

## History Lesson

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

SUPER - NEAR ANDOVER MASSACHUSETTS

A Ford pickup that's seen better days. It comes to a stop on an overgrown trail. The driver, JESSE(35) opens his door.

The inside light still works, and it illuminates his companions, RICH(35) and TOBY(24). All three wear black gear.

TOBY

How far we gotta walk again?

He drinks nervously from a grimy bottle, scans the ground.

TOBY

Ain't no swamp here is there?  
Can't stand frogs. I hate the  
fuckin' things.

JESSE

It's a forest. Dry as a bone. No  
damn frogs. And take it easy on  
that stuff. We need clear heads  
tonight.

RICH

Too late for Toby, man.

He opens his door, gets out. There's a silence in the forest. It's an overcast night - the dark hangs like a curtain.

RICH

Its so fuckin' quiet.

Jesse gets out, leans into the back of the rig. Toby slides across and out the same door.

Jesse rummages through a large duffle bag, takes out three balaclavas. He flings one across to Rich, one towards Toby.

JESSE

Put these on when we get near the  
house.

TOBY

Who lives there again?

JESSE

You stupid fuck. I told you to  
stay off the booze this afternoon.



TOBY

Hey! The fuck...?

RICH

Don't you ever diss Miles again!  
He's a fuckin' war hero. You  
ain't worthy to lick his boots.

TOBY

His boot you mean. Left his other  
leg in I-raq. Fat lotta good  
being a hero did for him.

Rich looks set to jump him but sees Toby isn't laughing.

TOBY

I'm sorry bro. Been a long day,  
is all.

RICH

Yeah, well, just keep quiet.  
Let's get going instead of  
standing here jawing.

He takes a torch from the duffel bag and walks off through the trees. Toby watches him go then tips the bottle back. His eyes widen as Jesse takes a gun from the bag and checks it.

JESSE

We ain't shoplifting anymore,  
Toby. This is the real thing.  
Hard times for all of us.

He takes the bottle from Toby, flings it into the scrub.

JESSE

Sober up before we get there.

He stows the gun in his waistband, grabs the duffel. He heads off after Rich. Toby follows, a worried look on his face.

Overhead the clouds part to reveal a full moon.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house sits on about five acres. It's a rambling two storey, at least eighty years old. A small barn off to one side of the dirt track leading to the main road.

Rich crouches behind an empty water trough. The other two join him. There's no visible lights on in the house.

RICH

Miles said there ain't no dogs.

He turns to Toby before he can ask anything.

RICH  
My cousin did a few days  
work...with a removalist. Friend  
of the family, helping Miles earn  
some cash.

He breaks off to spit again.

RICH  
Anyway, he reckoned this  
furniture and stuff was fuckin'  
A class, some of it antiques.  
Plus they dropped off a new  
fridge, plasma T.V, computer gear.

JESSE  
Maybe she won the lottery. It  
happens.

RICH  
Yeah, could be. Or an inheritance  
maybe. But the interesting thing  
is these steel sorta strongboxes.  
Four or five of them, all  
padlocked. Miles reckons they  
were full of jewellery. Something  
precious anyway...

They all comtemplate that. Then Rich sniggers softly.

JESSE  
What's so funny?

RICH  
This lady? Maybe more to her than  
meets the eye. Talk has it that  
she's into the witch craft thing.

He grins humorlessly. And a shiver ripples through his body.

TOBY  
What the fuck crazy talk is that?

RICH  
You know old Jimmy? Sits near the  
pool table at Casey's?

Jesse and Toby both nod.

RICH  
Said she's descended from the  
witches they killed in Salem Town  
way back when. Said his grandson  
has the next farm over...

He waves a hand in that general direction.

RICH

...and that he's seen strange lights from this house and heard noises.

A silence, punctured by the distant HOWL of a dog. Jesse clears his throat, pulls the balaclava on.

JESSE

Old Jimmy Bush is eighty fuckin' years old. He wouldn't know what day it was.

(beat)

I'm banking on Miles to be telling it how it is. That's what we're here for.

Rich and Toby put their balaclavas on.

JESSE

Ready?

The other two nod.

JESSE

Ok, remember the plan. Rich picks the lock. The bedrooms are upstairs. Me and Rich will wake the woman up, bring her down. We'll leave the boy unless we need him to force her to hand over the keys to those boxes.

He hands the duffel to Toby.

JESSE

Meanwhile, Toby can search the rooms downstairs for anything small we can take.

RICH

What if she doesn't do as we say? Even with threats? How far do we...you know...

JESSE

She's a mother. She won't let anything happen to the boy. And no using our names. Want this to be a clean heist. No ties.

The others nod. They head off across the damp grass.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door eases open. Rich peers in. A long carpeted hallway stretches the length of the house. Doors lead off on either side. At the far end is the kitchen.

RICH

Ok.

He eases himself in. Jesse and Toby squeeze through the gap. Rich quietly closes the door. Jesse flicks his torch on. Rich looks down at the carpet, feels the material.

RICH

Thats real damn expensive.  
Probably imported from Turkey.

They all creep forward.

JESSE

Makes for less noise too.

TOBY

I'm liking this place more and more.

He comes to a door on his right, opens it carefully, shines the torch in. A sitting room, with furniture and book cases.

TOBY

I'll start in here. Lotta  
ornament type things.

He carries the duffel in, closes the door. Jess and Rich move along. An opening to the left - stairs leading up.

JESSE

Right. I head up. You go to the  
kitchen, see if there's another  
stairwell down.

RICH

Got it.

JESSE

I'll bring her down to the  
kitchen. If she tries to run or  
something, head her off.

Rich nods, continues on. Jesse puts a foot on the stairs. Suddenly there's a NOISE in the kitchen. A light comes on.

Rich freezes, looks back. Jesse eases off the stairs, gestures for Rich to get going. He follows him, gun held by his side.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The carpet muffles any sound as the two men reach the doorway. Jesse sneaks a look.

A woman CARLA(30) stands at the kitchen sink, drinking a glass of water. She wears a bright red silk slip. Putting the glass down, she leans forward to open the curtains over the window.

The kitchen fills with a pale light as the moon is revealed. A large wooden table takes up the middle of the room. There's a covered shoe box sitting on it.

The two men watch, spooked for a moment. Then...

Jesse deliberately steps onto the timber floor of the kitchen. The woman doesn't react at all. Simply stares at the moon.

RICH

Is she deaf or something?

JESSE

I...who knows?

He steps around the table to one end of the bench, level with her. He waves the gun at her. Nothing. The woman is oblivious.

JESSE

Did your cousin mention anything about her being crazy?

RICH

Nope.

He shivers again, glances around the room. Then she is turning to face them, speaking in a deep voice, intoning like a judge passing sentence of death.

CARLA

Richard Stoughton...Jesse  
Newton...Toby Sewall...

RICH

The fuck...?

Jesse's eyes widen in fear. He points the gun right at her head, wrist trembling.

RICH

How the hell...

JESSE

Quiet.

He's concentrating on keeping his sanity but it's a tough gig.

CARLA

My family has been seeking revenge for over four hundred years. Now that time is here.

JESSE

Rich? You have any idea what she means?

RICH

Maybe. But it's crazy as hell.

(beat)

One of my ancestors was involved in the Salem witch trials in the sixteen hundreds. Chief prosecutor or something.

Carla nods at this, a faint smile on her lips.

RICH

And I'm guessin' you and Toby have the same kin in there too back then.

Carla nods again. There's a faraway look in her eyes.

RICH

And I guess Old Jimmy was on the money about her ancestry.

CARLA

Her name was Bridget Bishop. Falsely accused. Taken with other innocents and hung from a tree like a piece of meat.

A noise from the hallway. Toby enters the kitchen, hauling the now bulging duffel. He frowns, examines the scene.

TOBY

Thought I heard voices. Got some real nice stuff from that room. So, she hand over the keys yet?

He places the duffel on the table with a THUMP. Looks at the shoebox. Jesse keeps the gun on Carla.

TOBY

What's in the box?

CARLA

Things for school.

Toby lifts the lid. Peers in. Empty.

TOBY

Nothin' in it.

CARLA

It's not ready yet.

She takes a deep breath. Jesse's finger tightens on the trigger. Then all hell breaks loose.

Carla lifts her hands in front of her face. The window suddenly opens with a CRASH. A wind HOWLS in.

Jesse pulls the trigger. The roar of the gun is lost in the sound of the wind.

The three men watch in shock as the bullet slows and stops an inch from Carla's eye. She reaches up to take it.

CARLA

Bridget Bishop was not a witch. But her daughter was, and she vowed that her descendants would hunt the progeny of those who put to death so many. I continued quest for revenge. My powers drew me here.

She moves forward, as the men cringe. Toby is hyperventilating. Rich trembles.

JESSE

Please...you can't, these things happened centuries ago. It's not our fault.

RICH

Fuck this! Run!

The three turn as one, filled with the speed of fear. Carla raises her hands again. The men's movements slow, like the bullet, before they can reach the doorway.

JESSE

Don't kill us. We're sorry for breaking in, sorry for...

CARLA

Oh, don't worry. I'm not going to kill you.

She closes her eyes, begins a soft chant. The men start SCREAMING. The sound of bones CRUNCHING, shrinking...

The CHANT rises along with the wind until...BLACK

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

A busy carpark, teachers arriving, students being dropped off.

MAX(O.S.)  
Have a great day, Mom. Meet you  
for lunch?

CARLA(O.S.)  
You bet. Now, you take this  
straight to Mr. Parsons, ok?

MAX(O.S.)  
Sure thing. Bye!

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - MORNING

Inside a black space, moving forward. The SOUND of kid's voices, laughing, chatting. The SLAM of locker doors.

INT. SCIENCE ROOM - MORNING

A table filled with equipment - bunsen burners, microscopes. And a stainless steel tray with clips. The science teacher, Mr.PARSONS is there but only his hands are visible.

MR.PARSONS(O.S.)  
Ah, hello, Max. What do we have  
here?

Small hands place the shoebox on the table, lift the lid.

MAX(O.S.)  
My mom said you were looking for  
specimens. She found them at our  
farm. Careful, they are feisty.  
Been jumpin' about, hitting the  
lid all morning.

The view of the box - three frogs frantically leaping and scratching at the cardboard. The lid hurriedly pressed down.

MR.PARSONS(O.S.)  
Excellent! Thank you, Max!

Hands place instruments on the tray - cotton buds, a scalpel.

INT. SHOEBOX - MORNING

Darkness. Faint screams.

FADE OUT.