black, barbed vines twist up the burned walls. Wraps around wrought iron chairs and a black table of soot and smoke.

He looks around, confused. *How is this possible?*

FINN  
Royal?

The whine in his head grows.

Finn winces. Grabs for his pills. Jerks the top off--

THE MONSTER (O.S.)  
Hello, Billy.

Finn startles. The bottle SLIPS from his hand. Pills SCATTER across the hardwood floor.

Finn looks up to see--

The Monster. Sat at the head of the table. A king on the throne.

It smiles its horrible grin at him.

Finn stumbles back away from the sight.

FINN

ᄇᄇᄇᄇ!

Flames engulf the chair. The Monster remains untouched by the fire around it.

THE MONSTER

A lifetime of stolen magic and  
this is the best you can muster?  
Eliza would be ashamed...

FINN

ᄇᄇᄇᄇ--

The Monster raises a finger. Finn's voice cracks and quiets.

THE MONSTER

Enough.

The creature rises from its seat. Towers over Finn.

FINN

I know what you are, Heretic.

THE MONSTER

You only know what the welpling  
told you. Did she also tell you of  
the abuse I endured? The suffering  
and pain they inflicted?

The Monster's face wrinkles with a grotesque pout.

**INT. COVEN HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

The Boy kneels on hands and knees. Scrubs blood away from wood floors with a rag.

Several Bishops leer and sneer at The Boy. Their features are distorted and blurry. A funhouse reflection of horror through the Boy's eyes.

THE MONSTER (V.O.)

An innocent boy whose only misdeed  
was being born to them.

END FLASHBACK



**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHTMARE PARLOR - NIGHT**

The Monster and Finn circle the table.

THE MONSTER

They only needed share themselves  
with me. Let me join them in the  
Lööma. But they refused my RIGHT  
as their kin!

FINN

So you slaughtered them?

THE MONSTER

Tell me, magician...if I was  
banished because men are to never  
know Bishop magic, what do you  
think the girl will do to you once  
she has the grimoire?

FINN

We're not the same.

THE MONSTER

Aren't we? Now...tell me, where  
did you hide my grimoire?

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - STUDY - NIGHT**

The doors to the study burst open.

Ash steps through the threshold.

The fireplace spontaneously erupts into flames. Reveals  
bookshelves overstuffed with books and taxidermy and Harrison  
Marigold's prized trophies.

Ash's glances around the room. Her gaze lands on a glass case  
behind the massive desk on the far side of the room. In it--

The Heretic's grimoire.

Ash moves to the case. Tests the handle. LOCKED.

HARRISON MARIGOLD (O.S.)

He's lying to you...

Ash turns to find--

--the specter of Harrison Marigold. He stands in the shadows of  
the room. Eyes gouged out. Skin pallid and dusted with ash.  
Lips and fingers cracked black with blood.

A shell of his former self.

HARRISON MARIGOLD  
 He won't let you destroy the book.  
 It keeps us here. Forever trapped  
 between this world and the next.  
 Let us die. Please let us DIE!

Whispered voices behind him. Shapes emerge from the shadows...

VOICES  
 ...kill us...kill us...

The party guests. Leon. Eliza.

The phantom woman stares at Ash through shattered eyes. Bloody tears drip from her cheeks.

ASH  
 Eliza...

ELIZA  
 You must kill him. It is the only  
 way...please...

HARRISON MARIGOLD  
 Hurry, girl!

Ash locates a heavy paperweight on the desk. Uses it to--

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - NIGHTMARE PARLOR - NIGHT**

SMASH!

The Monster snaps its head towards the door at the sound of shattered glass.

It's lips curl into a black smile.

FINN  
 Ash...

Finn scrambles for the exit.

The Monster raises its hand. The doors SLAM closed. LOCK tight.

Finn BANGS on the door.

FINN  
 Ash! Run!

THE MONSTER

Once the book is mine, I'll cut  
her open from cunt to throat and  
suck every drop of magic from her  
bones.

FINN

No!

Finn CHARGES The Monster. Finds only black smoke...

...then nothing.

He's trapped alone in the room.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - STUDY - NIGHT**

Ash stares down at the grimoire in her hands. It breathes and  
pulses between her fingers.

HARRISON MARIGOLD

Do it now! Before--

Harrison EXPLODES into a cloud of dust.

Behind him--

The Monster.

The creature waves its finger. One by one, the ghostly party  
guests explode into mist until only Eliza remains.

She stares into Ash.

ELIZA

Kill him...

Eliza's face crumbles. Her body follows until she's nothing  
more than a pile of dust scattered across floor.

THE MONSTER

Hello, sister.

The Monster stands in the doorway. Dust sifts from its  
outstretched palm.

THE MONSTER

Give me the book and I'll end your  
wretched existence quickly.

ASH

Come take it, motherfucker.

The Monster waves its hand.

Ash's body is TOSSED like a RAG DOLL across the room. CRASHES into and over an armchair.

Ash looks up in time to see The Monster BEARING down on her.

She ROLLS out of the way. Jumps back to her feet. Dagger at the ready.

The Monster FLIES at her like a bat out of hell. They crash against the bookcase. STRUGGLE for dominance.

The Monster's fingers WRAP around her throat. Its fingers claw up her face. Reach towards her eyes.

Ash pushes against the creature's brute strength. Weakens beneath its powerful grip.

Its fingers CLAW closer...

Closer...

...The Monster slides a fingertip deep into her eye socket.

Ash SCREAMS.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Royal hears Ash's wail. BANGS his fists against the door.

ROYAL

ASH!!

He searches the room. Finds a hefty bust statue of Harrison Marigold on the mantle.

He smashes it down on the door's handle.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - BALLROOM - NIGHT**

The room is set with tables and fine china. Decorated in preparation for a party that will never come.

Moonlight filters in from the giant windows that surround the room. Reflects off the giant iron chandelier that hangs heavy over the massive space.

CRASH!

Ash is FLUNG through a set of double doors and TUMBLES across the ballroom floor. Bruised. Battered. Bloody as hell.

The grimoire slips from her hands. Slides out of reach across the polished floor.

The Monster emerges from the broken doors. Floats across the floor towards its prey.

Ash rolls to her feet.

ASH  
 ...æåðçæ...æåðçæ.....æåðçæ...

A pair of tables SMASH into The Monster. The impact stumbles the creature. It shoves the furniture out of the way.

Ash leaps! Thrust's her blade at the creature's face.

It catches her by the arm. Twists.

The bones in Ash's arm SNAP. The blade falls from her hand.

The Monster PUNCHES her in the chest. Her ribs SHATTER.

Ash skids across the floor. Crumples to the ground. WHEEZES and GASPS for air.

THE MONSTER  
 Your coven could not contain me.  
 What chance did you imagine you'd  
 have, little sister?

The Monster kneels next to her. Leans in close. Inhales deeply.

THE MONSTER  
 Mmmm...the pain of your failure is  
 palpable. What it must feel like  
 to know your life, your very  
 existence means absolutely  
 nothing.

ASH  
 ...fuck you...

The Monster wraps its finger around her neck. Squeezes.

THE MONSTER  
 Embrace the truth, sister. You  
 welcome this pain because you  
 believe you deserve it.

Ash struggles against its grip. Her eyes tear up. Bulge as her airway collapses.

BLAM!

The Monster's face EXPLODES in a mist of blood and bone.

It SCREAMS. Scuttles away from Ash.

BLAM!

Another bullet tears through The Monster's chest.

Ash looks up to see--

ASH

Royal!

The detective stands at the room's entrance, his gun pointed at The Monster.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Royal storms towards The Monster. Unloads an entire clip into the creature as he does. Each bullet finds its mark.

The Monster curls in on itself. Shrivels into its smoking coat before it disappears altogether.

Royal kneels next to Ash. Helps her sit up.

ROYAL

You look like shit.

ASH

Asshole.

He pulls a handkerchief from his coat pocket. Wraps it around Ash's head and gored eye socket.

ROYAL

Where's Finn?

ASH

The grimoire...

Ash points towards the book with her good arm.

Royal grabs the grimoire.

Behind him, The Monster emerges from the shadows. It SPEEDS across the room in a cloud of black fury.

ASH

No!! Royal!

Royal spins towards The Monster. Aims for the kill shot. Pulls the trigger.

Nothing happens.

He looks down at the SPURTING stump where his hand once was. At his SEVERED HAND on the marble floor. Back up at The Monster stood in front of him. *Dumbfounded.*

A flick of The Monster's wrist and a dozen iron rods break from the window frames. SHOOT across the room.

Each rod buries itself deep into Royal's body. Pins the man against the wall.

The Monster floats across the room to Royal.

THE MONSTER

Poor Royal. So desperate to be the hero. To be seen, even if just once, by her.

Royal spits blood in The Monster's face.

ROYAL

Just get it done with then, you prick.

THE MONSTER

She never loved you. But I do.

The Monster leans in. Kisses him...long and deep and hard.

Royal chokes on The Monster's serpentine tongue. CONVULSES and SPASMS until his body gives out.

He goes limp.

The Monster pulls away. Admires Royal's violated corpse...

Ash rises up behind The Monster.

JAMS her blade under the Monster's ribcage.

The Monster SHRIEKS and WITHERS in pain. GRABS at the wound that GUSHES sticky black ooze. FALLS to its knees.

Ash turns her attention to the fallen grimoire. Limpes towards it. Reaches out for it...

THE MONSTER

...æåøçæ...

The chandelier sways and cracks free of its mooring. CRASHES down on Ash. IMPALES her with several of its iron fittings.

Ash CHOKES up blood. Sees the book within her reach. Stretches her arm out. Gets her fingertips on the book's spine...

The Monster SNATCHES the book away from her. Look down at her with almost mournful eyes.

THE MONSTER

Sleep now, sister.

Ash's world goes black...

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - BALLROOM - NIGHT**

Finn bursts into the ballroom. Skids to a stop when he sees Royal's brutalized body.

He stares at the carnage. Stumbles back.

FINN

...No...

ASH (O.S.)

...finn...

Finn's pulls his attention away from Royal. Sees Ash sprawled beneath the giant chandelier. A lake of blood pools around her pale body.

She's bleeding out.

Finn rushes to her side.

FINN

Shit. Shit. Shit!

It takes every bit of his strength to shove the light off her.

Ash's lips move, but no sound comes out.

Finn kneels. Cradles her in his arms.

In the dim light of the room, she looks like Eliza. An amalgamation of their two faces, superimposed over each other like a double-exposed photo.

Ash reaches up. Pulls his face to hers. Kisses him.

Finn tenses up...

...relaxes.

He kisses her back with everything he has.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - BALLROOM - LATER**

Ash and Finn lay nude together inside a large circle drawn in chalk on the floor. Entwined bodies wetslick with her blood.

The sex is slow. Rhythmic. They whisper the same incantation.



ASH  
...æþðøçæ...æþðøçæ...

FINN  
...æþðøçæ...æþðøçæ...

The circle BURSTS into tall flames, casts shadows on their bodies.

For the briefest moment, Ash spies Eliza watching from the shadows. Almost invisible but for a hint of her spectral form.

The flames glint off the wet tears on her face.

Ash closes her eyes.

Their bodies move together. Faster and faster. The incantation grows louder and louder still.

Beneath Finn, Ash's body heals itself. Broken bones mend. Torn flesh seals up.

Her destroyed eye remains dead.

Screams of ecstasy and pain weave through the incantation.

They climax together.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - BALLROOM - NIGHT**

Ash watches Finn heft Royal's tablecloth-wrapped body up onto one of the tables.

Finn stares at his dead friend.

FINN  
He was the only one I told about the book's magic. It was Royal who suggested I take the act on the road. So we did. Him setting up the gigs, me doing the tricks. Everything that came after...the shows, the money, Eliza...he made that happen.

ASH  
I'm sorry, Finn...

FINN  
Me too.

Finn holds his hand to the body. Head hung low.

FINN  
...æþðøçæ...

The tablecloth BURSTS into flames. The fire envelops Royal's body. The table. The floor.

Finn watches the body burn.

**INT./EXT. FINN'S CAR - NIGHT**

The Mercury cruises back through the forest towards the city.

Behind them, Edenwood Manor burns down once again.

Finn and Ash sit in silence. They stare out the windshield at the road ahead.

Ash takes Finn's hand in hers.

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Ash follows Finn into the apartment.

He disappears into the bedroom and returns with a bottle of booze. Collapses onto the couch next to Ash. Takes a long pull off the bottle. He hands the bottle off to Ash who takes an equally long drink.

Ash gets off the couch. Wanders to the window. Stares down at the street below.

A parade of protesters march and chant along the street. Many hold signs demanding justice for the slain women. Other hold candles in vigilance.

ASH

The Heretic will come. For both of us.

FINN

What do we do?

Finn takes Ash into his arms. She rests her head against him.

ASH

I don't know. I'm tired, Finn. So fucking tired.

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Finn lays awake in bed. Alone.

He slides out of the bed and--

**EXT. THE FOREST - NIGHT**

--explores a winding path through the forest.

He lights the path ahead of him with a flashlight. Whispers come and go, in and out of the darkness around him.

He comes to a MASSIVE TREE that towers over him. The gnarled bark twists and curls inwards. Forms a dark hole that resembles a gaping mouth.

Finn peers into the mouth hole. Sees carved steps that lead down into the tree's dark innards.

He--

**INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT**

--descends the ancient staircase into the bowels of the tree.

The space narrows. Claustrophobic. Oppressive. Silent save for his tense breath.

Finn forces himself along the tight passage until--

**INT. STONE HALLWAY - NIGHT**

--it opens up into a long stone corridor.

Deeper and deeper...

The path becomes a labyrinth of multiple paths and false turns.

Deeper and deeper...

Finn--

**INT. THE MONSTER'S CHAMBER - NIGHT**

--comes to the end. It opens up on a cathedral-like chamber.

The walls are lined with tapestries of torn flesh that soak up the oily filth that permeates the chamber.

A dozen large mirrors encircle the room in baroque frames. In each, a woman's body. Nude. Bloody. Writhing in pain and ecstasy on the other side of the reflection.

At the center of the room, a circular pool filled with a viscous white milk. The surface churns and separates. Something rises from its depths--

--The Monster. Younger. More human. It stares up at him from the ornate cage locked around its head.

Finn recognizes the cage from Enzo's torture machine.

The Monster slides from the pool. Drapes itself in one of the flesh tapestries. Circles the room opposite Finn.

FINN

What is this place?

THE MONSTER

Do you not recognize it?

Finn can't help but stare at the creature's exposed, sexless crotch and the turgid slit that runs the length of its belly.

THE MONSTER

Tell me, magician, how much longer do you think you can maintain this charade? This tiresome game you've forced us into.

FINN

I don't know what you're talking about.

The Monster runs his hands along the mirrors. Their surface ripples like water beneath its fingertips.

THE MONSTER

Don't you?

The reflections change to reveal--

Claire. Violet. Kumi. Eliza.

The dead women press their violated bodies against the glass.

Finn grits his teeth.

THE MONSTER

You saved the Bishop. That was a mistake.

Finn doesn't respond. His eyes are transfixed on Eliza's writhing corpse.

THE MONSTER

She's using you to get to me. You're nothing but bait. Chum in the water.

FINN

What do you want from me?

The Monster appears behind Finn! Whispers into his ear.

THE MONSTER

I want out...

It grabs Finn by the shoulders. Forces him to kneel.

The pink slit on its belly opens wide.

Finn--

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

--jerks awake in a sweat.

Ash is on top of him. Stares down at him with sad eyes.

FINN

Ash? What are you--

Ash KISSES him.

The tension floods out of Finn. He embraces her. Returns her deep kiss.

Ash brings his hands to her chest. Finn traces the outline of her tattoos with his fingertips.

Ash runs her hands across his chest. Her fingers tracing the old scars. Downwards to--

--a new scar beneath his ribcage.

The same wound inflicted on The Monster earlier.

She DIGS into the scar. PENETRATES Finn's flesh. Forces her hand inside him.

Finn gasps.

Ash fingers the wound in time with Finn's pumping hips. Slides her fingers out of the wound. Uses the sticky blood to draw the banishment sigil on his chest.

ASH

I understand now.

FINN

Understand what?

ASH

What she was trying to tell me.

ASH  
 ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...

He notices for the first time that Ash has chalked sigils into the walls of his room.

FINN  
 What is this? What are you doing?

ASH  
 I need to see the truth.

Ash stabs her fingers into Finn's temples. The world disappears in a HOT WHITE FLASH.

**INT. EDENWOOD MANOR - PARLOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

Finn flips through the pages of the grimoire with DESPERATION as The Monster slashes at Eliza. Finds the page he's looking for.

He recites the words on it as fast as his lips will move.

FINN  
 ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...

The Monster STIFFENS. Drops Eliza to the ground. FORCES itself to turn to Finn.

THE MONSTER  
 What...are...you..doing?!

Finn's SHOUTS a stream of unintelligible words at The Monster.

FINN  
 ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...

The Monster's pale flesh LOOSENS from its bones. DRIPS into a puddle on the floor. The Monster SHRIEKS.

THE MONSTER  
 Stop! Stop!

Finn's voice is a STORM now. The room shakes and shudders under the torrent of wind that whips around them in circles.

FINN  
 ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...æððøçæ...

The Monster's skeletal frame collapses into the puddle.

Eliza watches in horror as the liquid flesh speeds across carpet to Finn. Up his legs and torso.

ELIZA

Billy!

Finn holds out his hands. Watches the Monster's flesh absorb into his own. He collapses to his knees, drained from the powerful spell.

ELIZA

Oh god...what did you do?

FINN

I banished him. It's going to be okay now. You're safe. It's going to be--

Finn chokes on his words. Clutches his stomach.

ELIZA

Billy?

FINN

Something's wrong...

He shouts out in pain. Falls to his hands.

ELIZA

Billy?!

Finn looks up at her. His face--

--is the Monster's face.

FINN

No.

Eliza RECOILS in horror.

The creature rises to its feet. Its features and limbs shift and crack like wet clay. It is both Billy and The Monster, and yet neither of them.

Eliza claws her way away from him on her stomach, inch by painful inch. DESPERATE to escape her impending doom.

The Billy Monster GRABS her ankles. DRAGS her back to him.

The creature pulls her up to stare into her wide eyes.

THE MONSTER

Dearest Eliza. So sweet and innocent. Your pain will haunt him for an eternity...

The Monster slides its fingers into her open mouth. Past her teeth and gums. Pushes its hands up along her skull.

Blood sprays the creature's smiling face.

The violation RIPS the flesh of her face away from her head as if to unwrap her skull.

Her screams--

END FLASHBACK

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

--become Finn's.

He throws Ash off of him. Scrambles to the corner of the room.

He RETCHES and GAGS under the weight of the revelation.

FINN

Make it stop! Make it stop!

Ash rises to her feet, the Bishop's Blade gripped in her hand.

ASH

You were so arrogant in what you thought you knew. You didn't banish the Heretic, Finn. You never had that kind of power. No...you bound its soul to your own. Gave it a home inside you.

FINN

No! NO! I stopped it. I did!

ASH

Royal was right, after all. Billy died that night. You're just a monster wearing a man's skin.

FINN

Liar!

Finn's voice is a demonic roar.

He falls to his hands and knees. Bolts of agonizing pain WRACK his body. He gasps for air. Reaches out for Ash.

Finn's body spasms. Convulses. Something moves and grows beneath his sweat-soaked skin.

He cries out in pain.

FINN

...help me...



He's overtaken by metamorphosis. Barbed tendrils slither from his mouth. Wrap tight around his neck.

His body JERKS and CONTORTS. Flesh and bone STRETCH beyond the breaking point. Muscle and tissue rearrange and move beneath his skin. Limbs JERK and TWIST the wrong way.

The transformation is complete. The Monster rises up.

It glares at Ash. HISSSES like a feral animal.

THE MONSTER  
Clever girl...

Ash reveals the grimoire in her hand.

THE MONSTER  
No! Give it to me sister, and I  
will spare your life.

ASH  
Go to hell.

The Monster HOWLS. JUMPS at Ash!

She STABS the blade through the center of the book. It burns beneath the blade. Turns to dust in her hand.

The Monster collapses, as if consumed by a heavy gravity.

Its bones turn brittle. CRACK and BREAK under the strain. It cries out like a wounded animal.

Ash approaches, dagger at the ready.

It tries to crawl away from her. DESPERATE to escape its fate.

Ash rolls the creature onto its back. When it looks up, it has Finn's face again.

FINN  
...please...

ASH  
This is for Eliza.

Ash PLUNGES the dagger into Finn's heart.

He doesn't make a sound. Looks down at the blade sticking out of his chest. Back up at Ash.

A sad smile.

His body disincorporates. Flakes and floats away until...

...there is nothing left.

Ash's shoulders sink. She does not retrieve the dagger.

**INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM**

Ash walks across the room. Dazed. Exhausted.

The faint glow in the window announces sunrise. She opens the window. Looks out over the sleeping city. The Lower District is quiet. Serene in the new daylight.

Ash lets the warm sunlight wash over her.

FADE TO WHITE

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY**

Sunlight filters through the blinds. Warm. Comfortable.

Ash stares out the window with her one good eye. Looks down at her hands clasped on her stomach.

She's very pregnant.

NURSE (O.S.)

Ms. Bishop? We're ready for you.

Ash turns away from the window. Smiles softly at the nurse.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY**

Ash sits on the examination table. Waits.

The DOCTOR knocks and enters. Clipboard in hand. She takes a seat across from Ash. Flips through the pages on the clipboard.

DOCTOR

So everything looks great.  
There's a few more tests I'd like  
to run but it looks like you're  
baby's in perfect health.

Ash smiles. Looks down at her stomach.

ASH

I can't wait to meet her.

The Doctor's face wrinkles in confusion. She checks her chart again.

DOCTOR  
Oh! I'm sorry, I think someone  
misinformed you. You're going to  
have a boy...

Ash's expression falters.

ASH  
What did you say?

DOCTOR  
A baby boy.

Time...

slows...

down...

Ash SCREAMS.

THE END