

DEVIL OF A NIGHT

Written by

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INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Warm lighting illuminates a thin layer of blood, gore and viscera caked to the face of JACK SMITH (30s).

He sits across from the Sheriff's desk, alone, waiting.

After a few beats, SHERIFF enters and takes a seat across from him.

He takes him in for a moment, then--

SHERIFF

I know you gotta hell of a story to tell, and I sure as hell wanna hear it. So let's untangle this web of shit you seem to have found yourself in. Gory details and all.

JACK

I don't even know where to begin.

Sheriff leans back, calmly puts his feet on the desk.

SHERIFF

In my experience, the best place to start a story is typically at the beginning. But I'm no Shakespeare. For your sake, though, I hope you got at least a little Bard in you.

JACK

Okay. Uh.
(clears his throat)
From the beginning.

INT. BORING ADVERTISING FIRM OFFICE - DAY

A fluorescent-lit cube farm half-heartedly decorated. Most people are in basic costumes.

Jack, charming in that effortless way that suggests he's gotten by on it his whole life, sits at his desk in a button-down and slacks.

STACY (late 20s, dressed as what could be construed as The Wicked Witch of the West) passes him, does a double-take.

STACY

(sighing)
Jack. Where's your costume?

Jack gestures vaguely at his outfit.

JACK
I'm dressed like a mature guy who
has his shit together.

She rolls her eyes but smiles.

STACY
That's not a costume. That's false
advertising.

JACK
That's the business we're in.

TODD (40s, enthusiastic, inflatable T-Rex suit) waddles over,
struggling with the suit's tiny arms.

TODD
Smith! You coming to Flanagan's
after work? Everyone's going. Drink
specials, karaoke--

JACK
(cutting him off)
Got other plans, Todd.

TODD
Always with the other plans. I'm
starting to think you don't like us
as much as you say you do.

Todd laughs and waddles away. Stacy lingers.

STACY
Your aura's very blue today.

JACK
Yeah? What's that mean?

STACY
It means you're divinely protected.
Which doesn't make sense.

JACK
Thank you for the insight, Stacy.

STACY
Mhm. I'm doing free Reiki during
lunch if you're interested.

She walks away. Jack watches her go, then turns back to his
computer screen and stares at it with dead-ass eyes.

INT. JACK'S CAR - DAY (DUSK)

Jack sits in city traffic, listening to a PODCAST about conspiracy theories.

A COSTUMED DRIVER glances over and waves at him.

Jack gives the driver an exaggerated THUMBS UP.

INT. URBAN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Jack sits at a table by himself, scribbling in a notebook, half-drunk cup of coffee next to him.

He glances up at a woman at table nearby, her nose in a book.

This is JULIE (early 30s, naturally beautiful, dressed casually but put-together, has an easiness to her).

She feels her eyes on him, then looks up. They lock eyes briefly before Jack sheepishly goes back to writing.

JULIE

What are you writing?

Jack looks back up. He rattles his pen against the paper.

JACK

A novel. Actually.

JULIE

Wow. An actual writer.

JACK

No, not really. I'm in advertising.

JULIE

But you're writing a novel.

JACK

Trying to. What are you reading?

JULIE

Oh, just something stupid.

JACK

I bet it's not that stupid.

She gets up and walks over, plops the book on the table as she sits across from him.

JACK

The Alchemical and Archeological History of the World by John Ockerman. That sounds like the opposite of stupid.

JULIE

Most people I know think it is. But this guy's legit. Goes to all these places and digs up all these interesting stories that no one knows about. I've met him a few times. He's, like, so smart.

JACK

Yeah, I've read some of his stuff. So we have something in common.

JULIE

I don't think I've met anyone who's even heard of this guy.

JACK

I heard him on a podcast.

JULIE

The guy who does the stuff with the sun and the moon on YouTube?

JACK

That's the one.

JULIE

Oh my god. I am OBSESSED with that.

JACK

His work is, like, eye-opening, right?

JULIE

Okay, can I get weird for a minute?

JACK

I mean, get weird for a couple minutes, at least.

JULIE

So, I was listening to this podcast about, like, magick. But magick with a K.

JACK

Oh, yeah, the good stuff.

JULIE
You know about this?

JACK
I've dabbled.

JULIE
Are you serious right now?

JACK
I mean, I'm not an expert. But.

JULIE
Do you know about menstrual blood
and manifestation?

JACK
Yeah, of course. That's some potent
stuff right there.

JULIE
Okay, so I think I was able to
manifest something with my blood.

JACK
Really? What would you have
manifested exactly?

JULIE
This moment right here.

JACK
Okay, details.

JULIE
I focused my intention on meeting
someone on Halloween. A few weeks
ago. Just to see if it would work.
And here you are.

JACK
But, technically, you could have
manifested anyone you met today for
the first time. Not just me.

JULIE
But you're the only one I've met
today for the first time.

JACK
Huh. Maybe you should be dressed as
a witch then.

JULIE
I know, right? Too basic, though.

JACK
Yeah, it's pretty basic.

A beat as both sip their coffees.

JULIE
So, I, um, I'm headed home, but my neighbors throw a killer Halloween party. If you're interested.

JACK
Ah, you know, I was trying to finish this chapter tonight.

JULIE
Oh. That's way more important.

JACK
Not really. Where's the party?

JULIE
Hallow Corner.

JACK
I don't know where that is.

JULIE
Small town like 45 minutes away.

JACK
That's a heck of a commute.

JULIE
I know. I gotta get going, but...

She commandeers his pen and jots down an address in his notebook.

JULIE
That's where the party is. And if you change your mind, I'll be dressed as a witch.

Julie smiles. Jack's heart leaps out of his chest.

JULIE
Nice to meet you, Jack.

JACK
Yeah. You as well.

She leaves. Jack goes back to writing.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A small one-bedroom. Tidy, impersonal, minimal. Looks like someone who could pack up and leave in an hour.

Jack enters, tosses his keys on the counter.

Opens the fridge. Takeout containers. Beer. Not much else.

He grabs a beer, cracks it open.

Sits on the couch.

Pulls out his phone. Opens a dating app.

Scrolls through messages. Dozens of conversations that just stopped. Ghosts he left behind.

He closes the app.

Looks around his empty apartment.

TV off. No music playing. Just silence.

He picks up the notebook. Julie's handwriting.

He closes the notebook.

Takes a sip of beer.

Sits there.

Beat.

He stands.

Walks to his bedroom.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack opens his closet. Looks at his clothes.

Pulls out a button-down shirt. Holds it up. Puts it back.

Pulls out a t-shirt. Considers it.

Puts it on.

Looks at himself in the mirror.

He grabs his jacket.

Heads for the door.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jack grabs his keys, his phone, the notebook.

And he's gone.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Jack's car scoots down the road.

Ahead, a weathered wooden sign:

WELCOME TO HALLOW CORNER

A HALLOWED CORNER OF OHIO

With a spray-painted grinning jack-o'-lantern face on it.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The town explodes into view.

Every storefront decorated. Orange and purple lights strung across the street. Giant inflatable ghosts and spiders.

CARNIVAL RIDES lit up in the distance.

The sidewalks are PACKED. FAMILIES with strollers. TEENS in costumes. ADULTS stumbling between bars.

Jack drives slowly, taking it in.

A BRASS BAND plays on a corner. FOOD VENDORS line the square. A DJ booth blasts music from a makeshift stage.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER - MAPLE STREET - NIGHT

Jack turns onto a residential street.

Cars parked on both sides. Every spot taken.

He drives slowly, looking for parking.

Nothing.

A cookie-cutter HOUSE halfway down the block is lit up, people spilling onto the lawn.

A festively over-the-top place, like the Griswolds moved into Pee-wee's Playhouse.

But no parking anywhere near it.

Jack keeps driving to the end of the block.

Which is BLOCKED by a CREEPY YELLOW VAN.

He waits a couple beats, then lays on his HORN!

JACK

Hey, buddy, c'mon! Let's go!

The VAN DRIVER pokes his head out, cranes it back toward him. He's cloaked and masked.

VAN DRIVER

Fuck off! I'm waitin' on someone!

Jack puts his hands up in dismay.

JACK

(to himself)

At least move your fucking car.

(to the driver)

Can you just pull forward so I can go around?!

The driver gets out and beelines back to Jack's car.

VAN DRIVER

You gotta problem, asshole?!

Jack makes sure his doors are locked.

JACK

No problem! Just kinda in a hurry.

VAN DRIVER

I'm in a hurry too! You don't see me being a prick about it!

He slams his hand on Jack's hood!

Jack jumps like a little bitch.

The driver turns back just as the people he's waiting for show up -- THREE PEOPLE DRESSED IN THE EXACT SAME COSTUME as the driver. They pile into the van and take off.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jack drives around trying to find a place to park but every street seems full.

He finally pulls onto ASH TREE LANE -- completely empty and eerie. He parks at the end of the block.

He pulls out a phone, types the street name into the Notes.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

The party is PACKED. Costumed TWENTY- AND THIRTYSOMETHINGS drinking, laughing, swaying to music, fun vibe with an edge.

Jack pushes through the crowd, trying to find Julie.

He gets approached by a GUY DRESSED LIKE WALDO.

WALDO GUY

Hey, are you the guy?

JACK

No, I'm not the guy.

WALDO GUY

You look like the guy.

JACK

I get that a lot.

WALDO GUY

So you're not the guy with the thing everyone's talking about?

JACK

I don't have the thing and I'm not the guy.

WALDO GUY

Far out, man. You smoke?

JACK

No, thank you. Hey, do you know someone named Julie?

WALDO GUY

Yeah, man. Cool chick.

JACK

Where can I find her?

WALDO GUY

Back there.

He points off into the abyss of the house.

Jack moves deeper into the house. He bumps into A GUY IN A WEREWOLF COSTUME talking to his MUMMY FRIEND.

WEREWOLF GUY

Dude, they're gonna summon the Devil tonight.

MUMMY FRIEND

How the hell they gonna do that?

WEREWOLF GUY

I don't know, bro. Topher said they found a way.

They disappear into the crowd. Jack goes deeper.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack pushes through to a quieter back room where a group plays BEER PONG and others lounge on couches.

He spots Julie, dressed as DOROTHY GALE, effortless and beautiful.

She's mid-conversation with two friends, including a CAT WOMAN, laughing.

Jack approaches, hesitant.

JACK

Julie?

She turns, sees him.

Her face lights up.

JULIE

Jack! You came!

JACK

Yeah. I, uh...I changed my mind about that chapter.

JULIE

I'm so glad you did.

She excuses herself from her friends, walks over to him.

JULIE
You want a drink?

JACK
Yeah. Sure.

MONTAGE - PARTY:

- Julie pours Jack a drink from a punch bowl. They toast.
 - Jack and Julie talking on a couch, leaning in close to hear each other over the music. Chemistry crackling.
 - Julie introduces Jack to random partygoers. They're welcoming, chaotic, drunk.
 - Jack and Julie dancing awkwardly. Julie is loose, uninhibited. Jack is stiff at first, then relaxes. They're laughing.
 - Julie and Jack on the back porch, getting some air. The noise of the party muffled behind them.
- They're talking seriously now, deeper conversation.
- Julie mentions something about "starting over" and "getting out of a bad situation." Jack listens, engaged.
- Back inside. Julie grabs Jack's hand, pulls him through the crowd toward the front door.

EXT. MAPLE STREET - NIGHT

Julie and Jack step out onto the front lawn.

JULIE
You want to get out of here?

JACK
Where to?

JULIE
My place. Just down the street.

JACK
Yeah. Okay.

JULIE
Come on.

She starts walking. Jack follows.

EXT. MAPLE STREET - CONTINUOUS

They walk side by side down the sidewalk.

The street is quieter here. Decorated houses. Glowing jack-o'-lanterns. Music from the party fades behind them.

JULIE
So what changed your mind?

JACK
Honestly? I have no idea.

JULIE
Quite spontaneous of you.

JACK
I'm not usually spontaneous.

JULIE
I figured.

JACK
(smiling)
What's that supposed to mean?

JULIE
You seem like someone who thinks too much.

JACK
Better than not thinking enough.

JULIE
Maybe, yeah.

They walk in comfortable silence for a moment.

JULIE
I'm glad you came, though. It's nice to meet someone who I can actually relate to. Most people think I'm weird.

JACK
You are weird. But that's cool.

They reach a house, modest, two-story, decorated but not over-the-top.

JULIE
This is me.

She heads up the walkway. Jack follows.

JULIE
Fair warning. The place is a mess.

JACK
No judgment.

She unlocks the front door.

She steps inside. Jack hesitates for just a second.

Then follows.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cluttered as hell. Would make most people claustrophobic.

JULIE
You want something to drink?

JACK
Water's fine. If you got it.

JULIE
Yeah, I have water.

JACK
Be weird if you didn't, right?

JULIE
(smiling)
Right.

She moves to an adjacent kitchen as Jack sits on a sectional couch and looks over the living room. If there's bare space on the walls, he can't find any.

But the thing that catches his eye the most are photos of Julie with a MAN and TWO TWEEN BOYS.

JACK
Are these your kids?

JULIE
(walking back with a glass
of water)
Yeah. James and Jacob.

JACK
And the guy...he's your roommate?

JULIE
(laughing)
No, silly. He's my husband.
(MORE)

JULIE (CONT'D)

Well, soon-to-be ex-husband. We're separated right now.

JACK

Oh. I didn't know you had all that going on.

JULIE

I mean, I'm in my thirties.

JACK

What's that supposed to mean?

JULIE

People our age in the dating pool are either divorced or never been married for, you know, reasons.

JACK

Or by choice.

She catches a vibe from his tone.

JULIE

Sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.

JACK

Nah. No offense taken. Everyone has their reasons for being where they are, I guess.

(beat)

You mind if I use the bathroom?

JULIE

Not at all. Down the hall to the left. Don't mind the mess.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jack creeps down the hall, taking in more FAMILY PHOTOS. Something ain't feeling right.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jack flips on the light and takes a piss. He notices MASCULINE HYGIENE PRODUCTS and CHILDREN'S HYGIENE PRODUCTS scattered about. Creeps him out a bit more.

He flushes the toilet, rinses his hands, then leaves.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Julie scrolls through her phone as Jack reappears like an apparition.

JACK

Hey. I think I'm gonna head back. I didn't realize it was so late.

JULIE

It's not even midnight.

JACK

Yeah. Just tired, I guess.

JULIE

Did I do something wrong?

JACK

No. I just--

JULIE

(cutting him off)

I freaked you out with the menstrual blood thing.

JACK

Um, you know, honestly, yeah, that might be part of it.

JULIE

God dammit. I knew I shouldn't have mentioned that.

JACK

Hey, it's fine. I'm glad you felt comfortable enough to share it.

JULIE

But you don't wanna be with some weird ass girl saving her period blood for manifestations.

JACK

I didn't say that.

JULIE

Yes, you did. You just said that.

JACK

Technically, I said that was part--

JULIE

You know, you're acting just like my husband. Doesn't accept anyone for who they really are.

JACK

Okay. I'm gonna go now. I don't wanna argue about this.

Julie goes back to scrolling her phone. Jack lingers. She looks up.

JULIE

Are you leaving or not?

JACK

I don't...look, I'm sorry, but if you're separated maybe don't keep your husband's things around. Or his toothbrush. Or family photos everywhere.

JULIE

We've been separated almost a year.

JACK

A year? Then you're clearly either in denial or you're trying to get back with him. Just own it. Be honest about it.

JULIE

I am being honest about it.

JACK

Are you, though?

JULIE

Dude, we met, like, three hours ago. Don't act like you know me.

JACK

You're right. My bad. I'm just not getting good vibes here all a sudden.

JULIE

Okay. Then take your vibes and go.

Jack hesitates. Wants to say something. Can't find the words.

He walks out. She closes the door behind him.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jack wanders through the streets, trying to retrace his steps to his car.

Every block looks the same -- festive chaos, costumed crowds, jack-o'-lanterns grinning from every porch.

He pulls out his phone, opens Notes, finds Ash Tree Lane. He looks up at the nearest street sign: Maple Street.

He pulls open his Maps app, starts typing...and then his phone dies a sudden death despite plenty of battery.

He tries to turn it back on. No dice.

He keeps walking, passing TRICK-OR-TREATERS, DRUNK ADULTS, a GUY IN A GORILLA SUIT playing saxophone on a corner.

The town square ahead is packed.

A BUSTLING HALLOWEEN FESTIVAL spills into the streets.

Live music, food trucks, carnival rides lit up against the night sky.

Jack navigates around it, heading down a quieter side street lined with LOCAL BUSINESSES --

A vintage bookstore, an oddities shop, a restaurant.

Then he stops in front of --

MADEMOISELLE LENORE'S FORTUNES FORETOLD

PALMISTRY - TAROT - ASTROLOGY - BEIGNETS

An OPEN sign blinks in the window, neon red, hypnotic.

He stares at it, considering, then pushes the door open.

INT. MADEMOISELLE LENORE'S FORTUNES FORETOLD - CONTINUOUS

A bell chimes as Jack steps into a small, cluttered, candlelit shop. Velvet drapes, incense smoke, shelves crammed with crystals, tarot decks, occult books.

Behind a small table draped in dark fabric sits THE MADEMOISELLE (Black, 40s, sharp eyes, unreadable). Rings on every finger, hair wrapped in a silk scarf, the vibe of someone who's seen some shit.

She doesn't look up from the deck of cards she's shuffling, speaks to Jack with a New Orleans twang.

THE MADEMOISELLE
You're lost.

JACK
What gave it away?

THE MADEMOISELLE
Don't look like someone who'd typically wander into a place like this unless.

JACK
Unless what?

THE MADEMOISELLE
Unless you're lost. Sit.

Not a request.

JACK
Oh, I'm not looking for--

THE MADEMOISELLE
Sit. Please.

Jack hesitates, then sits across from her.

She sets the deck down between them.

Her eyes finally meet his.

THE MADEMOISELLE
You want to find something, but you can't. And there's a reason for that. So let's figure out that reason right now.

JACK
I don't have any cash on me.

THE MADEMOISELLE
Did I ask for any?

JACK
No.

THE MADEMOISELLE
Alright then.
(taps the deck)
Cut.

Jack reaches forward, cuts the deck.

The Mademoiselle takes the top half, places it back down.

Then she begins laying out four cards, face down, in a row.

THE MADEMOISELLE

Your past, present, future...and
what you're running from.

She flips the first card. THE DEVIL.

THE MADEMOISELLE

You're trapped. Not by chains you
can see, but by patterns you refuse
to break. You've been running so
long you think it's freedom. But
it's just another cage.

Jack shifts uncomfortably.

JACK

Could you be more specific?

THE MADEMOISELLE

Nope.

She flips the second card. THE TOWER.

THE MADEMOISELLE

Sudden change. What you've built,
all those walls you think keep you
safe, they actually do the
opposite. And they're coming down.
And you can't stop it.

Jack sits a little straighter, stares at the card.

JACK

When you say sudden...how sudden?

She snaps her fingers.

Reaches for the next card, then suddenly pulls back.

THE MADEMOISELLE

Oh, hey, you wanna beignet, sugar?
Make 'em fresh every day. Reminds
me of home.

JACK

That sounds great, thank you.

Jack glances over the store and all of its occult flavors while she gathers their treats.

She returns to the table with two plates of beignets.

Jack swipes his and bites into it. He raises it at the taste.

JACK

Wow. That's authentic.

THE MADEMOISELLE

You've been to the Bayou?

JACK

No, just like Cajun restaurants.

The Mademoiselle smiles, lets a chuckle escape.

THE MADEMOISELLE

You're funny. But I think you're compensating for something.

He furrows his brow as he chews.

She flips the third card. THE LOVERS.

THE MADEMOISELLE

You get close to people but not too close. It terrifies you. You've opened your heart before and got hurt, so best to avoid all that intimate stuff, right?

JACK

I just don't find a lot of people that interesting, you know?

THE MADEMOISELLE

Or maybe you don't go deep enough to find what's really interesting.

JACK

Sometimes there's really nothing there. Have you met people out there these days?

THE MADEMOISELLE

You're making excuses.

JACK

No, it's just that--

THE MADEMOISELLE
 (cutting him off, calm)
 One more.

She flips the fourth card. DEATH.

Jack stares at it.

THE MADEMOISELLE
 That's almost a little too
 convenient, ain't it? 'Specially on
 a night like tonight.

JACK
 Is that literal?

THE MADEMOISELLE
 None of this is literal. But, then
 again, most of it is.

JACK
 Is that some sort of joke?

THE MADEMOISELLE
 Did it sound like a joke?

JACK
 It sounds like a fucking joke,
 yeah. Pardon my French.

THE MADEMOISELLE
 Honey, I'm from New Orleans. That's
 not French.

Silence. Jack looks at the cards, then at The Mademoiselle.

JACK
 Look, I parked on Ash Tree Lane and
 can't seem to find it. Can you help
 me or not? That's all I need to
 know right now.

The Mademoiselle coolly draws the top card of the deck and
 flips it toward him. THE CHARIOT.

JACK
 Okay, very funny. You got me.
 (getting up, swallowing
 his last bite)
 Happy Halloween, but I can't handle
 any more of these tricks.

He reaches into his wallet, tosses a \$20 bill on the table.

JACK

Appreciate the treat, though. It really did taste authentic. Can you at least point me in the right direction? I really am lost.

She points to the right.

JACK

(pointing right)

Ash Tree Lane is that way?

THE MADEMOISELLE

You'll find what you're looking for whichever way you go.

JACK

Right. Thank you, Mademoiselle, for the cryptic nature of all this.

(walking to the door)

Sorry if I was rude, but it's been a frustrating night already, and I just want to go home.

THE MADEMOISELLE

I'm sure you'll find your way.

He leaves. The bell chimes as the door closes behind him.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack emerges from the fortune teller's shop, a little rattled, a lot frustrated.

He looks around, orienting himself.

The festival nearby seems louder, more chaotic. He spots a SHERIFF'S CAR parked near the square.

He heads toward it, weaving through COSTUMED CROWDS, FOOD VENDORS, a BAND setting up on a small stage.

Then -- WHAM.

A LARGE MAN IN A DEVIL MASK barrels into him, nearly knocking Jack off his feet. The man doesn't stop, doesn't apologize, just keeps moving, fast, like he's on a mission.

JACK

Hey, man! What the hell?!

Devil Mask stops and turns. He towers over Jack.

JACK
All good, man. Killer mask.

Devil Mask disappears back into the crowd.

Jack shakes it off, keeps moving toward the sheriff's car.

He spots a DEPUTY (30s, no-nonsense, holding a coffee) standing near the vehicle, scanning the festival.

JACK
Excuse me. Officer?

DEPUTY
(turning)
Yeah?

JACK
Where is Ash Tree Lane exactly?

DEPUTY
Sorry?

JACK
Ash Tree Lane. Where is it?

DEPUTY
You lost or something?

JACK
I parked on Ash Tree Lane, but I can't find it. Do you think you could maybe drive me around?

DEPUTY
I look like an Uber driver to you?

JACK
No. But--

DEPUTY
Can't help you. Sorry, buddy.

Jack runs his hands through his hair.

JACK
What if my car was stolen?

DEPUTY
You wanna file a report?

JACK
Yeah. I do.

Deputy pulls out his notebook.

DEPUTY
Make and model?

JACK
Honda Civic. Silver. 2015.

DEPUTY
(writing)
License plate?

JACK
Uh. I don't know. Who remembers
that kinda thing?

DEPUTY
So you want me to keep an eye out
for a possibly stolen silver Honda
Civic, with an unknown license
plate. Literally one of the most
popular cars on the road. How am I
gonna know it yours?

JACK
Again, it's a 2015. A little older.
And silver. So that probably
narrows it down a bit.

DEPUTY
And how's a 2015 different than a
2016? Or 2014? Or 2025? 2024?

JACK
I mean, I'm not the expert here.

The Deputy's radio blares to life.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
All units, be advised: 10-31 in
progress. Suspect is a white male
in a devil mask, considered armed
and dangerous.

JACK
Oh shit. I just saw that guy.

DEPUTY
You did? Where?

Jack points in the wrong direction.

JACK
Pretty sure it was that way.

The Deputy's eyes sharpen. He brings his radio to his mouth.

DEPUTY
 (into radio)
 Dispatch, I got a lead on the devil
 mask. Heading north. In pursuit.

He clips the radio back, nods at Jack.

DEPUTY
 Appreciate it.

The Deputy gets in his car and peels out.

Jack watches him go, then turns back to the festival. He scans the crowd -- everyone enjoying themselves.

Then he spots a booth, not far down the square.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER HALLOWEEN FESTIVAL - MOMENTS LATER

Jack approaches the booth of JOHN OCKERMAN (50s, rugged, weathered, dressed like Indiana Jones had a midlife crisis).

John packs up his booth: OCKERMAN'S OCCULT ARCHAEOLOGY - BOOKS, LECTURES, EXPEDITIONS.

A banner behind the booth shows John posing dramatically in front of ancient ruins. Jack stops, stares.

JACK
 Holy shit. John Ockerman?

John doesn't look up, still packing books into a crate.

JOHN
 That's me. Booth's closed, though.

JACK
 No, I--I'm a fan. I've read your stuff. The thing about the alchemists in Prague? Incredible.

John pauses, glances up.

JOHN
 You read The Hidden Philosophers?

JACK
 Cover to cover. Your theory about Dee and the Enochian transmissions? Blew my mind.

John sizes Jack up, impressed despite himself.

JOHN

Huh. Most people just want me to sign their copies of the bestseller. The watered-down one.

JACK

Secrets of the Codex. Yeah, I read that too. Solid, but not your best work by any means.

John laughs, a short bark of appreciation.

JOHN

Alright. You got taste. Help me load this stuff into my van and I'll buy you a beer.

JACK

Deal.

Jack picks up a crate. John grabs another.

They walk toward a beat-up Econoline with a hideous multicolored paint job parked nearby.

JOHN

So what brings you to Hallow Corner? Don't get many occult enthusiasts wandering through.

JACK

Bad date. Now I can't find my car.

JOHN

Sounds about right for this town.

They load the crates into the back of the van. John wipes his hands on his pants, then turns to Jack, studying him.

JOHN

Alright. Enough small talk. Are you the guy?

JACK

What guy?

John reaches into his jacket, pulls out a THICK WAD OF CASH bundled with a rubber band.

JOHN

The guy who came for this.

Jack stares at the money.

JACK
(slowly)
...Yes. I am that guy.

Jack reaches for the cash, but John puts it back in his jacket.

JOHN
Good. They said you'd be in a costume, but probably better you're not. Less attention that way.

JACK
Yeah, that was a conscious decision on my part.

JOHN
I hope you're okay digging.

JACK
(confused but going with)
Digging. Right. Yeah, I can dig.

JOHN
We gotta move fast, though. We've only got a small window before someone'll notice.

JACK
Yeah, we don't want anyone to notice what it is we're doing.

John climbs into the driver's seat.

JOHN
Let's go.

John starts the engine.

Jack looks back at the festival -- crowded, chaotic, full of people who know where their cars are.

He exhales, climbs into the van, slams the door shut.

The van pulls away, disappearing into the night.

EXT. OLD HALLOW CORNER CEMETERY - NIGHT

The van pulls up to rusted iron gates.

Beyond them: rows of weathered headstones, crumbling mausoleums, dead trees silhouetted against the moon.

John kills the engine, grabs a duffel bag from the back.

JOHN

Alright. Let's do this as quickly as possible.

He gets out, grabs TWO SHOVELS from the back and hands one to Jack. Jack accepts, hesitant.

JACK

So, uh...what's the plan exactly?

John walks up to the gate, pulls BOLT CUTTERS from the bag.

JACK

Whoa, whoa, wait. What--

SNAP. The chain drops.

John pushes the gate open. The hinges scream.

JACK

--are you doing? We're breaking in?

JOHN

(walking through)

I prefer entering without explicit permission.

JACK

That's literally breaking in.

John stops, turns back.

JOHN

What the hell do you think we're here for? What do you think we're getting paid to do?

JACK

I don't know. I was told it was a quick in-and-out type of thing.

JOHN

Your people said it was urgent, but no one said it'd be quick.

JACK

My people didn't tell me all the details. You know how they can be. They're purposefully vague.

John walks through the cemetery. Jack follows.

JOHN

There's a book buried here. A grimoire. Rumored to have been buried with an alchemist in the 1800s. If we find it, it's one of the most significant occult finds in modern history.

JACK

Okay, I didn't agree to grave robbing. If I knew that's what we were doing I would have turned down the job.

JOHN

It's not grave robbing. It's archaeological recovery. Big difference where I come from.

JACK

We come from the same place.

John ignores him, walks deeper into the cemetery.

Jack hesitates but follows anyway.

EXT. CEMETERY - DEEPER IN - CONTINUOUS

They move between headstones, John leading with a FLASHLIGHT, consulting a hand-drawn MAP.

JOHN

The alchemist's name was Jeremiah Crow. Died in 1863. Local legend says he was burned for heresy, but his followers recovered his body and buried him here in secret.

JACK

Alchemy. Now that's a sexy subject. Lead to gold and all that.

JOHN

This guy wasn't transmuting shit to piss. He was into reanimation. Real Lovecraftian stuff.

JACK

Huh. You know, I always thought Lovecraft was overrated.

John stops dead in his tracks, eyes Jack up.

JOHN
I'm gonna pretend you didn't just
say that.

Then keeps walking.

They reach a section of the cemetery that's older, more decayed. UNMARKED TOMBS and MAUSOLEUMS, stone worn smooth by centuries, no names or dates visible.

John stops, frustrated.

JOHN
Shit.

JACK
What?

JOHN
(scanning the place)
The map says it's here, but all
these graves are unmarked.

JACK
We can't dig up all these graves.
We don't have time for that.

JOHN
Of course we don't!

He moves between the identical plots, shining his light on each weathered stone. Nothing, just blank markers.

JOHN
Shit. Shit shit shit.

Jack wanders to one of the graves, crouches down.

His fingers trace something carved into the base of a headstone, barely visible.

JACK
Wait, wait, what's this?

John hurries over. Carved into the stone, barely visible, worn almost flat: a SYMBOL.

JOHN
The Caduceus.

JACK
And look at this.

He traces the symbol with his fingers, then notices faint lettering beneath it.

JACK
(reading)
Solve et coagula...ex tenebris lux.
Latin. What's that mean, something
about dark and light?

JOHN
It means we dig.

John drops his bag, then stabs his shovel into the ground.

MONTAGE - DIGGING THE GRAVE:

- First few shovelfuls. Easy.
- A foot down. Harder.
- Two feet. Jack's sweating now, breathing hard.
- Three feet. John's in the zone, methodical.
- Four feet. They're both in the hole now, tossing dirt up over the edge.
- Five feet. Jack stops, wipes his face.

JACK
(panting)
How deep are we?

JOHN
Gotta be five feet or so.

They keep digging. Then--

THUNK.

John's shovel hits something solid.

JOHN
Jackpot.

They clear away dirt frantically, revealing:

The top of a WOODEN COFFIN, old, rotted in places.

They kneel, brushing dirt off the lid with their hands.

John wedges his shovel under the edge of the coffin lid.

JOHN
C'mon, help me.

JACK
Are we sure about this?

JOHN
Absolutely not. Now push.

JACK
Wait. What if this guy reanimated
his own corpse?

JOHN
Now how the hell would that make
any sense? Push.

They both pry with their shovels.

CRACK.

The lid splinters, breaks. They pull it aside.

INSIDE: a SKELETON, draped in decayed robes.

And clutched in its bony hands: a LEATHER-BOUND GRIMOIRE,
surprisingly intact.

Next to the skull: a PLAGUE DOCTOR MASK, modified, the beak
half-broken off.

John reaches down, carefully lifts the grimoire.

Jack picks up the mask, examines it. Leather cracked but
still supple. Eye holes empty, dark.

John tosses the grimoire out of the grave. He and Jack help
each other get out.

John grabs the book and flips through brittle pages covered
in symbols, diagrams, Latin script.

JACK
(turning over the mask)
Why would they bury him with this?

JOHN
(distracted, reading)
Protection. Or punishment. Hard to
say.

Jack lifts the mask toward his face, curious what it might be
like to look through it.

JOHN
Invoco spiritum tenebrarum...per
sanguinem et ignem...

JACK
(lowering the mask)
What is that?

JOHN
Venite, venite, aperite portas
infernii--

JACK
John.

JOHN
Et accipite quod vestrum est!

Silence. Nothing happens. John looks up, smirking.

JOHN
Do you understand what we've just--
The mask in Jack's hands VIBRATES.

JACK
Whoa, what the hell?!
It jerks violently. A sharp edge slices Jack's palm!

JACK
Shit!
He drops it, clatters to the ground. Blood drips from his
hand. John sets the grimoire down, picks up the mask.

JOHN
You okay?

JACK
Yeah, I just...it moved.

John examines the mask, turning it over.

JOHN
It's just old leather. Probably
dried out, contracted when you--

The mask SNAPS onto John's face.

JOHN
(muffled)
MMPH! MMPH!

He claws at it, trying to pull it off! It won't budge!

JACK

John!

John stumbles backward, hands frantically pulling at the edges! Then he FALLS backward into the grave!

JACK

John?

One of John's hands emerges on the edge of the grave.

Then another.

Then his face.

His eyes, visible through the mask's holes, are BLACK. Pupils blown wide, no white left.

DEMON JOHN BOLTS out of the grave, impossibly fast!

Jack barely dodges as Demon John crashes into a gravestone behind him!

Demon John spins, impossibly fast, comes at him again.

Jack runs, blind with panic, weaving between headstones.

Demon John on his tail, not running -- hunting, methodical, relentless.

Jack circles back to the open grave and grabs one of the shovels as John emerges from behind him!

Demon John lunges. Jack swings, harder than he means to. The blade of the shovel connects with Demon John's wrist.

CRUNCH. The hand SEVERES in a spray of blood! It hits the ground, twitching.

Jack stares, horrified!

JACK

Oh, fuck. I'm so sorry!

Demon John doesn't flinch, just looks at the stump where his hand was, then back at Jack. And keeps coming!

Jack turns and runs!

Demon John follows, one-handed, blood dripping.

Jack sprints toward the gate, reaches it, and just as he grabs it Demon John is on his back!

Jack spins around as Demon John tries to ravage his neck!

He thrusts all his weight backwards, driving this thing into the gates as hard as he can, holding on for dear life!

Then in one swift motion he flips Demon John over the front of him like he's JOHN FUCKING CENA.

But Demon John is unfazed, too quick, and he's back on his feet, flying through the air toward Jack, who instinctively ducks and runs as Demon John clangs against the gate!

Jack runs back into the cemetery, back toward the alchemist's grave.

When he gets there, he swipes the GRIMOIRE and jumps down into the OPEN GRAVE.

He crouches, panting, trying to stay quiet, furiously flipping through the pages in the moonlight.

JACK
(whispering)
Come on, come on!

After a couple beats, a page with a reversed symbol.

JACK
(reading, frantic)
Revertere ad tenebras! Solvo te!
Solvo te!

Above him: silence. Then --

Demon John's face appears over the edge of the grave, looking down.

His head tilts, that creepy MICHAEL MYERS TILT, then Demon John JUMPS into the grave and lands on top of Jack!

They crash backward into the open COFFIN, onto the skeleton. Bones crack! Dust explodes!

Demon John pins Jack down with his one remaining hand, the other stump dripping blood onto Jack's face.

JACK
Revertere ad tenebras! Solvo te!
Solvo te!

The mask begins to LOOSEN. Demon John's grip weakens.

JACK
Revertere ad tenebras! Solvo te!
Solvo te!

John collapses, convulsing. Then goes still.

Jack slides John's body off of him, pulls himself up, shaking, covered in blood and dirt.

He starts climbing out, clawing at the dirt walls, pulling himself up.

He's halfway out when a hand grabs his ankle.

Jack looks down.

John climbs after him, using Jack's leg as leverage.

The mask is off now, and John's face underneath looks like a Fulci nightmare -- melted flesh, black goo, exposed bone where the mask fused to skin.

John lunges to bite Jack's leg. Jack kicks hard, breaking free, pulls himself out of the grave onto solid ground.

He gasps for air, looks around frantically.

The shovel. Grabs it.

John's already climbing again. One-handed, face destroyed, but still coming.

His hand claws at the dirt.

His head appears over the edge of the grave.

Jack swings the shovel down like an axe.

THWACK! Hits John in the head.

John keeps climbing.

Jack swings again. THWACK!

John's face pulps slightly, but he keeps climbing, grabbing the edge of the grave.

Jack keeps swinging! THWACK! THWACK! THWACK!

Each hit turns John's face pulpier, gorier, skull fractures visible, blood spraying.

But John won't stop because he's FUCKING POSSESSED.

Exhausted and terrified, Jack starts screaming as he swings!

JACK
STAY! DOWN! JUST! STAY! DOWN!

THWACK. THWACK. THWACK. THWACK. John's head is now unrecognizable -- pulp, mush, skull caved in.

Finally, John's hand slips from the edge of the grave. His body falls backward, landing in the coffin with a heavy thud.

Jack stands there, panting, covered in blood, holding the shovel.

He stares down into the grave. John's body motionless, face obliterated, lying among the bones.

He waits. Is he coming back again?

Nothing. Just silence.

He drops the shovel, backs away from the grave.

He doesn't bury the body. Doesn't do anything. Just walks away, traumatized, stumbling back toward the gates.

He gets to the van, checks for the keys. Of course they're not there.

So he walks.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jack stumbles out of the darkness, back into the glow of the festival.

COSTUMED REVELERS pass him, laughing, drinking. No one notices him.

He walks like a zombie through the crowd, disoriented.

EXT. SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Jack turns down a quieter street, away from the festival noise.

Shop fronts dot the landscape. He spots a small storefront with a hand-painted sign:

WITCH WAY APOTHECARY

Warm light glows from inside. The door is open. A couple CUSTOMERS file out as Jack files in.

INT. WITCH WAY APOTHECARY - CONTINUOUS

Small, cluttered with jars of herbs, dried flowers, crystals, candles. Shelves lined with homemade tinctures and salves.

Behind the counter stands GRANNY WITCH (70s).

She lowers her head and peers at Jack over a pair of glasses, takes him in without judgment.

GRANNY WITCH
You look like shit.

JACK
Thank you.

GRANNY WITCH
Let me guess.

She looks at Jack's hand dripping blood on the floor.

GRANNY WITCH
You have a headache.

JACK
Aspirin'd be nice right about now.

GRANNY WITCH
Ain't gonna find that junk in here.
Got some white willow bark, though.

She comes around the counter, takes his hand, examines it.

GRANNY WITCH
Lord, that's deep. You get bit?

JACK
I think I got cursed.

She eyes him up again, curious but not surprised.

GRANNY WITCH
Careful what you wish for.

She gestures to a stool, then moves to a shelf, selects a small amber jar.

Jack sits.

GRANNY WITCH

Manuka honey mixed with colloidal silver. Antibacterial, antifungal, anti-evil. Should heal it right up.

She unscrews the lid, dabs a healthy amount onto Jack's palm, then wraps it with a clean strip of cloth, ties it off.

GRANNY WITCH

There. You'll live. For now.

JACK

How much do I owe you?

He reaches for his wallet, pats his pockets. Nothing.

JACK

Shit. I don't have...my wallet.

(desperate)

I swear I have money. I can come back. I can pay you. I just--

GRANNY WITCH

(holding up a hand, calm)

It's fine.

JACK

No, seriously, I--

GRANNY WITCH

It's fine.

Jack stares at her, thrown by the kindness.

JACK

Thank you. Really.

(beat)

You wouldn't happen to know how to get to Ash Tree Lane, would you?

GRANNY WITCH

Ash Tree Lane...haven't heard that name in ages.

JACK

You know it?!

GRANNY WITCH

Yeah, but they renamed that street a while back. Not sure what it's called now. Maybe Elm? Or is it Maple? Birch? Oak? Beech? Some sort of tree. People obsessed with trees around here.

JACK

Do you know which way it is?

GRANNY WITCH

I think it's west.

JACK

West. Okay. I can figure that out.

He stands, lingers for a moment.

JACK

Do you believe in curses? Like,
real ones?

She considers that for a beat or two.

GRANNY WITCH

I believe in patterns. And
depending on the pattern...that can
feel like a curse to most folk.

She gets up, walks behind the counter, roots through things,
starts putting together a pack of herbs.

GRANNY WITCH

Difference is...people who think
they're cursed don't do a damn
thing about it. Or they rely on
someone else to do something.
That's how they end up paying five-
hundred bucks to some purple-haired
girl from Portland for a simple
sage-ing. But you identify a
pattern of your own behavior...
who's responsible for that? Not
God, not The Universe or whatever
other superstitions people believe
in. Certainly not some jezebel on
the internet, and certainly not
some granny witch doling out free
herbs and silver honey out of the
kindness of her own broken heart.

She sets down a pack of herbs front of him.

JACK

What's this?

GRANNY WITCH

White willow bark. For that
headache and any other aches you
may have.

INT. LOCAL DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Packed with LOCALS and COSTUMED DRUNKS. Neon beer signs, Halloween decorations, a small stage in the corner where a BAND is playing -- loud, grungy, hypnotic.

Jack pushes through the crowd to the bar.

A PIRATE BARTENDER (50s) wipes down the counter.

JACK
Can I get some hot water?

The Pirate Bartender gives him a look.

PIRATE BARTENDER
HOT water? Not cold water?

JACK
Yeah. Hot water.

PIRATE BARTENDER
That's it?

JACK
Yeah. Wait. Glass of ice water too.

The Pirate Bartender shrugs, fills a mug from a coffee urn, sprays water into a glass, slides them in front of him.

Jack takes a healthy swig of the ice water, then dumps some of the herbs into the hot water.

The Pirate Bartender eyes him curiously.

PIRATE BARTENDER
That kinda night, huh?

JACK
I think I just killed a man. Or a demon. Or something.

The Pirate Bartender doesn't even blink.

PIRATE BARTENDER
'Tis the season.

The Pirate Bartender moves down the bar to another customer.

Jack turns, sips his water, and takes in the room.

ON STAGE: KANDI KARVER (late 20s, magnetic, punk-goth energy, dressed like a witch in leather and lace) fronts the band with THREE GUYS in black contact lenses, pale white ghost paint and thrift store suits.

Kandi's voice is raw, haunting. Jack can't look away.

The song ends. Scattered applause. Kandi leans into the mic.

KANDI

Thank you so much. You guys rock.
We are Kandi Karver and the Black-
Eyed Kids. We'll be back later
tonight. Try not to kill each other
while we're gone.

Laughter and cheers from the crowd.

The band steps off stage. The JUKEBOX kicks in, something moody, old-school.

Kandi heads to the bar. Jack watches her approach, works up the nerve. He steps forward, trying to intercept her--

And bumps into a BIKER, built like a tank, leather vest covered in patches and occult symbols. Name patch: VIKTOR.

Jack's mug tilts. Hot water splashes onto the biker's vest.

The biker freezes. Jack freezes.

FOUR MORE BIKERS with WHITE WOLF MC patches turn to look.

JACK

Sorry. I'm so sorry. It's just
water.

Viktor leans in close, sniffs.

VIKTOR

Holy water?

JACK

What? No. I don't think so. Unless
a priest blessed the tap.

VIKTOR

(grabbing Jack by the
shirt)

You trying to bless me, boy?

Viktor shoves Jack backward against the wall. The other bikers close in, forming a half-circle.

JACK
No, no, I'm not ordained!

VIKTOR
We don't like being blessed like
that around here.

JACK
Okay, okay, no blessings for you!

BIKER #1
What you gonna do with him,
Viktor?!

VIKTOR
I don't know. What should we do?

BIKER #1
I say we make him chug that hot
water, see if it burns him from the
inside!

BIKER #2
I say we take him out back, see if
he floats!

BIKER #3
I say we kill him, and then we eat
him!

BIKER #4
I say we eat him, and then we kill
him!

JACK
Guys, come on! It was an accident!
I'm not--I don't even go to church!

VIKTOR
That's exactly what someone
carrying holy water would say.

KANDI (O.S.)
Viktor! Let him go.

Kandi steps through the circle, calm, unbothered.

Viktor looks at Kandi. Then at Jack. Then back at Kandi.
Something about her hypnotizes Viktor.

He releases Jack, steps back. The other bikers disperse.

Viktor gives Jack one last look then walks away.

Jack exhales, relieved.

JACK

Thank you. I thought I was about to get sacrificed or something.

KANDI

They're all bark and no bite.

Kandi leans against the bar, studying Jack, then gazes down at his wounded hand.

KANDI

I take it you're not from here.

JACK

That obvious, huh?

KANDI

The locals have their own...flavor. I don't sense that from you.

JACK

Yeah, I came to meet someone for a date, and then things just...well, you know how those things go.

KANDI

(nodding at his hand)
They go like that?

JACK

No, that's my own stupidity.

KANDI

I can't tell you the last time I had a traditional date. They seem so...outdated. Pun intended.

Jack cracks a smile, takes a swig of his tea.

KANDI

You want a harder drink?

JACK

I'd love to, but...I'm just trying to find my car and go home.

KANDI

Where you parked? Maybe I can walk you there.

JACK

Uh. Ash Tree Lane.

Kandi smiles, then runs her tongue across her teeth.

KANDI

Don't know where that is, but that
doesn't mean we can't find it.

She stands, gestures toward the door.

KANDI

Come on. Our next set's not for
another two hours.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jack and Kandi walk side by side through the festive chaos.

COSTUMED CROWDS pass. Music bleeds from open bar doors. Jack
keeps looking around, disoriented.

They turn down a quieter residential street. Decorated
houses. Fewer people.

KANDI

So what went wrong with your date?

JACK

What makes you think something went
wrong?

KANDI

You're wandering around alone,
covered in dirt, bloody hand,
looking for your car. That's not
usually how good dates end.

JACK

That's how most of my dates end.

KANDI

What was she like?

JACK

She was...I don't know. Smart. Into
weird stuff. We actually connected.

KANDI

So what happened?

JACK

She has a husband. Had a husband. I
don't know. Wasn't too clear.

KANDI
Sounds scandalous.

JACK
Exactly. It's scandalous. And I'm not trying to get involved in any scandals at my age. I just want...honesty and transparency.

KANDI
Well, honestly, I don't know where your car is, but my place is just around the corner and I could use a drink. You mind?

JACK
I don't want to impose.

KANDI
You're not. I'm offering.

Jack looks at her -- calm, confident, magnetic.

JACK
Okay. Yeah. A drink sounds nice.

KANDI
Follow me.

She turns down another street. Jack follows.

INT. KANDI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A space that's equal parts goth aesthetic and oddities shop. Velvet curtains, taxidermy animals under glass, shelves lined with skulls, candles, old books, record player in the corner.

Kandi lights candles around the room. The atmosphere shifts, darker, more intimate.

Jack sits on a worn velvet couch, looking around.

JACK
This is...quite a collection.

KANDI
I like things with history. Things that have personality.

She moves to the record player, selects a vinyl, sets the needle down. Slow, moody music fills the room. Something atmospheric, almost hypnotic.

KANDI

You like Bloody Marys? I have my own recipe.

JACK

Yeah, that sounds good.

She walks to a liquor cabinet and pulls out a bottle of ABSINTHE, then to the kitchen where she mixes it with tomato juice, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, hot pepper sauce, and salt and pepper.

She pours two glasses of it and brings one to Jack. Their fingers touch as she hands it to him.

KANDI

To long nights with new friends.

They drink.

JACK

Wow. That's...what is that?

KANDI

Bloody Fairy. Basically a Bloody Mary with absinthe instead of vodka.

JACK

I've never had absinthe. Doesn't that make you hallucinate?

KANDI

Only in its purest form.

JACK

Is this...pure?

KANDI

I guess we'll find out.

Kandi takes another sip, gets up and begins to sway to the music. Slow, deliberate.

She moves in front of the candlelight, her shadow dancing on the wall. Jack watches, transfixed, takes another sip.

The room seems to pulse slightly. The candles flicker in sync with the music.

Kandi moves closer. Her movements fluid, trance-like.

Jack blinks. The edges of his vision blur.

She's right in front of him now. Leans down, her face close to his. Jack's head swims. The room tilts slightly.

JACK
I should probably--

KANDI
Shh.

Her hand touches his chest. Pushes him gently back against the couch.

KANDI
Just relax.

Her mouth opens slightly.

Jack sees something -- are those...fangs?

He blinks. They're gone. Just teeth. Normal teeth.

JACK
(slurred)
I think I'm...

KANDI
You're fine. Just the absinthe.

She leans in toward his neck.

Jack's eyes drift toward the shadows in the corner of the room. Someone emerges from them.

JACK
Who is...?

Kandi pauses, looks over her shoulder at GORDON (30s, stoner energy, holding a joint) as he sits down on a couch across from them, completely casual.

KANDI
Relax. It's just Gordon. He's cool.

GORDON
Hey, man.

Jack looks at Kandi, confused.

KANDI
He likes to watch. It's fine.

JACK
Watch...

Jack's head spins. The room pulses again.

JACK
Watch what?

Kandi steps closer to Jack. Her eyes lock onto his.

Her voice is different now, deeper, commanding. She leans in, her face close to Jack's neck.

KANDI
Just relax. Let it happen.

Suddenly, Kandi's teeth graze his skin. He jumps, half in pleasure, half in surprise.

JACK
Wait, I...

But Kandi doesn't wait. Her FANGS extend and she bites down hard on his neck. Jack cries out, more in shock than pain.

Kandi pulls back, confusion dawning on her face. She swishes around his blood in her mouth for a beat, then

Her skin begins to BUBBLE AND SMOKE!

She SCREAMS, a terrifying, inhuman sound!

BOOM-SPLAT!

SHE EXPLODES, SHOWERING JACK AND THE COUCH IN GORE!

For a moment, all is silent save Jack's ragged breathing.

Then reality crashes in. He wipes chunks of Kandi from his eyes and mouth.

Gordon stares at the space where Kandi was.

GORDON
(joint hanging from mouth)
What the fuck, man?!

JACK
(hyperventilating)
What the...oh my god, please, man,
please don't kill me! It was an
accident!

GORDON
The hell just happened?!

JACK
I don't know! She bit me and she
just...exploded!

GORDON
Yeah, I saw it. That was wild.

Gordon gets up, eerily calm despite the circumstances.
He examines the gore on the walls, on Jack, on the floor.

GORDON
She must've been really turned on.
But for real. She bit you and then
just...

He makes an explosion gesture.

JACK
I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to--

Gordon holds up a hand.

GORDON
Hold on. Just...hold on.

He takes a long drag of his joint, processes.

GORDON
She bit you and then exploded.

JACK
Yeah.

GORDON
Vampires don't just explode.

JACK
Vampires?!

GORDON
Yeah, man. That witch was a
vampire. You didn't know?

Jack's heart nearly gives out.

JACK
No! No, I did NOT know! I
thought...maybe the absinthe
was...you know, fucking with me.
(beat)
Wait. Are you...

GORDON

Nah, man.

JACK

Okay, 'cause you gotta tell me if you are. That's, like, a code isn't it?!

GORDON

Chill out. We're just roommates. Been roommates since before she turned. God, that night was fucking wild. Almost as wild as this.

A few beats.

JACK

What the hell do we do?

GORDON

We gotta get this cleaned up before Viktor gets a whiff. He'll smell this a mile away.

JACK

Viktor?

GORDON

Yeah, her boyfriend. Real macho werewolf type.

JACK

Were-what?

GORDON

Wolf. You know, like a dog but better.

JACK

Oh, fuck.

GORDON

Yeah. Yeah, he's a real possessive motherfucker too.

Gordon sighs, long and exasperated, then disappears into a closet, returns with cleaning supplies -- buckets, rags, spray bottles, trash bags.

Tosses a rag to Jack.

GORDON

You clean. I'll supervise.

JACK
What? Why am I--

GORDON
Because you exploded her. That's
the rule.

JACK
That's not a rule.

GORDON
It is now.

Gordon sits back down, relights his joint.

Jack stares at him, then at the carnage.

MONTAGE - CLEANING UP:

- Jack on his hands and knees, scrubbing blood off the
hardwood floor as Gordon puffs and watches.

- Jack wiping down walls with a sponge. Blood streaks
everywhere. He wipes, the stain just spreads.

- Jack scrubbing the couch. It's hopeless.

- Jack scrubbing the coffee table.

JACK
So when you said Kandi and Viktor
were...how's that work? I thought
vampires and werewolves had, like,
a blood feud.

GORDON
Nah, man. They gotta truce now.

JACK
Oh, wow. Progress.

GORDON
Yeah, they all just fuck each other
now.

- Jack gathering chunks of gore into a trash bag. Trying not
to look too closely.

GORDON
You know, people think vampires
live forever. They don't.

JACK
They don't?

GORDON
Nah. Average lifespan after turning
is like 27 years. Most get killed.
Some go crazy. It's rough.

JACK
How long was Kandi...?

GORDON
Five years. So she had a good run,
relatively speaking.
(drag)
You ever think about that? They're
not technically immortal if they
can die.

JACK
Yeah, you got the stakes and the
holy water and the garlic and the
silver and the -- oh. OH.

GORDON
What?

JACK
(clearing his throat)
Nothing. Just...had a piece of
Kandi in my throat or something.

Gordon chortles like he's stoned as fuck, which he is.

GORDON
Too soon, bro.

- Jack wipes down the last wall. He steps back, surveys his
work. It's...better. Not good, but better.

JACK
What do you think?

GORDON
Man. I'll probably have to move.

JACK
Yeah.

GORDON
(standing)
Alright. Your turn.

INT. KANDI'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

- Jack strips off his gore-soaked clothes, tosses them in the trash.

- Turns on the shower.

- Steps in.

- Scrubs at his face, his arms.

- Watches the gore circle the drain.

GORDON (O.S.)
You get it all?

JACK
(startled)
What?

Gordon walks in, smoking his joint, completely casual, pokes his head into the shower.

GORDON
The blood. You got it all?

JACK
Uh...what are you doing?

GORDON
Turn around.

JACK
What?

GORDON
You got chunks in your hair, man.
Turn around.

Jack hesitates, then turns.

Gordon reaches in, picks gore out of Jack's hair with his free hand. Flicks it into the toilet.

JACK
Is this...are you...?

GORDON
Relax. I'm not looking.

JACK
Okay.

He picks out another chunk. Flicks it.

GORDON
There. You're good.

JACK
Thanks.

GORDON
No problem.

Gordon takes a drag, exhales.

GORDON
You want me to wash your back?

JACK
No. I'm good.

GORDON
Cool. Towels are under the sink.

He walks out, closing the door behind him.

Jack stands there, water running over him.

INT. KANDI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jack emerges in borrowed clothes -- one of Kandi's band t-shirts and a pair of Gordon's Zubaz pants that look completely out of place on him.

Gordon looks him up and down.

GORDON
Now that's a fucking costume.

INT. KANDI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jack emerges in borrowed clothes -- one of Kandi's band t-shirts and a pair of Gordon's Zubaz pants that look completely out of place on him.

Gordon looks him up and down.

GORDON
Now that's a fucking costume.

Jack looks down at himself, then at the apartment -- still stained despite their best efforts.

JACK
So what are you gonna do? About all this?

Gordon takes a drag from his joint, considers.

GORDON

I don't know, man. Probably burn some sage or whatever.

JACK

I really am sorry. About Kandi.

GORDON

Yeah, me too. She was a good roommate. Kept the fridge stocked. Never ate my leftovers.

(another drag)

Plus, you know, she was cool and shit.

Jack nods, unsure what else to say.

JACK

Alright. Well.

He moves toward the door, then stops.

JACK

Do you need my number or anything? In case, like, the cops or...?

GORDON

Nah, man. I think it's better if we just pretend this never happened.

JACK

Yeah. Okay.

Gordon walks over, extends his hand. Jack shakes it.

GORDON

Good luck finding your car, dude.

JACK

Thanks. And, uh...good luck with the whole...

(gestures vaguely at everything)

...all of this.

GORDON

(nodding philosophically)

It's all just, like, patterns, you know? Tonight was just a really fucked up pattern.

JACK
Right. Patterns.

He opens the door, steps into the hallway, then looks back one last time.

Gordon's already sitting back down on the blood-stained couch, relighting his joint, staring at the space where Kandi used to be.

Jack quietly closes the door behind him.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jack hurries down the sidewalk, head down.

The borrowed clothes make him look absurd.

He keeps checking over his shoulder.

The streets are still busy with COSTUMED REVELERS, DRUNK COLLEGE KIDS, FAMILIES with children.

Then he hears it.

VROOM VROOM VROOM.

The rumble of motorcycle engines.

Jack's head snaps up.

Down the street: HEADLIGHTS. Multiple bikes rolling slowly toward him.

The WHITE WOLF MOTORCYCLE CLUB.

Jack's heart pounds.

He turns down a side street, walking faster.

Behind him: the engines grow louder.

He glances back.

The bikes turn onto his street.

JACK
(under his breath)
Shit.

He starts jogging.

The bikes accelerate.

Jack breaks into a run.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER - DOWNTOWN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Jack sprints across a main intersection, weaving between PEDESTRIANS.

The motorcycles follow, engines roaring.

Ahead: a MOVIE THEATER. Old-fashioned marquee. Halloween double feature playing.

Jack runs toward it.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Jack pushes through the small crowd at the entrance, doesn't stop for tickets.

TICKET SELLER

Hey! You gotta buy a ticket!

Jack ignores him, crashes through the doors.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Jack bursts into the lobby, doesn't slow down.

Jack shoves past, through the theater doors.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Jack slips into the darkened theater.

A black-and-white horror film plays on screen.

Maybe a dozen PEOPLE scattered throughout the seats.

He moves quickly down the aisle, finds a seat in the middle. Sits. Catches his breath.

The theater door opens.

Light spills in.

Silhouettes.

Three figures enter.

Jack sinks lower in his seat.

The figures move down the aisle, scanning faces.

Viktor stops, looks directly at Jack's row.

Jack freezes.

Viktor starts moving toward him.

Jack doesn't wait.

He bolts from his seat, runs toward the front of the theater.

Viktor whistles, signaling his crew.

Jack reaches the emergency exit at the front, slams through it as the ALARM BLARES!

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND MOVIE THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Jack bursts out into a narrow alley.

Behind him: the emergency door crashes open.

The bikers emerge.

Jack doesn't look back.

He runs.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER - FESTIVAL AREA - CONTINUOUS

Jack breaks out of the alley onto a crowded street.

Jack plunges into the crowd.

Behind him: the bikers push through, but slower now. Too many people.

Jack weaves between FAMILIES, DRUNK ADULTS, TEENS.

He spots a HAUNTED HOUSE attraction - cheap plywood façade, fake cobwebs.

Ducks inside.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dark corridors. Strobe lights. ACTORS in monster costumes jumping out at guests.

Jack pushes past SCREAMING KIDS, trying to navigate through.
A ZOMBIE ACTOR jumps out.

ZOMBIE ACTOR
RAAARGH!

Jack doesn't even flinch. Keeps moving.
Shoots out the back exit.

EXT. FESTIVAL AREA - CONTINUOUS

Jack is on the other side of the festival now.

He looks back. Doesn't see the bikers.

Catches his breath.

Ahead: a row of shops. One catches his eye.

A COSTUME SHOP. Still open.

He heads toward it.

Behind him, in the crowd: VIKTOR appears on foot, scanning.

Jack doesn't see him.

He pushes through the shop door.

INT. COSTUME SHOP - NIGHT

The cluttered shop is nearly empty now. Late hour.

An EMPLOYEE (20s, bored, dressed as a clown) looks up from their phone.

CLOWN EMPLOYEE
We're closing in ten.

JACK
I'll be quick.

He moves through the racks frantically, spots the last DEVIL MASK on a display, grabs it.

He keeps browsing, looking over his shoulder at the employee, too engrossed in the phone to care what's going on.

He inches toward the back of the shop, then pushes through a door marked EMPLOYEES ONLY, into the

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND COSTUME SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Jack bursts out, pulls the devil mask on as he runs.

He rounds a corner, slows to a walk.

Adjusts the mask.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Jack blends into the crowd of costumed revelers on a busier street.

Ahead: Another BAR. Music. Crowd gathered outside.

Then he sees her: a woman dressed as DOROTHY GALE standing near the entrance, smoking a cigarette.

Jack's heart leaps.

JACK

Julie.

She flicks the cigarette away and heads inside. Jack follows.

INT. BAR - MOMENTS LATER

The bar is PACKED. A small stage has been set up. The crowd is rowdy, drunk, festive.

Jack pushes through, trying to spot Julie.

She's on stage. A MAKESHIFT COSTUME CONTEST is underway. Five people lined up, including her.

CONTEST MC is on stage with a microphone.

CONTEST MC

Alright, alright! Last-minute entry!

He spots Jack in the devil mask, gestures him over.

CONTEST MC

Devil Guy! Get up here!

Jack hesitates. The crowd cheers, pushes him forward.

He climbs onto the stage, stands awkwardly next to the other contestants.

He tries to get the attention of Julie. Leans toward her.

JACK
(muffled through mask)
Julie?

She doesn't hear him. Crowd's too loud.

CONTEST MC
Alright, let's see who wins! Cheer
for your favorite!

He points at each contestant. The crowd cheers.

When he points at Jack, the crowd ROARS.

CONTEST MC
Winner, winner, pumpkin dinner! The
Devil takes it!

Jack -- stunned. The other contestants exit the stage. Julie walks past him without a glance. He follows her.

JACK
(pulling off his mask)
Julie! Hey!

The woman turns. NOT Julie. Different face, different energy.

NOT JULIE
Do I know you?

JACK
I...sorry. I thought you were
someone else.

NOT JULIE
I get that a lot.

She walks away. Jack stands there, deflated.

BARTENDER (O.S.)
Hey! Devil Man!

Jack turns. Bartender waves him over to the bar.

BARTENDER
Free shot for the winner.

Jack approaches the bar, sets the mask down.

Bartender pours a shot of liquor, slides it over.

Jack downs it, winces. His eyes drift to the TV mounted above the bar.

A LOCAL NEWS BROADCAST.

BREAKING: MULTIPLE DEATHS AT HALLOWEEN PARTY

A REPORTER stands in front of a house -- yellow police tape, flashing lights.

REPORTER (ON TV)
...authorities are still searching
for the suspect, described as a
white male wearing a devil mask
similar to this one.

Reporter holds up the mask. Jack looks down at the devil mask on the bar, back at the TV.

Yep, same one.

REPORTER (ON TV)
Police are urging anyone with
information to call 911. The
suspect is considered armed and
extremely dangerous.

A PATRON at the bar notices Jack, notices the mask, looks at the TV.

BAR PATRON
Holy shit.
(loud as hell)
That's the guy!

Heads turn. Jack freezes.

BAR PATRON
That's the DEVIL!

ANOTHER BAR PATRON
Someone call the cops!

The crowd starts murmuring, shifting.

BARTENDER
(reaching under the bar)
Hey, man, don't do anything st--

Jack grabs the mask, bolts toward the exit! The crowd surges!

Bartender pulls up a SHOTGUN.

EXT. BAR / STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Jack bursts out the door and RUNS as a GUNSHOT echoes from the Bartender in the doorway!

Behind him: Shouts! Footsteps! A growing MOB!

VOICES FROM CROWD:

That guy's the devil!

Someone grab his ass!

Stop that devil man!

Jack sprints down the street, weaving between COSTUMED REVELERS and TRICK-OR-TREATERS.

He turns a corner, then another, the mob still behind him.

He ducks into an alley.

Presses himself against a wall, breathing hard.

The mob runs past the alley entrance, their voices fading.

Jack waits. Listens.

Silence.

He exhales, slides down the wall, has a moment with himself, then hears MORE VOICES and is up and out.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Jack approaches cautiously, still catching his breath from the chase.

The street has transformed.

POLICE CARS everywhere, lights flashing.

YELLOW TAPE cordoning off the house.

COPS interviewing costumed partygoers.

A small CROWD of neighbors and other partygoers gathered on the sidewalk, watching.

Jack moves closer, trying to blend in. He scans the crowd, looking for Julie. Doesn't see her.

He approaches Mummy Friend, visibly shaken, still holding a beer in a red cup.

JACK

Hey, man. What the hell happened?

MUMMY FRIEND

Man, I don't even know. This dude just came in and started slashing people like it was fucking Elm Street, bro.

JACK

Have you seen a woman, Dorothy costume?

MUMMY FRIEND

Uhh, yeah. Julie, right?

JACK

Yeah, Julie.

MUMMY FRIEND

Yeah, she was here earlier. She left before all this, though.

Jack's face floods with relief.

JACK

She left? She's okay?

MUMMY FRIEND

Yeah, I guess.

MEDICS roll a GURNEY WITH A BLOODY BODY by them. The remnants of the Werewolf Guy by the looks of the arm hanging out.

JACK

Oh, thank God.

Mummy Friend audibly chokes up.

JACK

(eyeing the gurney)

I mean, just awful, though. Tragic.

MUMMY FRIEND

(choking more)

The fucking devil, am I right, bro?

He hugs Jack, who lets the embrace go on a bit too long.

EXT. STREETS OF HALLOW CORNER - NIGHT

Jack walks alone, head down, hands in pockets, the streets quieter now.

He passes darkened storefronts, empty sidewalks.

Behind him: the rumble of an engine.

Jack glances back.

That CREEPY YELLOW VAN, moving slowly down the street.

Jack keeps walking.

The van accelerates.

Jack's pace quickens.

The van speeds up.

SCREEEEECH!

The van cuts him off, jumping the curb.

The side door SLAMS open. A HOODED FIGURE points a SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN at him.

HOODED FIGURE #1

Get in!

Jack hesitates, even though he knows better. Hooded Figure pumps the gun.

HOODED FIGURE #1

Don't be a hero now. C'mon.

Jack gets in. The door slams shut. The van peels away.

INT. YELLOW VAN - MOMENTS LATER

The gun on Jack. Three HOODED FIGURES surround him all wearing the same masks and dark robes.

We saw these guys earlier. Jack realizes it too when the Van Driver speaks.

VAN DRIVER

Where's the book?

JACK

What book?

HOODED FIGURE #2
(grabbing Jack by the
collar)
Don't fuck with us, man!

JACK
I don't know what you're talking
about!

HOODED FIGURE #3
He's lying.

VAN DRIVER
You been following us?

JACK
No. I swear.

VAN DRIVER
Saw you earlier, though. Seems like
you had a plan of your own. Who you
working for? Freemasons? The feds?

JACK
I'm not--

VAN DRIVER
We know you took our money 'cause
the guy we hired to do the job
didn't do it. So I'm gonna ask you
again. Where's the book?

Jack's mind races. The grimoire. The cemetery. John's money.

JACK
It's, uh, it's at the cemetery. In
the grave.

VAN DRIVER
So it's real?

JACK
Yeah.

VAN DRIVER
And Ockerman?

JACK
Dead. I think.

VAN DRIVER
Good. You at least got one thing
right tonight.

The van turns sharply. Hooded Figure #1 accidentally FIRES the gun and KILLS Hooded Figure #3!

Jack skids across the floor like he shit his pants.

VAN DRIVER
Fuck, man!

HOODED FIGURE #1
Stop driving like a psychopath!

VAN DRIVER
(looking in rearview)
He okay?

HOODED FIGURE #2
(checking pulse)
Nah. He's not.

VAN DRIVER
Shit!
(calmer)
Alright. Doesn't change anything.
Let's do what we gotta do.

The van accelerates.

Poor Jack looks like he's holding on for dear life.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Headlights wash across the gates as the van creeps to a stop. The doors SLIDE open.

Van Driver and the two Hooded Figures step out, followed by a reluctant Jack.

The corpse of Hooded Figure #3 is dragged out of the van and tossed over Van Driver's broad shoulders.

Jack stumbles as he's pushed forward by Hooded Figure #1's shotgun, hands raised.

HOODED FIGURE #1
Lead the way, my guy.

Jack navigates the group to the dug-up grave.

Van Driver plops the fresh corpse down next to it, then all four men peer down into the grave.

VAN DRIVER
(to Jack)
Get in there.

A couple beats. The shotgun pumps. Jack does as he's told, slips down into the grave.

IN THE GRAVE

Jack drops to his knees, knee-deep in damp earth. John's bashed-in face greets him unceremoniously.

JACK
(to himself)
I'm so sorry about this, John. You
deserved a bigger audience.

He digs through loose dirt with his bare hands until he finds the grimoire, half-buried and slick with mud.

Next to it -- the MASK that possessed John.

He lifts both items carefully, looks up.

Driver extends a hand and pulls Jack out.

He gives the items to the Driver, who passes the mask to Hooded Figure #2 and flips through the book reverently.

VAN DRIVER
Well, fuck my face. It's real.
(laughing)
It's fucking real! Boys! We're
summoning the devil TONIGHT!

Both Hooded Figures rejoice. Driver pats Jack on the back.

VAN DRIVER
You did good, amigo.

The Hooded Figures dump their fallen comrade in the grave with a dull THUD. Jack stares back into the hole.

JACK
You guys do this often, or is this,
like, a seasonal thing?

VAN DRIVER
Oh, this is a special occasion. And
you, you're in for quite the treat.

JACK
I've had enough treats for a few
nights, I think.

VAN DRIVER
But this is the sweetest one yet.
You still gotta meet your maker.

Jack's eyes widen. He drops to his knees, begging.

JACK
Please don't kill me. I know I'm
not the best guy, but I don't
deserve this. I'm not even--

VAN DRIVER
Get the fuck up, man.

Jack hesitates.

HOODED FIGURE #1
No one's killing you. We need you.

VAN DRIVER
Yeah, killing you wasn't part of
the deal.

JACK
I didn't make any deals, though.

Van Driver steps to Jack.

VAN DRIVER
You just did.

EXT. RURAL ROAD / ABANDONED CHURCH - NIGHT

The van crunches up a foggy, dirt road.

An ancient church crouches at the edge of a field, leaning
like a tower ready to fall.

The headlights die. Silence.

The side door SLIDES open.

Jack is dragged out. He looks up at the church. A place that
forgot what God is.

Jack says nothing but his breath ghosts in the air.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH - NIGHT

Candles line the aisles. Pews are pushed aside to make room for a blackened pentagram carved into the old wood.

At its center, a marble altar, wet with something dark.

A dozen SATANISTS stand in circles, hoods drawn, murmuring softly in unison, seductively, like they're trying to lure the Devil in with real intimacy.

A SATANIC PRIEST turns from the altar, tall, skeletal, face painted with soot and bone ash.

Viktor hands the book to him.

The Satanic Priest opens it, tracing a sigil with his fingertip.

SATANIC PRIEST

This is older than language. Older
than lies themselves.

The priest signals.

The chanting swells.

The priest reads from the grimoire.

SATANIC PRIEST

Invoco te, Princeps Tenebrarum...
veni ad nos...per sanguinem et
ignem...

The candles flicker. An impossible gust of wind moves through the church.

SATANIC PRIEST

Accipe hoc sacrificium...et da
nobis vitam aeternam...

The wind intensifies. Candles blow out, then reignite on their own. The Satanists murmur, awed.

The priest closes the book, turns to Jack.

He hands Jack a CEREMONIAL DAGGER.

Then the MASK that possessed John.

Then a sound: a whimper.

Two Satanists drag a HOODED VICTIM from the shadows, bound, gagged. A struggle but to no avail.

The Satanists then tie and strap the victim down in the middle of the pentagram circle.

SATANIC PRIEST

To open one door...another must close.

(to Jack)

One body must empty...so another can be filled.

The priest walks up to the victim and unhoods them --

DOROTHY.

JULIE.

Jack stares at her for what feels like forever, dumbfounded, dagger in one hand, mask in the other.

And that's when he knows exactly what he has to do.

JACK

The book, please.

The priest looks hesitant...

JACK

The book!

The priest obliges.

Jack steps into the circle.

Puts the mask on.

Dagger trembles in his hand.

Julie shakes her head, sobbing through the gag.

The priest IGNITES the circle in flame.

Jack opens the book, flips until he finds what he wants.

He leans down over Julie, straddling her.

Then whispers something only she hears.

Then reads.

JACK

Invoco spiritum tenebrarum...per sanguinem et ignem...

He lifts the knife over her, hand shaking.

JACK
 Venite, venite, aperite portas
 inferni...

Takes the deepest fucking breath he's ever taken.

JACK
 Et accipite quod vestrum est!

Then moves the blade in one sharp motion and

CUTS HER FREE.

The Satanists don't notice. Too horny and transfixed because of the fire and theatrics.

Jack stands, turns to the congregation.

The mask TIGHTENS on Jack's face.

His eyes go black. His body convulses. Then goes still.

Then DEMON JACK tilts his head, looking at the Satanists.

He smiles behind the mask.

SATANIC PRIEST
 My Lord!

SATANISTS
 All hail Satan!

The church fills with the sound of something arriving.

THEN HELL OPENS.

Wind roars, walls shake.

The pentagram ignites, white fire bleeding through black ash.

Jack's voice growls, splitting into two tones.

DEMON JACK
 (somewhat normal)
 You wanted the Devil?!

A flame erupts from the altar and out of it comes a SCREAM!

DEMON JACK
 (completely demonic)
 Here I am!

The Satanists panic, some dropping to their knees, others fleeing toward the doors that no longer open.

THE SLAUGHTER

He grabs the priest by the throat, lifts him off the ground.

SNAP. The priest's neck breaks. Body drops.

The Satanists SCREAM. Chaos erupts.

He moves through them like a blade through paper.

SLASH! STAB! TEAR!

Blood sprays. Bodies fall. Satanists try to run.

Demon Jack is faster.

Driver pulls the shotgun, fires.

The bullet just grazes Jack's shoulder.

But he doesn't flinch.

Demon Jack grabs Driver, RIPS HIS FACE OFF.

Julie, free now, scrambles to the grimoire.

She flips through pages frantically, searching.

Finds it -- the REVERSAL INCANTATION.

She reads aloud, voice shaking.

JULIE

Revertere ad tenebras! Solvo te!
Solvo te!

Demon Jack freezes mid-attack, a Satanist's throat in his hands. The mask begins to loosen. His body convulses.

JULIE

Per vim verbi, te libero! SOLVO TE!

The mask FALLS from Jack's face.

He collapses to the ground, gasping.

The remaining Satanists (maybe two or three left) flee through the doors.

SILENCE.

The church is still again.

Julie crawls to Jack, presses a trembling hand to his cheek.

JULIE

Jack...?

He coughs, breath shallow.

Julie drops the grimoire, runs to him.

JULIE

Jack? Jack, are you okay?!

Jack looks up at her, eyes his own again.

Blood everywhere. Bodies everywhere.

JACK

(hoarse)

Did it work?

JULIE

I--I guess. I don't know.

She helps him sit up. They look around at the carnage.

JACK

Yeah, it worked.

JULIE

We need to get out of here.

JACK

Probably a good idea.

She pulls him to his feet.

They stumble toward the door, both limping, bloodied, one of them human again.

Or maybe human for the first time.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY (DAWN)

Same room from the cold open. Morning light now bleeds in through the blinds.

Julie sits beside Jack now, wrapped in a blanket, exhausted.

The Sheriff sits across from them, notepad in hand, feet still propped up.

SHERIFF

So let me get this straight. You drove here to go on a date with this young lady.

(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You went grave robbing with a dead archaeologist. Got bit by a cursed demon mask. Accidentally killed a vampire because of silver honey. Got kidnapped by a Satanic cult. Voluntarily put on the demon mask. Slaughtered said cult while possessed. And she--

He gestures to Julie.

SHERIFF

--read a spell from a spellbook to save you.

JACK

Yeah. That's pretty much it.

SHERIFF

(to Julie)

And you corroborate all this?

JULIE

I can only corroborate the beginning and the end. But I don't think he's a liar.

The Sheriff stares at them both for a long moment.

SHERIFF

Well. That certainly sounds like a devil of a night to me.

(beat)

But here's my version of the story.

He closes his notepad, feet down, leans forward.

SHERIFF

You got drunk on absinthe, wandered around town having a very vivid hallucination, and somehow ended up at an abandoned church where a bunch of Satanists were doing God-knows-what and got themselves sacree-ficed. Then you and the Missus here stumbled into the aftermath, got covered in blood, and your brain filled in the rest.

He leans back in his chair.

SHERIFF

Are we clear, Shakespeare?

Jack glances at Julie, then back to the Sheriff.

JACK
Crystal.

The Deputy from earlier enters, holding a clipboard.

DEPUTY
Sheriff?

SHERIFF
What is it?

DEPUTY
We arrested the guy in the devil
mask about an hour ago. Found him
wandering near the festival. Said
he was trying to...
(looking at notes)
..liberate the spirits of all who
are trapped in this earthly realm
and achieve immortality through
blood sacrifice. Or some such shit.

The Sheriff glances at Jack.

SHERIFF
That so?

DEPUTY
Yeah. Real dumb-fuck. Also...

He flips a page on the clipboard.

DEPUTY
Found that silver Honda Civic
registered to a Jack Smith. Parked
on Ash Tree Lane. Been sitting
there all night. Looks undisturbed.

Jack's face floods with relief.

SHERIFF
Well, Mr. Smith. Sounds like your
chariot awaits.
(to Deputy)
Get them out of here.

DEPUTY
Yes, sir.

The Deputy gestures for Jack and Julie to follow.

They stand, exhausted, and head toward the door.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY (DAWN)

Jack and Julie step outside, both still covered in dried blood, exhausted beyond words.

They stand there for a moment, processing.

JACK

Look, I don't really know what to say. But...I'm sorry and thank you. I don't think I'd be here if you didn't trust me.

JULIE

We're even, I guess.

JACK

Are we?

Julie looks at him, tired but clear-eyed.

JULIE

Probably not.

JACK

That sounds about right.

(beat)

I'm an asshole.

JULIE

Yeah, you are. A scared little judgmental asshole.

Jack looks down.

JACK

You're right. That's fair.

JULIE

I know it is. But I also know that underneath that you're not really like that at all. It's just too bad that's how you showed up tonight before you got possessed and killed a bunch of Satanists. We might have had something special.

(shrugs)

And maybe we still can.

Jack perks up.

JULIE

But not anytime soon.

Then deflates.

JULIE

I think I need a moment to figure
out myself too.

They stand in silence.

A car pulls up -- a beat-up sedan. CAT WOMAN from the party
leans out the window.

CAT WOMAN

Jules! Oh my God, are you okay?

Julie walks toward the car.

JULIE

I'm fine. Ready to go home.

She opens the passenger door, then looks back at Jack.

JULIE

At least we'll always have the
menstrual blood story.

Julie gets in the car.

It drives away.

Jack watches it go, standing alone in the parking lot as the
sun rises.

The Deputy steps out of the station, keys in hand.

DEPUTY

Alright, Smith, let's get you back
to where you came from.

Jack follows him to the patrol car.

INT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

They drive in silence through the empty streets of Hallow
Corner.

The town looks different in the early morning light. Quiet,
almost peaceful.

Decorations still up, jack-o'-lanterns still sitting on
porches, candles long burned out.

They pull onto Ash Tree Lane.

EXT. ASH TREE LANE - CONTINUOUS

The patrol car stops.

Jack's silver Honda Civic sits at the curb, exactly where he left it. Untouched. Not a scratch. Like it's been waiting for him all night.

Jack gets out, stares at it like it's a gift from God.

He approaches the car, tries the door.

Locked.

He pats his pockets.

Nothing.

JACK
(panicking)
No. No no no!

He checks again. Front pockets. Back pockets. Jacket.
Nothing.

JACK
Fuck!

BANG BANG BANG on the car. Jack spins around.

The Deputy stands behind him, holding up a set of KEYS.

DEPUTY
Dropped these in the back.

Jack exhales, relief flooding through him.

JACK
Oh thank God.

The Deputy tosses them to Jack.

DEPUTY
Do yourself a favor. Stay out of
this town for a while.

JACK
(taking the keys)
Yeah, I was thinking forever.

The Deputy gets back in his patrol car, drives away.

Jack stands alone on the quiet street, keys in hand.

He unlocks the car, gets in.

INT. JACK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jack sits in the driver's seat, hands on the wheel.

He looks at himself in the rearview mirror.

Blood-streaked face. Hollow eyes. Exhausted.

But alive.

He puts the key in the ignition.

Pauses.

Something catches his eye through the windshield.

A piece of paper tucked under the windshield wiper.

Jack frowns, gets out.

EXT. ASH TREE LANE - CONTINUOUS

Jack reaches for the paper.

It's a TAROT CARD.

THE FOOL.

He stares at it.

Looks around the empty street.

Just him and the rising sun.

He pockets the card.

Gets back in the car.

INT. JACK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jack starts the engine.

He sits there for a moment, gripping the wheel.

Then shifts into drive.

EXT. ASH TREE LANE - CONTINUOUS

The car pulls away from the curb.

Drives down the street.

Past decorated houses. Past glowing jack-o'-lanterns.

EXT. HALLOW CORNER - OUTSKIRTS - CONTINUOUS

The car passes a weathered sign:

NOW LEAVING HALLOW CORNER

COME BACK SOON!

Jack keeps driving.

The sun rises higher.

The town disappears behind him.

THE END