# THE INVITATION

by

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# DARKNESS

SUPERIMPOSE:

Wherever God erects a house of prayer, the Devil always builds a chapel there; And 'twill be found, upon examination, the latter has the largest congregation. --DANIEL DEFOE,

FADE IN:

#### EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Light snow drifts down from a dark canvas of black. Flakes disintegrate on impact with spirals of rising smoke.

SUPER: GREEN CREEK, MASSACHUSETTS, 1615

## EXT. GREEN CREEK - VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT (B/W)

A charred human head burns inside an iron cresset.

Rows of abandoned houses. Straw-thatched roofs. Wood-shingle walls. Doors swing back and forth from a gentle gust of wind.

Beyond a wooden palisade looms a fog smothered woodland road. Torch-bearing figures emerge. HUNTER (60) mean and wild-eyed, leads a MOB of angry VILLAGERS.

The scowling mob storm through the deserted square. They stop at the iron cresset, placed in the middle of the village.

Hunter kicks the cresset over. The scorched head rolls.

# EXT. VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT (B/W)

Isolated. Huge. Imposing black timber. Steep stone steps lead to an ominous red door. The house drips with menace.

The mob congregate at the bottom of the steps. Fear silences their bravado.

## HUNTER BRING OUT THE VARONES!

Frenzy reignited, the mob stampede towards the door.

A CLOTH-MASKED MAN, MR VARONE (50), MRS VARONE (40) kneel on the ground. Hands tied behind their backs. Heads bowed.

#### HUNTER

# Burn it down.

Several mob members torch the household. They CHEER as the building burns. Hunter looms over the tied trio.

HUNTER Varones. May you burn in hellfire for all eternity.

The Varones look up. Beaten, bruised faces conceal previous beauty. Smirks creak across their split cracked bloody lips.

Enraged, Hunter grabs Mr Varone's hair. He forces his head back. Varone's sly grin versus Hunter's pent-up pain.

HUNTER

I shall enjoy watching you perish.

### INT. UNDERGROUND CAVE - NIGHT (B/W)

A freshwater river glistens from no obvious sign of light. Sporadic blobs of <u>gold</u> lava spit from several nearby pits.

The mob group by the riverside. Three villagers hold the squirming Varones and Masked Man's heads under the water.

HUNTER

Enough games.

Villagers bring the Varones up. They gasp for air.

Hunter withdraws a knife from his belt. He slices Masked Man's throat.

Masked Man's limp body slumps by the riverside. Hunter kicks it into the lake. Water turns <u>red</u>. The mob CHEER.

HUNTER As the remaining residents of Green Creek we demand death to the Varones, a despicable regime that

has spread terror to our community.

Hunter grabs both Varones by their hair. Grips tight.

HUNTER Once heralded as trusted founders, you have been found to be in league with the Demon, Satan. Such betrayal shall not be tolerated. Mrs Varone spits at Hunter.

HUNTER May the water cleanse your spirit. May God have pity upon your soul.

MR VARONE MRS VARONE Bury us but you will never forget. Drown us but we will never sink. For the Lord we live. For the Lord we die. Your heirs will pay in Hell, when we hear them cry. MRS VARONE Bury us but you will never forget. Drown us but we will never sink. For the Lord we live. For the Lord we die. Your heirs will pay in Hell, when we hear them cry.

Hunter forces the Varone's heads under water. The Varones squirm and kick. Shackled, they offer no match for Hunter.

The Varone's bodies fall lifeless.

Hunter holds his arms aloft like a champion, engulfed by celebratory cheers from the mob.

Villagers roll the Varone's dead bodies into the river. The corpses sink under the water.

#### INT. ABYSS - NIGHT

Darkness. Sensory sensations of falling deep underwater. But this is not just water. A distant DRONE throbs in this void.

# EXT. SWEET PEACE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Dusk clouds hover above the intimidating gloomy structure.

SUPERIMPOSE: MODERN DAY

A gust of wind sweeps damp leaves around a sign: SWEET PEACE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL.

### INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - CELL ROOM - NIGHT

Dim blue glows from a grill-protected ceiling light.

Padded walls covered in scrawled gibberish. Sophisticated equations. Ancient symbols. Maya. Greek. Roman. Unknown.

A wall-mounted calendar crafted from notepad paper depicts a numeral countdown: 100-365. 100-364. 100-363...

A pile of handmade envelopes, created from notepad paper, lay scattered across a bed.

A female INMATE, mangled hair disguising her face, scurries from wall to wall. She writes on a notepad. Frantic.

A page RIPPED from the notepad drifts to a floor littered in similar paper. Every page line reads: 100-362...100-362...

Inmate's hands tremble with fear. She grips the notepad. Scrawls obsessively: 100-362...

A painful HIGH-PITCH sound.

Inmate doubles over. Drops the notepad. Clutches her ears.

## INT. ABYSS - NIGHT

A distant blinding ray of red light pierces the darkness. THROBBING drone intensifies. Morbid. Solemn. Terrifying.

We try to "swim" away. The red light is too strong. We're being sucked toward it. The drone THROBS. Loud. Unbearable.

## INT. CELL ROOM - PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Door observation window slides open. A slim ray of radiant yellow light beams inside.

Inmate screams. Delirious. She runs for the door.

The window slides shut.

The defeated Inmate falls to her knees. Her cracked fingernails scratch weakly against the door. Hopeless.

Her hands cover her face. She sobs. Sobs turn to GIGGLES. Giggles turn to uncontrollable unhinged LAUGHTER.

### EXT. PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

A gloomy dawn sky overlooks the Keystone State. Museum of art. Independence Hall. Liberty Bell. Congress Hall.

### INT. BORDEN APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

SAMANTHA BORDEN (33) lies asleep in her luxurious king-size bed. Face of a model, body to match.

Bedroom door CREAKS open. GREG BORDEN (55), average-looking, stares at Samantha with love-filled eyes. Smiles.

Greg, dressed immaculately in a business suit, attempts to wake her with gentle, lingering neck kisses.

Samantha stirs... she turns away.

Greg places a tray full of appetizing breakfast by the side of the bed.

He pulls the curtains ajar. Sunlight shines over expensive decor. Greg gazes at Samantha. Stunning.

GREG Duty calls, my darling. Someone's gotta pay the bills around here.

Greg sighs. He leaves the room.

SOUND of the apartment front door OPENING. The door SHUTS.

Samantha opens her play-sleeping eyes. She sneers.

## LATER

Samantha, dressed like an A-list celebrity, applies finishing touches to her make-up. She poses. Takes a selfie.

The SOUND of POSTED MAIL grabs her scornful attention.

## INT. LIVING ROOM - BORDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Top floor of an exclusive apartment complex. Immaculate furniture. Huge windows display the distant city.

Samantha struts through the sumptuous spacious room with POODLES, a handbag Chihuahua, by her side.

## INT. HALLWAY - BORDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Stylish, narrow. Two ajar doors face each other, bathroom and closet. A wall-mounted intercom system. Classy.

Samantha strolls towards the front door.

She collects mail from the floor. Flicks through it. A <u>lime-</u> <u>green</u> <u>envelope</u>. Cursive handwriting reads: SAMANTHA BORDEN

Samantha opens the envelope. She takes out a one-page letter.

## LETTER/INVITE

Three short beautifully handwritten paragraphs. A distracting <u>emblem</u>: A red river sits underneath locked gates. A menacing perched dragon drops flames from its spread wings.

# BACK TO SCENE

Samantha reads to Poodles as she walks to the livingroom.

### SAMANTHA

Dear Mrs Borden. Please accept our apologies for the direct nature of this letter... blah blah blah.

#### INT. LIVING ROOM - BORDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Samantha skim-reads. She pauses. Something of interest.

SAMANTHA You are the sole benefactor of an inheritance left by a recently deceased distant relative.

She gazes at Poodles with gleeful surprise.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D) The coat of arms attached to this invitation are your true origins.

Samantha strokes the emblem. Frowns. It's ugly.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D) You are the only Borden left. Please visit us online at...

Sudden disgust. She crunches the letter in her hands, storms over to a waste basket and tosses the letter inside.

# LATER

Samantha sits on a sofa. Types on a laptop. Poodles watches.

## ON LAPTOP SCREEN

An e-mail provider. Samantha enters her login details: USERNAME: R1CHB1TCH PASSWORD: TAKESALL

Samantha clicks on ONE NEW MESSAGE. The e-mail message opens. A digital duplicate of the letter.

Samantha sends the e-mail to the trash bin.

ONE NEW MESSAGE appears in her inbox. Header: URGENT.

Samantha opens it.

A digital duplicate of the letter-- with added lines: "We expect you to arrive on December 12th at 18:00. Accept our invitation or accept the consequences."

A hyperlink, ACCEPT, glows at the bottom of the message.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D) Consequences my ass. Samantha deletes the message.

## EXT. LUXURIOUS APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Remote. Quiet.

A black window tinted hearse pulls up by the kerb. Driver's door opens. Black boots hit the pavement.

The STRANGER (black trenchcoat, trilby hat, face unseen) takes slow but purposeful steps towards the entrance door.

Black gloved hands try the entrance door handle. Locked. A voice CRACKLES from an intercom speaker.

SECURITY GUARD (V.O.) Security, how can I help you?

## INT. BORDEN APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

A loud KNOCK on the front door.

Samantha strolls towards the door. She looks through the peephole. No one there. Samantha heads back up the hallway.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

Samantha swings around. She stares at the door, anxious.

SAMANTHA

Who is it?

Samantha approaches the door with caution.

SAMANTHA

Who's there?

She views the peephole. Empty corridor.

## INT. LIVING ROOM - BORDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Samantha paces up and down with her I-phone on loudspeaker. Constant DIAL TONE. Display screen reads: *Calling GREG*.

DIAL TONE cuts out. Samantha throws her phone on the sofa.

A KNOCK on the front door.

Samantha storms towards the hallway. She's had enough.

# INT. HALLWAY - BORDEN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Samantha opens the door. Looks out into an empty corridor.

Her I-phone RINGS from the livingroom.

Samantha swings the door behind her as she rushes to answer. The door gently rebounds off <u>something</u> in the corridor.

### INT. LIVING ROOM - BORDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Samantha, nervous, roams with her I-phone on loud speaker.

GREG (V.O.) Sam, calm down. It's nothing to worry about. Probably just kids. If it happens again, just call security. They'll look after you.

SAMANTHA Just... get back home soon, OK?

GREG (V.O.) I gotta get back to work, we've got an important meeting coming up and--

Samantha hangs up. She looks down the hallway. Fear. The front door is wide open.

### INT. HALLWAY - BORDEN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Samantha slams the door shut. Secures it with a dead-bolt.

Samantha presses digits on the intercom pad. She impatiently stomps her feet. Finally--

SECURITY GUARD (V.O.) (over intercom) Security.

SAMANTHA At last. Look, someone's fucking about up here. They keep knocking on my door.

SECURITY GUARD (V.O.) We'll check it out, ma'am. What's your name and apartment number?

SAMANTHA

(curt) Samantha Borden. I'm Greg Borden's wife. I'm in room one-eight-seven.

## INT. LIVING ROOM - BORDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Samantha's hands shake as she pours a glass of red wine from a decanter. She swigs the drink down. Hits the spot.

She sits on the sofa. Calls Greg on her I-phone. I-phone dies. She turns to her laptop. It turns off.

Poodles WHIMPERS-- a short-lived canine SQUEAL of pain. Scared, Samantha scans the room for her dog.

## SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Poodles?

Samantha moves to the bedroom doorway...

Blood covered Poodles lies dead. Cut to shreds.

Samantha trembles, frozen. Wine glass slips from her fingers. Glass SMASHES on the floor.

Samantha's brought to her senses. She runs into the hallway.

# INT. HALLWAY - BORDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Samantha runs towards the door. She pulls it open-- freedom denied by the chain-lock.

Closet door <u>bursts</u> open.

Samantha spins round, shocked.

The Stranger, dark eyes peering beyond a face masked by cloth bandages, grabs her throat. He pins her against the wall.

He raises a dagger. Strikes it down. Samantha SCREAMS.

### EXT. LUXURIOUS APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Police cars and ambulances litter a taped off crime scene. Curious neighbors and confused residents gather together.

### INT. SECURITY OFFICE - LUXURIOUS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Blood splattered Christmas decorations. Window blinds drip red. A CCTV monitor stained in red splatter.

A FORENSIC TEAM collect evidence. A PHOTOGRAPHER takes shots of two dead SECURITY OFFICERS in their chairs. Stab wounds cover their shredded bodies.

Detective TOM ATKINS (45) enters with Deputy JAMES KIWOSKI (33). Protective sheets cover the floor.

Atkins, once a chisel-faced Adonis but now a scarred, whitehaired hardboiled veteran, stands at the doorway. He analyses the room with hawk-like eyes.

Kiwoski, a smart smug-looking goes-by-the-code rookie, takes snapshots with his smartphone.

Atkins turns to head of forensics, KACEY LING (55).

ATKINS Fuck Christmas. What you got me?

LING Triple homicide.

ATKINS Number three gift-wrapped upstairs?

Ling nods. Kiwoski analyzes the officers' wounds. A puddle of blood lay underneath their seats.

> KIWOSKI Big mess. Little struggle. Yet, we've got stab wounds. Were these guys shot first, or sedated somehow, then stabbed?

LING We'll have to wait for the autopsy. Early indications say there's no sign of bullet trauma.

ATKINS How'd they get in?

LING

No sign of trespassing out back. Yet someone was able to take two armed guards by surprise, and attack them with a bladed article.

Atkins eyes the CCTV monitors.

ATKINS I want that tape.

LING So did whoever did this. They took it with them.

## INT. BORDEN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Forensics at work. Ling leads Atkins and Kiwoski to a body covered by a blood-soaked sheet.

Atkins lifts the sheet. Samantha - hacked-to-shreds. Kiwoski flinches, sickened.

ATKINS

Bastards.

He replaces the sheet.

LING

Samantha Borden. Thirty-three. Recently married property tycoon Greg Borden. Quit work as a stripper to become a housewife.

KIWOSKI Looks like her luck ran out.

LING No sign of forced entry. Unless this guy's Spiderman, the only way in is through that door.

Ling points to the front door.

Atkins lifts the laptop lid. Dead. He closes it.

ATKINS I want all these computer gizmos thoroughly checked. Find out if she invited someone over.

LING

Of course.

KIWOSKI What was it that you specifically wanted to show us?

Ling hands the crumpled invitation to Atkins. He shares the invite with Kiwoski. They exchange a knowing look.

KIWOSKI Same invite. Same non-existent web address. Same as the previous three.

ATKINS Four women murdered in a week. All of them had this damn letter.

LING That's why we called you in, Detective Atkins. That's not all. There's more.

# INT. BEDROOM - BORDEN APARTMENT - NIGHT

A giant emblem, inked with blood, covers the wall. Blood fills the shape of an upside down crucifix that has been carved deep into the bed.

Kiwoski, revolted, brings a handkerchief to his mouth.

### KIWOSKI

Tom, have you ever seen anything as sick as this shit?

ATKINS

I'll tell you something, Kiwoski. I haven't felt this desperate since the Orioles streak of '88.

## EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

A cold chill in the air as an assortment of winter-dressed STUDENTS mill about the grounds.

#### INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

PROFESSOR SWANSON (65) teaches a history lesson to a handful of stuporous students.

AMY (21) bright, pretty, conserved, sits in attendance. She's captivated by Swanson's topic on ancient Rome and the Empire.

PROFESSOR SWANSON Augustus' dynasty became diminished by those that followed. I'm sure you've all heard the name <u>Caligula</u>.

This captures the students interest.

PROFESSOR SWANSON His empire lead by one rule. No law. This gave him free reign over Rome's terrified citizens. Themes varied from sexual perversions, sadistic fantasies... or both. Eventually the public revolted, forcing the hierarchy to create public law. This way, everyone knew where they stood and boundaries were constructed.

AMY

Professor Swanson. You mention Roman barbarity. How savage were they? Did they just round civilians up from the street?

PROFESSOR SWANSON Absolutely, Amy. Many gladiatorial battles included crowd participation. If the Emperor didn't like the look of someone in attendance, he'd have them thrown literally to the lions. If the Roman Guard came knocking at your door, you had two choices. (MORE) PROFESSOR SWANSON (cont'd) Attend at the Emperor's will or face death. It was an invitation you couldn't refuse.

#### INT. SWIMMING POOL ARENA - UNIVERSITY - DAY

An excited crowd fill the stands as they await a swimming competition. Amongst the audience sit best buddies Amy and SARAH JONES (21), an unpredictable firecracker with sparkling eyes and equally stunning figure.

Male student COMPETITORS complete their warm-up routines. Amy eyes STEVE (23), her handsome, wholesome boyfriend.

SARAH Seriously, I know Steve's the "great love of your life" an' all, but if you stare any harder you might turn him into stone.

AMY

(mock laughter) Oh, Sarah! You're so funny.

SARAH

Look at all the other fish in the sea, that prime meat on display. You should listen to me, Amy, we've got history. You've known this Steve dude for, what, a few months?

AMY

What you're trying to say is ...?

SARAH I'm incredibly jealous.

Sarah playfully nudges Amy. She smiles.

SARAH

Although it is a bit of an odd fit.

AMY

You don't give up, do you?

#### SARAH

Steve's a former swimming champion. You have a phobia of water. His passion is your worst fear. Athletics and archaeology? Doesn't bode well, babe.

AMY

Polar opposites attract. He's not always in the pool, I'm not always out on a dig. We do have other interests. Oh, I'm sure you do.

Swimming competitors line up in their positions. Sarah jumps from her seat. She chants like a cheerleader.

## SARAH

S-T-E-V-E, you are looking so sexy!

Everyone looks at her like she's nuts.

Amy hides her face in her hands, yet can't help but laugh. She lowers her hands. Scrawled felt tip pen writing on the back of Sarah's seat: SARAH WOZ 'ERE

Sarah sits down, attention-fix satisfied.

AMY

Noticed the art work. You've done that since we were kids.

#### SARAH

Remember practising our autographs, preparing for when we were gonna be famous pop stars?

Sarah covers her nose as if about to sneeze. Sniffs. Coughs. She appears drained, pale.

AMY

I can have a word with the Dean. I can try to get you reinstated.

SARAH

It's only been six months. I'm amazed they let me back on campus without calling the national guard.

AMY

Why don't you stay with us over Christmas?

Sarah springs Amy a reassuring smile. Before she can reply--

A loud KLAXON. The swimming event begins. Amy and Sarah CHEER Steve. Sarah screams herself hoarse.

In a neck and neck climax, Steve finishes a close second. A disappointed but respectful Steve congratulates the winner.

Sarah puts on her coat, picks up her handbag.

SARAH I've gotta split. Time for work.

AMY Call me when you get home, OK? SARAH Don't worry so much. You'll end up having a nervous breakdown.

AMY Atleast consider my offer.

SARAH I already owe you too much.

Amy, worried, watches Sarah leave the arena.

## EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

Steve and Amy, a comfortable couple, stroll across campus.

STEVE I keep replaying it in my head. I can see the finishing line. He must have beaten me by an inch.

AMY You're still my champion, baby.

Amy kisses Steve. He smiles. Fades quick.

STEVE I don't know if I'm ever gonna win that title. Maybe it's complacency. I mean, I was high school champion three times in a row...

AMY STEVE ...And twice in college. And twice in college.

Steve relents. Amy's heard this before.

STEVE I saw Sarah in the crowd.

AMY Be blind not to.

STEVE What's she up to these days?

Amy hesitates.

AMY I'm concerned about her.

STEVE If she stopped snorting coke every day it might help her financial situation a little more. AMY

I'm serious, Steve.

STEVE So am I. She didn't pay you back that hundred bucks either, did she?

AMY I don't care about the money.

STEVE Neither does she. That's the problem.

## EXT. CAR PARK - UNIVERSITY - DAY

Steve and Amy reach their car. Frost covers the windows.

STEVE Look, I know she's your best friend. I know she's going through a rough time. I just hate seeing you get taken for a ride.

AMY Let's just drop it, Steve.

Steve admits defeat.

STEVE

Gladly. Back to us. I've been thinking about spring break. Somewhere exotic, somewhere warm. Anywhere away from here.

AMY Now you're talking.

Steve and Amy enter inside the car.

STEVE Some of the websites I've seen will make your eyes pop out.

#### INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

A low class dump. Glitzy ceiling mirror balls. Tacky Christmas lights surround a stage. Loud "sensual" music.

Sarah dances erotic. She gyrates against a stage pole. False smile. Awkward movements. Sexy, it ain't.

An audience of DRUNKEN MEN watch her with leering eyes. Unimpressed men JEER and CHANT for Sarah's removal.

### INT. DRESSING ROOM - STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Alone, an angry Sarah dresses into everyday attire.

She gazes at her reflection in a make-up mirror. Her tear smudged eyeliner depresses her even more.

She opens her handbag. Takes out a small bag of powder.

Sarah snorts a line of coke from the table.

#### INT. HALLWAY - STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Sarah heads to the exit.

FAT SAM (O.S.) Hey, Sarah.

Sarah turns to face FAT SAM, the repugnant manager.

FAT SAM You better buck your ideas up or you won't get another slot. I'll just get another slut.

Sarah's enraged.

SARAH Who do you think you are, Sam? You can't just talk to me like that--

Fat Sam sneers. His smirk breaks her confidence.

FAT SAM I'm the bastard that pays your wages. See you Friday.

Sarah storms out.

SARAH

Asshole.

## EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

A dilapidated hell hole dimly lit by flickering street lamps. Sarah, dejected, heads towards the entrance.

She trips up a flight of steps. Breaks one of her heels. Sarah picks up her shoes.

SARAH Can this night get any worse? She hobbles barefoot to the entrance door.

## INT. SARAH'S ROOM - RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

Cramped. Boxes overflow with unpacked personal belongings. A tatty, stained sofa-bed. Dingy walk-in bathroom.

Sarah enters her home. Closes the door behind her. A limegreen envelope lay on the floor. Sarah picks it up.

SARAH

If you're an eviction notice, I swear I'm gonna jump.

Sarah sits on the sofa. Rests her tired feet on a wonky table propped up by old newspapers and celebrity magazines.

She studies the envelope. Stylish cursive handwriting reads: SARAH JONES

Sarah opens the envelope. She takes out a one-page letter.

## LETTER/ INVITE

Three short paragraphs formed from beautiful handwriting plays second fiddle to a distracting emblem: A red river sits underneath locked gates. A menacing perched dragon drops flames from its spread wings.

### BACK TO SCENE

Sarah reads. Her eyes widen. She's interested. Hopeful. A RING TONE breaks the silence. Sarah answers her I-phone.

AMY (V.O.) (on phone) Hey, how are ya?

SARAH Guess what I just found in my mail.

AMY (V.O.) Oh shit... You've got a job?

SARAH Get real. Apparently I've just inherited something... valuable.

AMY (V.O.) You're kidding!? I never knew you had rich relatives.

#### SARAH

Neither did I. All it says is we'd like you to come to Massachusetts to reclaim what is rightfully yours. It's all a bit vague.

AMY (V.O.) That sounds like a con. Junk mail. You're not seriously considering...

SARAH Of course not.

Amy can tell she's lying.

AMY (V.O.) Sarah - I bet I get the same letter tomorrow. Forget about it.

SARAH You're right. As usual, you're absolutely right.

Sarah crunches up the letter. Tosses it in a waste bin overflowing with bill requests and final demand letters.

### MOMENTS LATER

Sarah checks her e-mail on an old laptop computer.

### LAPTOP SCREEN

ONE NEW MESSAGE appears in her inbox. Header: URGENT.

Sarah opens it.

A digital replica of the invitation - with the added lines: "We expect you to arrive on December 12th at 18:00. Accept our invitation or accept the consequences."

A hyperlink, ACCEPT, glows at the bottom of the message.

Sarah smirks at the demand. Intrigued.

## EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

Black hearse pulls up by the kerb. Driver's door opens.

Stranger steps out. Surveys quiet surroundings.

He walks to the entrance.

## INT. SARAH'S ROOM - RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

Sarah lights a cigarette. She ponders the ACCEPT option.

#### INT. DOWNSTAIRS CORRIDOR - RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

A merry old DRUNK sings as he staggers towards the front door. He fumbles with a rusty about-to-collapse door lock.

DRUNK Just gimmie a sec, Joe. Damn thing gets stuck all the time.

He opens the door. His cheerful expression turns into fear.

DRUNK

You ain't Joe ...

The Stranger dips his gloved hand into his trenchcoat pocket.

DRUNK Hey, you buzzed my number, Mister. I ain't got no beef, I ain't looking for no trouble, bud...

The Stranger takes a wad of cash from his pocket. Hands it over to the shocked Drunk. He smiles, delighted.

The Stranger puts a gloved finger to his bandaged lips.

DRUNK You got it, boss.

The Stranger drifts inside.

## INT. SARAH'S ROOM - RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

Sarah's finger swipes the laptop touchpad.

## LAPTOP SCREEN

Mouse cursor/pointer lingers over the X close window icon.

### BACK TO SCENE

Sarah's finger glides from the touchpad to the left button. One click will close the window, and reject the invite.

### INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

The Stranger creeps down a grimy, dimly lit deserted hallway. He pulls out a dagger from his belt. Grips it tight. Sarah gazes at her laptop screen unable to make up her mind.

SARAH Fuck it.

LAPTOP SCREEN

Mouse cursor moves to <u>ACCEPT</u>.

BACK TO SCENE

Sarah clicks the left mouse button.

KNOCK KNOCK

Sarah, startled, turns to the door.

SARAH

Who is it?

A moment of silence.

KNOCK, KNOCK

Sarah cautiously approaches the door.

SARAH Who the hell is it?

KNOCK, KNOCK

Sarah opens the door.

A gum-chewing wife-beater wearing slime-ball looms in the doorway. The LANDLORD (60).

LANDLORD Rent's due, baby.

SARAH I paid it last week.

Landlord pervs over her body as he looks her up and down.

LANDLORD Oh yeah. Just checkin'.

The piggish Landlord sneers. He walks away, content he's got his bedtime visual aid. Sarah SLAMS the door shut.

# LAPTOP SCREEN/ SARAH'S ROOM

ONE NEW MESSAGE. Header: ACCEPTED

Sarah opens the message. A basic e-mail reads: "Thank you for accepting our invitation. Please write down the following directions carefully..."

Sarah grabs a nearby note pad covered in artistic sketches. She rips the page. Writes the directions on a fresh canvas.

> SARAH Just my luck. Frickin' miles away.

"Please arrive on your own..."

Sarah frowns, unsettled.

"...we have accommodation available for one person only."

Sarah relaxes.

"A reservation for one has been made at the Serpents Inn on the 12th of December. Staff will be happy to accommodate your every whim. In order to claim your inheritance, visit 63 Lamplight Lane. We look forward to seeing you."

Sarah writes down the instructions. Finished, she turns the laptop off using the shut down option. She reviews her notes.

She fails to notice a <u>virus</u> <u>warning</u> <u>message</u> on the screen. Her laptop closes down with a dismal, fan-beaten WHIRL.

## EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

The black hearse drives away.

#### EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

Crack of dawn.

The entrance door opens. Sarah leaves with a rucksack. She takes a last look at the place she called home. Smiles.

### EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - DAY

Sarah's car speeds out of the city.

# INT. SARAH'S CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY

Christmas music plays from the radio. Sarah switches the channel. A lively death metal/ pop number. Sarah smirks.

# EXT. DESERTED RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Sarah's car passes farmland. Dark clouds in the distance.

## INT. SARAH'S CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY

Sarah writes a text message on her I-phone. I-phone screen reads: I'm taking up the invitation.

Sarah's phone rings. She answers it.

AMY (V.O.) (on phone) Are you nuts?

SARAH Oh, lighten up, Amy. It's worth checking out. What have I got to lose?

AMY (V.O.)

Your life?

SARAH Don't be so melodramatic. I'm going a couple of days early. Figure I'll catch them off guard. If it's a scam, I'll know about it.

AMY (V.O.) Where exactly are you going?

Sarah checks her ripped piece of note pad paper for details.

SARAH Massachusetts. Green Creek.

AMY (V.O.) Do you ever think things through?

# EXT. DESERTED RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Sarah's car pulls up by the side.

## INT. SARAH'S CAR - DAY

Sarah reaches her boiling point.

SARAH (exploding) We can't all be Little Miss Perfect, Amy. If you ain't gonna support me on this, fine, but don't act like you're better than me.

Phone line goes dead.

SARAH

23.

Amy?

Sarah tosses her phone on to the passenger seat. She runs her fingers through her hair, takes a deep calm breath.

SARAH (regretful) What's wrong with me?

## EXT. OCEAN ROAD - DAY

Light snow falls. Dark clouds linger over a distant ocean. Sarah's car passes through a lonely scenic clifftop road.

## EXT. CROSSROADS - RURAL ROAD - DAY

Grim lifeless fields. Desolation. Three routes. A weather beaten wooden sign post: GREEN CREEK...15, WHITEWOOD...25, MARBLEHEAD...35.

Sarah's car drives towards Green Creek.

## INT. SARAH'S CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Sarah squints through her windshield. Her car headlights beam over a never ending stretch of white. A murky mist drifts over a woodland road decorated by thick snow.

Thin lingering tree branches SCRAPE against the roof. Sarah shakes her head, weary of the repetitive scenery.

She passes a succession of snow-clad trees. Frozen puddles. A dark figure standing by the roadside-- The Stranger.

Sarah slams the breaks. Car skids to a halt.

She looks in the rear view mirror. Nothing but mist.

Sarah winds her window down. Pokes her head out.

SARAH Hey, anyone out there?

Eerie silence. Mist thickens.

#### SARAH

I'd be happy to give you a lift. I could sure do with some directions.

Wind-chilled, Sarah winds her window up. She drives on ahead.

## A LITTLE FURTHER

The mist dissipates revealing the distant snow-covered Christmas card town of Green Creek. Sarah sighs, awestruck by the breathtaking view.

## EXT. LAMPLIGHT LANE - NIGHT

Sarah's car drives down a desolate residential street. Dark Gothic Victorian houses lined up in rows. Gloomy orange street lights. No sign of vehicles. No sign of life.

## EXT. VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah's car pulls up by an intimidating house. King of the street. Steep stone steps lead to an imposing double door.

A rock rests on a garden path wall. Engraved white writing GLOWS: 63 Lamplight Lane.

#### INT. SARAH'S CAR - NIGHT

Sarah checks her notes for clarity. Unsettled by the conformation, she sits back and contemplates her next move.

## EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

A derelict two-storey Gothic mansion resides at the top of a steep sloping woodland hillside. Dim light shines within.

Sarah's car parks in an empty lot. Mist swirls in the air.

Travel-weary Sarah exits her car. She rubs her arms from a cold chill. She looks at the inn. It's horror house central.

# INT. SERPENTS INN - RECEPTION - NIGHT

A heavy wooden door CREAKS open. Sarah enters inside.

A collection of lit candles, lined up in wall-mounted holders, help support a dim, flickering ceiling bulb.

MRS NEWMAN (40, stern yet elegant) greets Sarah from a reception desk.

MRS NEWMAN Good evening, my dear. I'm Mrs Newman. How may I help you?

Sarah approaches the desk, unable to hide her awkwardness.

SARAH I have a reservation. Sarah Jones.

Mrs Newman checks her registry. Frowns.

MRS NEWMAN I see you're here to pick up an inheritance. (MORE) MRS NEWMAN (cont'd) Unfortunately, I'm afraid you were not expected until the twelfth. Today is the tenth, Miss Jones.

SARAH

Is there anyway I can... kinda forward the whole thing? Can I swap bookings for tonight instead?

Mrs Newman chuckles with sarcastic delight.

## MRS NEWMAN

An inconvenience on your part is not a problem of ours. What you ask is absolutely out of the question.

#### SARAH

Please. I've come a long way... my only alternative is to sleep in my car. It's freezing outside. I'm desperate, Mrs Newman.

MRS NEWMAN You're fortunate that I know the gentleman responsible for contacting you.

Mrs Newman picks up a black old fashioned rotary telephone. Calls someone. She keeps her beady eyes locked on Sarah.

> MRS NEWMAN We have a guest here... She has arrived early... Sarah Jones.

Sarah gazes down a dark hallway that presumably leads to some of the rooms. Moonlight shimmers beyond a distant window.

MRS NEWMAN Yes.... Very well.

Mrs Newman hangs up the phone.

#### MRS NEWMAN

You may stay the night on the condition you visit your benefactor tomorrow evening. If he contacts us regarding your failure to attend, we shall consider this an outstanding debt. A debt we would pursue by means we deem lawful.

Sarah's relieved.

SARAH Thank you. I appreciate your help.

## MOMENTS LATER

Sarah signs her name in a registry book. First on the list.

SARAH It's a very beautiful town you have here. Very... quiet.

Mrs Newman selects a door key from a rack.

MRS NEWMAN All part of the charm, my dear.

Mrs Newman hands Sarah the key. She points to the hallway.

SARAH

Thank you.

Sarah heads down the hallway. Mrs Newman smirks devilishly.

MRS NEWMAN All part of the charm.

## INT. ROOM SIX - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Sarah flicks the light on. Closes the door. Bare walls. Single bed. A bedside cabinet. Lampstand. Walk-in bathroom.

Sarah opens dingy curtains. Through a grimy window she sees the inn is based on top of a hill overlooking dense woodland.

Sarah lies across the bed. She squirms. Uncomfortable. She sighs, tired. She turns on her I-phone. Battery fails. Dead.

Her fatigued eyes twitch... and close. Sarah drifts to sleep.

# EXT. SHOPPING MALL - PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Christmas music plays from inside a busy complex.

## INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Christmas decorations. Festive music. Crowded with shoppers.

Amy and Steve carry overstuffed gift bags as they manoeuvre their way through the relentless crowd.

STEVE I know Christmas can be a stressful time, but you've hardly spoken a word all day.

AMY I'm worried about Sarah.

#### STEVE

If she doesn't want to reply to your texts, that's her choice. Give her some room.

AMY I tried calling. Her phone's off.

STEVE What does that say?

Amy shrugs.

STEVE Maybe she got her million dollar inheritance and moved to the Bahamas. I know I would.

AMY Something's wrong. I can feel it.

STEVE Amy, she made her bed. Now she's got to lay in it.

## EXT. LAMPLIGHT LANE - DAY

Dusk sets in. Snow falls. Sarah's car drives down the deserted street. The black hearse tails her.

Sarah's car parks opposite the Varone house. The black hearse silently passes her.

### INT. SARAH'S CAR - DAY

Sarah gazes at the Varone house. Dim lights flicker inside from a downstairs stained glass Victorian window.

SARAH Let's get this over with.

## EXT. VARONE HOUSE - DAY

Sarah trudges up several steep stone steps to a large door. A brass door knocker features a hideous demonic face.

She uses the knocker. The BANG echoes around the street. Sarah grimaces.

Sarah's about to knock again-- several latches UNLOCK beyond the door. Sarah takes a cautious step back.

The door CREAKS open.

Sarah shivers, welcomed by a burst of biting wind. A midget SERVANT stands in the doorway.

He uses an ancient wax tablet and stylus to write a message. He presents the message to Sarah.

Tablet reads: Welcome. Please follow me.

Servant beckons her inside. He forces a smile. Sarah, against her better judgement, enters the house.

## INT. VARONE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dim candlelight. Antique paintings hang on walls. Floorboards CREAK as Sarah follows the Servant.

Servant pauses by an open doorway. Light flickers within. He gestures Sarah inside.

## INT. LIVING ROOM - VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Flames flicker in a coal fireplace. Despite the warm glow, Sarah rubs her arms from a cold chill in the room.

Elegant furniture. A large bookshelf features a huge library of literature. H. P. Lovecraft's "The Festival" stands out.

Servant gestures Sarah to a set of chairs arranged around a large chest. She takes a seat. Servant offers her a drink from a wide selection on a nearby table.

### SARAH

Whatever's strongest.

Servant pours her a glass from a decanter. He sets it down on a table by her side. He writes a message. Shows her.

It reads: My master will be here shortly. Please relax.

Servant leaves the room.

Sarah, curious, sniffs her drink. Smells alright. She takes a sip. It tastes good. She takes a larger swig. Hits the spot.

MR VARONE (O.S.) Thank you for coming.

Sarah nearly drops her glass.

MR VARONE, 50, tall, gowned, face hidden in shadow, stands in the doorway. He carries a sinister presence.

MR VARONE I'm Mr Varone. You must be Sarah Jones. Sarah nods. She stands to greet him.

SARAH It's nice to meet you.

Mr Varone gestures her to sit. She does so. He enters the room, his movements camouflaged by darkness.

Before Sarah knows it, he's sat opposite her. His face remains dimly lit. Something about what can be seen, seems unreal. Like a wax mask. Something unnatural.

His soft voice carries a strange, on edge tension.

MR VARONE I apologize for the unorthodox nature of our invitation. I'm extremely grateful you accepted.

SARAH You don't mind I arrived early?

MR VARONE No. Not at all. The family name must live on. You're the only person who can do that.

SARAH What is it I'm inheriting?

MR VARONE This house is one of many things.

SARAH Are you serious?

MR VARONE Money won't be an issue for you. I can assure you of that.

Sarah lets the thought sink in for a moment. She's stunned.

SARAH How did you find me?

MR VARONE It took a great deal of trouble... but things, delicate things of this nature, take time.

SARAH What's the catch?

Mr Varone's hands clench the arms of his chair. Veins bulge.

MR VARONE In order to own this dynasty, certain traditions must be upheld. (MORE) MR VARONE (cont'd) I'm only here to fulfill your descendant's request. To honor his final wish.

# SARAH

Who was he?

MR VARONE I fear my words would fail to do him justice. I have to show you.

Mr Varone opens the chest. He takes out a dark cloak. He passes the cloak to Sarah. She takes it.

MR VARONE I need you to come with me.

### EXT. VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door CREAKS open.

Sarah exits dressed in black cloak and hood. Mr Varone follows behind her. Sarah's jaw drops at the sight in front of her.

#### EXT. LAMPLIGHT LANE - NIGHT

A mass of black hooded cloaked figures (HOODS) leave their homes with candle-lit lanterns. The swarm head up the street.

### EXT. VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah turns to Mr Varone. A sinister smile greets her.

SARAH What is this? What's going on?

MR VARONE Please follow me.

# EXT. MOUNTAIN HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Lanterns glow as the Hoods head up a steep snow covered hill via a zigzag trail.

Sarah hikes with Mr Varone. A sombre atmosphere. Frosty.

She looks up at the top of the seemingly never-ending hill. An intimidating moonlit white church.

## EXT. HILLTOP - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

A glow radiates from the white church, as if absorbing the moonlight above. It's a foreboding structure. A large castlesque door. Dark tear shaped windows.

Excited hoods gather together. Sarah takes a rest. She gazes out at the beautiful view below.

Green Creek appears like a miniature toy set. Lit lights in homes. Stars shine in the night sky. A wondrous clear moon.

Sarah's eyes well up. Homesick.

A furor of movement. A loud CREAK. Church doors swing open.

The congregation enter the church.

Sarah moves to head back down the hill. She stops. Several Hoods guard the area.

A hand grips her shoulder. Sarah grimaces. She turns around to face Mr Varone.

MR VARONE You must come with us. It's time.

Sarah realizes she has no choice.

# INT. WHITE CHURCH - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Dark. Overcrowded with Hoods. Candles die inside lanterns, suffocated by lack of oxygen. Sarah struggles to keep her feet as she's swept further inside.

A loud CLUNK of a locked door being opened.

Sarah's helplessly ushered along with the excited congregation as they head through a doorway.

### INT. PASSAGEWAY - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

Sarah's swept down a dark narrow stairway with the Hoods.

### INT. CATACOMBS - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

Mr Varone aides Sarah through a series of dark damp tunnels.

### INT. TOMB CHAMBER - NIGHT

The congregation gather around a stone sarcophagus that lays in the centre of the chamber.

Several Hoods use shovels and crowbars to pry open the lid. It slides to the ground with a tremendous BOOM.

### INSIDE SARCOPHAGUS

A stone staircase leads downwards.

### BACK TO SCENE

A sense of awe overcomes the congregation. They descend inside the crypt. Sarah, coerced by Mr Varone, follows.

### INT. UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Wind roars through a vast open cave structure. Slime glistens on various rock formations. Gloomy yet mesmerizing.

A <u>swamp</u> extends beyond the eye can see. Bubbles boil on its wretched stale surface; spirals of smoke; crusty pieces of decay float on top.

The congregation settle, relieved to be back on familiar ground. They all know this place.

Sarah appears taken in by the unearthly breathtaking sight.

#### SARAH

So beautiful...

Sarah turns to the swamp. Her admiration changes. A horrid stench makes her eyes water.

A hand rests on Sarah's shoulder. She jumps, startled. It's Mr Varone. He admires the swamp view with a deep sigh.

He takes her hand and leads her to the bay.

MR VARONE Sarah, we invited you here to join us.

SARAH

Join what?

MR VARONE A very special, sacred club.

SARAH You said I had an inheritance... you said the house...

MR VARONE And everything that comes with it.

Sarah looks around the cavern. Silent Hoods stare at her.

## SARAH

I don't understand...

MR VARONE We rise every one hundred years. We walk the earth for one month. We seek out our bloodline. We offer them the chance to join us.

Sarah's unsettled. She tries to play along.

SARAH

Right... OK...

MR VARONE I offer you the chance of eternal life, Sarah. Join <u>us</u>. Join <u>him</u>.

Mr Varone gestures to his flock. A naked, stuporous YOUNG GIRL (18) emerges from the crowd. Razor blade scars blemish her wrists. She drifts, entranced, towards the swamp.

Mr Varone whispers in Sarah's ear.

MR VARONE Follow her lead, and I promise you shall live forever. Free your misery from this land of pain. Join us in a paradise beyond your wildest dreams.

Young Girl wanders into the swamp. She vanishes under the fluid. Blood bubbles to the surface.

Sarah, aghast, turns to Mr Varone. She sees part of his face. One half fresh skin. One half wax-like. Mouldy.

Mr Varone gestures her to enter the swamp.

SARAH

No. No fuckin' way.

Sarah breaks from his grip. She runs for the exit.

# INT. TOMB CHAMBER - NIGHT

Sarah emerges from the Sarcophagus. Terrified, she runs out of the dark chamber.

## INT. CATACOMBS - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

Sarah runs through narrow maze-like tunnels.

## INT. PASSAGEWAY - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

Sarah clambers up the steep slope. She tries to use the walls for leverage. Her hands slip on their slimy surface.

She falls to her knees. She crawls up the slope, exhausted.

## INT. MAIN HALL - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

Sarah runs through the hall. She reaches the door. She tries to pull it open. Won't budge.

# SARAH Come on, Goddammit!

She musters all her strength. Heaves the heavy door open. Slips to her knees in the process.

Sarah's dazzled by exhilarating bright moonlight. She smiles in relief. Exhausted but euphoric.

A shadow casts over her. Sarah's smile vanishes.

The Stranger stands before her, dagger poised to strike.

SARAH No... no... please...

Sarah SCREAMS as the Stranger strikes his dagger downwards.

### INT. APARTMENT - UNIVERSITY - DAY

A raised knife stabs into a birthday cake.

Several friends gathered at a table CHEER as they celebrate the BIRTHDAY GIRL, 20. A STUDENT, 21, slices the cake and passes segments around.

Amy and Steve congratulate the Birthday Girl. A small party begins. Music blares. Forget the cake, grab the booze.

Amy and Steve mingle on their own. Amy sips on a cup of wine. Steve fiddles with an unopened beer bottle.

#### STEVE

Have you seen a bottle opener?

#### AMY

# Ask Knucklehead.

A rowdy student, KNUCKLEHEAD, bites off a beer bottle-top. He sprays the shaken contents over his head and guzzles into his wide open mouth.

STEVE Bit harsh. Dude's just having fun.
No, that's his name. Atleast, what everybody calls him around here. I'm sure he'd be happy to help.

Knucklehead shares a bong with the Birthday Girl. Steve fans the smoke away.

STEVE Yeah, maybe later. Look, I thought Sarah would've turned up by now. Any excuse to party.

AMY She should have. They're her friends. None of them have heard from her. That's two days now.

STEVE Where exactly was she was going?

Amy checks Google maps on her phone. Scans Massachusetts.

AMY Got it. This place. Green Creek.

She shows Steve the map.

STEVE That's a four hour drive.

Amy looks at Steve with puppy dog eyes.

STEVE Amy, I'm not gonna drive all the way up there without an address.

AMY What if I said I might know where to find one?

Steve sighs as he places his unopened beer on a table.

# EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

Steve's car parks by the kerb.

#### INT. STEVE'S CAR - DAY

Driver Steve frowns, unimpressed at the surroundings. He turns to concerned Amy, sat in the passenger seat.

STEVE What a dump. AMY I warned you it wasn't exactly a penthouse suite.

## INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - HALLWAY - DAY

Steve and Amy head down a grimy corridor.

They reach Sarah's room. Amy takes a key from her handbag. She unlocks Sarah's door.

STEVE Wow. You two really do share everything, don't you?

AMY I had to beg her to give me a spare when she moved into this pit.

STEVE Because of her overdose last year?

AMY

Well, that... and just look at this place. It gave us both some comfort that if anything should happen...

# INT. SARAH'S ROOM - RUNDOWN APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

Steve and Amy enter inside.

AMY ...I'd be there for her.

Steve looks sympathetic at the conditions.

STEVE I guess she tried to make the best of a bad situation.

Amy finds the crumpled up invitation on the floor.

AMY

Take a look at this.

She shows Steve.

STEVE This doesn't tell us anything. No directions, no address. Nothing.

Amy takes Sarah's laptop. She opens the lid.

AMY

She said they sent her an e-mail. Maybe I can find out more on there. Amy tries to turn it on. It won't even start.

STEVE Indiana Jones would have a tough time getting that thing to work.

Amy sets the laptop aside. She glances at the notepad.

AMY An archaeologist's job is not to <u>fix</u> what's broke. It's to discover

Amy takes the notepad to the window. Daylight reveals indents of writing from the previous torn off page.

AMY

why it broke.

Sixty-three Lamplight Lane.

Steve notices the final demands overflowing from the bin. Propped up table. Sofa bed.

STEVE We can't let her stay in this slum. She should spend Christmas with us. Only a couple of days, but...

Amy turns to Steve and imitates the character Short Round from Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom.

AMY

Hang on lady, we going for a ride!

Steve frowns, bemused.

## INT. STEVE'S CAR - DAY

Steve and Amy sit in the car, mid-argument.

STEVE

OK, great. We've got an address. That doesn't convince me to drive all the way to Massachusetts.

Amy gazes out of the window. Frustrated.

STEVE Seriously consider this. She might not want to get in touch with you.

AMY I don't believe that.

Steve sits back with a sigh.

AMY

We've got to go to the police.

STEVE

No way. They'd either laugh us out of the station or arrest us for wasting their time. That's absolutely out of the question.

Amy gives Steve a stern look.

# INT. POLICE STATION - RECEPTION - DAY

Hectic. Multiple telephones ring. Policemen bring in handcuffed criminals. Lawyers take smirking suspects out.

Amy and Steve, lost in such an environment, que at the desk. In front of them, a BEATEN WOMAN makes out a report to a heavy set seen-it-all-before DESK CLERK.

> BEATEN WOMAN My husband used to be such a good man, but today was the final straw.

Steve turns to Amy.

STEVE We should go. Now.

Amy remains persistent.

Beaten Woman finishes her report. A police officer leads her to an office.

Steve and Amy reach the Clerk. He barely registers them as he files paperwork on his desk. He gestures them to speak.

AMY My name is Amy Johnson. My friend Sarah Jones has gone missing.

No response from the Clerk.

AMY She hasn't answered her phone in

Clerk looks up, unimpressed.

two days.

CLERK How old is she?

AMY

Twenty-one.

CLERK

Nothing I can do. Maybe she hooked up with some quy. She's old enough.

Amy shows Clerk the invite.

AMY

Look! She followed up on some scam. She's gone all the way to Massachusetts, a place called Green Creek. She could be in danger.

CLERK So you know where she is.

AMY

No, not exactly. She's never been out of contact for this long.

CLERK Have you seen the type of problems we deal with, lady? Do you really want to put more pressure on me?

Steve's incensed by the Clerk's attitude.

STEVE

Yes, we do.

CLERK

Fine. All I can do is make out a missing persons report. I'll need your name and contact number.

Clerk slaps a piece of paper on the counter. Amy writes down her name and phone number. Clerk takes the paper and invite.

> CLERK If she's in another state, it's out of our jurisdiction. You'd have better luck going up there yourself. That way, you're only wasting your time and not mine.

Steve leads Amy away before she snaps. The Clerk looks up at the next complainant, a stoned PUNK.

PUNK I wanna file a restraining order against the police.

Clerk rolls his eyes.

## EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Amy and Steve leave the station. Disappointed. Angry.

AMY

I feel like I've let Sarah down and there's nothing I can do about it.

Steve wraps a consoling arm around her shoulder. Hugs her.

STEVE That cop was a major asshat.

AMY Thanks for supporting me, Steve. You were right. I'm sorry.

STEVE You know, it is the weekend. How about we advance our vacation.

Amy looks at him, stunned at his selfishness.

STEVE Say, a weekend in Massachusetts?

AMY

Really?

STEVE

Really.

He kisses her. Amy smiles. They head for Steve's car.

# INT. POLICE STATION - ATKINS OFFICE - DAY

An office decorated with baseball memories. Baltimore Orioles dominate the memorabilia.

Atkins sits befuddled at his desk. Kiwoski sits opposite with a forensics computer technician named HALLINGS, 44.

ATKINS Hallings. You're telling me it's a computer virus, right?

Hallings chortles. A self-indulgent cackle.

HALLINGS

I'm afraid it's a tad bit more advanced than that, Detective.

Atkins lights a cigarette.

ATKINS

More advanced than our department?

#### HALLINGS

We examined Samantha Borden's PC. It's the same virus that infected the previous three victims' computers. We believe once you open a certain e-mail, not only does it delete all data from the hard drive, but it corrupts it beyond repair.

### ATKINS

Come on. You guys sift through those things a million times. Buried, smashed, burnt, thrown in sewage. You always find something.

HALLINGS It's unsalvageable, Detective.

KIWOSKI The computer's fucked, Tom.

Atkins nods. He gets the point.

#### HALLINGS

We tried to access Mrs Borden's email account. Our computer crashed and died seven minutes and six seconds later. When we checked with the e-mail provider, all trace of her account had been erased.

# ATKINS

Wonderful.

### HALLINGS

It's really quite exciting. The process they must have gone through to create this infection would have taken years of dedication.

ATKINS So we rule out amateurs.

HALLINGS Oh, most definitely.

KIWOSKI Sounds like something terrorists would love to get a hold of.

#### HALLINGS

I'm thankfully surprised you haven't received any demands. We've never seen such technology used at this level. It's mind-blowing.

Atkins leans forward with a sceptical grin.

#### ATKINS

Come on, Hallings. What are you telling me here? We're dealing with a killer geek from outer space?

Hallings chortles. His cackle grates on Atkins' nerves.

#### HALLINGS

No, no. Just a meticulous highly skilled precise to the point of the most minute detail programmer. Or programmers. This wasn't the work of some kid in his mom's basement.

#### ATKINS

I get that you've got a hard-on for this maniac. You've made that clear. Do you wanna tell me the good news now?

#### HALLINGS

We tried a trace through the internet service provider. Of course, we received a false lead. It directed us to exactly six hundred and sixty six different locations across the world.

KIWOSKI The good news is?

HALLINGS

We've narrowed them down to one hundred.

ATKINS Narrow them down to one.

# INT. RECEPTION - POLICE STATION - DAY

Quiet compared to earlier. Atkins and Kiwoski head through the reception. They banter about baseball.

CLERK Hey, Detective Atkins.

Atkins turns to the Clerk.

CLERK I might have something on that invitation thing.

ATKINS What "something" have you got?

Clerk passes the invitation to Atkins. He analysis it.

### CLERK

Some young couple came in reporting a missing person. Been gone all of two days. So I figure it's just paranoid youngsters, right? Kids go where they wanna go at that age... Atkins passes the invite to Kiwoski. Atkins fumes at Clerk.

ATKINS Why wasn't I told about this earlier?

CLERK

People come in about missing people all the time. How did I know reporting frickin' spam mail was so important to the homicide division?

ATKINS Because you were briefed about it? Because there's a fucking memo on your desk? Add to that the fact you knew it was important enough to tell me about it, but couldn't be bothered to move your fat ass from behind that desk.

Clerk gulps. The lazy sod directs his eyes away from Atkins.

ATKINS Where's their report?

Clerk scrawls through paperwork, struggles to find his nonexistent report. He hands over the note with Amy's details.

> ATKINS What's this? Your unfinished shopping list?

CLERK I was under pressure at the time. Huge que... they left without making one.

Atkins' frown intimidates the Clerk.

CLERK I remember they said Massachusetts. Green Park, Green Dale. Green something.

Atkins and Kiwoski head back to their office.

ATKINS Get Hallings back in here. We might have nailed his number one spot.

Kiwoski darts down a hallway.

CLERK Detective, I'm really sorry. It's the stress. I need a vacation.

Atkins pauses at his office door.

ATKINS Consider yourself on one. Permanently.

## EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - DAY

Steve's car drives through busy traffic.

STEVE (O.S.) Still think we should have packed some warmer clothes. It's gonna be cold as hell where we're going.

#### EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Steve's car drives past desolate surroundings. Farmland. Fields. Abandoned buildings left to rot.

# EXT. RURAL ROAD - CROSSROADS - DAY

Dusk. Steve's car stops at the crossroads.

## INT. STEVE'S CAR - DAY

Steve and Amy stare through the windshield. Grim lifeless fields. Weather beaten sign. Three routes.

STEVE Wow. Seriously? A crossroads.

AMY

Let's just get there, Steve.

Steve smirks.

STEVE Like something out of a horror movie. (mimics dramatic narrator voice) Stuck in the wilderness, a young couple in search for their friend fight for their lives --

AMY

Steve!

STEVE

What?

AMY You're being a dick. STEVE I'm just joking, Amy. Sorry.

## EXT. RURAL ROAD - CROSSROADS - DAY

Steve's car drives towards Green Creek. They trade joke insults: "Typical jock", "Geek", "Dickhead", "Loser" (O.S.)

# EXT. RURAL WOODLAND ROAD - NIGHT

Cold dense mist swirls. Overhanging branches swoon from sorrowful trees. They seem to be dying, infected by the fog.

Headlights emerge. They barely penetrate the ghostly vapor.

Steve's car drives slow down the lane.

#### INT. STEVE'S CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Steve squints, struggles to see through his fogged-up windshield. His sat nav cuts out.

STEVE Have we just entered the twilight zone or what?

Amy checks her I-phone.

AMY

Strange.

She shows Steve her phone. It's dead. Steve checks his.

STEVE

Same.

AMY Explains why Sarah never called.

STEVE It's probably just a bad reception.

AMY

Steve, both our phones just died. At the same time. Don't you find that weird?

STEVE OK, let me rephrase what I just said. Maybe there is <u>no</u> reception.

AMY I'm not talking about the connection, Steve. Both our phones are dead. As in <u>not working</u>. Steve double-checks his phone. Yep, it's dead.

STEVE Yeah, OK, that's weird.

They drive past the Stranger, standing guard by a mud bank.

AMY

Did you see that?

Steve pushes his foot on the accelerator.

STEVE

Yeah. I did.

AMY

Why the hell are you speeding up for? It was probably a hitcher!

STEVE

Yes, precisely. There's a horror film called "The Hitcher". And in "The Hitcher", said hitcher kills the very people that pick him up.

AMY You might have scared him.

#### STEVE

I'm gonna scare him? How about him scaring me? You don't hitchhike in the middle of the woods, let alone the Land That Time Forgot, and then expect a free ride. Sorry Miss Daisy, that ain't happening.

AMY

He might be able to give us directions. We don't have much of an option now do we?

STEVE It's an option I'm keen to avoid. This road has to lead to somewhere.

#### INT. POLICE STATION - ATKINS OFFICE - NIGHT

Atkins has a phone to his ear. Kiwoski and Hallings examine a map of Massachusetts. Atkins gives up the call.

ATKINS Amy Johnson ain't answering.

KIWOSKI She reports her missing friend and then doesn't answer her phone? Don't you find that strange?

#### ATKINS

It's a miracle we got her number. That fat lump of shit desk clerk must have used up all our luck.

# HALLINGS

Eureka!

Hallings nails down a spot on the map. Pinpoints Green Creek.

HALLINGS This is where the virus was sent.

Atkins and Kiwoski gaze at the map.

ATKINS Get me all the information you can on Green Creek.

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Steve's car pulls in to the mist-shrouded empty lot.

### INT. STEVE'S CAR - NIGHT

Amy and Steve gawp at the intimidating Inn.

AMY At least we've found our lodgings for the night.

STEVE Remind me to book it for our honeymoon.

## INT. SERPENTS INN - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Amy and Steve enter. The door CREAKS closed behind them. It's empty. They walk to the desk. Steve RINGS a bell.

Amy checks her I-phone.

AMY Still dead.

Steve checks his.

# STEVE

Same.

Steve wriggles his fingers and hums the Twilight Zone theme.

MRS NEWMAN (O.S.) May I help you?

A stern Mrs Newman stands at the desk. Her sudden appearance surprises Amy and embarrasses Steve.

AMY Oh, hello. We'd like to book a room for the night, please.

MRS NEWMAN I'm sorry. No rooms are available.

AMY Oh. We didn't see any cars parked outside so assumed--

MRS NEWMAN Not all of our guests drive.

STEVE None of them?

Mrs Newman frowns. Steve bows his head, intimidated.

AMY We're looking for a friend. She may have stayed here. Her name is--

MRS NEWMAN This is a motel, my dear, not a missing persons bureau.

Steve fishes for a response.

STEVE Our friends' name is Sarah Jones.

Mrs Newman arches her eyebrow.

MRS NEWMAN I wish I could help. Now, if there's nothing else...

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT - POV

<u>Someone</u> approaches Steve's car. They linger on his Pennsylvania licence plate.

# INT. SERPENTS INN - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Steve and Amy head for the door. Mrs Newman smirks. The door opens. Steve and Amy step back, surprised. Mr Varone limps inside with a walking stick. Dark suit and tie. Trilby hat. His face half-masked by darkness.

MR VARONE Good evening. Travelled far?

STEVE

Pennsylvania.

MR VARONE You must be looking forward to a good nights' rest.

AMY Would you happen to know a place?

Varone and Mrs Newman lock eyes. Newman softens.

MRS NEWMAN I explained all rooms are occupied.

MR VARONE A room is available. This lovely couple need look no further.

Mrs Newman frowns at being undermined. Varone keeps his steel gaze on her. Amy and Steve stand in the middle. Awkward.

STEVE I think we're fine. We'll find somewhere else--

MR VARONE There isn't another motel for twenty miles. Our rates are very reasonable.

AMY Are you the owner?

MR VARONE I'm the manager, Mr Varone. Mrs Newman here, has been very busy of late. She wouldn't have known our most recent occupant checked out earlier today.

Steve and Amy turn back to Mrs Newman.

AMY If you're sure it's no problem?

Mrs Newman forces a smile.

MRS NEWMAN Of course not.

## MOMENT LATER

Steve pays Mrs Newman cash. Amy signs her name in a fresh page of the registry book.

She taps her fingers on the book, tempted to turn back a leaf. She feels Mrs Newman's icy gaze. She resists the urge.

Mrs Newman gives her a door key... and a frosty welcome.

MRS NEWMAN Enjoy your short stay.

# INT. ROOM SIX - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Steve crashes on the bed with a travel-weary sigh. Amy emerges from checking the bathroom.

STEVE Just give me a couple of minutes.

Amy joins him on the bed.

AMY First thing tomorrow let's find Lamplight Lane.

STEVE With pleasure. I'll be glad to get outta here.

AMY Me too. But I want to take a look at that log book.

STEVE Not gonna be easy. Mrs Happy-andhelpful was guarding that thing like a hawk.

Amy rests her head on Steve's chest. She looks up at him with a glint in her eye.

AMY Then we need to lead the hawk astray.

#### INT. RECEPTION - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Steve approaches Mrs Newman at the desk. He coughs to get her attention. She looks at him with a raised eyebrow.

STEVE Sorry to bother you, Mrs Newman, but we have a small problem. MRS NEWMAN

Oh?

STEVE The bathroom taps aren't working.

MRS NEWMAN I'll make a note of it for Mr Varone--

STEVE I really would appreciate you taking a look. It wouldn't take you very long.

Mrs Newman sighs.

MRS NEWMAN Very well.

# INT. ROOM SIX - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Steve enters with Mrs Newman. Amy lies casually on the bed. Mrs Newman acknowledges her with a simple nod.

Steve leads Mrs Newman into the bathroom.

STEVE (O.S.) See, I tried to turn the tap...

Amy darts from the room.

#### INT. RECEPTION - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Amy hurries to the dimly lit desk.

She leafs through the registry book. Blank pages.

Puzzled, she turns back to the page she signed in. Takes a look at the previous page.

# REGISTRY BOOK

Dates from December 1st. Amy's finger runs up a long list of crossed out names. She finds a signature right at the top: SARAH JONES, PA, DEC. 10th.

# BACK TO SCENE

Sarah's bewildered. She darts down the hallway.

Mr Varone emerges from a drape-covered doorway behind the reception desk. He clenches his fist.

Mrs Newman turns the sink tap. Water runs.

STEVE

Oh my gosh, would you look at that?

Mrs Newman folds her arms, unimpressed.

# INT. ROOM SIX - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Amy enters just as Mrs Newman storms from the bathroom. Newman leaves the room and SLAMS the door shut behind her.

> STEVE I don't think she believed me.

> > AMY

She lied first. Sarah was here.

Amy searches the room for a clue. She checks under the bed. She opens the bedside cabinet drawer. Inside, a scrawled signature: SARAH WOZ 'ERE

AMY

Case closed.

Amy reels away upset. Steve looks inside the drawer.

STEVE Christ, they even gave us her room.

AMY

I think it's time we got hold of the authorities. This place must fall under somebody's jurisdiction.

Steve gives her a reassuring hug.

STEVE Let's check out Lamplight lane

first. See if we can find Sarah.

Steve tries to open the door. It's locked. He tries pushing and pulling. Nothing works. Steve bangs on the door.

> STEVE Hey! Mrs Newman!? Mr Varone!?

Amy darts across the room. She opens the curtains. A window displays a huge descent into woodland.

AMY

Oh my God. They know we know.

Steve repeatedly kicks the door. He turns to Amy, defeated.

STEVE

Our canoe's just arrived at shit creek and we ain't got a paddle.

## INT. POLICE STATION - ATKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Atkins, Kiwoski and Hallings sit at the desk. Hallings uses a laptop to set up an online video chat through Skype.

HALLINGS Professor Swanson is an expert historian. Whatever you need to know about Green Creek, he'll be of great assistance.

# LAPTOP SCREEN / ATKINS' OFFICE

PROFESSOR SWANSON appears online.

ATKINS Professor Swanson. Thank you for getting back to us so quickly.

PROFESSOR SWANSON Not a problem. Hope I can help.

ATKINS

We sure hope so too.

PROFESSOR SWANSON I'm very familiar with Green Creek. I conducted a recent seminar on lost cities and the evolution of witchcraft. Green Creek was an interesting piece to research.

ATKINS

Witchcraft?

PROFESSOR SWANSON It ties in with the symbol you sent me. It's actually a family crest, a coat of arms belonging to the Varones.

Swanson shows a scanned photo of the invitation's emblem.

PROFESSOR SWANSON The Varones were settlers from overseas, their exact origin remains part of myth, but they became the hierarchy of Green Creek. As the story goes, the civilians of Green Creek revolted. The Varones were hunted down and executed. (MORE)

# PROFESSOR SWANSON (cont'd)

They swore a curse on those that betrayed them, vowing to return every one hundred years for one month. During that month, Blood December, they would seek out the relations of their murderers and exact their revenge.

#### KIWOSKI

So what did the Varones do that pushed the residents over the edge?

PROFESSOR SWANSON Their rule can be compared to the tyrannical Roman Empire, albeit the Varones dealt with the occult. They would send invitations to civilians, either attend their presence or face execution.

## ATKINS

What happened if you went?

#### PROFESSOR SWANSON

The unlucky recipients were killed as part of a sacrificial act. The Varones believed they would be nourished by their victim's soul, enabling them to keep their youth and ultimately, live forever.

#### ATKINS

Sounds like a no-win situation.

PROFESSOR SWANSON If you received a summons, you received a death sentence.

KIWOSKI What happened to the townspeople?

PROFESSOR SWANSON If you go by mythology, the entire place was destroyed in a freak volcanic explosion that made the town run red with blood. I'm sending you some pictures I discovered during my research.

# SWANSON'S SENT PICTURES

Early 17th century aristocratic artwork features the Varone family. Mr Varone and Mrs Newman pose like King and Queen.

PROFESSOR SWANSON (V.O.) They're historically skilled at coercing their victims to follow their beliefs. Ritual killings. Suicide. They preyed on the weak.

A family portrait of the Varones. The Stranger stands guard by their side, face covered in a cloth mask.

ATKINS (V.O.) Who's the guy with no face?

PROFESSOR SWANSON (V.O.) An assassin. They were either deformed or their faces were deliberately mutilated, a stigma they would have to bare for the rest of their lives. Once marked, they depended on the Varones to keep them fed and sheltered. In return, they would carry out whatever deed they needed doing.

#### BACK TO SCENE

KIWOSKI How were the Varones executed? Hung? Burnt at the stake?

PROFESSOR SWANSON Despite what you've heard, witches were never burned in this country. They were taken to a cave and drowned. Some say they were melted in pits of lava.

ATKINS You're insinuating we're looking for four-hundred-year-old witches... bearing a grudge?

PROFESSOR SWANSON More likely a cult. Some group that's following the tradition.

Atkins rises from his seat. He puts on his jacket.

KIWOSKI We going somewhere?

### ATKINS

Do you need to ask where?

Kiwoski gets up. He follows Atkins out of the office, leaving a bemused Hallings to shrug questionably at Swanson.

## INT. SERPENTS INN - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Mr Varone enters the drape-covered doorway behind the desk. Mrs Newman follows.

# INT. GRAND DINING ROOM/ HALL - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Dazzling bright light beams from a chandelier.

A huge circle-inscribed pentagram with the Varone emblem in the middle lay imbedded in the floor surface.

Varone and Newman stand at opposite ends of the pentagram. They face each other, arms aloft.

Light cuts out.

The Varone emblem glows red.

Varone and Newman concentrate, eyes closed tight.

MR VARONE MRS NEWMAN Oh Lord hear us, send these crusaders to their graves, crush Nazorean spirits, let us fulfil our rage. MRS NEWMAN Oh Lord hear us, send these crusaders to their graves, us fulfil our rage.

#### INT. ROOM SIX - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Amy and Steve <u>sweat</u> as they search for a way out. Steve bangs on the door. Amy bangs on the walls. Both YELL for help.

AMY

Steve...

Smoke drifts underneath the door. Steve tries to kick the door down. Fails. Smoke rises from the floorboards.

Amy runs into the bathroom.

### INT. BATHROOM - ROOM SIX - NIGHT

Amy bursts inside. Stops in her tracks. Shock.

Blood swells upwards from the bath plughole. Builds quick. Blood overfills the bath, drips down the side of the tub.

AMY

Steve!

Chunks build inside the bathtub... <u>something</u> developing underneath the blood. Slowly, a burnt SKELETON rises. Its charred head turns towards Amy. Scowls.

Steve enters the room. Amy's stunned, speechless.

# STEVE

Amy?

Steve shakes her. Amy looks at him, points to the bath.

Steve frowns, confused. Amy turns to the bathtub. It's empty.

AMY But I saw...

STEVE There's nothing in here that can help us. Come on.

Steve leads Amy back into ...

#### INT. ROOM SIX - NIGHT

Smoke fogs the room. Steve and Amy choke.

Steve grabs the lamp-stand. He turns it on its side. Steve smashes the window with the base of the lamp-stand.

# EXT. WINDOW LEDGE - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Smoke bellows from the window. Steve and Amy climb out onto a slim ledge. Below them looms a sheer drop into woodland.

They hold hands. Look at each other. Perhaps for the final time. They look down at the drop. Nod to each other.

They jump together... separating mid-fall.

#### EXT. WOODLAND HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Steve and Amy hit grassy ground with a crashing, painful thump-- and roll down the steep hillside.

They tumble helplessly, narrowly missing trees and bushes.

### EXT. BOTTOM OF WOODLAND HILL - NIGHT

Steve's rapid descent declines. He lands at the foot of a tree. Dazed, battered and bruised, he gets to his feet.

STEVE

Amy?

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AMY (O.S.)
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Steve...

Steve hobbles towards the sound of Amy's voice.

He finds Amy tangled in a bush. Minor cuts and bruises. Steve helps her out of the shrub. They embrace each other.

# EXT. OCEAN ROAD - NIGHT

A desolate clifftop road overlooks the moonlit ocean.

Steve and Amy stagger out from woodland, scratched and battered to all hell, torn mud-ridden clothes.

They look up at the hilltop. The Serpents Inn. It's covered in mist. Hard to tell if it's fire smoke or natural.

Steve searches his pocket. Brings out a set of car keys.

STEVE There's only one way we can get outta this shit hole.

AMY Go back for the car.

Steve nods. Amy looks over Steve's shoulder. Fear.

Steve turns behind. Dark cloaked figures, HOODS, hold flamelit torches as they approach from the distance.

Steve grabs Amy's hand.

STEVE They ain't search and rescue.

Steve and Amy run towards an upward winding road.

# EXT. LAMPLIGHT LANE - NIGHT

Amy and Steve pause for breath at the top of the street. A quiet, vacant neighborhood. Residential houses. Safety.

STEVE

Thank God.

Amy swipes a snow-covered sign post: LAMPLIGHT LANE.

AMY

Steve...

STEVE The entire town can't be in on this freak show. We'll find help.

Steve and Amy move inside the gloomy residential area. Orange tinted street lights. Dark houses.

Steve and Amy knock on a house door. A moment passes. No reply. They try the house across the street. No reply.

Steve and Amy rush down the street.

They knock at another house door. No response.

Steve and Amy stand in the middle of the road. Dark houses all around them. Silence. Eerie, eerie silence.

They both SHOUT for help. Their calls echo...

Instinctively, they both turn around.

Light appears from the end of the road.

Amy and Steve huddle together.

Torch-bearing Hoods emerge at the bottom of the street.

Steve grips Amy's hand.

#### STEVE

Run.

Amy and Steve run down the road. The Hoods chase after them. Amy and Steve SCREAM for help.

Amy looks behind. The Hoods multiply as other members join in the chase from lanes and alley ways.

Steve and Amy continue to run, gasping fearfully-- the street seems like a never ending nightmare.

Amy tires, dares to look back. She trips on a pothole, falls to the ground. She clutches her ankle in pain.

Steve picks her up, cradles her in his arms. He turns behind. The Hoods are catching up.

Steve carries Amy. Runs as best he can.

He's losing. The Hoods close in. It's hopeless.

Moonlight shines on a house in the near distance, its front door tauntingly wide open.

Reenergized with hope, Steve runs for the house.

#### EXT. VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve carries Amy up the steps. He enters the open doorway. The door SLAMS shut.

## EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Headlights spear darkness as Atkins' car zooms down the road.

# INT. ATKINS' CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Recorded commentary from a twenty-year-old baseball game crackles from an ancient cassette/radio player. The Orioles lose. Atkins ejects the tape. Self-administered motivation.

Atkins drives, stern-faced, cigarette in his mouth. Kiwoski sits in the passenger seat, examines files on his I-pad.

KIWOSKI You know we're way out of our jurisdiction here, Tom.

Atkins stares dead ahead, puffs his smoke.

ATKINS Then why'd you come with me?

KIWOSKI Green Creek doesn't seem to fall under anyone's jurisdiction.

ATKINS Found any more fun facts?

KIWOSKI Green Creek lay in the middle of a dormant volcano crater. Natural gases exposed to suspectable civilians can cause mental instability.

## ATKINS

Go on.

#### KIWOSKI

Infected civilians could become influenced by a powerful figurehead in the community. A leader of a cult, in theory, could lead them on a controlled rampage.

## ATKINS

So Swanson may have a point.

#### KIWOSKI

I'm quite sure we won't be dealing with supernatural beings.

#### ATKINS

People believe in superstition. Don't tell me you never heard of the curse of the Bambino?

#### KIWOSKI

Baseball again, right? Are you ever gonna tell me about your obsession with the bat and ball or do you save it for your weekly meetings with the therapist?

#### ATKINS

Fuck you, asshole. You're just a rookie. Remember that, Kiwoski.

Kiwoski smirks.

## ATKINS

You put all your faith in the bullshit they teach you down at the academy. Technology won't save your ass. You've gotta learn to trust your gut. Instinct.

#### KIWOSKI

See, now you're opening up I bet you feel better already.

#### ATKINS

Victory and defeat are part of the cycle of life, my friend. The trick is to make sure you win more than you lose. And the only way to keep you hungry for victory...

Atkins flips the tape. Replays it.

ATKINS Is to remind yourself how much it hurts to lose.

Atkins reveals a Sig Sauer pistol in his gun belt.

#### ATKINS

I don't care who we're playing against. I plan to win.

Kiwoski gives Atkins a bemused smile.

#### INT. VARONE HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Shrouded in darkness. Light flickers from a doorway.

Steve and Amy take a respite by the front door, gathering breath, taking in their gloomy surroundings.

STEVE

You OK?

Amy nods. She's shaken, but puts on a brave face. They take each other's hand. They head towards the doorway.

## INT. LIVING ROOM - VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Amy and Steve enter inside. Flames flicker from the fireplace, yet there's a damp, unearthly feel about the room. Steve and Amy shiver from the cold.

### STEVE

Whoever lived here left in a hurry. They left the fire on and the door open. It's like the whole town's been invaded.

AMY

I think it was the whole town that just chased us. We're the invaders.

STEVE

There must be a phone somewhere.

Steve and Amy search the room. Amy notices seventeenth century furniture. A chest of drawers. Oak panel back chairs.

AMY

Everything is so... old.

STEVE Prioritize, Amy, we're not here on a dig. Let's check upstairs.

# INT. STAIRCASE - VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Amy and Steve climb CREAKING bare wooden steps.

#### INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

A long, dark corridor. Three closed doors face opposite each other. Amy and Steve creep across the hallway.

#### EXT. VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

The black hearse pulls up.

#### INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve tries to open one of the doors. Locked. Amy tries the opposite door. Locked. They move to the second set of doors.

Behind them, the two doors silently open. A dark figure dashes across the hallway, from one room to the other.

Amy and Steve spin around. Nothing there. Closed doors.

AMY I don't like this. We're not gonna find a telephone up here, Steve.

STEVE

Just keep trying.

Steve and Amy try the second set of doors. Both locked.

They reach the final set of doors.

FOOTSTEPS from downstairs.

Steve tries his door. Locked. Amy tries her door -- it opens.

## INT. ARTIFACT ROOM - VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Amy and Steve dart inside. Steve gingerly closes the door. It CLICKS shut. Steve grimaces.

AMY (O.S.)

Oh my God.

Steve faces the room. His jaw drops.

Lit by dim red fluorescent wall lamps, five tables display assorted technology from different time periods.

Table one displays prehistoric technology - ancient stone tools, weapons, basic star maps.

Table two features a bronze sword. An axe head made of iron. Sculptured art in stone and flint.

Table three features complex astrological maps. Ancient texts. Powders. Chemicals. Lab equipment. A human skull.

The fourth table has a collection of hypnotic devices. Pendants. Watches. Illustrated symbols and designs.

The fifth table has an advanced computer set up, a spiderweb of wires tangled behind it.

STEVE Some kind of museum?

AMY Seems so. From ancient civilization to the present day.

A symbol covers one wall. The Varone emblem.

#### AMY

Some kind of cult worship...

Amy turns to the ancient artifacts. She can't help but be amazed by their pristine condition.

AMY All kinds of crafts...

STEVE Which craft?

#### AMY

Could be.

Amy kneels below table one. She finds a large storage box. Books based on witchcraft. The world's religions. Movies from nineteenth century roll film to DVD format.

Titles such as: "Family massacre", "Genocide", "Snuff I-X".

Steve examines the skull. He looks over an ancient scroll. An illustrated ANKH symbolizes transformation of a skeleton into a fully fleshed human body. He doesn't know what he's looking at exactly apart from--

STEVE This is some sick shit.

AMY You have no idea.

Steve moves to the door. Keeps guard. Amy scans the display tables. Realizes.

AMY It's millennial.

#### STEVE

What?

AMY

Every item in here... manipulation. Brainwashing. Methods of murder and corruption. It's a trophy room. Celebrates how certain victories were achieved through the ages...

Amy looks at the emblem on the wall.

STEVE Who the hell celebrates death and destruction?

AMY <u>Hell</u>... The writing's on the wall. We might have just discovered the Devil's breeding ground.

#### MOMENTS LATER

Amy paces the room. Steve keeps guard by the door.

STEVE We can't stay in here all night. Christ, here of all places.

AMY

Our options are fairly limited.

Steve nods in reluctant agreement.

STEVE Why invite Sarah? She hasn't got any money. She hasn't got anything.

AMY They didn't want her money. And they sure didn't invite her over to give them a lap dance.

STEVE They didn't force her. She chose to come here.

AMY A willing sacrificial lamb.

STEVE What does that make us?

Amy moves to the computer table.

STEVE

Amy, I doubt they're paying for broadband, they don't even have a phone connection.

AMY

Not that we know of.

Amy turns the computer on.

AMY

They're confirming invites by email. They can't do it by magic.

STEVE

I thought that's what witches did.

The computer makes an unholy racket of a noise as it loads. Amy and Steve exchange nervous concern.

Amy swipes dust from a monitor screen. The computer chugs along, taking an age to process its ancient operating system.

STEVE

They know we're here, Amy.

Amy concentrates on the screen. Silently begs for it to load.

STEVE We haven't got time. We've gotta--

AMY We've got nowhere else to go.

Hallway floorboards CREAK. Slow FOOTSTEPS approach the door. The computer CHUGS along...

Steve slices his hand across his throat. Kill the computer. Amy shakes her head.

Multiple FOOTSTEPS from the hallway. Whatever's outside the door, there's now a few of them. They're gathering.

Amy relents. She hits the power button. Computer continues to load. She jabs the power button again. It won't switch off.

Amy turns the monitor off. Stares at Steve. What now?

Steve rushes over to table one, grabs the end of it.

Amy shares his idea. She moves to table one, grabs the opposite end. Both try to lift the table towards the door.

The table won't budge. Its legs are <u>nailed</u> to the floor.

AMY

Umm... hide.

Steve stares blankly at her. Where?

Amy frantically scans the room. Steve returns to the door, grips the handle.

Amy pulls apart a set of wall curtains. A large slat-cased wooden closet. She pulls open the door--

Several cloaked figures stand inside. Amy steps back... from a closet filled with cloak costumes.

AMY

Steve!

Steve rushes towards the closet. He joins Amy inside. Amy closes the door.

#### INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

Amy and Steve grip hands as they stare through the closet door slats. They share a minimal view of the artifact room.

The artifact room door opens. Several Hoods enter inside. The loud HUM of the computer takes their attention.

Amy closes her eyes, fears the worst. The computer HUM fades. It's turned off.

The Hoods turn towards the closet.

Steve clenches his fists.

The Hoods leave the room. The door CLICKS shut behind them.

Amy and Steve, reprieved but not relieved, simultaneously gesture each other to remain silent.

Hallway floorboards CREAK. FOOTSTEPS descend the staircase. The front door OPENS. A long moment... the front door CLOSES.

Amy and Steve breathe a huge sigh of relief.

## EXT. VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Atkins' car passes by, cruising past the parked hearse.

A few moments pass...

Hearse headlights beam on.

#### INT. ATKINS' CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Atkins and Kiwoski gaze at Lamplight Lane's empty streets.

ATKINS This place is a graveyard.

KIWOSKI And for all these years I thought the Manhattan project was out in Mexico.

ATKINS I'm gonna head back. I noticed another slip road before we entered party land. I wanna try that before we wake up the dead.

### EXT. RURAL WOODLAND ROAD - NIGHT

Atkins' car drives through the fog-filled road.

# INT. ATKINS' CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

A bumpy ride. Atkins grips the steering wheel as he maneuvers the car past several pot holes. Kiwoski gives up his I-pad.

KIWOSKI Sat nav's out. Whole thing died.

ATKINS Your cell still dead? Kiwoski checks his phone.

#### KIWOSKI

As a Dodo.

Through the windshield, mist rises. The Serpents Inn comes into view.

## EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Atkins and Kiwoski exit their car. They scan the misty, deserted area. They notice Steve's car.

Atkins checks the license plate. Pennsylvanian registration.

#### ATKINS

Home run.

Atkins and Kiwoski walk to the Inn entrance. Kiwoski tries the door. Locked.

KIWOSKI Welcome to Green Creek.

ATKINS Let's check round back.

# EXT. BACK YARD - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Atkins and Kiwoski enter a large area full of discarded vehicles. They check various license plates. From New York City to California.

> KIWOSKI Looks like this place should be rated number one on the tourist attraction list. We've got people coming from all over the country.

ATKINS Invited, no doubt. The question isn't why they came here. It's where are they now?

Atkins and Kiwoski check the back of the Inn. Dark windows are closed and locked.

Kiwoski discovers a door. He tries to open it. Locked.

KIWOSKI You know, if we were back home, I'd say we had the right to forcefully enter the premises--

Atkins kicks the door open.

Looks like we just discovered signs of a B and E. As employees of the legal system we have a duty to investigate.

Kiwoski smirks, shakes his head. Atkins enters inside.

#### EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

The hearse pulls up by the Inn.

# INT. SERPENTS INN - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dark. Atkins flicks a wall light switch. Nothing happens. Kiwoski turns on his I-phone flashlight. Atkins looks amazed.

> KIWOSKI Signal was dead, not the phone.

ATKINS Forget that. You've got a torchlight on your damn phone?

KIWOSKI Modern technology, Tom. You really need to get with the times, pal.

Kiwoski waves his light around the room. Empty shelves ridden with dust. Cobweb coated walls.

KIWOSKI What the hell have they been serving their guests? Take-outs?

ATKINS Maybe they've been serving their guests... the guests.

Atkins tries a closed door. It CREAKS open.

ATKINS Give me some light over here.

Kiwoski's light shines inside a storage room.

KIWOSKI I know you wasn't being serious with that last remark...

The storage room is filled with travel bags and suitcases. Personal items from previous guests.

KIWOSKI But I'll be damned if you ain't a million miles from the truth.

# INT. SERPENTS INN - GRAND DINING ROOM/HALL - NIGHT

Atkins flicks a mould-ridden switch.

A ceiling chandelier flickers, forming a stroboscopic effect. Kiwoski's phone light dies.

> KIWOSKI Fucking battery.

ATKINS You put way too much faith in modern technology.

KIWOSKI It got us this far.

ATKINS That's what worries me.

Atkins and Kiwoski move cautiously across the hall.

Between flashes of light-- linger menacing APPARITIONS. Ghoulish, scowling faces shrouded in dark hoods. Long brittle fingers. Sharp demonic eyes observe their two new guests.

> KIWOSKI Get the feeling we're not alone?

They reach the top of the hall and enter inside a doorway.

A dark figure looms at the bottom of the hall. The Stranger.

#### INT. RECEPTION - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

All lights are out. Kiwoski and Atkins enter through the doorway behind the reception desk.

Atkins flicks on his lighter. He finds a candle on the desk and passes flame to the wick.

He notices the registry book. Atkins flicks the pages.

ATKINS We've got nothing for the entire year. Then all of a sudden...

He shows Kiwoski the book. The month of December is filled with signatures. Every guest given <u>room</u> <u>six</u>.

Ceiling light turns on.

Atkins and Kiwoski squint from the sudden radiance.
MRS NEWMAN (O.S.) If you wanted a room, all you had to do was make a reservation.

Mrs Newman stands at the entrance door. She's dressed in a figure hugging black dress and fur coat. Killer high heels. Atkins and Kiwoski stare at her. How did she get in without making a noise?

Atkins shows her his police badge.

ATKINS Police officers, ma'am. Are you the owner of this place?

MRS NEWMAN I am Mrs Newman. I am merely the keeper of the Serpents Inn.

Mrs Newman steps towards the desk.

KIWOSKI Keep where you are, Mrs Newman.

Mrs Newman stops in her tracks.

#### ATKINS

I'm Detective Atkins, this is my partner, Officer Kiwoski. We're investigating a series of disappearances and we're gonna need to ask you a few questions.

MRS NEWMAN You're out of your territory, Detective.

ATKINS You're outta your mind if you think I give a shit.

Mrs Newman scowls.

#### ATKINS

Several people have disappeared that we know of - and all of them, under the impression they were invited to gain an inheritance, have travelled to this vicinity.

MRS NEWMAN People come. People go. It is the nature of an Inn, Detective. We

have nothing to hide here.

Mrs Newman moves a step closer.

KIWOSKI Keep still, Mrs Newman.

Quietly seething, Mrs Newman abides by the warning.

ATKINS Wanna explain to me the car lot out back? The stored luggage?

MRS NEWMAN The owner of this establishment enjoys collecting items.

KIWOSKI It's called stealing.

MRS NEWMAN How can you steal what you have been given?

ATKINS Hope you got a receipt, lady, 'cos that ain't gonna hold up in court.

MRS NEWMAN I doubt the owner would care what your law-makers think.

ATKINS Is that right? Where is this "owner"? In fact, where is anybody?

MRS NEWMAN I'm not the keeper of people, Detective Atkins. People do as they please. Why would I know or care where these lost souls may be?

Mrs Newman takes another step towards the desk. Unnerved, Kiwoski pulls his gun and aims it at her. She stops. Smiles.

> KIWOSKI I've told you enough times, Mrs Newman. Stay put!

ATKINS What's the owner's name?

MRS NEWMAN Why, Mr Varone of course.

Atkins and Kiwoski exchange a knowing glance. Atkins brings out his gun and aims it at Mrs Newman.

> ATKINS (to Kiwoski) Cuff her.

Kiwoski slides his gun away. He walks towards Mrs Newman. He forces her hands behind her back. Handcuffs her. Forces her to her knees.

# KIWOSKI

Don't move.

Atkins keeps his eyes and gun on Mrs Newman.

ATKINS (to Kiwoski) Check every room. Start with room six.

Mrs Newman keeps her head high. She smirks at Atkins.

MRS NEWMAN Bit unorthodox all this, don't you think? Quite a witch hunt. My, my, my. How things never change.

Kiwoski takes a handful of keys from behind the desk.

KIWOSKI (whispers to Atkins) Her hands felt like ice, Tom.

ATKINS Dressed like that, I'm not surprised.

Kiwoski glances at Mrs Newman. Her smirk intimidates him. Spooked, Kiwoski heads off down the hallway.

#### INT. HALLWAY - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Four closed room doors face opposite each other, bathed in a moonlit glow radiating from a window at the end of the hall.

Kiwoski passes through to the end of the hallway. He turns into--

# A SMALL CORRIDOR

Four more doors -- and that's it. Some motel.

Kiwoski checks the door numbers. Finds Room Six.

He searches his handful of keys. A MUFFLED noise behind him.

Kiwoski swings around-- faces Room Five. Curious, Kiwoski moves close to the door. Listens.

KIWOSKI Anyone in there? A further MUFFLED noise.

Kiwoski searches for the key to Room Five. He places it in the lock. Turns the knob. Opens the door.

Kiwoski's eyes widen in horror.

## INT. ROOM FIVE - NIGHT

Ten CAPTIVES (young to elderly) lie on their fronts, hands rope-tied behind their backs, mouths gagged with shreds of their own clothing. Their terrified eyes beg for help.

### INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Kiwoski backtracks, shocked. Can't believe what he's seeing.

KIWOSKI Jesus Christ...

Behind Kiwoski, the door of Room Six creeps open.

KIWOSKI Everybody stay calm. I'm with the police, I'm gonna get you out of here.

Kiwoski feels an unnerving presence. He swings around-- face to face with The Stranger.

# INT. VARONE HOUSE - ARTIFACT ROOM - NIGHT

Closet door opens. Steve and Amy step out.

Steve arms himself with a stone dagger from the table. Amy takes a small sharp flint knife.

Prepared, they stand side-by-side at the door. They give each other a nod. This is it.

Steve's shaking hand grips the door handle. He slowly turns it. A gentle CLICK. Steve opens the door ajar.

#### INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - VARONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve leads Amy into the quiet, empty hallway. They creep across the floor.

They move past the middle set of doors. A sense of relief. One more to get past.

SLAM! All of the doors swing open, smacking against the wall.

Hoods emerge from the doorways. They turn to Steve and Amy.

Servant observes from the top of the hallway, rubs his hands with malevolent glee.

Hoods storm towards Amy and Steve, bombarding them from both sides. They're overpowered, swamped by sheer numbers.

Hoods wrestle Amy and Steve's weapons away from them. Flint knife and stone dagger drop to the floor.

Hoods mockingly pass Amy and Steve to one another. They slam them wall to wall like a game of human pinball, maneuvering them both towards the--

# TOP OF THE STAIRCASE

Two Hoods hold Amy over the top of the steps. She pleads for mercy. They throw her down the stairs.

# STAIRCASE

Amy tumbles down the steps.

## DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

She hits the bottom of the stairs, collapses into the hallway. She murmurs, semi-conscious.

#### TOP OF THE STAIRCASE

Two Hoods force Steve to the staircase balustrade. Their ironlike grip renders him helpless.

They throw Steve over the edge.

He hits the top of a bookcase, softening what would have been a killer blow, before he lands on the hard floor in a heap.

#### EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Surrounded in a swirling, ghostly mist.

#### INT. SERPENTS INN - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Mrs Newman, on her knees, fumbles with her handcuffs. Atkins, at the desk, finishes reading her rights.

ATKINS Do you understand your rights as I have explained them to you?

Mrs Newman grins.

### MRS NEWMAN

Do you obey every rule in that little book you've submitted to? To obey every command they demand?

Atkins scowls.

ATKINS What have you done with them, you crazy bitch.

The door opens. A breeze blows dead leaves inside. Atkins aims his gun at--

Mr Varone. Dark glasses. Trilby hat. Suited and booted. He hobbles inside with his walking stick, mimicking a blind man.

Ceiling light flickers. Mrs Newman's smirk grows.

ATKINS OK, hold it, handsome.

Mr Varone freezes on the spot.

ATKINS I'm a Detective. I'm with the police. What's your name?

MR VARONE Why, I'm Mr Varone.

The name hits home. Atkins frowns, anxious.

ATKINS Who else is outside?

MR VARONE No one, Detective. Relax. This is a happy hotel. We're here to please.

Mrs Newman cackles.

<u>Something</u> moves behind Atkins. He turns to the doorway-nothing. He turns back to Varone and Newman.

> ATKINS On the floor, face down. Now!

MR VARONE I'm afraid I can't do that.

ATKINS Can't or won't?

MR VARONE A bit of a mixture of the two.

Atkins needs back up. He turns to the dark hallway.

ATKINS Kiwoski... KIWOSKI!

MR VARONE You need to rest, Detective Atkins. We have the perfect room for you.

ATKINS What are you talking about? How do you know my name?

MRS NEWMAN Standard procedure.

MR VARONE We know all about our incoming guests, Detective. You can never be too careful. Especially these days.

Atkins aims his gun at Mr Varone.

ATKINS

On the floor!

MR VARONE We are the police here.

MRS NEWMAN We make the rules.

Newman rocks back-and-forth as she giggles mockingly. Atkins aims his gun towards her. She laughs loud and harsh.

Light flickers.

Atkins aims back at Mr Varone. He's gone.

MRS NEWMAN Are the blind leading the blind, Detective?

Kiwoski staggers from the hallway.

ATKINS Get to the car. Call backup.

Atkins face pales.

Kiwoski drops to the floor. Knife in his back. The Stranger looms behind him.

Atkins aims to shoot. Mr Varone appears behind him. He whacks the back of Atkins' head with his cane.

Atkins slumps against the desk, his gun drops to the floor.

Mr Varone beats Atkins with his cane. Hit after hit after hit. Atkins shields his face as he falls to his knees. Mr Varone takes Atkins' keys. He uncuffs Mrs Newman.

Atkins crawls out from behind the desk. Mrs Newman towers over him, anger burning in her eyes.

She kicks and stomps Atkins' torso with her heels as she SCREAMS obscenities.

Varone and Newman laugh mockingly as Atkins, bloodied, bruised and beaten, scurries blindly towards the hallway.

Atkins stops at two dark boots. He looks up with dread. The Stranger's bandaged face stares down at him, eyes of fury.

### INT. HALLWAY - SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

The Stranger slams Atkins back-and-forth against the walls, edging further towards the moonlit window.

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - SIDE OF INN - WOODLAND HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Looking up at the side of the Inn. Dark room windows. Picturesque setting. Quiet. Peaceful...

Atkins SMASHES through a window. He YELLS as he plummets into the dark forest below.

The Stranger looks down from the broken window. Content, he turns and returns inside.

#### EXT. MOUNTAIN HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Amy opens her startled eyes. Snow falls from a starlit sky. Flakes rest on her face. She strains to move. She can't.

She lies tied on a stretcher constructed from skin and bones. Amy SCREAMS.

Two Hoods carry her stretcher uphill. They gaze down at her, no emotion on their wax-like faces.

Amy turns her head to the side. Steve is being carried alongside her in the same way. They share a horrified stare.

A large procession of Hoods swarm up the hill. Twenty-five stretchers contain men and women of assorted ages being carried up the hill like cattle.

Other Hoods provide a guiding light with glowing lanterns. A solemn Mrs Newman and Mr Varone lead the pack.

The white church awaits.

### EXT. WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

Amy and Steve are taken through the church's intimidating door, the starlit sky replaced by impenetrable darkness.

#### INT. WHITE CHURCH - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Amy's eyes widen in terror. Assorted SCREAMS of horror echo from those ahead of her.

A red light shines over her face. She turns to see a vibrant red symbol - the Varone emblem - above a candlelit alter.

Amy glimpses Steve taken down the passageway.

#### INT. PASSAGEWAY - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

Hoods carry the stretchers in single file. Amy closes her eyes tight.

AMY Please God. Please help us.

Her carriers stop. Amy opens her hopeful eyes.

An Old Woman's ghastly face looks down upon her. Wrinkled taunt skin covered in bulging dark spots. Piercing eyes. Goo drips from her abnormally distorted long pointed nose.

> OLD WOMAN No God can save you now, child.

# INT. TOMB CHAMBER - WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

The Hoods carry their human cattle down the crypt. Horrific SCREAMS and YELLS of pain wail from beyond the tomb.

Steve gives Amy a terrified look as he's taken into the crypt. Amy's next. She's carried into the chamber.

Hell awaits.

#### INT. UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - SHORE - NIGHT

Eerie light shines from lanterns nestled into cave ledges. Distorted shadows dance in unnatural directions.

Twenty-five stretcher-bound captives squirm near the swamp. Hoods watch over their prey. Guards patrol the cave entrance.

A mixture of SCREAMS. Angry. Desperate. Pitiful. Helpless. Young. Old. It's almost operatic. Delight for the Devil. Amy lies beside Steve. She looks at her surroundings. They're last in line. Good or bad, they get to see what's coming.

Steve and Amy lock eyes on each other. Steve can't bare it. He turns away. Amy struggles to fight back tears of her own.

Mrs Newman and Mr Varone stand by the swamp, faces unseen.

#### MRS NEWMAN

Is it time?

Mr Varone concentrates on the swamp... waiting... expecting. He raises a hand to silence her.

# MRS NEWMAN We can't wait much longer.

Mrs Newman turns to Mr Varone. She's aged rapidly. Her skin wrinkled and haggard. Her hair thin, mangled and gray.

Shocked, Amy looks at the Hoods. Aging faces. Frail posture.

Mr Varone turns to Mrs Newman. Slippery skin drips from his decaying face exposing parts of his skull.

MR VARONE The time has come.

Mrs Newman barks an order to two awaiting SERVANT HOODS.

# MRS NEWMAN Float the first five.

Servant Hoods lurch towards the first five stretchers. Their bound victims SCREAM in panic.

Servant Hoods take hold of the first stretcher by its skeletal handles. A bound YOUNG WOMAN begs for her life.

Servant Hoods carry the stretcher to the riverside, set it into the murky water and give it a gentle push.

### INT. SWAMP - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Five stretchers float down the swamp. The strapped victims, THE FIRST FIVE, SCREAM for help. All five look instinctively upwards. Unified horror.

Something underneath the lake sucks the first five below.

A few spurts of water spout from the surface. Silence. Calm.

# INT. SHORE - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Amy hyperventilates. She struggles in her restraints, desperate to escape.

Steve aggressively pumps both fists up and down, trying to weaken his tight binds.

STEVE Amy... please. Don't give up.

Amy, panic-stricken, breaks down in tears.

An air of awe overcomes the Hoods. They study their youthful hands. Feel their flesh filled faces. Some fall to their knees in thanks. Rejoice.

Mrs Newman admires her reflection in a watery section of the swamp. No longer a haggard, aging corpse. She's beautiful-in a stern, seductive, dominatrix way.

> MRS NEWMAN It works once again.

She turns to the dutiful Servant Hoods.

MRS NEWMAN Hurry! Move the next five inside!

Servant Hoods drag the second row of five captives towards the swamp. They place them on the surface. Push them out...

MRS NEWMAN Never keep the Master waiting.

# INT. SWAMP - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Five stretchers drift on the lake. Five captives SCREAM for help. <u>Something</u> drags the stretchers under the lake.

# INT. SHORE - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Mrs Newman smirks in delight. She turns to Mr Varone. He's handsome, youthful. They share a tender loving kiss amidst screams of terror.

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Mist surrounds the Inn. A radio CRACKLES inside Atkins' car.

#### INT. ATKINS' CAR - NIGHT

A CB radio crackles static.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.) (from radio) Detective Atkins... unit advised... what are your whereabouts?... must get in touch... over.

# INT. UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - SHORE - NIGHT

Mrs Newman stands imperious and radiant, hands on her hips.

MRS NEWMAN Next five. Now!

Servant Hoods send another five stretchers down the swamp.

Five more Hoods are replenished with youth.

A reinvigorated YOUNG HOOD, 18, sits by himself. He rolls up his sleeves. Cuts the flesh of his newly-formed wrists with a sharp stone.

He leans back in euphoric pain. Blood throbs from his shredded veins.

YOUNG HOOD Allow me to die for you once again, Master.

Four UGLY HOODS linger over a petrified young BUXOM WOMAN tied to a stretcher. They kneel by her side. Drool drips from their mouths, reborn eyes ravish her body.

Their hands wriggle, eager to feel and touch. Buxom Woman shrieks. Ugly Hoods rip her clothes off.

A BARBARIC HOOD kneels between a stretcher-bound couple, a TEEN BOY and TEEN GIRL.

Barbaric throttles the Teen Boy. His huge hands crush the poor boy's throat. He watches Teen Girl's reaction-- she cries, helpless. Barbaric grins. Grim delight.

Hoods huddle together at the riverside. A collection of beautiful faces. Too beautiful to be real.

They enjoy their reflections in the lake as five distant SCREAMS are cut short.

Various vanity pleased voices: "I didn't look this good a hundred years ago!"; "It's all in the water"; "Well worth the wait."; " I even have a beauty spot."

Hoods drag the penultimate five captives down to the riverside. They float them on the swamp. Mass SCREAMS.

Amy, empty of tears, turns to Steve. He looks away, ashamed.

Amy... I'm sorry. I let you down.

Amy watches the Hoods celebrate.

She twitches in anger. Bites her lip so hard blood drips down her chin. She GIGGLES. She's cracking.

### EXT. WOODLAND HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Nocturnal noises. Mist shrouded trees and bushes. A very human GROAN.

A shaky, bloody hand grips a tree stump. Bruised and battered, Detective Atkins rises from a gully.

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Atkins limps to his car, a bent unlit cigarette dangling from his mouth.

A distorted CB radio voice CRACKLES inside his vehicle.

Atkins tries to open the door. It's locked. He pats himself down. Empty pockets.

Atkins, frustrated, slams his fist against the door window. He leans against his car. Takes a breather.

### MOMENT LATER

Atkins SMASHES the car door window with a rock.

#### INT. ATKINS' CAR - NIGHT

Atkins speaks into the CB radio microphone.

ATKINS This is Detective Tom Atkins. I'm out here at the Serpents Inn, Green Creek. Requesting immediate back up from the nearest police force.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.) Please confirm the nature of your emergency.

ATKINS It's a matter of life and death, just get your ass over here!

Atkins opens the glove compartment. He takes out a gun, a packet of cigarettes and a lighter.

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Atkins exits the Inn, smoking a cigarette. Dejected.

Stumped, he looks up at the heavens. He double takes a look at the moon over the horizon. It's <u>not</u> the moon. It's the hilltop white church.

ATKINS Now we've got a brand new ballgame.

He checks the mag of his gun. Full. Reloads it. Smokes.

ATKINS Time to step up to the plate. It's my turn to bat.

#### INT. UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - SHORE - NIGHT

Hoods move towards the last row of victims. Amy and Steve struggle helplessly in their binds.

The Hoods lift the five stretchers. They carry their captives to the riverside. They place them on the ground.

Mr Varone turns to the swamp. He awaits the sign ...

Steve frees his hand. Hope gleams in his eyes.

Mr Varone raises his arm. It's time.

One by one, the Hoods load the stretchers on to the swamp. The first three float across the surface.

The Hoods approach Amy.

Steve makes a desperate grab for Mrs Newman. He grips her leg. His fingers sink inside her flesh. Mrs Newman moves away. A chunk of mouldy flesh comes apart in Steve's hand.

> MRS NEWMAN You wretched foul being!

She takes Mr Varone's cane, imbedded in the soil, and beats Steve viciously.

MRS NEWMAN Look at what this pitiful dog has done to me.

Mr Varone sneers.

MR VARONE Retribution shall be imminent. MRS NEWMAN Send his love to her death. Let him watch. I want to see despair in his eyes.

#### STEVE

No!

The Hoods lift Amy's stretcher. Amy SCREAMS. They place it on the swamp surface. Steve watches in horror.

Mrs Newman laughs with evil delight.

# INT. SWAMP - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Amy's stretcher floats along the swamp. She passes dark cavernous tunnels, lit ceremoniously by candles.

She floats further ... all light turns to darkness.

# INT. SHORE - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Mr Varone concentrates, eyes transfixed on the swamp, arms aloft. Distant SCREAMS echo throughout the cave.

Flesh grows across Mrs Newman's injured leg. She looms over Steve. Smirks at his misery.

Atkins enters the cave. He's stunned by the sights.

ATKINS Jesus Christ on a bike...

Mrs Newman spots Atkins. Shocked. She points him out.

MRS NEWMAN

Seize him!

Several Hoods run towards Atkins. Atkins shoots three with his gun. Three Hoods drop dead.

An unnerving silence overcomes the cave. The remaining Hoods step back. They're overawed. Scared.

Mrs Newman and Mr Varone gaze at Atkins, stone-faced.

STEVE (O.S.) Help! Help me!

Atkins aims his gun at the Hoods as he rushes down to Steve. He kneels beside Steve's stretcher and unties his binds.

> STEVE Amy-- You've gotta help Amy.

Atkins helps Steve to his feet.

ATKINS Where is she?

STEVE She's in the swamp.

Amy's stretcher floats closer to the danger zone.

ATKINS Backup's on the way. We'll get her.

STEVE We don't have time.

Steve runs towards the swamp.

ATKINS Hey, wait, what are you doing?

# INT. SWAMP - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Steve wades into the ooze. Breathtaking. Cold. He grips his fists. This is gonna be tough.

Steve dives into the swamp. He swims towards Amy.

#### INT. SHORE - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Atkins keeps fort at the riverbank. He aims his gun at a solemn Newman and Varone.

ATKINS Your Christmas vacation's come to an end. You belong in Hell. I'm gonna make sure you go back there.

MRS NEWMAN (bitter) Isn't it against your law to kill? Where's your humanity, Detective?

ATKINS I'm readjusting the balance of nature. Call it an act of God.

Behind Atkins, three dead Hoods rise. Mrs Newman and Mr Varone smirk. Atkins spins around.

The revived Hoods, along with the remaining congregation, head towards him. They're surrounding him.

Atkins backs away to the brink of the swamp. Atkins shoots Mrs Newman. Shoots Mr Varone. No effect.

MR VARONE You cannot kill what is already dead, Detective.

MRS NEWMAN It's the law of nature.

### ATKINS

Oh, Christ.

# INT. SWAMP - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Steve struggles to manoeuvre his arms and legs as he battles across the thick, gloopy surface.

Bile enters his mouth. Steve chokes -- but he manages to keep afloat. Amy's stretcher drifts further away.

STEVE

Amy!

# INT. SHORE - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Atkins teeters at the edge of the swamp, surrounded. The Hoods close in. Atkins aims his gun at the closest figure. Pulls the trigger. CLICK. His gun's empty.

The Hood lunges forwards. It grabs Atkins' throat. Drags him to the ground.

Atkins grapples with his assailant. He grips the Hood's arm-it tears away like a body part on a model toy.

Stunned but rejuvenated, Atkins punches the Hood's midriff-his fist <u>bursts</u> out of the Hood's back.

Atkins tosses the Hood aside. He stands up.

A horde of Hoods lurch towards him.

Atkins picks up the Hood's dismembered arm. He grips it like a baseball bat.

# ATKINS

Batter up.

Atkins hits oncoming Hoods, knocking them sideways and creating an escape gap.

Atkins runs past the Hoods.

He looks back. The Hoods chase after him, but he's way too quick for them. They can't catch him now.

Atkins makes it to the cave entrance/exit. He shouts across to Mrs Newman and Mr Varone.

## ATKINS One last thing. Your hotel sucks.

A shadowy figure emerges behind him.

The Hoods stop in their tracks. Give up the chase. Mrs Newman smiles. Mr Varone turns his attention back to the swamp.

#### ATKINS

Aww, don't worry. I've recommended you to my friends. They'll be visiting shortly. They're keen to turn you into a five-star... fivestar swiss fuckin' cheese.

The Stranger raises his dagger above Atkins.

Mrs Newman's eyes light up with malicious glee. Atkins YELLS in pain. Aggressive STABBING sounds. Mrs Newman CACKLES.

# INT. SWAMP - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Steve, tiring, swims towards Amy. He's made up ground, within touching distance. He reaches for Amy's stretcher...

Her stretcher sinks like a stone.

#### STEVE

# No... NO! AMY!

An eerie SCREAM echoes around the cave.

# INT. UNDERWATER/ UNDERNEATH SWAMP

Amy sinks further and further underneath murky, dark liquid.

AMY'S POV - DESCENT INTO LIMBO

Amy's hands and feet wail before her as she sinks. Her clothes rip apart by an unseen force.

Her hands and feet depart her body, float above her, disappearing into darkness.

Sheets of her skin, a template of her body, glide away.

Inner organs waft upwards. Muscles. Kidneys. Lungs. Heart.

The skin of Amy's face floats above like a mask.

Broken bones from Amy's skeleton scatter upwards.

Her skull drifts into the void.

Amy falls deeper in this murky liquid. She's no longer human, just a mind-state sinking further into a dark abyss.

IMAGES of cherished memories, encased in ORBS, flash upwards. Amy's past, her loved ones, her friends, FADE beyond reach.

A shiny bright light, her soul, drifts away... spiralling upwards... splitting into glittering sparkles.

Horrific SCREAMS. Abandoned. Tortured. Trapped. Louder... Growing closer.

#### DARKNESS

SOBBING. MOANS. WAILS of PAIN and AGONY. SCREAMS of intense distress. Indecipherable WHISPERS. A terrifying DRONE lingers somewhere in this nightmare... it's getting closer...

Amy SCREAMS. Welcome to Hell.

# INT. SWAMP - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Steve bursts from the water, gasping for air. He clutches an unconscious Amy in his arms.

Moonlight seeps from an overhead crack in the cave, pinpointing a nearby riverbank.

Steve swims towards the light.

#### INT. SWAMP BANK - UNDERGROUND CAVE - NIGHT

Steve tries to resuscitate Amy using CPR and mouth-to-mouth. Amy coughs. She turns on her side, chokes up dirty water.

Steve breathes a sigh of relief. Amy sits up, confused, frightened. Steve holds her in a tight embrace.

#### STEVE

Amy, are you OK? Can you hear me?

Amy gazes up at Steve with vacant eyes.

#### STEVE

Can you get up, can you move?

A glaze in Amy's eyes. Indescribable horror.

Steve helps Amy to her feet. She's floppy, lifeless. Steve places her over his shoulders.

He heads towards the only route of escape -- a dark tunnel.

### INT. SHORE - UNDERGROUND CAVE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Hoods wade into the lake.

Morose, Mrs Newman and Mr Varone hold flesh-slipping hands as they watch from the river side.

## INT. CAVERN TUNNEL - NIGHT

Steve carries Amy through a narrow cave structure. A path leads upwards. A THUNDEROUS noise nearby.

# EXT. CAVE CLIFFTOP - NIGHT

Steve and Amy emerge from the tunnel onto a ledge of land that overlooks the area. A dazzling, moonlit waterfall THUNDERS below them. A massive descent... a dead end.

Steve places Amy on the ground. He looks at the passageway from which they came. Retreat seems the only option.

#### INT. SWAMP BANK - UNDERGROUND CAVE - NIGHT

Hoods emerge from the swamp onto the shore. They trudge into the dark tunnel.

# EXT. CAVE CLIFFTOP - NIGHT

Steve overlooks the waterfall. Surveys the drop. Possible.

Amy rocks back-and-forth, muttering incoherently.

FOOTSTEPS from the tunnel. An approaching army.

Steve looks down the tunnel. A mass of Hoods head toward him. Steve clenches his fists.

Two Hoods attack with outstretched claw hands.

Steve smashes his fist through the first Hood's face, withdraws, elbows another Hood off the cliff. Two down.

#### STEVE

# Bring it on, freaks!

Behind him, Amy stands up. Weary. Disorientated.

Steve goads the hesitant Hoods. They're keeping back.

Amy wanders to the cliff edge. She looks down at the descent. Tears drip from her eyes, become lost in the waterfall below.

Steve looks back. Double-takes. Shocked.

#### STEVE

Amy!?

The Stranger emerges from a secret entrance in the side of the tunnel. He lunges towards Steve, stabs him in his back.

Steve drops to his knees, agony frozen on his face.

Amy turns around, distraught. Steve, the heartbeat of her soul, kneels before her, moments from drifting away.

AMY

No! Steve!

STEVE

Amy... jump...

The Stranger grabs Steve's neck, twists it. CRACK! Steve's lifeless body flops to the ground.

The Stranger rips his dagger from Steve's back. He confronts Amy. Amy quivers at the edge of the cliff.

AMY You're not getting me.

Amy jumps.

#### EXT. WATERFALL - NIGHT

Sporadic rays of moonlight capture Amy's descent as she plummets alongside the fall. She hits the water below and disappears beneath.

#### EXT. CAVE CLIFFTOP - NIGHT

Stranger peers over the edge, eyes searching for signs of life. Devoted Hoods gather around him. Wary admiration.

Content Amy's dead, Stranger turns away. He leads the Hoods back down the tunnel.

# EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Sea waves roll onto a sandy beach enclosed by woodland.

Amy emerges from the sea onto the shore. Exhausted, she crawls across the sand. She clambers up against a tree.

She falls to her knees, crying. Her cries turn to maniacal laughter. Her laughter turns into an enraged SCREAM.

Nocturnal noises. Amy, startled, gazes into the dark woods. A distant, faint DRONE lingers behind her. Amy, bewildered, turns to the sea.

In the distance... the landscape of Green Creek. Her mountain hell. The faraway waterfall.

Amy gets to her feet. Terrified, she flees into the woods.

#### EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Amy runs through wild woodland. She stops, breathless.

Every direction looks the same. Hideous looking trees gaze down upon her with mocking glee, their branches seemingly stretching out to get her.

Various nocturnal noises. Twigs SNAP. Various CRACKS. Everything spins...

Amy collapses on the muddy ground.

### MOMENTS LATER

Amy wakes. She struggles to her feet.

She trudges aimlessly through the woods -- like a zombie.

# EXT. FOREST - CLEARING - DAY

Dawn breaks. Amy rests by a tree bathed in rays of sunlight. Birds chirp and sing.

Near-distant ROAR of a passing car breaks the peace.

A quiet road lay ahead. Amy can't believe her eyes. She hobbles towards it.

Amy trips over an exposed tree root, twisting her ankle. Undeterred, she crawls eagerly towards the road.

She uses a tree for support. Stands up. She's mere feet from the road. Her hopes are dashed. Her excited smile fades.

Opposite the road, dark figures move inside the woods. Amy collapses to her knees, crestfallen.

Amy turns back into the woods -- she bumps into a dark figure. Amy SCREAMS. The figure holds her tight. It's a POLICE OFFICER.

POLICE OFFICER It's OK, ma'am, you're safe now.

POLICE OFFICERS emerge from the woods. A search party.

A police car pulls up on the road. Flashing red and blue lights illuminate Amy's face.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.) Officers at Pride Rock investigating a backup request from Green Creek, we need medical assistance. Over.

Amy breaks down, cries in relief.

# EXT. SWEET PEACE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Dark clouds hover above the intimidating gloomy structure.

# INT. WARD - SWEET PEACE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

A DOCTOR in a white coat leads a group of clipboard carrying MEDICAL STUDENTS to a cell door.

DOCTOR

Our next patient is a recent admission. Police found her wandering the woods, rambling about devils, demons and witches. In other words, and to use a more professional term-- the usual gibberish.

Students chortle as they write down notes.

### INT. CELL ROOM - SWEET PEACE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Observation window slides open. A slim ray of light sprays across the dark room.

Padded walls covered in scrawled crayon. Sophisticated equations. Ancient symbols. Maya. Greek. Roman. Unknown.

A wall-mounted calendar crafted from notepad paper depicts a numeral countdown: 100-365. 100-364. 100-363...

DOCTOR (0.S.) Subject C arrived in a calm condition. Her only request-- paper and a pen. We evaluated her as a low suicide risk, so accepted her demand. We're hopeful she'll write a confession.

Student faces gawk into the observation window.

DOCTOR (0.S.) Don't let her demeanor fool you. She may be responsible for the disappearances of two police officers and two of her friends. STUDENT (O.S.) She killed them?

DOCTOR (0.S.) She claims that a cult, consisting of the undead no less, residing in a town called Green Creek, were responsible. But when police investigated they found the town deserted, as it has been for many years. We're holding her here temporarily for observation. As you can see from her artwork alone, temporarily may mean permanently.

Amy, oblivious to her viewers, sits on her bed. She writes frantically on a notepad.

Piles of written notes lay scattered across the floor amidst handcrafted envelopes.

STUDENT (O.S.) What's she writing?

DOCTOR (0.S.) Letters. She's warning the world of a Satanic coming. She plans to give them guidance... instructions.

STUDENT (O.S.) Wow. She's really been to hell and back, hasn't she?

The observation window slides shut.

Amy breaks from her writing. She looks up with a sinister glint in her eye.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

# EXT. RURAL WOODLAND ROAD - DAY

Peaceful. Quiet. Harmonious. Nature at it's most tranquil.

LOUD MUSIC ascends.

A car ROARS down the road.

# INT. TODD'S CAR - DAY

A well-dressed couple, mid-twenties. TODD drives, irritated with the unhelpful music that MARCY, his partner, enjoys. Todd turns the volume down.

MARCY Hey, who shit in your mince pie?

TODD It's hard enough trying to keep this tin can on the road, Marcy.

The car hits a pot hole. Todd bumps his head on the roof.

TODD Zack Jarvis has a twisted sense of humor. Of all places to host a Christmas Eve party. Couldn't be as simple as having a few sherries at the local bar. Oh no, we've got to travel half way across the state.

MARCY He said he was closing in on a major deal that would benefit all of us. At least, that's what he wrote in the invitation.

TODD You think he's finally going to pay us our Christmas bonus?

Marcy rubs her fingers together with gleeful optimism.

MARCY He'll have it either gift-wrapped or stuffed inside a cracker. You know how eccentric he is.

Todd's eyes gaze through the windshield.

TODD

Incredibly.

#### EXT. SERPENTS INN - DAY

Todd's car pulls into an empty lot.

TODD (O.S.) An Easter egg hunt for Halloween. A haunted house for Christmas.

MARCY (O.S.) That's Zack Jarvis. Oh, and Todd, it was a pumpkin hunt. I won, remember? Grand in my hand.

TODD (O.S.) Whatever, Marcy.

# INT. SERPENTS INN - RECEPTION - DAY

Todd and Marcy enter inside. They shiver from a chill in the empty, quiet room.

They walk to the desk, unsure of their surroundings. An open log book. Fresh page. Todd hits the desk bell.

A MASKED FIGURE jumps up from behind the desk -- Todd and Marcy jump back, SCREAM...

The figure laughs. Removes his mask. It's ZACK JARVIS, 40, an unusual, sly looking fellow.

Zack!

TODD

MARCY

Zack!

ZACK Apologies, guys. Just trying to get you in the festive mood.

Todd and Marcy exchange looks. Eccentric.

TODD

So, what's the deal, Zack? We switching from real-estate to hosting horror house conventions?

ZACK

I was invited, out of the blue, to look at some property and low and behold, here we are.

MARCY

Bit of a fixer upper...

# ZACK

The terms were flexible. They're reasonable people. I requested we host a Christmas Eve party and they were thrilled. I sold them the idea that we'd fill the hotel and it would be a nice parting gift for them to see their hotel full for the last time.

MARCY Probably the first time.

TODD So where is the owner? Taking a nap in his coffin?

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - DAY

The hearse glides towards the Inn.

# INT. HEARSE POV (TRAVELLING) - DAY

Through dark glass: Todd's parked car.

#### EXT. SERPENTS INN - DAY

The hearse drifts towards the back of the Inn.

# INT. SERPENTS INN - RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Zack joins Marcy and Todd at the front of the desk.

MARCY So where's everybody else?

ZACK Oh, they'll be here soon. I invited the whole office. The owner was thrilled. They said--

MRS NEWMAN (O.S.) The more the merrier.

Mrs Newman enters through the doorway behind the reception desk. She's radiant. Devilish smirk.

MRS NEWMAN We just love having new faces around here.

# EXT. SERPENTS INN - NIGHT

Multiple SCREAMS bellow from within.

# EXT. WHITE CHURCH - NIGHT

The church glows from radiant moonlight. Distant SCREAMS.

CUT TO BLACK.