

THE NEW KID

Written by  
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FADE IN:

INT. BRADYVILLE, WISCONSIN, 1962 - NIGHT

The newly built suburb of Orchard Estates. Pristine houses sit along a tidy street. A gated community without the gate.

SUPER: "1962"

Currently, there's a party underway in the basement of one of these houses. Bossa Nova MUSIC drifts into the night air.

INT. HOUSE, BASEMENT - NIGHT

A knife taps a champagne glass. The handsome man holding it smiles out at the room. This is EUGENE STRAFER (40s).

EUGENE

Thank you. Hello! Thank you, everyone. This won't take long. I know you're all eager to try Mrs. Fairfield's lemon blancmange.

The basement is packed with neat suburban couples - Eugene's neighbors. MRS. FAIRFIELD, an obvious battle ax, smiles demurely from an armchair.

EUGENE

I wanted to take the opportunity, before I'd had too many of these, to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for making me feel so welcome at Orchard Estates.

This man effortlessly holds the room's focus, as well as the adoring gaze of several females. These are people secure in the knowledge nothing bad happens here. It happens elsewhere.

EUGENE

I know I haven't been one of you for very long but the expression of friendship and community you've all extended since I moved here just, it humbles me. So for that I thank you.

He raises his glass. The room does the same.

EUGENE

To new friendships!

A cheer goes up.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE, BASEMENT - LATER

The party has reached the next level of inebriation. People drape over the bar along one side of the basement. Others mingle near a large wood-veneered record player.

Currently, Eugene is being held in place by a pretty young girl, SANDY - an obvious casualty to his charms.

SANDY

I agree with you so much. I could have gone to the secretarial school in Bradyville like my mother wanted but I want to help children, so I chose a great teacher's college in Edgerton. I'm home for the Summer. I'm so happy you feel that way.

EUGENE

Uh huh. Will you excuse me for just one moment?

SANDY

Oh. Of course.

Eugene carries a bowl of Chex Mix through the room, smiling, nodding. Just a hint of contempt in his expression.

MAN (O.S.)

Here he is!

Eugene is suddenly mobbed by a group of rosy cheeked MEN. Clearly the alpha-males of Orchard Estates.

MAN

We were just discussing what average you might be. What do you swing?

EUGENE

I'm more of a hunting man, myself.

Blank stares from the men, then they all laugh heartily, slap him on the back as he moves on.

BASEMENT CORNER.

A couple - ROY and CAROL - bicker discreetly in the corner. They stop when Eugene approaches.

EUGENE

Roy. Carol. Is everything okay?

Carol hugs her elbows, clearly uneasy.

ROY

We... I'm sorry. Carol and I are going to head on home. The babysitter's probably climbing the walls by now.

EUGENE

Oh, that's a shame! You sure I can't tempt you with one more? For the road?

Roy seems like he could be. Carol shoots him a look.

ROY

Ah. Another time. We really oughta be going.

Eugene shakes Roy's hand firmly.

EUGENE

Well, I'm genuinely glad you could make it. Look both ways before you cross the street, now.

Roy laughs at the joke but Carol's had enough. They head for the stairs, Carol chastising her husband the whole way.

Eugene watches after them, expression blank.

INT. BASEMENT, STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Carol and Roy ascend the stairs. Now they're away from the party, they let loose.

ROY

I don't know what the big hoopla is! When do we ever get to do anything like this?

CAROL

I'm uncomfortable. He makes me uncomfortable. Can't you see that?

Carol stops short. Her eyes widen.

ROY

Well I sure could have used another drink--

Roy bumps into Carol. He looks up.

Above them, blocking the doorway, are several HOODED FIGURES. One raises a mean looking MACHETE.

ROY

Oh jeez!

Carol draws in a breath. She doesn't get the chance to scream.

INT. HOUSE, BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The party continues. No one hears the sickening SCHICK! from the staircase, followed by a rapid THUMP as Carol's head rolls down the stairs and across the basement carpet, French Roll unravelling.

Carol's head comes to a stop amidst the feet of oblivious party-goers. Her glassy eyes stare straight at Sandy, who sees it and SHRIEKS.

The party falls silent. The music plays on. A long moment stretches. Is this a prank or...

A group of HOODED FIGURES, robes billowing, suddenly descend on the party from the stairs.

They brandish knives, machetes, cleavers. A bewildered man gets an ax square to the forehead and then the panic begins.

Party-goers scream, cut down brutally as they try to escape.

Mrs. Fairfield is run through with a carving knife in her armchair.

People claw at the small basement windows but are dragged down, dealt with gruesomely.

A man grapples with a Hooded Figure. They crash against the record player, turning the music into a crackling repetitive sound-bite as the needle jumps, over and over.

Eugene moves casually through the mayhem. He stops at the bar where he pours himself a Scotch. As he sips it - and the bloodbath continues behind him - something catches his attention.

Sandy cowers behind the bar. She stares up at him with terrified eyes.

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Sandy sobs, beyond terror, as she's carried by two Hooded Figures through a dark mass of trees - the old orchard that sits behind Orchard Estates.

SANDY

Please.

Eugene - now donning his own robes - heads this solemn procession. Hooded Figures either side of him hold aloft flaming torches.

ORCHARD, CLEARING.

The group emerges into a clearing, spreading out around a large circle of ANCIENT CUNEIFORM carved into the dirt.

Black candles burn. A shrine - holding what looks like a bloody human heart - sits to one side.

Sandy sobs. How did she get here? She's placed, hands tied, in the center of the strange symbols.

SANDY

What is this? Please. Let me go.

The Hooded Figures silently take their places.

Eugene reverently takes a STONE TABLET off the shrine. Carved into the tablet, and surrounded by esoteric writing, is a terrifying beast-headed woman - the baddest of bad Ancient Mesopotamian demons, LAMASHTU.

He turns and holds the tablet aloft.

EUGENE

*Lamashtu! Risa-r nap-ip-ir!*

His followers raise their hands to the sky.

Sandy moans when she sees Eugene pick up a wavered DAGGER from the shrine.

SANDY

Please. No. Why? Why are you doing this?!

Eugene points the dagger to the east, the west, cradling the stone tablet in his left hand. He chants under his breath and points to the north and south.

EUGENE

*Nap-ir u-ri!*

Sandy struggles as Eugene's chanting rises in volume. He approaches her.

EUGENE

*Erientum tipu-h ak hiya-n Lamashtu!*

The Hooded Figures join Eugene, CHANT with him, concealed faces raised to the night sky.

EUGENE

Nap-ir u-ri!

EUGENE'S FOLLOWERS

Nap-ir u-ri!

Eugene kneels beside Sandy, the dagger raised. His words become guttural, eyes wide in reverence.

EUGENE  
LAMASHTU! NAP-IR U-RI! LAMASHTU!  
NAP-IR U-RI!

Sandy twists on the ground. She screams in horror, stares up at the dagger.

EUGENE  
(bellows)  
LAMASHTU!

Eugene DRIVES the dagger into Sandy's chest. The girl bucks once, shudders, and goes still. Blood wells, trickles to the soil.

Eugene waits. The silence is broken only by a whistling wind.

One of the Hooded Figures takes a step forward but Eugene holds up a staying hand. He's heard something. A low GROAN.

The earth rises beneath Eugene and he staggers to his feet. He stops, listens. Silence.

Suddenly, dozens of HANDS - monstrous and inhuman - crack from the ground and latch onto the Hooded Figures. They scream in terror.

Realization and dread dawn on Eugene.

EUGENE  
No.

Eugene watches his followers - horrified howls cut short - as they're overwhelmed and pulled into the earth.

Hands snake around Sandy's body, take her down too.

EUGENE  
NO! This is impossible!

Hands erupt beneath Eugene's feet. They snag him and he lands on his rump. Screaming, he twists onto his stomach but they have him. One of his legs SNAPS as he's pulled down.

EUGENE  
NOOO! WHY?! WHYYYY?!

He scrabbles with one hand, the other clutching the stone tablet like something precious. More hands reach out, snatch his robes, circle his throat.

Bit by bit, Eugene is yanked downward. He struggles but with another horrific TUG, he disappears beneath the dirt, taking the tablet with him.

The ground settles. The orchard falls into silence.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: "THIRTY YEARS LATER"

The unpleasant nasally CAW of a crow. Then TAP-TAP-TAP.

EXT. BRADYVILLE, OUTSKIRTS - AFTERNOON

A mangy black CROW, a wretched looking thing, sits atop a wooden sign. It taps the sign purposefully with its beak.

TAP-TAP-TAP.

The sign itself cheerily declares: 'You Are Entering Historic Bradyville, Wisconsin!'

The crow cocks its head when distantly, there comes the groan of an engine, and the rapid, muffled pulse of LOUD MUSIC.

The crow tenses. Caws. It spreads its wings and takes off in an indignant flurry - and straight into the windshield of a CAR as it screams past, music blaring.

INT. CANDICE CLOOTIE'S MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

The crow's body rolls lifelessly away, leaving the windshield coated in black feathers and crow juice.

Hands - painted fingernails and garish jewelry - hold the steering wheel. One hand reaches down and flicks on the wipers.

CANDICE CLOOTIE (42), big hair and dressed like a woman two decades younger, watches the road ahead.

NICK CLOOTIE (17), floppy hair, real teen girl crush material, slouches in the passenger seat. There's no sign behind his sunglasses that he's grossed out by the mess on the windshield... or that he's even awake.

Candice sighs, turns off the wipers.

CANDICE

Close enough.

EXT. BRADYVILLE, SUBURBS - AFTERNOON

The suburbs. Trees. Houses set back behind lawns, lush and manicured.

Candice's Mustang comes careening down the street. It screeches to a stop in front of a cute double-story house. Hedges, gardens. The American flag flies proudly.

A real estate sign stands at the front of the property. A large 'SOLD' sticker covers it.

INT. CANDICE CLOOTIE'S MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Nick slouches in his seat and stares at the house.

NICK  
You're shitting me.

Candice cuts the engine and lights a cigarette.

CANDICE  
Nick, I'm not gonna go through this every time. Make the most of it, huh?

Candice opens her door and gets out.

EXT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, PORCH - AFTERNOON

Candice lugs a bag up onto the porch. Her tight clothes show off a tattoo of a serpent, that winds its way around her midsection.

She stops short in the process of unlocking the front door.

She dubiously eyes a cellophane-wrapped gift basket sitting on a nearby love-seat. Nick comes up the steps behind her.

NICK  
What's that?

Candice approaches the basket. She plucks the card off it.

CANDICE  
It's a gift basket.

Nick rolls his eyes, picks up Candice's bag and walks inside.

NICK  
Great. We've moved to fucking Disneyland.

Candice tears the gift basket open and pulls out a bottle of wine. She dumps the basket into some bushes over the side of the porch.

She wanders inside. The door closes.

BEGIN CLARA BLACK MONTAGE.

Someone flicks on a stereo, presses play. A cassette tape's spindles turn. Music starts.

Closet doors open. Clothes on hangers thrust aside. A box is dragged out. The box opens. Items of old clothing pulled out.

Boots lay at the bottom - knee-high and 70s.

The boots come on. The zip pulled slowly all the way up.

A skirt clasp is fastened. A patterned sweater pulled on.

Now we're in the mirror: the faintest hint of lipstick. Hair mussed, then flattened, then left be.

END CLARA BLACK MONTAGE.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, CLARA'S ROOM - MORNING

And there she is, CLARA BLACK. Seventeen trying hard not to look seventeen.

She smooths her pleated skirt, pulls on the collar of her sweater. She appraises herself, nervous.

EXT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, STREET - MORNING

Clara's new boots slip awkwardly on her bike's pedals as she guides her bike toward the teeming entrance to Bradyville High.

Strapped to the back of the bike, is a CLARINET CASE.

A roaring engine and a car full of boys slows and keeps pace with her. The driver, a PIG-EYED MORON in a varsity jacket, leans on the window.

PIG-EYED MORON

Hey, Clara!

Clara blinks out of her daydream.

PIG-EYED MORON

I'll let you blow me!

Clara blushes furiously as the car speeds away in a cloud of uproarious laughter. She pedals on past a familiar yellow Mustang parked at the curb.

INT. CANDICE CLOOTIE'S MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Nick sits behind his sunglasses as Candice cranes her neck to look up at the school's entrance.

Students mill. Every bored affectation learned directly from MTV.

CANDICE

It doesn't look as bad as the commune in New Mexico. That's something.

Nick scowls.

CANDICE

Hey.

(removes his glasses)

Nicolas Clootie, you look at me. Now we all gotta do our part. How do you think I feel about finding a job?

NICK

Yeah, okay.

Candice stares into his face.

NICK

I said okay. God.

CANDICE

(sighs)

I know, hon'. If not for me, do it for Him, okay? He's done so much for us...

Nick nods.

CANDICE

Good. Now give your Ma a kiss.

Nick pecks her quickly on the cheek, scoops up his backpack and gets out.

CANDICE

Go make some friends!

Nick doesn't look back.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, CORRIDOR - DAY

Clara empties books from her locker into her backpack. She deliberately blocks out the chaotic corridor around her.

STELLA STERKEN, a beanpole with a droll mouth, appears and leans against the lockers next to Clara. Her tight shirt only accentuates the breasts she hasn't got.

OLIVER ALBERELLI, a mild-looking boy with hair in his eyes, stands behind Stella. He wears an oversized army jacket.

STELLA

Did you hear?

Clara glances at Stella, distracted.

STELLA

They caught Mrs. Glick and Ms. Sapko lezzing out in the home-ec rooms. It's not like anyone's surprised, I guess. They've been wet for each other for years.

Clara blinks.

STELLA

Oh my God. You totally believed me.

Clara continues with her locker.

STELLA

So Oliver and I are gonna go make fun of the cheer-tards. You wanna come?

CLARA

Yeah, I can't. I haven't learned this song.

STELLA

Everything we know and you're still a band geek.

Stella turns her heavy-lidded gaze across the corridor to a group of GIRLS.

RUBY VALENTINE, blonde and pretty in a Clearasil commercial sort of way, is the obvious ringleader. She has her jock boyfriend, KYLE ACKERMAN, draped over her.

Currently, the entire group is casting looks over at a diminutive girl, LACEY, who busies herself at her locker. Lacey's not nearly so pretty and not nearly so cool - and she's seven months pregnant.

Ruby gives Lacey a withering look.

RUBY

So gross.

Stella folds her arms, stares at Ruby.

STELLA

Picking on the fat girl. That's real original, Ruby.

Lacey hears this and turns.

LACEY

(uncertain)

Oh. I'm actually... I'm pregnant.

RUBY  
 (at Stella)  
 Uh, I don't believe I was  
 addressing you.

Ruby wanders across the corridor toward Stella. Passing students instinctively give her right of way.

RUBY  
 Oh and one other thing? When are  
 you even going to grow a pair of  
 tits?

Ruby's group hive-five each other. There are shouts of "Oh snap!"

STELLA  
 Oh, hey Ruby. How about you choke  
 on my dick?

MONICA, a cookie-cutter hottie with her own jock boyfriend, looks horrified.

MONICA  
 You kiss your mother with that  
 mouth?

STELLA  
 No, I kiss your mother with this  
 mouth.

Ruby tries to stare Stella down. Stella stares back, unblinking. Ruby's disdainful gaze passes over Oliver and stops on Clara - who tries to sink into the wall.

RUBY  
 Fucking freaks.  
 (to her gang)  
 Let's bounce.

Ruby is joined by her handmaidens as she struts away up the corridor. As Kyle follows, he leers at Oliver.

KYLE  
 Hey Oliver. Hangin' with your fag  
 hags?

For good measure, Kyle spontaneously trips up a lanky kid, STUART DINGLE, on his way. Stuart goes sprawling.

KYLE  
 PSYCHE!

MRS. GLICK (O.S.)  
 MR. ACKERMAN!

MRS. GLICK - an eccentric spectacle in emerald green and bright orange hair - glares at Kyle from a classroom doorway.

Kyle makes a "bad widdle boy" face then runs up the corridor, high-fiving his buddies.

MRS. GLICK  
(calling after)  
Don't run in the halls!

Mrs. Glick turns, watches Stuart collect his books from the floor. She briefly fixes her suspicious eyes on Clara, then disappears into the classroom.

Lacey gives Stella a small, appreciative smile before she wanders away.

STELLA  
God I hate this school.

Clara angrily closes her locker.

CLARA  
You don't exactly need to draw attention to us either.

STELLA  
Why do you care what those airheads think?

CLARA  
I don't. I just... It's hard enough here without you making it harder.

STELLA  
God. Duly noted. Come on, Oliver.

Stella huffs away. Oliver meekly follows.

OLIVER  
Bye Clara.

Clara watches after them.

She stops when she spots Nick, standing at his locker. He glances Clara's way and she quickly turns, walks in the opposite direction.

EXT. BRADYVILLE, BLACK'S HARDWARE - DAY

A row of mean looking chainsaws. Candice looks them over.

As she passes down the aisle of Black's Hardware in her mini-skirt and cropped top, she's indifferent to the scandalized looks from other customers.

She stops at a display of axes. She tests the sharp edge of one, bends to run her hand along a polished handle.

HOWARD BLACK (45) - a kindly looking man with the square features of a boxer - stops behind her, puzzles over an elaborate tramp stamp on her exposed lower back, then smiles.

HOWARD

Can I help you find anything,  
ma'am?

Candice starts.

CANDICE

Oh!

HOWARD

My apologies. Were you after  
something in particular?

CANDICE

Oh. No. Well. I just moved here and  
my house needs some brightening. I  
thought I might hang some pictures.  
That kind of thing.

HOWARD

I'm not sure an ax is the right  
tool for that.

Candice laughs.

CANDICE

You're right. I get a little lost  
in these places.

Howard gestures and Candice walks with him down the aisle.

HOWARD

You're new in town.

Candice gives him a sidelong look.

HOWARD

Oh don't worry. I'm not as  
unforgiving to newcomers as some  
people 'round here. Bradyville has  
its small town mentality but it's  
actually a pretty nice place to  
live. You'll see.

CANDICE

I'm counting on that.  
(puts out hand)  
Candice Cloutie. Or Candi.

Howard shakes it and smiles.

HOWARD

Howard Black.

CANDICE  
The man himself?

HOWARD  
Black's Hardware, that's right.

CANDICE  
Very nice to meet you.

A hint of something predatory in Candice's eyes. Howard clears his throat and turns to a display of hammers.

HOWARD  
Here we are. Are your walls ply?

CANDICE  
Actually, there was something else  
I was looking for...

Howard waits.

CANDICE  
A job? I know I don't have a lot  
of...  
(gestures at merchandise)  
You know, but I learn real quick  
and I'm great with people.

HOWARD  
Oh. I'd really love to help you out  
but I'm afraid I'm not looking for  
anyone right--

Howard jumps when there comes an almighty CRASH from the front of the store.

CASHIER (O.S.)  
Ow! Ow ow ow!

INT. BLACK'S HARDWARE, FRONT OF STORE - SECONDS LATER

Howard, eyes wide, hurries from the aisle, followed by Candice.

Lying on the linoleum floor, bottom half beneath a large bank of toppled shelving, lies a CASHIER. She looks up at Howard in shock.

CASHIER  
It just fell over.

Howard rushes forward with two helpful customers. Candice smiles to herself.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, CLASSROOM - DAY

Clara sits in class, taking notes as the ENGLISH TEACHER speaks from the front of the room.

There's a knock at the door and a CLERICAL ASSISTANT gestures to the teacher. Quiet words, a note is passed and then the Clerical Assistant steps aside to allow Nick into the room.

Clara sees Nick. She stares.

ENGLISH TEACHER  
Everyone. This is...  
(reads note)  
Nicholas... Cloutie?

NICK  
Cloutie.

ENGLISH TEACHER  
I stand corrected. Welcome to  
Advanced English. Pull up a pew.

Nick moves through the classroom, indifferent to the eyes on him. He sits in the seat across from Clara.

ENGLISH TEACHER  
Okay people. Eyes on me now. Great,  
thanks.

Clara surreptitiously glances at Nick. Something on his notebook gets her attention. She cocks her head to get a better look. It's a sticker: JOY DIVISION.

Nick catches her staring and her eyes flick away. She looks to her left. Stella smirks from across the aisle.

EXT. BLACK HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Clara directs her bike toward the lawn of a modest house. She steps off clumsily, walks the bike the rest of the way to the open door of the garage.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Clara gazes at an old car propped on stilts.

CLARA  
Dad?

VOICE (O.S.)  
Under here sweetpea. You have a  
good day?

Clara walks her bike inside, leans it against the wall. She unstraps her clarinet.

CLARA

I don't know why you ask me that every time. I mean, it's school...

Howard rolls out from under the car.

HOWARD

They your mom's old shoes?

Clara gives them an appraising tilt.

CLARA

Yeah.

HOWARD

Not real good on a bike though, you think?

CLARA

They're okay.

Howard watches his daughter.

CLARA

I've got homework. Dinner's in an hour.

Clara wanders away.

EXT. BLACK HOUSE, FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

Clara walks the path towards the front door. She watches a car come down the street and pull into the driveway of the large Tudor-style owned by the VALENTINES across the street.

Ruby and a group of her fashionable cronies emerge, giggling and chatting.

Clara watches them. They're only across the street but about a gazillion light years away.

She heads inside.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Clara plays her clarinet in the modest lounge room, reading sheet music off a stand. Although she's competent, she's never going to win any awards.

She stops to turn a page, looks across the room.

Howard sits in his recliner, beer in hand, snoring his head off. Clara stares, incredulous.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, CLARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Clara shuts the door on her room. Her walls are covered in posters: Blondie, David Bowie, The Cure. She stabs the play button on her tape recorder and treads curiously to her window.

The Valentine house sits across the street, well lit and welcoming.

Clara's eyes trail to an upstairs window. Ruby stands in her plush room, brushing her hair in front of a mirror.

Clara watches.

EXT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, PORCH - NIGHT

A figure makes its tentative way down the street, passing briefly under a street light.

It's RONA BEMBERRY (40s) - PTA member, community board sitter. She comes up the path to the Clotie's house with a quiet smile. She steps up onto the porch and rings the bell.

RONA

Yoo hoo! Mrs. Clotie?

No response. Rona tries the bell again and when no one comes to the door, she wanders to a window, peers in.

RONA

Are you home, Mrs. Clotie?

Rona thinks. She's about to leave when she hears something.

EXT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, SIDE - NIGHT

Rona treads down the side of the house.

RONA

Uh. Mrs. Clotie?

Rona kicks the uneven ground and almost trips. She rights herself, scowls.

RONA

Well, poop on a pope.

Rona listens again. It's clearer now. Chanting. Low, relentless.

Mystified, Rona edges to a window. Red light glows from within. Rona stands on tiptoes and peers in. She gasps and ducks.

She steels herself, peeks in again.

Sitting in the sun room, kneeling in a circle, are three PEOPLE. Their voices merge into one constant dirge.

And then a SHAPE fills the window - tall, dark, terrifying.

Rona shrieks and falls back. She scrambles to her feet and flees into the night.

CLARA (V.O.)

I do not have a boner for him.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

Clara, Stella and Oliver sit at their table in the bustling cafeteria. Lacey has now joined them.

LACEY

Wait, who are we talking about?

STELLA

The new guy. He's this total Christian Slater-alike and Clara loves him.

Clara glares across the table at Stella. Oliver looks alert.

OLIVER

Who?

CLARA

He likes Joy Division. That's all. It doesn't mean I love him.

STELLA

If you say so.

CLARA

Can we drop it?

STELLA

Oh my God. There he is.

They turn to see Nick wandering through the throng, carrying his tray. He garners a favorable look from the girls at Ruby's table.

Stella stands up and waves her arms.

STELLA

Hey!

Nick walks over.

STELLA

Sit with us.

Nick shrugs and sits down next to Clara, who shifts over rigidly.

NICK

Thanks.

STELLA

I'm Stella. This is Oliver. That's Lacey - she's kind of new here too. And pregnant.

LACEY

Hi.

STELLA

And that's Clara.

Nick nods.

NICK

Hey.

CLARA

Hey.

NICK

I'm Nick.

STELLA

So you probably don't remember us but we're totally in your Advanced English class.

NICK

Yeah, I remember.

STELLA

What do you think of Bradyville High so far? Isn't it a dream come true?

NICK

To be honest, one school kinda blurs into another after awhile. It's okay, I guess.

Lacey groans. Everyone looks around to see Monica approaching.

MONICA

Hi. Hi there.

(to Lacey)

We just wanted to give you this.

Monica puts a Planned Parenthood pamphlet in front of Lacey.

MONICA

You know, because you're a disgusting pregnant pig.

Laughter from a nearby table. Ruby and her tribe watch on.

STELLA

Oh, you did not just say that.

Monica looks at Nick, who watches all this with blank fascination.

MONICA

Also, I wanted to let you know, you don't actually need to sit with these losers. There's a place over at our table.

Nick sits back in his seat.

NICK

Wow.

MONICA

Ruby says it's fine.

NICK

Yeah, you know what? I'm good.

MONICA

...Really?

NICK

Yeah. Actually, I'd sooner eat my own face off than sit with you.

MONICA

Uh... Okay.

Bewildered, Monica walks away. The gang sit in stunned silence.

STELLA

I think I'm in love.

INT. OLIVER'S HOUSE, BASEMENT - AFTERNOON

Stella sits atop an old armoire and directs cigarette smoke out of the narrow basement window.

STELLA

Man, what a total bitch. "Ruby says it's fine." God, whatever. Like being in their presence is some hot prize.

Nick flips through records as Clara, stealing quick glances at Nick, sits on a worn couch. Lacey channel surfs on a beat-up television.

STELLA

I swear, I can't wait to graduate.  
I'm totally gonna get out of this  
crater and go live in New York and  
have this one room apartment where  
I'll let artists and writers crash.

CLARA

And sit around smoking clove  
cigarettes and reading poetry with  
guys named Page?

Nick smirks.

STELLA

Shut up. At least I have  
aspirations and that's more than I  
can say for the rest of the  
assholes at our school.

Oliver comes tramping down the stairs carrying the boardgame Mouse Trap. He rolls his eyes when he sees Stella.

OLIVER

Would you put that out. My mom'll  
be home soon.

STELLA

Don't sweat it. I can totally see  
the driveway.

OLIVER

Don't sweat it? I have to convince  
her I'm not a chain smoker every  
time you're around.

Oliver walks over to Stella and holds up an old clay ashtray. Stella petulantly stabs her cigarette into it and slides airily off the armoire.

STELLA

God Oliver. You're such a square.

Oliver sprays the offending area with air freshener.

OLIVER

Smoke at home.

STELLA

Are you serious? My mother would  
kill me.

Stella wanders over, sits on the floor. She appraises Nick.

STELLA

So what's your story?

NICK

My story?

STELLA

You obviously move around a lot. Is your Dad in the army or something?

NICK

Nope. Just me and my mom.

STELLA

Oh my God. Is he in jail?

CLARA

Stella.

NICK

Never knew him.

STELLA

Get out of here.

Nick notices everyone gazing at him.

NICK

It's no big deal. I'm not sure I would have turned out any different.

(thinks)

Actually, that's not true. It would have been nice to stay in the one spot. You know, for more than a couple months.

LACEY

Wow, so you must have a lot of interesting stories.

NICK

Not really. I guess the one thing I do have is... I mean, when you're the guy who sticks around for however long your mom stays with her new boyfriend, you need to learn how to be intuitive. It's pretty obvious you guys are the lepers of Bradyville High.

STELLA

Tell us how you really feel.

NICK

Come on. The way Ruby Valentine terrorizes the entire school? You guys need to stand up to that.

CLARA

How? I mean, it's not like we have any of the teachers on our side. The place is practically a dictatorship.

NICK

Did you ever hear that story a couple years back about those two girls in Phoenix who were really into witchcraft and they put a curse on this guy and his dick fell off? I dunno, I think he was harassing them or something.

CLARA

That sounds familiar.

NICK

I went to that school. It totally happened.

STELLA

Shut up. His dick never fell off.

NICK

Well maybe it didn't but whatever they did still worked. Guy never so much as looked at them sideways again.

STELLA

So that's your solution? Witchcraft?

NICK

Don't look at it that way. The Universe does its own what-goes-around-comes-around thing. Sometimes you can help it along. Point out people it might have missed who deserve some of their own medicine.

Everyone stares at him. He presses on.

NICK

And while you're doing that, getting what your heart's desire and being the person you most want to be. Basically it's a way to take control when you have none.

CLARA

But... Witchcraft?

NICK

You know, people were doing it way before the Christians came along and turned it into the bogeyman. Pagans. Druids. Early Man.

CLARA

Have you ever done it?

NICK

Plenty of times. How do you think I survived eight schools in five years?

LACEY

I'd love to cast a spell on that Monica cow.

NICK

Sure. I mean, we'd need something that she's touched, and some other stuff, but yeah, if you'd like...

Lacey's eyes light up. She digs in her tote bag, brings out the Planned Parenthood pamphlet.

STELLA

You kept it?

LACEY

It actually has some useful information...

CLARA

Wait a second. Are we talking about doing this?

STELLA

Don't be such a party pooper. It'll be fine.

Clara looks at Nick, at his cute half-smile.

CLARA

Okay. I'm in.

OLIVER

But... I thought we were gonna play Mouse Trap.

BEGIN RITUAL SET-UP MONTAGE.

Stella takes an old Twister mat and lays it on the carpet with the colored dots facing down.

Nick takes a Sharpie and sets about drawing a large triangle within a circle on the Twister map.

Clara and Lacey light candles, set them on different surfaces.

Oliver covertly searches his mother's spice rack, collecting jars and glancing over his shoulder.

END RITUAL SET-UP MONTAGE.

INT. OLIVER'S HOUSE, BASEMENT - NIGHT

Everyone sits around the symbol drawn on the Twister map, except for Oliver, who stands away, uncertain.

OLIVER

I don't know about this.

STELLA

Oliver. Be a bigger homo? Sit down.

NICK

And grab the lights.

Oliver reluctantly walks to the switch and turns the lights out. He returns to the circle and kneels. All their faces are bathed in warm candlelight.

Nick sighs, flushed. He gestures at Lacey, who begins tearing the pamphlet into pieces. She giggles at the mess she's making, drops the pieces into a bowl in the center.

LACEY

Screw you, Monica.

Nick holds his hand over the bowl, swiftly runs a kitchen knife across it.

NICK

*Verus in altari cruor est.*

The girls gasp as blood trickles into the bowl, patters the pieces of Planned Parenthood pamphlet.

OLIVER

(queasy)

My Mom is gonna shit.

NICK

Hold out your hands.

Oliver's eyes widen when he looks at the glinting knife.

OLIVER

What?!

Stella bravely extends her hand. She grimaces when Nick pricks her hand, her blood mingling with his in the bowl.

Nick does Lacey then looks at Clara. She's unsure, but extends her hand.

OLIVER  
(quietly)  
Clara. What about, you know...  
AIDS?

Clara looks at Oliver as Nick cuts her hand, lets the blood trickle. Clara retracts her hand, holds it. Nick turns to Oliver expectantly.

OLIVER  
Oh God.

He reaches out, turns his face away as the deed is done.

Nick touches a match to the bowl's contents. It erupts.

NICK  
Link hands.

Everyone holds hands - Oliver a little disdainfully as his slips into Nick's. Nick closes his eyes. The fire in the bowl pops, crackles.

NICK  
I want you all to focus on Monica Hart-Mitchell. What she looks like, the sound of her voice, what kind of gum she chews. And I want you to imagine - really imagine - something bad happening to her. Diarrhea. Twisted ankle. Anything. Hold it there in your mind.

Everyone closes their eyes - except an uneasy Oliver. Lacey giggles at what she's imagining.

NICK  
Monica. Monica. Monica. Say it with me...

They join in.

EVERYONE  
Monica. Monica. Monica. Monica.

They repeat 'Monica.' Over and over. Over and over.

Clara opens her eyes. She looks over at Oliver, who stares back at her, disapproving.

The flames in the bowl suddenly turn an ugly bile green then POP, extinguish.

Everyone opens their eyes. Everything is silent.

STELLA  
Is that it? Did it work?

Nobody speaks.

BANG! A door opens and the lights come on.

OLIVER'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
Oliver?

OLIVER  
Oh shit.

Everyone scrambles up the bowl and Twister mat as Oliver's Mother comes down the stairs carrying a laundry basket.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Nick closes the front door and listens. Music blares. He can hear Candice laughing from the living room.

CLOOTIE HOUSE, LIVING ROOM.

Nick stops in the living room archway.

Candice is on the couch with a balding man with glazed eyes. He drunkenly peers over her shoulder.

CHUCK  
Who's that?

Candice turns.

CANDICE  
Oh, hi hon'. I didn't hear the door. This is Chuck.

Nick continues wordlessly to the kitchen.

CANDICE  
Teenagers. Excuse me.

Candice gets up, skillfully removing Chuck's wandering hands.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Candice leans on the door frame. She watches Nick as he wraps a bandage about his cut hand.

CANDICE  
How was school?

NICK  
Typical.

CANDICE

I started at that hardware place today. My boss seems nice...

NICK

Uh huh.

CANDICE

Anything happen today you wanna tell me about?

NICK

Can we talk about this later?  
(looks at her)  
You're obviously busy.

CANDICE

Okay then. There's pizza in the fridge. We'll try to keep it down.

Candice disappears. Nick shakes his head, grabs a beer from the fridge and heads upstairs.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick lays in his bed, stares at the ceiling. He looks across at his alarm clock - 2:09

From somewhere else in the house comes moaning. Nick grabs a pillow and jams it over his head.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, CANDICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Candice sits astride Chuck. Chuck whimpers unseen below her. She holds something in her hand, nicking away, nicking away.

Chuck bucks and she steadies herself.

CANDICE

Can you hold still for me hon'? I'm almost done.

Chuck is trussed to Candice's bed, arms splayed. Candice's bra works as a tight gag in his mouth. He's a bloody mess - strange symbols carved into his bare skin.

Candice holds an ornate dagger in her hand - a nasty looking thing with a serrated blade. Chuck wriggles and sobs.

CANDICE

If you keep doing that, I'm really gonna do some damage.

Candice continues her work, digging the dagger's tip into Chuck's chest. Chuck roars through his gag. With a deft flick of her wrist, she finishes. She studies her handiwork.

CANDICE

Oh Chuck. Thank you for a lovely evening.

Candice raises the dagger. Chuck tenses, eyes wide. He screams, as much as he can.

The knife flashes down.

INT. RONA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rona, sleeping fitfully anyway, snaps awake.

She sits up. Clutching her nightgown to herself, she climbs out of bed and treads to the window.

Her HUSBAND stirs drowsily, a dark shape in bed.

RONA'S HUSBAND

Pumpkin?

Rona gathers her nightgown to her throat in dread and watches the Cloutie house.

Star Spangled Banner starts playing.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, AUDITORIUM - DAY

The entire student body is present as the school band honks and bangs its way through Star Spangled Banner. Mrs. Glick conducts from the front.

Clara sits close to the stage, playing her clarinet. She glances up at the school's principal, MR. HARRIS, who stands at the lectern, patriotic hand to chest.

The rest of the gang - Nick now one of them - sit in the crowd.

Spangled Banner winds down to tepid applause.

MR. HARRIS

Thank you, Mrs. Glick and the Bradyville High School band.

A JOCK sitting in the crowd cups his mouth.

JOCK

(shouts)  
You guys suck!

MR. HARRIS

OUT!

The Jock sits, a deer in headlights as Harris points his index finger square at him. Silence.

MR. HARRIS  
 ARE YOU MENTALLY DEFICIENT, MR.  
 BRASLIN? OUT!

The Jock, now officially cowed, stands and shuffles out.

MR. HARRIS  
 My office!  
 (suddenly jovial)  
 Very good. And now with a special  
 announcement, the Social  
 Committee's President and Vice-  
 President respectively, Ruby  
 Valentine and Monica Hart-Mitchell.

Ruby and Monica walk to the lectern as Harris steps aside.  
 Ruby smiles confidently out at the assembly. She's right  
 where she belongs.

RUBY  
 Mr. Harris. Teachers. Student body.  
 As you know, the committee has been  
 working very hard to make this  
 year's social calender one to  
 remember - I'm sure everyone can't  
 forget the Spring Fling where a  
 certain chaperone ended up in the  
 pool. Not naming any names, Mr.  
 Schofield.

Our gang roll their eyes as the auditorium fills with good-  
 natured chuckles and Mr. Schofield - a rosy-cheeked Math  
 teacher - smiles and shrugs. Monica steps forward and smiles  
 her best pageant smile.

MONICA  
 On that note, we're just, uh I'm  
 just so over the moon to announce  
 this: we've decided to hold a Sadie  
 Hawkins dance to raise awareness of  
 sick African kids. That's right  
 guys! Lady's choice!

This is met with equal parts elation and revulsion. Monica,  
 high on the attention, continues on - accompanied by a  
 growing TRICKLING noise.

MONICA  
 All proceeds will go to Dance  
 Against Diptheria - a foundation  
 close to all our hearts I'm sure -  
 and there will also be a chance to  
 win a gift bag including a twenty-  
 five dollar voucher from Shockwaves  
 Hair Salon...

Ruby frowns and looks down at Monica's feet. She takes a  
 small step back. The auditorium is growing steadily still.

MONICA  
 (oblivious)  
 And, one boy and one girl will be  
 crowned Mr. and Mrs. Sadie Hawkins  
 on the night so everyone, I urge  
 you, get your votes in by this  
 Friday...

Monica smiles out at the staring faces. And then she notices it too. It's like a running faucet. She looks down.

Pee. Lots of it. And still it comes, cascading over her ankles, soaking her shoes and spreading across the boards of the stage.

MONICA  
 Oh my God.

Ruby and Mr. Harris step back further as the puddle grows.

MONICA  
 Oh my God!

Monica steps away from the lectern, almost slips, and implores Mr. Harris and Ruby.

MONICA  
 Somebody?

Monica looks out into the sea of faces.

MONICA  
 OH MY GOD!

As the faculty members on stage finally move into damage control - and Ruby stands back in unmitigated disgust - the gang stare at each other in amazement.

Nick smiles to himself.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - AFTERNOON

Clara - who walks her bike - Nick, Stella, Oliver and Lacey walk along a road that's fallen into disrepair. They're in high spirits, elated by Monica's misfortune.

LACEY  
 That was amazing!

STELLA  
 That was, without a doubt, the  
 coolest thing I've ever seen. Ever.

Stella lights a cigarette, drags on it.

STELLA

Man, you know, I only wish she aimed just a little to her right and soaked Ruby.

Nick reaches out, plucks the cigarette from Stella's lips. She shrugs and lights another.

As the others chatter, Nick wanders over and walks next to Clara.

OLIVER

Remember that old guy that came into the school that time and told everyone that using Ouija boards and talking to spirits opens you up to possession?

STELLA

Shut up Oliver... He was an escaped mental patient.

OLIVER

It doesn't matter! You don't play around with this stuff.

Nick holds the cigarette out to Clara.

NICK

How about you?

Clara eyes the cigarette then takes it. Oliver disapproves as she tentatively drags on it, gives it back.

CLARA

I don't know what to think.

NICK

I guess I gotta work a little harder then.

Clara smiles to herself. She looks up at a sign as they pass. It's entirely illegible - the paint having cracked eons ago.

INT. ORCHARD ESTATES, CRUMBLING STREET - CONTINUOUS

They enter what's left of the once pristine Orchard Estates. It's now bleak, silent.

CLARA

What is this place?

STELLA

Devil's Lane.

CLARA

I've never heard of it.

STELLA

No one has. It's Bradyville's dark little secret.

The street is cracked, its edges crumbled away. The houses have succumbed to the depredations of the elements and time: rundown, collapsing, choked with brambles. Even the ubiquitous graffiti is faded.

OLIVER

I've heard of this place. And it's not called Devil's Lane. It's an old estate that was abandoned in the Sixties.

STELLA

Well if you've heard of it, you'd know why it was abandoned.

LACEY

What happened?

STELLA

The entire neighborhood was massacred. Everyone.

Stella stops at one house - a double-story with brambles creeping up its porch. Someone has blacked the windows with a messy coat of paint.

STELLA

Right here. In the murder house.

Clara looks at the house uneasily.

CLARA

Stop it.

STELLA

I shit you not.

OLIVER

That whole thing's made up. My dad said they found poison in the soil and that's why everyone left.

STELLA

Oliver, your dad is a fucking moron. Don't you think that's what they want us to think?

Lacey protectively holds her swollen belly.

LACEY

So what really happened?

STELLA

Well, what people say is some guy moved into this house in nineteen-sixty something. Just came out of nowhere, you know? No one had any idea where he came from or knew anything about him. All anyone can say is he bought the place with cash out of a suitcase.

A breeze picks up as Nick approaches the porch.

STELLA

One night, he invites all the adults in Devil's Lane to his basement as a, you know, get-to-know-you kind of thing. Chips and dips and charades and whatever else they did back then.

Nick steps up onto the porch and walks to one of the blacked-out windows. Clara watches him.

STELLA

What the people who lived in this street didn't know was this guy was the leader of a death cult, and that his loyal followers were waiting upstairs. With axes and knives.

Nick walks to the door and touches the doorknob.

STELLA

And at exactly the agreed upon moment, they locked the doors and butchered everyone. Total bloodbath. I heard they cut one woman up into tiny pieces.

Everyone is silent, contemplative. The wind cries softly.

OLIVER

That is complete horseshit.

Stella rounds on Oliver.

STELLA

It happened, Oliver.

OLIVER

First of all, what about the neighbors' kids? How come we never hear about what happened to them? Secondly, why would this guy kill them in the first place? It doesn't make any logical sense. The police would know exactly where to look--

STELLA

Oh yeah? Well my mom, who knows  
Mrs. Sanderson who used to babysit  
for the--

CLARA

Guys?

Everyone turns to see that the front door to the house is now wide open and Nick is nowhere to be seen.

INT. MURDER HOUSE, BASEMENT - AFTERNOON

The gang come down the dusty stairs into Eugene Strafer's old basement. Nick stands in the middle of it, staring into space.

The place is a mess. Ancient graffiti marks the discolored walls. The carpet has long disintegrated. The bar - now covered in a layer of yellowed dust - is lined with beer bottles and rat droppings.

Oliver accidentally knocks a bottle with his toe and everyone jumps as it CLATTERS across the floor.

STELLA

Oliver! Gees.

Lacey holds her nose.

LACEY

It smells like pee in here...

NICK

Can you feel that?

Everyone looks at Nick. His expression is faraway.

CLARA

Feel what?

NICK

This place has a definite... I dunno. Can't you feel it?

Nick turns on the spot, his ear cocked. It's like he can hear a vibration no one else can. Without a word, he heads for the stairs.

EXT. ORCHARD, CLEARING - DAY

Nick comes through the orchard into the CLEARING.

The cuneiform symbols have long since faded, the shrine gone, but nothing has grown here either. Even the weeds shun this place.

The rest of the gang enter the clearing.

CLARA

Wow.

STELLA

This is so weird. Why doesn't anything grow here?

Oliver, the only one who seems to sense anything sinister about this place, hangs back.

OLIVER

Let's... Why don't we just go? I think this is someone's private property or something.

Stella rolls her eyes.

Nick's toe kicks something under the dirt. Curious, he bends, fingers tracing a hard SHAPE imbedded in the ground.

Everyone approaches as he crouches, fingers hooking around the object. With an effort, he pulls it from the ground, shakes the dirt from it.

Everyone stares.

It's Eugene's STONE TABLET. Nick's eyes glaze as he stares at the carving of Lamashtu.

LACEY

What is that?

Nick doesn't respond. His fingers brush the tablet's face, the ancient cuneiform. Lamashtu stares back at him with empty eyes. The voices around him echo.

OLIVER (O.S.)

What was it doing out here in the ground?

LACEY (O.S.)

It looks like something from National Geographic.

CLARA (O.S.)

Nick?

Clara watches Nick's glazed expression.

CLARA

Nick.

Nick blinks back to reality. He looks around at everyone, then at the clearing.

NICK  
Let's do it here.

EXT. ORCHARD, CLEARING - NIGHT

Night has fallen and the gang kneel in a circle, Nick in the center. Candles burn, imbedded in the dirt.

Nick turns to Clara. He holds a short dagger. She watches warily as he brings it up, points it at her heart.

Stella, Lacey and Oliver look on.

Nick smiles at her, nods. Clara closes her eyes.

CLARA  
I, Clara Black, of my own free will, solemnly swear in front of all assembled, I shall ever keep the secrets of this coven, and work toward the best interests of this coven...

She falters.

CLARA  
And... I'll willfully throw myself upon this blade if I break my vow.

Nick moves, points the dagger at Oliver's heart. Oliver looks over at Clara who watches. He takes a breath.

OLIVER  
I, Oliver Alberelli... Of my own free will...  
(shakes head)  
This is stupid. I'm not doing it.

CLARA  
Oliver.

OLIVER  
I'm sorry.

Oliver goes to stand. Nick presses the blade into his chest and Oliver stops, incredulous.

OLIVER  
Ow.

NICK  
You're really starting to piss me off, man.

Oliver reaches up to remove Nick's hand but Nick presses harder. Oliver sucks in a sharp breath.

CLARA

Stop!

NICK

(to Oliver)

You refuse this, you leave. You  
leave, you don't come back.

Anger flashes across Oliver's face.

NICK

Do you get it?

Oliver nods. Nick removes the blade, forces a smile. He helps  
Oliver to his feet.

NICK

No hard feelings.

Oliver, stung, brushes the dirt from his butt. He looks at  
Clara imploringly.

OLIVER

Clara, come with me.

NICK

Why don't you let Clara make up her  
own mind?

Clara looks from Nick to Oliver, conflicted. She looks away.

NICK

I think there's your answer.

OLIVER

Clara?

CLARA

You should go home, Oliver.

Sucker-punched, Oliver turns and walks into the orchard.

Nick smiles.

NICK

We should celebrate.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

VERONICA - as Mabel in *Pirates Of Penzance* - stands on stage  
in costume. She's just the kind of ski-jump nosed, rod-up-the-  
butt girl you'd expect to dominate drama class.

Veronica is flanked by a chorus of shrill teenaged girls.  
This production is way out of its depth. And sounds terrible.  
Mrs. Glick directs with fluttering hands from front of stage.

VERONICA

(singing)

POOR WAND'RING ONE!  
IF SUCH POOR LOVE AS MINE  
CAN HELP THEE FIND  
TRUE PIECE OF MIND-  
WHY, TAKE IT, IT IS THINE!

CHORUS LINE

(singing)

TAKE HEART, NO DANGER LOW'RS  
TAKE ANY HEART BUT OURS!

The auditorium doors BANG shut and Clara hurries in, hefting her clarinet case. She makes it to where the school band sit - clanging and tooting away - and crouches to retrieve her clarinet from its case.

Mrs. Glick eyes Clara, who mouths "sorry" then slinks to her seat, tripping on the feet of her bandmates.

VERONICA

(singing)

TAKE HEART, FAIR DAYS WILL SHINE--

MRS. GLICK

Stop. Wait, no. Stop. Stop!

Veronica stops mid-vibrato and the band churns down. Glick simpers at Veronica.

MRS. GLICK

Flawless, my darling.

Mrs. Glick turns her attention to Clara.

MRS. GLICK

I can only assume, Ms. Black, that  
your time is more precious than  
ours...

Clara stops, stuck awkwardly between the percussion and wind sections. She stares at Mrs. Glick, mute.

MRS. GLICK

Nothing to say?

(sighs heavily)

Must I remind you all I am not  
compensated for my time. And  
without my dedication, there would  
be no stage production at  
Bradyville High and yet, every  
year, a Good Time Sally like Ms.  
Black believes we're all here for  
her personal enjoyment.

CLARA

I'm sorry.

She moves to sit.

MRS. GLICK

Stop.

Clara freezes. Mrs. Glick gestures for her. Uncertain, Clara stumbles her way back down the row.

The auditorium is silent as Clara makes her way to Mrs. Glick, clutching her clarinet for security. Mrs. Glick gestures again.

MRS. GLICK

Please...

Clara blanches. She shakily lifts the clarinet to her lips. A combination of dry mouth and humiliation and a sharp SQUAWK emits.

Laughter from the other students. Mrs. Glick waits, humorless.

Clara tries again. She flubs her way through a bar of *Poor Wanderin' One*, bandmates and drama students snickering all the while. Clara finishes, lowers her clarinet in shame.

A satisfied arched eyebrow from Mrs. Glick and she turns, raises her arms to the stage.

MRS. GLICK

From the beginning.

Veronica, chorus line and band all jump to life.

Not Clara. Clara walks back to her seat. She sits and fumes.

EXT. MURDER HOUSE - DAY

Clara angrily dumps her bike on the murder house's overgrown lawn. She stomps up the steps and through the front door.

EXT. MURDER HOUSE, BASEMENT - DAY

Stella and Lacey are busy decorating the murder house basement. The place looks a lot cleaner and ordered.

Nick sits in the corner, surrounded by books. He scribbles in his notebook, mindless of his surroundings.

Clara stomps down the stairs. She reaches the bottom, clenches her fists and screams.

Stella and Lacey look over and laugh. Nick looks up from his notebook.

STELLA

What's wrong with you?

CLARA

Oh nothing. Mrs. Glick is a gigantic asshole, is all.

LACEY

Why? What did she do?

CLARA

She humiliated me in front of the entire drama club! It's like she's on this personal mission to make my life a living hell.

Clara thinks. She looks over at Nick.

CLARA

I want to teach her a lesson

NICK

Really?

CLARA

We're a coven, aren't we? Why don't we... I don't know. What are we doing?

Nick smiles, gets to his feet.

NICK

You wanna fuck her up? Like, spraying out of both ends, in bed for weeks sick?

Clara falters but finally nods, determined.

CLARA

Yes.

NICK

I know the perfect thing. We'll need some stuff, a cloven-hoofed animal but, you know, details.

Everyone nods, ready to follow Nick.

NICK

This is it guys. This is the real deal. You don't need to feel scared or helpless or humiliated anymore. It's time to push back. You know what else you guys have that kids in your situation don't?

LACEY

What?

NICK

Me.

He smiles at Clara. She smiles back.

EXT. BRADYVILLE, STREET - DAY

Stuart Dingle - the lanky kid from Bradyville High - is visible in his uniform through an ice cream parlor window. He mopes behind the counter.

Stella and Lacey watch from across the street.

LACEY

He's our guy? How is he going to help us find a goat?

STELLA

He's the president of the AV club. And because his dad is rich and on the city council, they trust him with the keys to the equipment cage.

LACEY

Okay...

STELLA

Inside the equipment cage is a window that leads to the agriculture pens where Pepper, the school mascot, is.

LACEY

You guys have a goat for a mascot?

STELLA

Officially it's a white-tailed deer. They put antlers on him for sporting events and whatever...

Stella takes a breath, adjusts her jacket and hair.

STELLA

Let's do it.

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - DAY

Stella pushes her way into the bright ice cream store, followed by Lacey, who hangs back.

Stuart looks over at them. He's a pale kid with greasy black hair - Bradyville's watered-down answer to the Goth movement. He watches Stella as she wanders to the glass display case.

STELLA  
Hey there.

STUART  
Hi.

Stella sighs and runs her finger down the glass.

STELLA  
I was after something in a sherbert. Maybe lemon?

STUART  
The lemon sherbert?

STELLA  
Make it two scoops.

Stella smiles, then rolls her eyes at Lacey as Stuart ducks into the display case. She leans forward and gazes over the case, in so doing, pressing her diminutive bosom against the glass.

Lacey averts her eyes, pretends to be interested in a notice board.

STELLA  
You go to my school, right?

STUART  
Yeah.

Stuart glances up and sees Stella's chest pressed an inch from his face. He reddens and straightens up. He hands over her sherbert.

STELLA  
So you know who I am.

STUART  
Yeah. You're Stella Sterken. You pushed me into the girls' locker room once.

Stella blanches.

STUART  
Anything else?

STELLA  
I guess not.

Stella hands over the money and walks towards the door. Lacey glares at her. She sighs, walks back to Stuart.

STELLA  
 Okay listen. I'll be completely  
 square with you. We need your help  
 kidnapping Pepper.

Stuart gazes at her.

STELLA  
 You know. Please.

STUART  
 Pepper the goat?

Stella nods.

STUART  
 Why?

STELLA  
 It's complicated.

Stuart waits.

STELLA  
 Basically we're, you know...  
 (quickly)  
 We need a goat to perform a ritual  
 to get back at Mrs. Glick

STUART  
 Witchcraft?

STELLA  
 Yeah.

STUART  
 Neat.

INT. SAFEWAY - DAY

Candice pushes a shopping cart down the aisle of the local Safeway. The cart is full of junk food: breakfast pizza, chips, Twizzlers. She stops, grabs wine.

At the end of the aisle, a stealthy figure appears and watches her: It's Rona.

EXT. SAFEWAY CARPARK - DAY

Candice makes her way across the carpark towards her Mustang, arms loaded with grocery bags.

RONA (O.S.)  
 Hi! Yoo hoo!

Candice frowns, turns to see Rona hurrying towards her.

RONA  
Hi there! Mrs. Clootie?

Candice stares at Rona behind her sunglasses like she's some disgusting bug. Rona reaches out and awkwardly shakes the tips of Candice's fingers.

RONA  
Hi. I'm Rona Bemberry. I live right next door to you...

CANDICE  
Okay.

RONA  
I'm sorry I haven't had a chance to welcome you to the neighborhood sooner but what with one thing and another!

CANDICE  
That's fine.

Candice moves to walk away but Rona puts a hand on her shoulder, stares meaningfully into her face.

RONA  
I just wanted to let you know that we have a very effective neighborhood watch program on our street... We really care about protecting one another. It's a very effective program.

CANDICE  
Great. I'll be sure to wave next time you're looking in my window.

Candice walks for her car. Rona stares after her.

EXT. SAFEWAY CARPARK, CANDICE'S MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Candice approaches her car, mumbling under her breath. She dumps the grocery bags on the ground and stops in the process of unlocking the door.

Across the way, cruising slowly down the street, is a DARK CAR. Candice eyes it suspiciously.

INT. BRADYVILLE, POLICE STATION - DAY

An older, stocky man enters the quietly bustling Bradyville Police Station. This is FATHER OATIS. He removes his aviators - revealing steely blue eyes - and casually peruses a nearby notice board. He zeroes in on a missing person poster: Chuck.

DEPUTY (O.S.)  
What can I do you for?

Father Oatis looks over to where an eager DEPUTY waits behind the reception desk. Father Oatis smiles.

FATHER OATIS (V.O.)  
I've been tracking these folk for over five states now.

INT. POLICE STATION, SHERIFF DAWSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Father Oatis sits in the sheriff's office, the bull pen bustling silently behind him through slatted windows.

FATHER OATIS  
I've followed a trail of animal mutilation, Satanic vandalism, missing persons. I can't stress how dangerous these people are. And there's every indication they're in Bradyville.

SHERIFF DAWSON, Bradyville's stalwart sheriff, sits behind his desk. He scribbles in his pad, nods.

SHERIFF DAWSON  
Uh huh. And you say you don't know the names of these people? Or really what they even look like. Nothing like that.

FATHER OATIS  
No sir, they're always two steps ahead. When you do the Dark Lord's bidding, it's easier to slink in the shadows.

SHERIFF DAWSON  
You say you're a priest?

FATHER OATIS  
Yes sir, I am.

SHERIFF DAWSON  
Why don't you got one of them white collars on?

FATHER OATIS  
(smiles)  
I'm off duty.

Sheriff Dawson sighs, puts down his pen.

SHERIFF DAWSON  
Father?

Sheriff Dawson raises his eyebrows: Do I call you that?  
 Father Oatis nods.

SHERIFF DAWSON

Father, I think what you're talking about here is a kinda mass hysteria. If you look at any of the news lately, why, they'd have us believe the president is a devil worshipping' pervert.

Father Oatis concurs.

SHERIFF DAWSON

This is a good town. Aside from your garden variety domestic disturbance or missing person who, generally speaking, shows up a week later hungover and full of remorse, we never get any anything like that. Not one black mass, not one witch on a broomstick.

FATHER OATIS

Sheriff Dawson, these people are insidious. They employ insidious means. They'll infiltrate your community, spread corruption like a cancer, and you won't know it. They'll start with your young.

(beat)

I understand Bradyville has its own dark history.

SHERIFF DAWSON

What do you know about that?

FATHER OATIS

Only what I've read.

Dawson sighs.

SHERIFF DAWSON

Well what you've read I'm sure is mostly hearsay and urban myth. The only thing that happened that night thirty years ago was a tragedy perpetrated by a sick man and his mindless followers. And it's something, I'm sure you'd understand, that this town would just as soon forget ever happened.

Father Oatis nods. He can feel this wrapping up. He stands.

FATHER OATIS

I'll be on my way then. Thank you for your time, Sheriff.

Father Oatis stops at the door.

FATHER OATIS

But I urge you, keep sharp. Note anything odd, out of the ordinary. Would you do at least that?

SHERIFF DAWSON

Sure.

FATHER OATIS

I'll be staying at the motel on the edge of town... Should you ever need me.

Father Oatis leaves, closes the door behind him.

INT. BRADYVILLE LIBRARY - DAY

Oliver walks covertly along library shelves. He reaches the 'Spiritualism' section, glances around, then hurriedly searches through the books.

He pulls out a book called 'Occult Philosophy'. A soft-focus picture of naked witches performing a ritual adorns its cover.

Oliver continues his search.

INT. BRADYVILLE LIBRARY - LATER

Pages turn. Occult symbols. Sketches of horned devils. Grainy photos of real-life witchcraft.

Oliver sits, face pale, as he turns pages. He stops on a photograph - a kneeling young woman with a man pointing a dagger at her heart. His eyes trail to the caption: 'A young devotee pledges her immortal soul to Satan.'

Oliver stares at the word 'Satan', dread and horror co-mingling.

VOICE (O.S.)

Interesting subject matter.

Oliver throws his arms across the pile of books in front of him.

Two of Bradyville High's nerds - MAL and CODY - stand staring at him. They're beset with acne, greasy hair. Both are interchangeable.

MAL

Ever hear of *Shadowrun*?

Mal shows Oliver the cover of a book he's carrying.

OLIVER

I thought you guys played *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Mal and Cody share a laugh.

MAL

Yeah, when we were seven.

(sizes Oliver up)

You should try it out. We've been looking for a fourth ever since our Game Master started dating Debbie Gipson. Like it's not 'cause she's the only girl who'll let him feel her up.

Mal and Cody laugh conspiratorially. Oliver watches them, curious.

EXT. BRADYVILLE CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

Clara and Nick emerge from the woods into Bradyville Cemetery.

NICK

I mean, there's this big black hole in Bradyville's history that nobody knows anything about. Whatever the guy was doing, it was huge...

CLARA

What are you talking about?

NICK

The guy! The cult leader guy. I did some digging and found out his name was Eugene Strafer. But that's all I could find out. Stella was right, no one knows where he came from.

Clara looks across the cemetery. Mourners walk among the headstones.

CLARA

There are people here.

NICK

Then we wait.

Nick shrugs off his backpack, walks to a grave and sits.

NICK

Come here, I wanna show you something.

Clara wanders over, sits next to him as he pulls the stone tablet out.

CLARA

Uh. That thing gives me the creeps.

Nick runs his finger across the chicken-scratch writing.

NICK

This is cuneiform...

(off Clara's look)

It's ancient writing. Like, the first writing. The thing is, I think it describes some kind of ritual... To contact or, I dunno, raise whoever this is...

He traces Lamashtu with his fingers.

NICK

But I think he screwed up somehow.

CLARA

Nick. If he was trying to raise this... whatever that is, I'm really glad he didn't get around to it. Aren't you happy doing what we're doing?

Nick doesn't answer her, looks down at Lamashtu. Clara sighs, thinks.

CLARA

Can I show you something?

EXT. BRADYVILLE CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

A headstone, dark marble. It reads: Ruth Black, 1951 - 1985. On it, the framed and faded photo of CLARA'S MOTHER. Clara obviously takes after her, looks-wise.

Clara and Nick stare at the grave.

NICK

What was it?

CLARA

Cancer.

NICK

Damn.

CLARA

I know.

(beat)

Do you ever think that your parents spend so much energy making out they're these perfect people when what you really need to know is that they're not?

Nick doesn't relate. Clara blushes.

CLARA  
It's just... Never mind.

Nick spontaneously steps close and kisses Clara. She pulls back in shock. He shrugs.

NICK  
It felt like the right moment.

Something over Clara's shoulder grabs Nick's attention.

NICK  
Oh wow!

CLARA  
(startled)  
What? What is it?

NICK  
You guys have a Devil's Chair.

Nick approaches a STONE CHAIR speckled with moss. It could be easily overlooked in this cemetery.

CLARA  
...What's a Devil's Chair?

Nick settles in.

NICK  
Well, they're supposed to be for people to rest while they're mourning for their, you know, loved ones. But they also say that if you sit in a Devil's Chair and say His name over and over, He'll appear and reward you for your courage.

Nick shrugs.

NICK  
Or punish you for your cowardice, depending on whether you're brave enough to look at Him.

CLARA  
He?

NICK  
Yeah, you know. The Devil. Pan. Baphomet. Loki. Whatever you wanna call him.

Clara lets this sink in. She turns, looks out at the now deserted cemetery. The sun has almost set behind the trees.

CLARA  
They're gone.

EXT. BRADYVILLE CEMETERY - NIGHT

Clara follows Nick through the dimming light as he searches, aiming a flashlight from crumbling tombstone to crumbling tombstone.

He scrapes his fingertips across the epitaph of a lichen-covered slab.

NICK  
Here it is.

Clara moves closer. She squints at the barely legible writing.

CLARA  
Thomas P. Glickhurst?

Nick nods. He grabs the shovel.

CLARA  
As in Mrs. Glick?

NICK  
The Glickhursts came to Bradyville a hundred and fifty years ago. They shortened their name to Glick - I have no idea why - and your best friend, Edna Glick, is the last of them.

CLARA  
How do you even know all this--

Nick raises the shovel and rams it into the chalky concrete of the unfortunate Thomas Glickhurst's grave. It cracks.

CLARA  
Wait! What are you doing?!

Nick stops, shovel in the air.

NICK  
Digging up a body. What did you think we were doing?

CLARA  
I don't know. Collecting grave dirt or chanting or I don't know!

Nick lowers the shovel.

NICK  
You're kidding me.

Clara shakes her head.

NICK

Clara, we need a finger bone. Specifically from one of Mrs. Glick's ancestors. And unless her mother is preserved in Bradyville's Museum of Local History, this is the only way around it.

CLARA

But...

NICK

Do you want to do this?

Clara shifts on the spot.

NICK

Do you want revenge on Edna Glick for humiliating you? Simple yes or no.

CLARA

Yes.

Nick sighs, brings the shovel down. Parts of concrete fall away into a yawning hole.

CLARA

Oh my God.

Clara shuffles back as Nick goes to town with the shovel. Clara glances around the cemetery as the blows echo loudly.

Clara hurries forward and takes the shovel as Nick lowers himself into the grave. His feet thud against old pine.

NICK

Okay Tommy. Please tell me you weren't a double amputee.

Nick wrenches at the lid of the pinebox and Clara covers her mouth. Bit by bit, the desiccated skeleton of the late Thomas Glickhurst is revealed.

It stares up at Clara with a rictus smile.

Nick reaches into the coffin, wrenches the skeleton's arm up. He takes a pair of pliers from his back pocket and goes to work on Glickhurst's index finger bone.

The finger bone comes off. Nick smiles triumphantly and holds it up. Clara looks disgusted.

NICK

How about that then, huh?

EXT. ORCHARD CLEARING - NIGHT

Stella, Lacey and Stuart - who holds a bewildered Pepper's leash - wait in the clearing. Candles burn in readiness.

LACEY  
Here they come.

Clara and Nick pick their way through the orchard. As they approach, Stella smirks.

STELLA  
You guys took your time.

Nick unwraps the finger bone and places it on its cloth on the dirt.

STELLA  
What the hell is that?

CLARA  
It's a finger bone.

Stella swallows her gorge, gestures at Stuart.

STELLA  
This is Stuart.

CLARA  
Hi.

STUART  
Hello.

Nick is already setting up. He drags a stick through the dirt, creates a circle. Then a triangle. In the middle of this large symbol he draws an eye.

NICK  
*Uminas. Laterus. Kithdoya. Manus  
Octi.*

There's a level of expertise here that unnerves Clara. Nick burns more herbs, waves them across the air in strange smoking symbols.

Stuart leans in and whispers to Stella.

STUART  
He done this before?

Stella says nothing.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The group huddle within a blazing beacon of light amidst the endless dark.

Nick stands with Pepper in the center of the circle. He wears a black cloak and holds aloft a ceremonial dagger.

Clara, Stella, Lacey and Stuart kneel at the compass points, repeating Nick's words.

NICK  
*Malefictum, de oppresso liber... in  
 hoc signo vinces... in medias  
 res... in personam...*

Nick runs his hand down Pepper's neck.

NICK  
*Cras donaberis haedo.*

Clara watches with growing horror as Nick lowers the dagger.

STUART  
 What are--

NICK  
*Dono.*

Nick GASHES Pepper's throat and the animal cries, bucks. Blood sprays and Nick tackles the goat to restrain it. He shouts over his shoulder at Stuart.

NICK  
 Help me here!

Stuart staggers to his feet and runs to help Nick. Pepper bucks and writhes beneath them.

STUART  
 Oh God it's strong!

Nick drives the dagger into the animal's chest. Stuart cops a gout of blood. He sputters.

STUART  
 Why won't it die?!

Nick works quickly to open Pepper's chest and retrieve the heart. He holds it up - Stuart stares in disbelief as it throbs and pulses. Pepper continues to cry and flop.

Nick drops the heart into a hole in the ground. It continues to beat next to the finger bone, a cat's skull and a dead twig with curling leaves.

Nick pushes soil into the hole, chanting under his breath.

NICK  
*Immolo!*

Pepper lets out an all too human scream, then lays still.

All is silent.

And then Clara hears it. A creaking, hollow sound. The trees sway slowly, unnaturally. Something whispers. A dark shadow flits. The ground in front of her groans.

Everyone stands.

STELLA

Guys?

The earth beneath them bulges and something sounds deep below. A muffled sigh.

Clara looks to Nick. His eyes filled with mad glee.

NICK

It's done.

INT. MRS. GLICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Slipperd feet shuffle down a dark hall. Edna Glick, dressed in a frayed dressing gown, blearily wanders her home.

MRS. GLICK

Kitties?

Around her, countless cats weave through her feet, dash away in the shadows. Some cry, agitated. There is a sense of unrest that Mrs. Glick is perturbed by.

INT. MRS. GLICK'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mrs. Glick stops in her cat-filled kitchen.

MRS. GLICK

You're all very skittish tonight.

She wanders to the window and squints out into her dark yard. She quickens when there comes a hacking, gagging sound.

MRS. GLICK

Bubbles?

More hacking. One of the cats is coughing up a nuclear furball.

Mrs. Glick wanders from the kitchen, into the

SITTING ROOM.

MRS. GLICK

Bubbles, you better not be on my good rug--

Mrs. Glick stops in the archway to her cramped sitting room.

Bookshelves are packed to groaning. An old couch dominates one wall. And on the rug in the center of the room is a black and white tabby - Bubbles.

MRS. GLICK

Bubbles?

Bubbles lurches, head twisting, hindquarters buckling at odds with the its body. It HACKS loudly.

Mrs. Glick jumps. She moves forward but stops dead when Bubbles' spine cracks. The cat's head turns weirdly to stare up at her.

BUBBLES

Meooooouurgh!

Mrs. Glick shrieks, backs up against the wall.

Bubbles hacks again. Something WHITE and SLIMY forces its way out of the cat's mouth.

Mrs. Glick's knees threaten to give out.

FINGERS, white and long, protrude from Bubbles' mouth, and then a hand that finds purchase on the rug. A wrist follows. Bubbles peels back to reveal an arm. An elbow.

Mrs. Glick screams in revulsion and flees.

INT. MRS. GLICK'S HOUSE, HALL - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Glick staggers down the hall. She moans when there comes a terrible KEENING from her sitting room.

She falls against the stairs, gibbers incoherently, starts an ineffectual ascent on her stomach.

A wet rapid THUD from the hall and Mrs. Glick shrieks. She turns in horror to see it - all gangly limbs with the unmistakable likeness of a goat - skittering down the hall. It's coming for her.

MRS. GLICK

Oh God, help meeeee!

With her last resolve, Mrs. Glick scrambles up the stairs and onto the

LANDING.

She crawls away as the White Goat Thing's hands slide over the top step.

MRS. GLICK

No!

Mrs. Glick gets to her feet, runs for her bedroom door.

The White Goat Thing stealthily vaults the wall, leaps and collects the woman. They both tumble through the dark doorway.

Mrs. Glick shrieks in terror. Then screams in agony.

Then silence.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, AUDITORIUM - DAY

Veronica and the other drama students practice their routine on stage.

Clara and the rest of the band wait in their seats. They murmur amongst themselves.

A female TEACHER enters the auditorium.

TEACHER

Everybody. Your attention here please. Mrs. Glick won't be in today.

VERONICA

Where is she? We're three weeks away and I know she wouldn't miss rehearsal.

TEACHER

I don't know. I suppose she's ill.

Veronica looks scandalized, shakes her head and confers confidentially with her chorus line.

Clara smiles to herself.

BEGIN MONTAGE

ORCHARD, CLEARING.

The group chants in the orchard clearing.

CAFETERIA.

The group sit in the cafeteria. Nick slips his hand into Clara's under the table. Clara smiles and then spies Oliver sitting at a table, joking around with Mal and Cody.

Her smile drops.

MURDER HOUSE, BASEMENT.

Lacey sits at a sewing machine. She smiles benignly as she sews together something made from black cloth. On the other side of the room, Clara adjusts her new black ceremonial gown in a mirror.

Stuart sits applying black lipstick on Stella.

Nick sits in the corner, scribbling in his notebook.

ORCHARD, CLEARING.

Everyone, now dressed in their black hooded robes, raises their arms to a sky clotted with clouds.

HARDWARE STORE.

Candice counts stock. She looks over and smiles at Howard who is helping out a customer. He smiles back.

BRADYVILLE, CHURCH.

Rona walks along the sidewalk in Bradyville's town center. She gapes at something as she approaches it.

The church, which faces the town square, has been vandalized. Men in yellow coveralls scrub at Satanic symbols spray painted in red on its walls.

Rona drops her groceries to the ground.

ORCHARD CLEARING.

It's night. The gang chant. Eyes closed. Hypnotic.

END MONTAGE.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, ENTRANCE - MORNING

Oliver sits with his new friends at the school's entrance. This group has a jovial dynamic, unshackled by the need to be cool.

Oliver spots something and his smile slowly drops.

Clara stands by the bike racks with Nick. They're cosy, intimate. There's something different about Clara - she's confident, unapologetic.

MAL

Didn't you used to be friends with those guys?

Oliver says nothing. He watches Nick kiss Clara good bye.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, ENTRANCE - LATER

Clara locks her bike to the rack. She looks up, uncertain, when Oliver approaches.

CLARA  
Hey.

OLIVER  
Hey Clara.

CLARA  
How've you been?

OLIVER  
Are you and Nick going out?

CLARA  
I guess so. I don't know if he  
wants to put a label on it.

Clara looks past Oliver at the group of nerds watching from a distance.

CLARA  
I've noticed who you're hanging out  
with now.

OLIVER  
Yeah?

CLARA  
Do you think they're the kind of  
people... I mean, it just looks--

OLIVER  
(angry)  
It looks like what?

CLARA  
Oliver, I'm just trying to look out  
for you.

OLIVER  
You're looking out for me? Do you  
know what people are saying about  
you?

CLARA  
What are they saying about me?

OLIVER  
I just... I don't think Nick is who  
you think he is.

Clara softens.

CLARA

Oliver, I know you, you know, have  
a thing for me.

Oliver flushes red.

CLARA

And now I'm hanging out with Nick,  
I understand how that might make  
you feel. Maybe a little jealous?  
But I'm a big girl.

OLIVER

(blurts)

Nick's a devil worshipper.

He strides away. Clara stares after him, shocked.

EXT. BRADYVILLE CEMETERY - NIGHT

Clara, Stella, Lacey and Stuart hang in the cemetery. They  
wear their dark robes as they traipse through the headstones.

Stella passes a BOTTLE in a brown paper bag up to Clara, who  
giddily teeters over an obstacle course of marble graves.

STELLA

Where the hell is Nick?

CLARA

I told him ten.

Clara smiles, drunkenly remembers something. She looks around  
at the cemetery from her vantage point.

CLARA

I wanna show you guys something.

DEVIL'S CHAIR.

The gang approach the Devil's Chair. Clara, full of bravado,  
sits in it. She grins.

LACEY

I don't get it.

STELLA

It's a chair.

CLARA

It's a Devil's Chair. Nick told me  
about them. They say if you sit in  
one and say the Devil's name, he'll  
appear.

STELLA

Well...?

Clara's smile slowly drops.

CLARA

What?

STELLA

I dare you to sit in the Devil's  
Chair and say his name.

Lacey giggles. Clara squirms, uncomfortable.

CLARA

I dunno.

STELLA

Fine. We'll just tell Nick what a  
total pussy you are.

CLARA

Whatever.

STUART

I'll do it.

Stuart steps forward but Clara doesn't move.

CLARA

No. I'll do it. Geez.

Stella smiles wide.

STELLA

Excellent.

EXT. BRADYVILLE CEMETERY - LATER

Clara sits in the Devil's Chair.

Across the cemetery, Stella, Lacey and Stuart wait at the  
cemetery gates. Their dim laughter reaches her across an  
ocean of night.

CLARA

(quietly)

Uh, Satan, Satan, Satan... Oh God.

She waits, eyes and ears alert. She clears her throat.

CLARA

Satan, Satan, Satan, Satan--

A shadow FLITS between the headstones to her right. It could  
have been nothing, but then she hears a strange WHISPER.

She tenses. The cemetery sits silent. It's as though the place is holding its breath.

As she watches, the shadows begin to move, blur. Something moves behind her, on the periphery. Something LAUGHS.

Clara freezes. She's seen something in the distance. A shape standing within a cluster of headstones. The SILHOUETTE of a watching woman.

Realization dawns on Clara. She recognizes this woman, even as a shadow. Clara stands, takes a step forward.

The woman is gone.

EXT. BRADYVILLE CEMETERY GATES - NIGHT

Stella, Lacey and Stuart wait near the cemetery gates.

Clara emerges from the darkness, pale as a ghost. She silently walks for her bike.

STELLA

Clara? What happened?

Clara shakily picks up her bike, gets on. She pedals off down the road.

LACEY

Clara?

STELLA

Clara?!

But she's gone. Stella and Lacey exchange mystified looks.

INT. MURDER HOUSE, BASEMENT - NIGHT

Clara comes down into the basement. Nick sits in a beanbag in the corner, writing in his notebook.

CLARA

Where were you?

Nick shrugs, keeps writing.

NICK

Just got caught up.

Clara wanders shakily into the room.

CLARA

Nick, I... I just saw something.

NICK

What?

CLARA

I sat in that Devil's Chair. You know, the one you showed me at the cemetery?

(beat)

I saw my mother.

NICK

Okay.

CLARA

I think it was her. She seemed...  
Angry.

Nick sighs, irritated, and goes back to his notebook.

CLARA

Nick--

NICK

God, you guys are so obsessed with this childish bullshit. We should be doing the big stuff.

CLARA

Big stuff? Like what?

Clara wanders to him, her expression a mix of fear and gratitude.

CLARA

I think the guys would do anything you wanted them to. I know I would...

NICK

You would?

CLARA

Yeah.

NICK

What would you do?

Clara awkwardly lowers herself onto the beanbag.

CLARA

Anything.

They kiss. It's clunky. Nick reaches up and slides his hand under her sweater. Clara tenses.

NICK

You said anything.

Clara nods and Nick rolls on top of her. They become a bungling mess of teenaged limbs. Nick, not exactly a Casanova, fumbles with Clara's clothing. Clara yelps.

NICK  
What?

CLARA  
My arm.

Nick readjusts and ineptly kisses her neck.

NICK  
You like that?

Clara nods.

CLARA  
Uh huh.

Nick starts grinding against her as she stares at the ceiling. He cries out suddenly and stops. He exhales.

NICK  
Wow.

Clara looks confused as he struggles up onto his feet. He laughs and looks down at himself.

NICK  
Whoops.  
(sighs)  
That was incredible. I'll be right back.

Nick hurries out of the basement. Clara lets her head drop back onto the beanbag, shell-shocked.

Her eyes trail down to Nick's notebook, open on the floor. She sits up and drags the notebook closer.

The pages are crammed to the edges with notes. She turns a page and finds a sketch of a beast-headed woman. Clara's eyes zero in on the word below it: Lamashtu.

INT. BLACK'S HARDWARE, BACK OFFICE - NIGHT

Howard sits at his desk, frowning over paperwork. A small radio plays music next to him. He looks up suddenly, listens.

HOWARD  
Hello?

Howard turns off the radio.

HOWARD  
Sam?

CANDICE (O.S.)  
Hello?

Howard swivels in his chair as Candice peers around the doorway. Howard smiles.

CANDICE  
Sorry. I didn't want to disturb  
you. I forgot my jacket.

HOWARD  
Where'd you come from?

CANDICE  
The back door. It's unlocked.

HOWARD  
Unlocked? That's weird.

Candice walks over and takes a denim jacket off a hook. She looks over at him as she slides it on.

CANDICE  
Hard at work?

HOWARD  
Oh. Yeah. No. Just avoiding an  
empty house.

CANDICE  
You too?

HOWARD  
Actually, sitting in the back of a  
hardware store at midnight isn't  
exactly great for the blues either.

Candice smiles.

CANDICE  
I don't think I've thanked you  
properly for giving me this chance.  
Really. I haven't felt that welcome  
in Bradyville so far and... I'm  
certain you don't know how much it  
means to me...

Candice stifles a sob as crocodile tears well.

CANDICE  
Uh, sorry. This is so queer.

HOWARD  
Is everything okay?

CANDICE  
Apart from the fact I'm crying in  
front of my boss?

Howard waves her away.

HOWARD  
We're after hours.

Candice thinks.

CANDICE  
How do you feel about taking an old  
fogey out for a drink?

INT. MAE'S - NIGHT

Mae's, small town dive bar and all its associated paraphernalia. Dark wood. Rock-playing Wurlitzer. Peanut shells pepper the bar. The place is filled.

Candice and Howard share a small table in the midst of the revelry. Howard is quite obviously drunk, Candice less so. She shows him a tattoo of an ornate skull on her shoulder.

CANDICE  
And I got this one after I found my  
second husband in bed with my  
sister.

HOWARD  
Well Candice. No one can accuse you  
of having a boring life.

CANDICE  
You gotta roll with the punches,  
Howie.

HOWARD  
Cheers to that.

Candice clinks her glass off his. They drink.

HOWARD  
You know, when I brought my wife -  
may she rest in peace - and Clara  
to Bradyville all those years ago,  
I thought I was building something,  
you know?

Howard's elbow slips off the table. He rights himself.

HOWARD  
Boston, Bradyville. There was  
nothing gonna stop Ruth from  
getting cancer the way she did.  
Anyway, I got a daughter. She's  
smart. She's like her mother. So...  
what's the word? Wordly? Worldly.

Howard swipes tears from his eyes.

CANDICE

Howard Black, I think you're drunk.

HOWARD

Yeah, I'd say that's about the face  
of it.

Candice stands, holds out her hand. Howard drunkenly accepts. She leads him through the crowd as '*Witchy Woman*' by the Eagles begins to play.

They reach the small dance floor. Candice writhes to the music.

CANDICE

I always thought this song was  
written about me.

Howard stands, sways on the spot. He nods along to the music but everything seems to warp, bend around him. Someone laughs - high-pitched and manic.

CANDICE

Dance.

Howard shakes his head.

Candice gazes at him, dull light catching the thin sheen of sweat across her arms, her exposed stomach. The other dancers around Candice seem at one moment to descend into orgiastic rutting.

Howard holds his head. He squints through the pain. The serpent tattoo across Candice's stomach pulses and writhes.

Candice gazes at him, her eyes burning from within. She holds out her hand.

HOWARD

I can't... I should go.

Howard turns but he's suddenly shunted out of the way by a ten-story GIANT - a bald man in coveralls and ferocious eyes. He points at Candice.

GIANT

You! What did you do with Chuck?

Candice scowls.

GIANT

Oh, I know exactly what you are.

The Giant latches onto Candice's wrist, drags her off the dance floor.

CANDICE

Get your hands off me!

In the confusion, Howard is buffeted back and forth. He sees Candice slapping ineffectually at the Giant.

The music slams louder. Distorts. Crackles. Howard sneers suddenly, overtaken by an uncharacteristic rage. He shoves through the crowd, reaches Candice.

He throws himself at the Giant and the two topple to the floor. Candice backs away with a small smile.

Anarchy descends. Fists fly as the bar erupts into violence. A rogue stool collides with the glass shelving behind the bar and some good whiskey falls to its death.

Howard looks up to see Candice over him. She reaches out.

CANDICE

Let's leave them to it.

Howard nods dumbly. They make their exit.

INT. MRS. GLICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Mrs. Glick's front door bursts open and a group of Bradyville deputies walk in. They're followed by Sheriff Dawson.

SHERIFF DAWSON

Mrs. Glick? It's the sheriff's department. Are you home?

The house is silent. And strangely free of cats.

SHERIFF DAWSON

Ambrose, Decklin. You're downstairs. Cole, check the yard. Gordon, you're with me.

DECKLIN

What is that God unholy stink?

Sheriff Dawson ascends the stairs with DEPUTY GORDON.

SHERIFF DAWSON

Just keep your eyes open.

INT. MRS. GLICK'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

Deputies AMBROSE and DECKLIN wander into the cramped kitchen. Decklin's toe knocks a kitty litter tray. He frowns, looks at a row of pet bowls.

DECKLIN

Cats?

Ambrose opens a cabinet revealing stacks of CAT FOOD.

DECKLIN  
Where'd they all get to?

INT. MRS. GLICK'S HOUSE, LANDING - MORNING

Sheriff Dawson makes it to the landing. Gordon is behind him, screws up his nose.

GORDON  
It's stronger up here, you think?

They both turn when they hear a stealthy noise. An orange CAT slinks from the bedroom doorway that sits ajar.

Sheriff Dawson and Deputy Gordon exchange a look, move close to the dark crack.

SHERIFF DAWSON  
Mrs. Glick? It's Sheriff Dawson.  
Are you decent?

There comes no response.

He pushes on the door. It squeals open, the light from the landing washing across Mrs. Glick's scores of cats.

They huddle around a mass on the carpet, licking, chewing. With horror, Sheriff Dawson's eyes fall on a skeletal HAND protruding from the cat-horde, flesh nibbled to the bone.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, LANDING - MORNING

Clara comes out of her bedroom in her pajamas onto the landing. She notices Howard's bedroom door is closed.

CLARA  
Dad? Are you late?

There's no response. She can hear pots clanging down in the kitchen.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, KITCHEN

Clara wanders sleepily into the kitchen and stops dead.

Candice stands at the stove-top in panties and one of Howard's shirts. She turns from the scrambled eggs she's making.

CANDICE  
Oh! Good morning.

Candice makes a showy attempt to cover herself.

CANDICE

I'm Candice! You must be Clara!

CLARA

You're... Nick's mom?

CANDICE

And I've heard so many good things about you. Sit.

Clara dumbly sits down at the table. Candice brings over a plate of scrambled eggs.

CLARA

Is my dad home?

Candice waves a dismissive hand, walks to the fridge where she pours Clara a glass of cola.

CANDICE

Oh sure. He's dead to the world. I know he needs to be at work right now but they can survive without him for a couple hours.

Candice puts the cola in front of Clara then stops.

CANDICE

Uh! It is so nice to finally meet you.

Candice shakes her head in wonderment and grabs her own plate. She sits down across from Clara, starts eating.

CANDICE

You know, Nick never talks about his girlfriends but, I dunno, you must be special... Oh, I know he can be a righteous pain in the ass but he's got a big heart. Even if he doesn't like to show it.

Candice continues eating.

CANDICE

Well. Won't we make a happy little family?

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, CORRIDOR - DAY

Numb, Clara wanders down the bustling corridor. Stella suddenly appears at her side.

STELLA

Oh my God. Come with me. Now.

Stella drags Clara onward.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

They enter the stairwell where Stuart and Lacey wait. Clara pulls her arm away from Stella and looks from face to face.

CLARA

What?

LACEY

(to Stella)

You tell her.

STELLA

They found Mrs. Glick. Mrs. Glick is dead.

Clara pales.

CLARA

What?

LACEY

Her cats totally ate her.

CLARA

Her cats ate her? How did she die?

STELLA

No one knows.

CLARA

Where's Nick?

Stella, Lacey and Stuart shake their heads.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, CORRIDOR - LATER

Clara walks down the corridor. She spots Nick at his locker, approaches him.

CLARA

Nick.

He glances at her.

CLARA

Did you hear about Mrs. Glick?

NICK

Nope.

CLARA

Nick. She died.

NICK

Oh yeah?

CLARA

Well, don't you think she could  
have died...

(glances around)

Because of us?

NICK

Clara, she was a hundred years old.  
Anyway, you got what you wanted.  
She won't be bothering you anymore.

CLARA

This isn't what I wanted.

Nick closes his locker, hooks the padlock on.

CLARA

I think we should stop. Someone's  
dead, Nick.

NICK

That's fantastic. We're this close  
and you're gonna fuck everything?

CLARA

Close? Close to what?

NICK

I came here and helped you losers  
and this is how you thank me.

Clara looks hurt.

NICK

Later.

Nick storms off.

CLARA

Nick.

Clara watches after him. She looks across the corridor to  
where Veronica sobs in the arms of a friend.

INT. BRADYVILLE, TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Bradyville's adult population sits within the town hall.  
Oliver is here with his mild-looking parents.

Sheriff Dawson stands at the lectern. Behind him, a number of  
town officials.

Howard and Candice sit amidst the crowd. Howard has a glazed,  
perplexed look about him.

SHERIFF DAWSON

We are taking the vandalism of the church and the cemetery very seriously. I have my men following several leads as we speak.

A man, a town SHOPKEEPER, stands.

SHOPKEEPER

Vandalization of the church is one thing. I've noticed a rise in theft in my store. What do you propose to do about that?

SHERIFF DAWSON

Please Mr. Kelso. We'll address that in due time.

An hysterical WOMAN stands.

HYSTERICAL WOMAN

Well what about Edna Glick?  
Disappears then turns up murdered?!

SHERIFF DAWSON

That is troubling, yes, and as you probably assume, we're focussing every effort on--

MAN (O.S.)

Pepper was a school hero!

SHERIFF DAWSON

Alright, could we all please, for the sake of harmony, could we please take a collective breath here?

The room quietens. Sheriff Dawson sighs.

SHERIFF DAWSON

The sheriff's department and the mayor's office is doing everything to get to the bottom of this. There is absolutely no cause to be alarmed.

FATHER OATIS (O.S.)

I disagree. You should all be alarmed.

Heads turn to Father Oatis who stands dead-center of the aisle. He begins a slow walk towards the lectern.

SHERIFF DAWSON

(under breath)  
Oh brother.

FATHER OATIS

All of these horrors can be attributed to one thing. Devil worship.

People look at each other, puzzled. Rona sits with her husband, bright eyes fixed on Father Oatis.

Candice's eyes widen in recognition. She discreetly hunches down in her seat as Father Oatis passes.

FATHER OATIS

Satan's grasp is stretching across this country, bringing with it debauchery. Murder.

Father Oatis stops at the lectern, addresses the crowd.

FATHER OATIS

They move into your town. Hold black masses and wanton sex orgies. Worse follows.

Rona nods emphatically. She stands. Rona's Husband puts a placating hand on her forearm but she'll have none of it.

RONAH

There are... *cultists* practising the Dark Arts out in those woods. Doesn't anybody here watch the news? It's happening all over. They're calling Satan to this earth and you'll see.

Oliver squirms, uncomfortable.

RONAH'S HUSBAND

Okay honey. Calm down.

RONAH

Blasphemies on our church? Missing farm animals? Dead teachers? What's next?

Ronah scans the faces around her.

RONAH

Our children. In Satan's palm.

Ronah stops on Candice. She points.

RONAH

You.

Candice scowls.

RONAH

It's you. You brought this.

Father Oatis squints. He picks Candice out of the crowd. Something clicks. A realization.

RONAH'S HUSBAND

Alright. That's enough.

Ronah's Husband stands and takes hold of his wife. Ronah struggles.

RONAH

You won't get away with it.  
 (declares to the crowd)  
 Prayer! It's the only way. Pray!  
 PRAY!

Ronah's Husband opens the door and leads Ronah out. The door slams shut.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE - NIGHT

Candice closes the front door. She stops and listens to the silent house.

CANDICE

Guys?

No response. She dumps her handbag on a side table, finds her cigarettes. Lights one.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

Candice walks along the upstairs hall. She stops and peers through a doorway.

GIRL'S BEDROOM.

The way this room is decorated, it's clear it's a girl's bedroom. Cherished Care Bears sit on the bed. Pictures of cute pop stars line a vanity mirror.

Candice moves on.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, NICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Candice pushes the door open into Nick's bedroom. She gazes in at the decidedly masculine decor.

Fondly, she wanders in, eyes trailing a poster of a bikini model, an acoustic guitar in the corner. This could be any teen boy's domain.

Her eyes land on a framed photo on the bedside table - Nick, as a kid, wearing too-large sunglasses and hefting a skateboard.

She picks it up and sits on his bed. Her heel knocks something underneath.

Curious, she reaches down and hooks her fingers into a box, slides it out. She frowns down at its contents: several ritual ingredients, a desiccated rat, and something wrapped in cloth.

She picks it up, unwraps it. She stares down at the stone tablet - her eyes roaming in shock over the cuneiform ritual, Lamashtu's horrifying visage,

She covers her mouth.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, CAR PARK - NIGHT

Stella's bomb of a car drives into the high school's full car park. Kids dressed in formal attire walk excitedly for the doors to the decorated auditorium.

INT. STELLA'S CAR - NIGHT

Stella accelerates at some dawdling dance-goers. They shriek and move out of the way.

STELLA  
Move it, dumb asses.

Stuart sits shotgun and Clara and Lacey sit in the back. They're all dressed up.

Lacey gazes out the window.

LACEY  
Oh my God, this is so lame.

STELLA  
I know. It's going to be amazing.

CLARA  
I don't know why we're even doing this. Has anyone seen Nick?

As Stella swerves the car into a space, a figure appears in the headlights.

STELLA  
He's right there. Crisis averted.

Nick, dressed in a tux, waves through the windshield.

Everyone clambers out. Clara sits in the car for a moment longer to gather herself.

EXT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, CAR PARK - CONTINUOUS

Nick holds out his hand and Clara reluctantly takes it as she emerges from the car. She looks at him.

He puts his hands on her hips.

NICK  
I'm sorry about before.

Clara nods.

CLARA  
Do you understand where I'm coming from?

NICK  
I understand.

He puts his arm around her shoulders as they head for the auditorium.

CLARA  
Where were you today?

NICK  
You'll find out.

Clara looks at him, puzzled.

NICK  
Don't worry. You're gonna love it.

STELLA  
Okay losers. Are we gonna do this?!

LACEY  
Yeah!

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, AUDITORIUM ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Music pumps from within the auditorium.

The gang push through the doors. They approach Monica, who sits behind a table, taking tickets.

Stella smirks, Stuart's arm over her shoulder.

MONICA  
(deadpan)  
Welcome to the Sadie Hawkins fund-raising dance.

LACEY  
(laughs)  
Oh wow.

STELLA  
 Hey Monica. I hope you found  
 Depends that match that dress.

MONICA  
 Tickets please.

They hand over their tickets. Lacey gives Monica her sweetest smile.

LACEY  
 So... Where's your date?

Monica ignores the question, avoids eye contact as she tears their tickets. All her puff is gone.

LACEY  
 Now you know how it feels.

Clara reacts to this. They're being a tad harsh.

MONICA  
 (quietly)  
 Have a nice night.

The group walk on, push the doors open into the auditorium. Clara trails behind, gives Monica a lingering look then follows.

INT. OLIVER'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Oliver, Mal and Cody sit around a coffee table, rolling dice, moving miniatures of sword-wielding barbarians and wizards around a board.

MAL  
 So. What do you think everyone's  
 doing right now?

CODY  
 Can we just play?

MAL  
 I'm just saying. I think we could  
 have worked a little harder to go  
 to that dance.

CODY  
 I don't know what difference it  
 makes. I ask them, they ask me. I  
 still won't be going with anyone.  
 Most of the girls at Bradyville  
 High are stuck up bitches.

MAL  
 (to Oliver)  
 How about you? Anyone in your  
 crosshairs?

OLIVER  
 It's your turn.

CODY  
 That means yes.

OLIVER  
 Shut up.

MAL  
 Wait! I know! Clara Black. It's  
 Clara fucking Black.

Oliver scowls.

MAL  
 You could do worse. She's got that  
 whole vamp thing happening now.

OLIVER  
 Clara Black is as bad as any of  
 those girls you're talking about.  
 Maybe worse.

Mal and Cody smirk at each other.

OLIVER  
 Now can we keep playing?

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Music blares and people dance. Our gang couldn't stand out  
 more. As they move through the crowd, relishing the stares,  
 they smile darkly. Except Clara. Her heart's not in it.

Ruby appears before them. She slows and looks them up and  
 down.

RUBY  
 Oh my God, you actually came.

She nods, looks them over, gives them a patronizing smile.

RUBY  
 That's really brave.

STELLA  
 You've done a great job decorating,  
 Ruby. Is that genuine cellophane?

Ruby comes in close to Stella.

RUBY

(hisses)

I'm not sure what's more pitiful.  
That dress or the fact you thought  
you were welcome here. Any of you.

CLARA

Ruby, we're not hurting anyone.  
Just leave us alone.

RUBY

Pardon me?

CLARA

Isn't this exhausting? We're here  
to have a good time. Why do you  
have to take it so personally?

Ruby laughs, disbelieving. There's an almost imperceptible  
glance between Ruby and Nick - one Clara misses - then she  
forces a smile.

RUBY

I have compere duties. Try not to  
stain anything.

Ruby struts away.

Nick smiles, puts his arm around Clara.

CLARA

I'm just over it.

STELLA

Bitch totally deserved it.

The microphone squeals.

RUBY (O.S.)

Your attention everyone. Hi there.  
Hello everyone.

The music drops and they turn to see Ruby standing on stage.

RUBY

Most of you look really, really  
classy. Y'all having a magical  
evening?

A cheer goes up.

RUBY

We're just an hour away from  
announcing Mrs. and Mr. Sadie  
Hawkins, but I wanted to take a  
moment to reflect on what we've  
achieved here at Bradyville High  
over the past year.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

I think when we look back on nineteen ninety-two, we'll all remember Haley Everton representing us at the State Track and Field Championships. We'll remember our debating team taking out silver at Regionals - well done guys. We'll remember when Miss George and Mr. Koehler finally made it official.

People applaud, someone wolf whistles.

RUBY

And we'll also remember the de-virginization of Bradyville's most desperate loser - in the girl category - Clara Black.

Ruby golf claps.

RUBY

Woo! Way to go, Clara! Way to go!  
Could we get a spotlight?

A spotlight swivels in the silence, picks out Clara in the crowd. She stands, paralyzed.

RUBY

You must be so grateful.

Quiet laughter echoes through the auditorium. It grows, until most of the crowd joins in.

Clara's lip trembles. She turns and pushes her way through the crowd.

RUBY

Now, Veronica Pritchard with a tribute to Mrs. Glick, may she rest in peace.

Veronica walks on stage, already singing 'I Have Nothing' from the *Bodyguard* soundtrack.

VERONICA

SHARE MY LIFE,  
TAKE ME FOR WHAT I AM,  
'CAUSE I'LL NEVER CHANGE  
ALL MY COLORS FOR YOU...

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, GIRLS BATHROOMS - NIGHT

Stella and Lacey enter the girls' bathrooms. They listen.

STELLA

Clara?

CLARA (O.S.)  
Oh God! I am so embarrassed.

Stella and Lacey walk to a locked cubicle door.

LACEY  
Are you okay in there, Clara? Do you want someone to come in?

CLARA (O.S.)  
Just, please, leave me alone.

Nick opens the door to the bathroom and peers in. Stella and Lacey nod and walk out, letting Nick close the door behind them. Nick walks to the locked cubicle.

NICK  
Hey in there.

CLARA (O.S.)  
Go away, Nick.

NICK  
What's going on?

CLARA (O.S.)  
How did she know?

NICK  
Clara, I didn't tell her. Why would I?

CLARA (O.S.)  
We didn't even...

NICK  
I know. Girls like Ruby aren't very interested in the truth. Now come on. Open up. I can't do my best work with a door between us.

The lock turns and Clara opens the door.

Nick leans against the door frame.

NICK  
What do you want to do?

Clara walks to the sinks. She splashes water on her face.

NICK  
I understand if you want revenge. I don't think there's anyone more deserving than Ruby.

Clara stares at Nick in the mirror.

Another cubicle door opens and they turn to see Monica emerge. Monica wordlessly walks to the sinks, preens herself in the mirror.

MONICA

There's an exclusive after-party  
out on Cottonwood Drive tonight.  
Some big mansion. You'll know it  
when you see it.

(beat)

She'll be there.

Monica glances at them both briefly then walks out.

INT. MANSION, POOL AREA - NIGHT

The after-party. The popular kids drink and dance around the pool of a double-story mansion in Bradyville's wealthier suburb.

Ruby sits on Kyle's lap in the midst of it, surveying her domain. Kyle tries to kiss her and she leans away.

KYLE

What, babe? Come on.

RUBY

Later. God, I can't believe those  
losers thought they could come to  
my dance.

KYLE

But you showed them.

RUBY

That's right. And I'll show them  
again until they get it through  
their skulls.

Kyle tries to kiss her again but she slides off him.

RUBY

I need to pee.

Ruby wanders through the crowd and the large open doors into

INT. MANSION, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The crowded living room. She smiles and nods, moves through to the

DOWNSTAIRS HALL.

Ruby walks along the hall and slips into a bathroom under the main stairs. She closes the door.

A hooded FIGURE in a black robe appears at the far end of the hall.

INT. MANSION, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ruby hums to herself, primps herself briefly in the mirror then settles on the toilet.

There's a soft knock on the door.

RUBY  
Someone's in here!

The knock comes again.

RUBY  
Are you deaf, dick munch?!  
Someone's in here!

Ruby listens to the muffled sounds of the party through the door. She sighs, continues.

Someone BANGS on the door and Ruby jumps.

RUBY  
Oh my God!

Ruby angrily finishes up and stabs the flush button. She strides for the door.

RUBY  
I can't believe I have to share  
this planet with such a bunch of--

Ruby wrenches the door open. A towering hooded FIGURE stands there.

RUBY  
(quietly)  
Assholes.

The figure reaches for her. She SCREAMS.

EXT. MANSION, POOL AREA - NIGHT

But no one hears her as the party continues.

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Nick and Stuart - concealed by their hoods - carry a trussed and squirming Ruby between them. Her voice is muffled by a pillowcase.

RUBY  
I'm gonna rip your fucking faces  
off! Let me go!

Lacey leads the procession - also in her robes and hood -  
shining the way with a flashlight.

Clara and Stella follow from behind in their hoods, faces in  
darkness.

Ruby bucks and Stuart fastens his grip.

ORCHARD CLEARING.

They reach the clearing and dump Ruby in the center of an  
arcane symbol carved into the dirt. Lacey moves around,  
lighting candles.

Ruby stops pulling at her bonds to listen.

RUBY  
Where am I? Where the fuck am I? My  
dad is gonna be so pissed at you!

Everyone moves to their places. Nick goes to the shrine  
they've built, lights candles.

RUBY  
Are you listening to me?! Whoever  
you are, you're in deep fucking  
shit. Get these things off my  
wrists.

NICK  
You didn't tell me she had such a  
mouth on her.

Nick crouches and removes the pillowcase. Ruby blinks up at  
all the faceless hooded figures.

RUBY  
(afraid)  
HELP! HEEEEELP!

CLARA  
Let's just get this over with.

EXT. ORCHARD ESTATES, STREET - NIGHT

Headlights sweep across the ancient 'Orchard Estates' sign.  
Sheriff Dawson's car coasts to a stop.

Sheriff Dawson gets out. He flicks on a flashlight, sweeps it  
around, then enters Orchard Estates on foot.

EXT. ORCHARD CLEARING - NIGHT

Ruby squirms on the ground as the gang chant around her.

NICK

*Risa-r nap-ip-ir!*

Nick moves around the circle, he points a dagger to the east, west, north and south. This ritual is identical to the one performed by Eugene Strafer thirty years ago.

NICK

*Risa-r nap-ip-ir! Erientum tipu-h  
ak hiya-n!*

EVERYONE

*Erientum tipu-h ak hiya-n!*

EXT. MURDER HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheriff Dawson comes upon the murder house. He shines his flashlight over it as he wanders closer. He passes the basement window, light flashing off the grimy glass.

He stops, sighs. He moves to leave but hears something. He turns the flashlight on the twisted orchard sitting behind the house.

He listens.

EXT. ORCHARD CLEARING - NIGHT

The ritual is reaching its peak. Nick moves around the circle, leading the others as his chanting grows in volume.

He raises his arms and they all do as well.

Ruby, who is trying valiantly to remove her ties, stops. She's spotted Clara's BOOTS peeking out from under her robe. She LAUGHS suddenly, loud and cruel.

RUBY

Oh my God.

Everyone stops chanting. They look at Ruby.

RUBY

Oh God, this is rich! I've been  
kidnapped by the freaks.

Ruby laughs harder.

RUBY

I should have known! What, is this  
some kind of lame roleplaying  
thing? You guys are so weird!

Nick pulls back his hood.

ORCHARD.

Sheriff Dawson treads through the orchard, eyes on the candlelight burning through the trees. He hears VOICES, reflexively puts his hand on his holster.

ORCHARD CLEARING.

Ruby is still laughing on the ground.

CLARA

Ruby, shut up!

RUBY

Oh, you don't tell me to shut up. I tell you to shut up. God Clara. I thought you were sad before, but this is, wow.

Clara pushes her hood away from her face.

RUBY

I'm sorry but how deluded are you actually? I'm Ruby Valentine. When they find out you dorks did this to me, you're all going to jail. For a very long time. Don't you worry about that.

ORCHARD.

Sheriff Dawson walks closer. He freezes when he gets a full view of the clearing. His eyes widen, taking in the hooded figures, Ruby lying on the ground, the ritualistic symbols.

He hunches, slides his gun from its holster. Then he frowns. He feels a presence beside him and turns--

The White Goat Thing LOOMS over him with baleful yellow eyes.

Sheriff Dawson reacts but the thing grips his head in its long fingered hands.

ORCHARD CLEARING.

Stuart turns at the commotion in the trees behind him. It stops. He shrugs and turns back to the clearing.

CLARA

We've been going to the same school for six years and you've never been anything but a bitch to me, Ruby. Why? What did I ever do to you?

RUBY

You'll never be like me.

CLARA

I don't want to be like you. I just want to feel normal and not something people like you scrape off your shoe.

RUBY

We're talking about shoes now? Okay Clara, those boots you suddenly started wearing like you're some kind of hot shit? I wouldn't put them on a pig.

Clara glares at Ruby, her breath hitches. Movement catches her eye and she sees Nick - unseen by Ruby - standing with dagger held high in both hands.

Nick's eyes meet Clara's. She nods.

He brings the dagger down, drives it into Ruby's chest. Ruby stares down at the handle protruding from her in disbelief. Blood trickles from her lips.

RUBY

(croaky)

Bugg'n.

Everyone stands in stark shock as the life ebbs out of Ruby. Stuart turns away and vomits.

Nick pulls the blade out. He gazes at the blood dribbling off it and onto his wrist.

EXT. ORCHARD CLEARING - LATER

It rains.

Stuart, Stella and Lacey frantically dig the wet soil as Nick circles Ruby's body, sprinkling it with oils and ash.

Clara hugs her knees nearby.

NICK

We need to hurry.

She watches as Nick and Stuart bundle up Ruby's limp body and drag it across the mud. Stella and Lacey, saturated and pale, stand back and watch.

Ruby's body rolls into the shallow grave. Her dead eyes fill with rain.

Nick glances over his shoulder at Clara then starts shovelling soil over Ruby.

Thunder roars.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick closes the door, leans against it with an elated smile. He walks for the stairs but stops.

Candice sits in an armchair in the dim living room, nursing a glass of wine.

CANDICE

That priest is in town. You should pack your bag. We'll leave soon. Maybe a couple days, depending on how nosy he gets.

Nick walks to the living room archway, sees boxes packed with their belongings.

CANDICE

Where've you been? That dance finished hours ago.

NICK

I've been out. I didn't realize I had a curfew...

His eyes fall on the stone tablet sitting in Candice's lap.

CANDICE

Nick, what have I told you about messing around with this shit? Lamashtu? Are you out of your Goddamned mind?! Who put these ideas in your head? How did you even get this?

NICK

You've been through my stuff?

CANDICE

Are you turning your back on Satan? After all He's done for us?

NICK

After all He's done for you! You never stopped to ask how I felt about any of this. I didn't ask for it.

Candice puts the tablet aside, stands.

CANDICE

You dedicated yourself to Him.  
Hon', don't break that oath. You  
know what'll happen.

(beat)

Have you dragged your sister into  
this?

NICK

Leave her out of it.

CANDICE

Nick, I... I feel like I've never  
had to do this before but, I'm  
sorry, you're grounded. No rituals,  
no books. Definitely no  
Mesopotamian demons. You're to stay  
in this house until we skip town.

NICK

This is bullshit! You just hate I'm  
doing something you're too fucking  
weak to do.

CANDICE

Nick--

NICK

Fuck off.

Nick stomps up the stairs. Candice looks genuinely hurt.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick closes the door on the girl's bedroom, leans against it.  
He gazes at someone.

VOICE (O.S.)

I heard everything.

Nick moves across the room to where Lacey sits on her bed. He  
lies down, puts his head in her lap. She fondly plays with  
his hair.

LACEY

Don't be sad.

NICK

She doesn't understand.

Lacey's are glassy with reverence.

LACEY

We'll finish the ritual and it'll  
be glorious. Then she'll see. Then  
she'll know a world fit for her  
grandchild.

Nick looks up at Lacey's swollen belly, places a hand against it. Lacey puts her hand over his.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, CLARA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Clara lays on her side on her bed. She watches the rain trickle down her window.

The phone rings in another part of the empty house. She ignores it.

Clara gets up and wanders to the window. She gazes over the street to the Valentine house where several police cars sit.

INT. BRADYVILLE HIGH, CLASSROOM - DAY

Clara stares down at a textbook in Advanced English. She looks across at Stella, who avoids her eye.

The INTERCOM crackles to life.

MR. HARRIS (V.O.)

Students. Faculty members. This is your principal. You've all heard by now of the disappearance of Ruby Valentine overnight and I'd like to let you know that the police are doing everything they can to find her, safe and sound. Anyone - student or teacher - who feel they need to, may take the rest of the day off.

'Runaway Train' by Soul Asylum plays from the speakers.

Some students look at each other and snicker.

Clara gazes at Nick's empty seat. She grabs up her stuff and hurries out.

EXT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, PORCH - AFTERNOON

Clara walks down the driveway to the Clotie house.

Clara steps onto the Clotie's porch and rings the bell. After a moment, the front door opens. Candice - dragging on a cigarette - looks at Clara through the screen door.

CLARA

Hi. Mrs. Clotie...?

CANDICE

Oh right. The Clara girl.

CLARA

Um. I was wondering if Nick was home. He wasn't at school today.

CANDICE

Nick won't be going back to that school. We're leaving town.

(beat)

So I guess it was you, huh? Filled his head with this stuff? I know girls like you.

CLARA

Sorry?

CANDICE

Calling up Lamashtu? What did you do to convince him? Give him a peek?

CLARA

Mrs. Cloutie, I--

CANDICE

You leave my boy alone.

Candice closes the door in Clara's face.

INT. BLACK HOUSE - NIGHT

Clara closes her front door. The house is dark. She reaches across, flicks on the lights.

CLARA

Dad?

There comes no answer.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Clara turns the light on in the kitchen. She yelps.

Howard sits at the kitchen table.

CLARA

Dad?

He gazes at her with listless eyes. He's dishevelled.

HOWARD

Where's my dinner?

CLARA

Dad... I've done something really stupid.

Howard slams his fist on the table. Clara jumps.

HOWARD  
WHERE'S MY DINNER?!

Howard stands, knocks his chair over.

CLARA  
Dad?

HOWARD  
You think this is all here for you?  
Ever since you sent your mother to  
an early grave, you've been working  
on me.

Howard moves forward. Clara backs away, eyes welling with tears.

HOWARD  
I'm not gonna let you, you hear me  
young lady?

CLARA  
What are you talking about?!

HOWARD  
I know what you're trying to do.

Howard lunges and Clara shrieks. She twists out of his way. His hands grab empty air.

Clara runs for it.

HOWARD  
CLARA!

STAIRS.

Clara heads for the stairs, the SHADOW of her father looming behind.

She scrambles up them, Howard's large hands grabbing at her legs. She screams, kicks out. The tip of her mother's boot catches his jaw and he grunts.

Clara continues upward.

LANDING.

She makes it to the carpeted landing but Howard tackles her. She scratches at him with her fingernails.

CLARA  
Dad! Why are you doing this?!

Howard's face is all fury as his hands find her throat. He squeezes. Clara gasps for breath.

He squeezes harder and Clara's face turns red. With her last resolve, she sends her knee up between his legs. He howls in pain. She takes the chance to crawl away.

Straining for breath, Clara runs for the first door she sees.

INT. BLACK HOUSE, HOWARD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clara slams the door on Howard's bedroom. She locks it, looks around for something to bar it with.

She hurries to a dresser as Howard SLAMS against the other side of the door, screaming bloody murder. Clara pushes her shoulder against the dresser but it doesn't budge.

Desperate, she looks around the room.

The door CRACKS.

HOWARD (O.S.)  
I'm gonna suck your eyeballs out,  
you little cunt!

Clara wails, heads for the window. She shoves it open and throws a leg over the sill.

The door SMASHES open and Howard stands there, a hulking shape, chest heaving.

Clara works fast. She clambers out onto the eve.

BLACK HOUSE, EVE.

Clara looks down. It's not a long drop.

Howard is in the window suddenly, grabs for her. He snags her sweater and she pulls away, loses her footing. She slides messily off the eve and lands with a grunt on the lawn.

Stunned momentarily, she whimpers and wobbles to her feet.

HOWARD (O.S.)  
CLARA!

Clara limps to her bike, gets on and rides into the night.

INT. OLIVER'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Oliver comes down the stairs into his basement in his pajamas. He stops when he hears sniffing. He wanders over to see Clara's boots sticking out behind the armoire.

OLIVER

Clara?

Clara huddles in the corner. Her face is red from crying.

CLARA

I'm sorry. I didn't know where else  
to go.

Oliver shifts self-consciously as he stands in his jim-jams  
in front of the girl he likes.

OLIVER

Is everything--

Clara lets the waterworks burst.

CLARA

Ruby's dead. She's not missing,  
she's dead.

Oliver computes this.

CLARA

We buried her in the orchard and no  
one's speaking to me and my dad  
just tried to kill me. I'm so  
scared, Oliver.

Oliver wanders to Clara, shocked. He sits down next to her.  
Clara holds her face in her hands and bawls.

OLIVER

What happened? Are you sure she's  
dead?

CLARA

Oh Oliver, I'm sure.

Clara rests her head on his shoulder and he awkwardly puts  
his arm around her.

CLARA

I'm sorry I was such a huge bitch.  
I don't know what came over me.  
Nick... He's...

OLIVER

It's okay.

They sit quietly for a while.

OLIVER

What do you want to do?

CLARA

What can I do? It's a mess.

OLIVER

I might have an idea...

Clara raises her head, looks at him.

EXT. LONELY ROAD - DAY

Clara rides her bike - Oliver sitting on the handlebars - along a lonely road on the outskirts of town. Oliver points.

OLIVER

I think that's it.

Up ahead, Bradyville's only MOTEL.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The motel beds have been pushed to the walls, making room for Father Oatis and a circle of Bradyville's devout, Rona among them. They link hands, eyes closed, as the Father leads them in prayer.

FATHER OATIS

The light of God surrounds us. The love of God enfolds us. The power of God protects us. The presence of God watches over us. Wherever we are, God is. And all is well.

There comes a soft knock at the door and all heads turn. Father Oatis nods, gestures to his followers.

FATHER OATIS

Please. Continue.

The prayer circle joins again as Father Oatis walks to the door. He opens it.

Clara and Oliver stand there like lost children.

EXT. MOTEL - LATER

Clara and Father Oatis sit on the retaining wall of an overgrown garden. Oliver paces near by.

FATHER OATIS

You know what you've done has very grave consequences? Not only in this life, but the next?

Clara nods, tears spill down her cheeks. He puts a comforting hand on her knee.

FATHER OATIS

Thankfully, in God's eyes, there is always a way back from darkness through prayer and forgiveness.

OLIVER

Couldn't we just ask God this one favor?

FATHER OATIS

The devil makes deals, God answers prayers.

CLARA

Will you tell the police?

FATHER OATIS

Yes. I'm afraid I'll have to. But I will tell them that you were influenced. That you were deceived... I've been following this family for a very long time. They hurt people, everywhere they go.

CLARA

Then I need to tell you something else. Something... Nick found a weird piece of stone covered in old writing. It has a picture of a woman with a dog's head, or a bear's head. I couldn't tell which.

FATHER OATIS

Go on.

CLARA

I don't know how he even knew but he said it was from Ancient Mesopotamia. He said he thought it was a ritual to raise this woman. And I think her name is Lamashtu...

Father Oatis pales.

CLARA

Is that bad?

He stands on shaky legs.

CLARA

Father Oatis?

FATHER OATIS

Lamashtu is an extremely terrible demon. A mother of monstrosities. An eater of flesh, slayer of children, bringer of disease.

(MORE)

FATHER OATIS (CONT'D)

If she should rise... There would be untold destruction.

Realization dawns on Clara.

CLARA

He's been using us. He's been using us to complete the ritual. Oh my God.

FATHER OATIS

If this is true, you need to gather your friends. We'll attempt to sanctify that orchard. Make sure he doesn't succeed.

OLIVER

What if it doesn't work?

FATHER OATIS

It has to. The only one who can stop Lamashtu if she rises is the Deceiver himself.

INT. CLOOTIE HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALL - AFTERNOON

Candice comes up the stairs and stops in the upstairs hall.

CANDICE

Nick?

There's no answer. She walks to his closed bedroom door and knocks. When there's no answer still, she opens the door.

Nick's room is empty.

EXT. CLOOTIE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Candice slams the door on her Mustang. Turns the ignition and jams her foot on the gas, sending a plume of smoke into the air as she reverses messily out of the driveway.

The Mustang screams up the street.

EXT. ORCHARD - AFTERNOON

Father Oatis leads Rona and his six followers through the orchard. They sing the hymn 'Onward, Christian Soldiers.'

Clara, Oliver, Stella, Stuart and Lacey bring up the rear. Stella scowls as she petulantly picks her way through the trees.

STELLA

Who are these people?

CLARA

They're here to help us.

ORCHARD, CLEARING.

The group emerge into the clearing. Father Oatis stares gravely at the carved symbols, the shrine. He turns and gestures for everyone to stand in a circle, join hands.

FATHER OATIS

Hold God in your hearts, my children. Believe. You must believe or this will fail. Join me in prayer.

They all close their eyes, bow their heads. Lacey doesn't. She stares balefully at the priest.

FATHER OATIS

In the name of Jesus Christ, I bind all spirits of the air, fire, water, ground, underground, and netherworld. I bind all forces of evil and claim the blood of Jesus on the atmosphere, the water, the ground, and their fruits around us, the underground and nether world.

Father Oatis stops when the trees around the clearing begin to creak. The ground beneath them groans softly.

FATHER OATIS

In the name of Jesus Christ, I seal this place and all members of this circle in the blood of Jesus Christ!

A mighty WIND picks up, whipping their hair, their clothes. The sky darkens. Father Oatis steels himself.

FATHER OATIS

(bellows)

In the name of Jesus Christ I forbid every spirit from any source from entering this world in any way!

The clearing is gripped by a violent maelstrom.

FATHER OATIS

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, I FORBID IT!

There is a sudden crescendo, then silence. The wind drops, the trees sway slowly into stillness.

They all wait, breathless.

OLIVER

Did it work? Is it done?

Father Oatis looks unsure.

Lacey giggles. Everyone turns, puzzled. When she sees them staring, she laughs harder.

CLARA

Lacey?

Lacey grins, eyes full of revelation.

LACEY

You're going to die.

Suddenly, a KNIFE flashes across Father Oatis's throat. Blood spurts. The priest gags, staggers. His followers cry out in horror.

Nick stands behind him. He watches as Father Oatis drops to his knees, blood pulsing through his fingers. Nick shoves Father Oatis with his foot. The priest lands in the dirt.

Nick smiles, looks at a pale Clara.

NICK

The blood of a holy man.

Lacey claps, laughs as everyone backs away.

Father Oatis's blood seeps into the dirt as his life fades. The ground groans, cracks.

NICK

Here she comes.

Clara, panicked, stares as THINGS begin to emerge from the dirt - Lamashtu's monstrous children.

Rona and Father Oatis's followers turn and flee into the orchard. Stella and Stuart do the same. Oliver pulls on Clara's arm.

OLIVER

Come on!

But Clara resists, looks at Nick in bewilderment. Oliver successfully coaxes Clara away and into the trees.

Nick and Lacey hold hands. They watch the ground before them bulge. The trees around the clearing blacken.

ORCHARD.

Clara and Oliver hurry through the twisted trees, the inhuman SHRIEKS of terrible things behind them.

Up ahead, Stella and Stuart run full pelt. Stella shouts over her shoulder.

STELLA  
Get to the house! The house!

ORCHARD, CLEARING.

The ground breaks open, falls away.

Nick and Lacey step back to avoid falling through.

Arms - human arms - burst from the ground. Ruby plants her hands, extracts herself, hair and face caked with dirt.

She opens her eyes. There's nothing human about them. Blank, dull red.

Ruby - or rather, LAMASHTU - stands on legs that bend the wrong way. Without giving Nick or Lacey a second glance, she walks passed them and into the orchard.

The trees twist and blacken in her wake.

ORCHARD.

Rona hurries through the trees. She wasn't built for this level of stress. She stops to hang onto a tree.

A terrible SCREAM rips through the orchard and Rona forces herself onward.

ORCHARD.

In another part of the orchard, a group of Father Oatis's followers desperately flee.

Something LARGE dashes out of nowhere and collects one of them in a spray of blood.

Another follower is snatched, disposed of messily.

ORCHARD.

Clara slows. Oliver stops when he realizes she's not with him. He hurries back.

OLIVER  
Clara!

CLARA  
The cemetery.

OLIVER

What?!

Clara runs off in another direction.

CLARA

I need to go to the cemetery.

Oliver races after her.

OLIVER

Clara!

INT. MURDER HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Stella and Stuart run through the front door of the murder house. The building shudders and shakes around them.

They head for the basement stairs.

EXT. ORCHARD ESTATES, STREET - AFTERNOON

Rona staggers from the trees, straining for breath. The orchard is a cacophony of awful HOWLS and BLEATS behind her.

She stops when she sees Sheriff Dawson's patrol car sitting by the Orchard Estates sign. She looks around.

RONA

Sheriff Dawson?

She hurries to the car, tries a door. Locked. Desperately, she rounds the car and tries the driver-side door. It opens.

She cries out in relief, turns--

A flash of HEADLIGHTS and a glimpse of canary yellow and Rona is obliterated by Candice's Mustang as it careens through, taking the patrol car's door with it.

INT. CANDICE'S MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Candice irritably flicks on the wipers. They smear blood across the windshield.

CANDICE

Dammit.

She makes the wipers go faster.

The windshield clears just as two GARGANTUAN things thunder across the road in front of her, trumpeting loudly. She slams on the brakes, stares after them as they plow through the trees.

EXT. ORCHARD ESTATES, STREET - CONTINUOUS

Candice gets out of the Mustang. She hears the mingled SHRIEKS from the orchard.

CANDICE

Oh Nick.

She turns when Clara pedals furiously passed on her bike, Oliver balanced precariously on the handlebars. Their eyes meet, but Clara doesn't stop.

Determined, Candice slides back into the Mustang. She guns the engine, screeches around in a circle and gives chase.

ORCHARD ESTATES, STREET.

Clara hears the approaching Mustang, glances over her shoulder.

A streak of yellow gains on them.

Oliver sees this too and blanches.

OLIVER

Crazy bitch!

Clara thinks quick, swerves off the road just in time and onto a narrow dirt track that leads through the woods.

INT. MURDER HOUSE, BASEMENT - NIGHT

Stella and Stuart tread cautiously into the middle of the basement. The chaos outside a distant murmur.

STUART

What do we do?

Stella shakes her head, rambles.

STELLA

How did I end up here? I'm having a nightmare, right? I'm having a nightmare? This isn't happening. How is this happening? I should have gone to church with my mom more. Oh my God, how did I end up here?

Stuart hears something. He turns, his eyes widen, makes a choked sound. His hand reaches out to snag Stella's attention.

STELLA

What?

She turns, freezes.

They're being watched. Around the basement, standing where they hadn't been a second earlier, are the PARTY-GOERS. Still in their cocktail dresses and smart suits, still bearing the ghastly wounds they sustained thirty years ago.

Stella clutches Stuart, looks from malevolent face to malevolent face. The staircase is blocked. There's no escape.

Carol's headless body gurgles, shuffles on uncertain feet towards them.

Stella lets out a horrified SCREAM and backs away. Stuart, too paralyzed with fear, succumbs to reaching, tearing hands as he's mobbed by these walking abominations.

Stella averts her face from Stuart's grisly end and looks up. The basement window is within arm's reach. She climbs onto a tattered couch and desperately shoves at the stubborn window.

EXT. MURDER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Whimpering, Stella manages to force the window open then hoists herself through. She freezes, her lower-half still inside. She looks up.

Lacey stands there, smiling down at her sweetly. She plants a foot on Stella and shoves her back through.

The window slams shut on Stella's SCREAMS. Blood sprays the dusty glass.

EXT. BRADYVILLE, STREET - NIGHT

The sun has set.

Ruby-Lamashtu walks the streets of Bradyville, a trail of destruction in her wake.

Hideous CREATURES circle her, run rampant.

Kyle hunkers behind a nearby car, eyes wide as he takes in the mayhem. He spots Ruby.

KYLE

Ruby?

Ruby-Lamashtu ignores him, continues on.

Kyle hurries from cover, heads for her.

KYLE

Babe? Where have you been?

Nothing. He reaches out, takes hold of her arm.

KYLE

Babe!

Ruby-Lamashtu turns, red eyes burning. Kyle staggers back.

KYLE

Oh shit.

Ruby-Lamashtu whips out, grabs the sides of Kyle's head. He stares at her in horror. She TWISTS sharply and his face goes slack. His body drops to the road.

Ruby-Lamashtu casually casts aside Kyle's head and moves on.

BEGIN DESTRUCTION MONTAGE.

A pair of TWINS, with elephant heads and the naked bodies of obese women, stomp through a PLAZA. Bradyville citizens flee in terror as they smash their way into a frozen yoghurt vendor.

A foul four-legged monstrosity with its head on backwards stampedes through traffic, crawls atop an SUV and smashes its way inside to get at the people.

A group of what look like twisted BABY BIRDS swarm a restaurant. One pins down a screaming woman and tears with its beak.

END DESTRUCTION MONTAGE.

EXT. BRADYVILLE, STREETS - NIGHT

Clara pedals through the streets. Oliver quails at the pandemonium around them. They're narrowly missed by a bellowing two-legged BULL THING pursuing a man on a motorbike.

A sudden flash of headlights and Candice's Mustang screeches out of nowhere.

Clara loses control and she, Oliver and the bike skid, tumble and crash across the road. Clara's clarinet case snaps free, spilling the instrument.

The Mustang skids to a stop, headlights glaring at Clara and Oliver. Clara sits up and winces at a large graze on her shin.

The Mustang revs.

Oliver jumps up and tackles Clara out of the way as the Mustang roars past again.

MUSTANG.

Angrily, Candice brakes and yanks on the wheel, spinning the car violently so it's facing Clara.

CANDICE  
Stand still, you little tramp.

STREET.

Oliver looks up, sees an ELEPHANT TWIN stomping her way closer, TRUMPETING loudly. He turns to Clara.

OLIVER  
Go.

CLARA  
Oliver--

OLIVER  
GO!

The Mustang growls.

Clara nods and gets up. Oliver, keeping an eye on the Mustang, shuffles forward. He snatches up Clara's clarinet.

The Mustang's rear wheels scream against the road-top. The car lurches forward, aiming for a fleeing Clara.

Oliver brings the clarinet to his lips and blows. An awkward HONK emits. He tries again, the Mustang bearing down, and manages a loud and sustained WARBLE.

The Elephant Twin hears this and stomps in their direction.

The Mustang closes the distance. Oliver WARBLER again and there's an almighty collision as the Elephant Twin collects Candice, crushing the car. Monster and twisted yellow metal tumble towards a wide-eyed Oliver.

Clara watches as the whole mess rolls out of sight down an embankment.

CLARA  
Oliver...

She stands, torn, then reluctantly turns and heads into the night.

EXT. BRADYVILLE CEMETERY - NIGHT

Clara hurries through Bradyville cemetery. This place is quiet compared to the rest of town.

She sees it. The Devil's Chair.

She approaches it and shakily sits. Her mouth is dry, doesn't work for a moment. She closes her eyes.

CLARA  
Satan, Satan, Satan.

She opens her eyes, looks around. Nothing.

CLARA  
Um, Beelzebub. Baphomet.

A ripple. A shadow flits. A whisper.

CLARA  
Lucifer!

The chair JOLTS and she grabs the stone armrests. She looks around, gasps. Bradyville cemetery is gone. In its place is utter darkness.

The chair shakes again and she's suddenly surrounded by a dark vista of sloping granite cliffs. The sky is a slate grey, throbbing with lightning.

A brilliant FLASH and Clara squints, grabs tight to the chair. She's high up, looking down on a heavenly landscape. Golden spires peek through white clouds.

The ROAR of fire and Clara's view changes again. Rock, warped and shot with veins of obsidian. She looks around in fear. There's a menace to this place, a dread.

She freezes when she hears foot falls behind her. The precise CLOMP of hooves. A dark PRESENCE rounds the chair, towering over her. She looks away when hot breath blasts her face.

The presence waits. Clara braces herself and looks up. She whimpers.

RUTH BLACK stands there.

CLARA  
Mom?

Ruth is expressionless. As Clara stares, tiny details become obvious: black pupils, pallid skin. This is someone parading as Clara's mother. And Clara knows who it is.

CLARA  
Please...

Ruth watches Clara passively. She reaches out, places her fingertips on the back of Clara's left hand.

A circular SYMBOL erupts in flame on Clara's skin. She yelps, snatches her hand away.

When she looks up again, she's back in the familiar shadows of Bradyville Cemetery.

She checks her hand. The symbol fades from scorched black into a faint, white scar.

EXT. BRADYVILLE, TOWN CENTER - NIGHT

Clara strides across Bradyville's town center. She presses herself against a bent bronze statue as a car zooms past, pursued by a hellish CLICKING INSECT.

Screams of terror and Clara stares across the way.

Ruby-Lamashtu approaches a group of Bradyville citizens trapped in a bus. They huddle, wide eyes on her.

Clara hurries through the civic park. She stops on the street, steels herself.

CLARA

Ruby!

Ruby-Lamashtu turns, terrible eyes gleaming.

CLARA

Go home.

The demon watches her.

CLARA

Or I'll send you home.

Ruby-Lamashtu circles Clara, hissing an esoteric language.

RUBY-LAMASHTU

*Jel'momhert uhfa'a x'inlamu?*

Clara winces, looks down at her left hand. It glows with a dead light, bones showing through the skin.

RUBY-LAMASHTU

*Sis jelsisqu as'iidihertfaa.*

CLARA

You know... I remember the one time you were nice to me, Ruby? Do you remember?

Ruby-Lamashtu stops and stares at this odd pink talking thing.

CLARA

When we were kids, my mom had just died and you and your mom came to our house with a casserole.

Clara's hand glows stronger. She curls it into a fist.

CLARA

And you said, "Clara, I'm sorry your mom died." Do you remember that? I do. I've never forgotten it. And ever since - elementary school and high school when you turned into a total bitch, I remember that one nice thing you said.

Ruby-Lamashtu, who stands close now, glares into Clara's face. Is there a flicker of recognition?

CLARA

But I also think you've had plenty of opportunities to be nice since, and you just haven't. And I don't know why. It's not like you had a difficult childhood. Both your parents are still alive. You're pretty... Were pretty.

Clara's fist pulses with energy now, bones and veins throb.

CLARA

So why did you make my life a living hell?

The wind teases Ruby-Lamashtu's dirty hair. Her expression changes in an instant - malice. She latches onto Clara's arms and Clara squeals.

Ruby-Lamashtu opens her mouth wide - too wide - and lurches close. Clara takes the chance to drive her glowing fist into the demon's chest.

Ruby-Lamashtu stops, looks down.

Clara's hand has disappeared up to her wrist. Searing orange light ripples outward, crackling through Ruby-Lamashtu's body.

The demon convulses, arms flapping out to the side. Ruby's body seems to collapse into itself as it crumples to the ground.

Clara stares down at the husk of Ruby's body. Something amorphous, cloudy, sinks into the road, leaving a dark patch.

Around Clara, Bradyville is silent.

Suddenly, an arm whips around her neck, pulls tight. Her feet come off the ground.

NICK  
You fucking bitch. You ruined it.  
You ruined it!

Clara gasps for breath, attempts to pull his arm away and wriggle free. He squeezes tighter, lips close to her ear.

NICK  
It could have been beautiful but  
you ruined it.

CLARA  
(strained)  
Don't!

CONK!

Nick swoons, releases his grip. He falls to the ground holding his head. Oliver stands over him wielding a fire extinguisher.

Clara hurries to him.

NICK (O.S.)  
You hit me.

They turn. Nick is attempting to climb to his feet.

NICK  
With a fire extinguisher.

OLIVER  
Stay away!

Nick laughs, woozy.

NICK  
You guys are so dead. Just... Hold  
on.

He slips, falls to the ground. He holds his head.

NICK  
Man. I think you cracked my skull  
open.

Clara and Oliver hear something. A slow creaking, a gathering wind. Shadows ripple.

Nick freezes. He's noticed it too.

Clara slips her hand into Oliver's and urges him away.

Nick sits up, looks around. He turns and gazes down the street. Something's coming. Something big. Concern turns to fear when there comes a terrifying HOWL.

Oliver covers his ears.

OLIVER

What is it?

Clara shakes her head, presses him onward.

CLARA

Nothing you'll want to see.

Nick stares into the growing darkness, a darkness that conceals a SHAPE within. He realizes what's coming and tries to get to his feet.

NICK

No!

The Shape approaches with the clear sound of hooves and the miasmal DIRGE of a hundred pained voices.

NICK

NO!

Nick is dragged through a dark puddle of shadow. It closes, cutting his scream short. The street is silent.

EXT. BLACK HOUSE - MORNING

Dishevelled and dazed, Clara and Oliver walk hand-in-hand through the destruction. Overturned cars, smashed houses. They watch the sky lighten over the distant trees.

CLARA

Do you think your parents will be okay?

OLIVER

They go to bed super early. And they're both heavy sleepers. They would have slept through it. At least I hope they did.

They stop and gaze at Clara's house. Aside from a crashed motorbike on the front lawn, it's untouched.

OLIVER

Do you think he's, you know, still crazy?

CLARA

I don't know.

They both jump when the front door BURSTS open. Howard staggers out. He looks around, bewildered.

HOWARD

Clara?

Clara heaves a silent sigh of relief. She turns to see Oliver giving her a strange smile. He takes both of her hands.

CLARA

What?

OLIVER

You did it. I don't know how but you did it.

Clara looks down at her left hand, resting in Oliver's. Her eyes fall on the weird scar on her skin. A symbol of the debt she'll eventually need to repay.

HOWARD (O.S.)

You guys want waffles?

They over to Howard. Clara smiles and nods and they all go inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

Lacey waddles from a bus station to a waiting bus. She has a travel bag slung over her shoulder, carries something else under her arm.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Lacey squeezes down the aisle, comes to a vacant seat next to an OLD WOMAN with a vizor on. They exchange a smile and Lacey stashes her bag, sits.

OLD WOMAN

How far along are you?

LACEY

Any day now.

The Old Woman pats her on the hand, settles back.

Lacey's sweet smile drops. She gazes ahead. In the crook of her arm, she nurses the STONE TABLET.

EXT. BUS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The bus starts away noisily, heading onto a long highway, the sky bright and blue overhead.

FADE OUT.