

COBWEB

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Once upon a time

There was a spooky old house

That sat alone on a hill

With no neighbors around

To hear the screams

TAP

TAP

TAP

INT. PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT

PETER (8) opens his eyes

He heard something

He's lying in BED, and it's dark, and this time

He definitely heard something

So he waits

But all he hears now is the HOWL of the wind outside

And the CLOCK by his bed

Nothing more - silence

He closes his eyes and lets the clock lull him back to sleep

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

TAP

TAP

TAP

No

He heard it

Peter sits up in bed

He stares unblinking at THE WALL - at the peeling wallpaper

He then turns to the opposite wall - to the WINDOW

He crawls out of bed

He tiptoes to the window, the floor creaking with every step

He looks out into his backyard

At the GARDEN

At the SHED

At the GNARLED TREE and the SWING that hangs from its branch
 The swing GROANS as it sways in the wind, but it does not tap
 Peter turns his attention to the TOY CHEST in the corner

To the grinning JACK IN THE BOX

He creeps to the corner - cautiously reaches his hand out to
 the smiling CLOWN protruding from the box and

Flicks it

The clown TWANGS back on forth on its spring, but it does not
 tap

He looks to his CLOSET - to its closed door

He inches closer - opens it and jumps

A RED BALL falls out and rolls across the floor, but it does
 not tap

Peter can't deny it any longer

He turns back to The Wall - to the peeling wall paper

He sucks in his breath

Tiptoes to The Wall

When he has summoned enough bravery

He places his ear against the wallpaper, and with his finger

TAPS

And waits - nothing

He exhales

TAP

TAP

TAP

Peter gasps

He stumbles backwards and falls

He scrambles back to his feet and sprints out of his room and
 into the

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Where he runs past the BATHROOM
Past the BOOK SHELF
Past the STAIRCASE
And to the DOOR at the end of the hall
He stops - his hand hovers above the knob
Finally - he opens the door into his

PARENT'S ROOM

EYES stare back Peter, illuminated by the hallway light
THE CAT glares at him from the foot of the bed
He ignores it and slowly, cautiously walks to the side of the bed where
His MOTHER sleeps
Peter gently tugs on her bedsheet
But she remains asleep
So he places his hand on her shoulder and shakes her
Finally, she opens her eyes and sees her son silhouetted by the hallway light

MOTHER

Peter?

PETER

Can I sleep with you?

Silence

MOTHER

What's wrong?

Peter hesitates

He looks to the hallway, then back to his Mother

PETER

I heard something.

MOTHER

You what?

On the other side of the bed, his FATHER stirs

FATHER

Peter?

MOTHER

He says he heard something.

Father reaches for the CLOCK by his bedside

He groans when he sees the time

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What did you hear, Peter?

But Peter doesn't answer

Father turns to face him

FATHER

Well?

MOTHER

Peter.

He shuffles his feet - hangs his head

Father's had enough - he lays back down

Mother too

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You didn't hear anything.

She lays her head on the pillow and closes her eyes

PETER

But--

MOTHER

Go to bed...

And with that, she's already asleep

Peter's shoulder's sink

INT. PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Peter goes back into his room

But this time, he leaves the door open - the light from the hall falling onto his pillow

He tiptoes back to his bed - crawls under the blankets

Turns his back to The Wall

It takes all his strength to close his eyes and keep them shut

The room is silent once again, save for the steady

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

But then

TAP

PETER

No.

TAP

PETER (CONT'D)

You're not real.

TAP

TAP

TAP

He pulls the covers over his head.

PETER (CONT'D)

You're only my imagination.

And then nothing - silence

Until

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Peter...

MORNING

Morning light floods through the window

And as the clock strikes 7:00am the ALARM rings
 But there's no one to turn it off
 Footsteps storm down the hallway and
 Mother - in her nightgown - pops her head inside Peter's room

MOTHER
 What are you--

But all she sees is an empty bed stripped of its blankets

INT. BATHROOM

Mother stands in the doorway of the bathroom
 She looks down at the BATHTUB
 At Peter curled up inside, wrapped in his sheets

INT. PETER'S ROOM

Peter stands outside his closet, his Mother kneeling before
 him buttoning his shirt
 He can't help but stare nervously at The Wall - at it's
 peeling wallpaper
 Mother catches him

MOTHER
 The circles under your eyes are
 getting worse.

She ties his BOW TIE

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 It's okay to be scared.
 This is an old house.
 There are bound to be bumps in the
 night.
 Even rats in the walls.

She looks back at The Wall

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 But anything else...
 Any ghouls or ghosts or goblins...

Back at Peter

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 They're all in your head.
 You understand that, don't you?

He hesitates

Nods

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 You've always had an active
 imagination.
 Such a mind for fantasy.

She stands

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Put on your shoes.
 You don't want to be late.

She walks out the door into the hallway

Peter reaches into his closet and retrieves his shoes

He sits on the floor and wrestles them on

But he doesn't take his eyes off The Wall

Once his shoes are on his feet, he takes a deep breath

He takes a step towards The Wall

Then another and another

He places his ear against the wallpaper and TAPS

Waits

MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Peter!

He leaps out of his skin

Runs out the door into the hallway

EXT. THE HOUSE - MORNING

The spooky old HOUSE sits atop a lonely HILL

Even in the daylight it looks haunted

Autumn leaves dance in the wind, blown from the branches of
 the back yard's gnarled tree

Mother holds the CAT in her arms as she watches Peter trudge down the hill to the

SCHOOL BUS waiting at the road

INT. SCHOOL BUS

Watching Peter from inside the bus is BRIAN (8)

His eyes follow Peter as he gets on the bus and makes his way to the back

Surrounded by the other children, Peter in his antiquated, overly formal clothing is an anachronism

So it is no wonder he's a target

As Peter passes Brian's seat

Brian sticks out his leg

Peter trips and falls

The whole bus erupts in laughter

Peter looks up at Brian and Brian looks down at Peter

Neither says a word

Peter climbs to his feet and continues to the back

He takes the empty seat in the last row

He ignores the laughter, avoids the stares

Looks out the window back at his spooky old house

Wipes his eyes

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

The classroom is dark until

MISS DEVINE (30s) walks in the door and turns on the lights

Shopping bags in hand, she surveys the classroom before getting to work

She mounts a fake SPIDERWEB in the corner

Places a stuffed BLACK CAT on her desk

She cuts construction-paper GHOSTS and hangs them on the wall
 And finally - places a piece of CANDY on every desk
 When she reaches the final desk - last row, furthest corner
 She stops - considers for a moment
 Lays down an extra piece

LATER

STUDENTS spill into her classroom
 After the initial horde has gone to their cubbies and run to
 their desks to claim their candy
 Peter straggles in
 Miss Devine smiles warmly from her desk

MISS DEVINE
 Good morning, Peter.

He doesn't acknowledge her
 She watches as he solemnly deposits his bag and coat in his
 cubby and goes to his desk in the last row, furthest corner
 She watches him take his seat and discover the two candies
 She watches him scan the classroom, see that everyone else
 has only one
 And even though his gloomy expression never changes
 Miss Devine grins to herself

LATER

Miss Devine wears a WITCH HAT and stands in the middle of a
 CIRCLE of students
 She mimes stirring a cauldron, and the children do the same

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
 Double, double, toil and...

THE CLASS
 Trouble!

MISS DEVINE
 Fire burn and cauldron...

THE CLASS

Bubble!

MISS DEVINE

By the pricking of my...

THE CLASS

Thumb!

MISS DEVINE

Something wicked this way...

THE CLASS

Comes!

She claps

MISS DEVINE

Ahhh, you're so scary!

The class collectively giggles

She glances at Peter sitting outside the circle, his face in his hand

He's asleep

LATER

Miss Devine walks around the classroom

The children paint with water colors

Peter only uses BLACK

LATER

Outside the WINDOW the children take recess

Meanwhile, Miss Devine is in an empty classroom

She hangs the children's WATERCOLOR PICTURES on the wall

She hangs a VAMPIRE - a MUMMY - a WEREWOLF

But as she's hanging the next one - she furrows her brow

It's almost entirely BLACK, save for the very bottom

A BOY in bed, and scrawled above his head:

HELP ME

Miss Devine studies the picture

Takes it with her to the window

She looks outside and scans the PLAYGROUND

She looks past the children on the slide, jumping hopscotch,
playing tag

And to the far end of the grounds

Where Peter sits alone, clutching his knees to his chest

LATER

The children swarm their cubbies

But Peter waits outside the chaos

When the crowd has left, he retrieves his coat and bookbag

As he heads to the door

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Peter?

He turns to Miss Devine sitting at her desk with her hands
folded

She smiles warmly, but he knows its forced

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

May I have a word?

He looks longingly at the door

But approaches her desk anyway

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

How is everything? At home, I mean.

He shrugs

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Are you getting enough sleep?

He shrugs again

New tactic

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Have you thought about what you're
going to be for Halloween?

He shakes his head "No"

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
That's okay. Me neither.

She places his PICTURE on the desk between them

He turns to see the wall where every other picture is hanging

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
I really liked your picture.
You're very talented.

He shuffles his feet

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
I was wondering though - what's
going on here?

PETER
It's just a picture.

MISS DEVINE
Oh I know, I know - I only mean...

Her smile falters, but for only a moment

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
Who needs help?

He says nothing

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
Does the boy in this picture need
help?

Miss Devine reaches her hand across the desk, but Peter
doesn't take it

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
Why is the boy asking for help?

PETER
He's not.

MISS DEVINE
But it says--

He points to the black

PETER
She is.

He looks to the door

PETER (CONT'D)
I'm going to miss the bus.

Miss Devine nods

MISS DEVINE
Okay.

Peter turns on his heel and marches out the door

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
Don't forget to bring a pumpkin!

EXT. THE BACK YARD - EVENING

The perfect PUMPKIN sits still attached to its vine

Peter stands above it, his Father waiting at the edge of the GARDEN

FATHER
Is that the one?

Peter surveys the rest of the pumpkins

He nods

FATHER (CONT'D)
All right then.

Father reaches into his pocket and removes a KNIFE

Father trudges into the garden, crouches down next to Peter

He starts to saw at the vine

FATHER (CONT'D)
You know, when I was your age, I was convinced a crocodile lived under my bed.

He laughs and shakes his head

FATHER (CONT'D)
Can you believe that? What would a crocodile be doing under there? It was completely irrational, but that made no difference to me - I was certain it was below me when I slept, biding its time before it could eat me whole.

He stops sawing

FATHER (CONT'D)
But there was no crocodile, Peter.
It was only my imagination.

His face grows stern

FATHER (CONT'D)
Being a big boy means learning to
distinguish fantasy from reality.
And you're a big boy, aren't you?

Peter shifts his weight

FATHER (CONT'D)
Peter.

PETER
Yes.

FATHER
I thought so.

He's about to return to sawing the vine, but has a thought

Instead, he hands the knife to Peter

Peter looks at it reluctantly

FATHER (CONT'D)
It's okay. It won't hurt you.

Peter takes it

He crouches down and saws the vine

When he cuts through, Father musses his hair

FATHER (CONT'D)
That's a big boy.

He stands

He starts towards the SHED

FATHER (CONT'D)
Now come on.

Peter follows

INT. SHED

Father stands in the doorway, watching Peter assess the SHELF

Peter furrows his brow as he scans its contents
He points, then looks back at Father
Father nods
Peter approaches the shelf
Stands on his tippy-toes
And after stretching his arms as far as they'll go
He retrieves a bag of RAT POISON
He brings it back to his father

FATHER
This oughta take care of it.

He closes the door

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No more bumps in the night.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

A framed FAMILY PORTRAIT hangs on the wall - Mother, Father,
and Peter as a baby

The family sits under it, eating their dinner in silence,
their silverware scraping against the plates

Eventually, Father clears his throat

FATHER
We put out some poison.

MOTHER
Mmm?

FATHER
Peter and I.

Mother nods

MOTHER
For the rats?

FATHER
Uh huh. Up high. Where the cat
won't get at it.

They both look to Peter - so that's settled then

He pushes the food around on his plate

INT. PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

TAP

TAP

TAP

Peter opens his eyes

He stares unblinking at The Wall - at the peeling wallpaper

He waits

TAP

TAP

TAP

His whole body tenses, he stops breathing

But he's defiant - he turns around to face the window

The shadow of the tree cast against the glass

TAP

TAP

TAP

He buries his head under his pillow

And for a few moments, that seems to do the trick

If there is any tapping, he doesn't hear it

But then

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Peter...

He heard *that*

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Please...

He whimpers

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Help me...

He's had enough

He bolts up and spins around

PETER
 You're not real!

He hurls the CLOCK at The Wall

It shatters

But now it's quiet

Peter's shoulders rise and fall with every heaving breath

He glares at The Wall

He dares Her to make another sound

MORNING

Morning light floods through the window

It's 7:00am, but the room is silent

Footsteps storm down the hallway and

Mother peers inside

MOTHER
 Peter, it's way past--

She sees Peter sound asleep in bed

She sees the broken alarm clock in pieces on the floor

INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING

A pumpkin rests next to Brian on the bus seat as he peers out the window at

Peter trudging down the hill

He watches Peter climb onto the bus and make his way to the back

As Peter passes

Brian sticks out his leg

But this time, Peter steps over it

He glances at Brian for just a moment before continuing to the last row

He sits in the empty seat and rests the pumpkin on his lap

He catches Brian staring back at him

Peter ignores him and looks out the window as the bus pulls away

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The desks are all moved out of the way and NEWSPAPER is spread across the floor

The children sit in a circle, each painting a face on their respective PUMPKIN

Miss Devine navigates the floor admiring their work, paying compliments to various students

She walks past Brian and notes the crude, lopsided face he's painting

MISS DEVINE
Very nice, Brian.

She moves on

Peter sits outside the circle, concentrating hard

Miss Devine kneels down next to him

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
Oh, wow!

She looks at the big, goofy FACE Peter has painted

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
This is so great, Peter!

Brian watches them from across the circle

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
What's his name?

Peter shrugs

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
But everyone has a name.

He considers this

PETER
Hector.

Miss Devine laughs

MISS DEVINE
Of course.
He sure looks like a Hector to me.

She leans in close - whispers so that only he can hear

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
This one is my favorite.

She holds a finger to her lips - *Our little secret*

She stands and moves onto the next student

Peter stares at Hector's face, and something odd happens

His lips curl upward

Brian notices

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Hanging from the monkey bars, Brian is still watching Peter from across the playground

Peter is sitting at his usual spot, away from everyone else

But he isn't alone - he has Hector

Hector with a smile so goofy that Peter can't help but smile back

He's content to simply sit there with the pumpkin between his legs, giggling at his own handiwork

Until the sound of LAUGHTER catches his attention

Peter looks to the SLIDE - to the children playing on it

And he gets an idea he's never had before
Brian watches as Peter stands and brings Hector to the SLIDE
Once the last CHILD has gone down, Peter tucks Hector under
his arm
And climbs the ladder
When he reaches the summit, he rests Hector on his lap
And SLIDES DOWN
He squeals with unbridled joy the whole way down
And when he reaches the bottom and lands on his rear
He can't contain his laughter
With a new sense of purpose, he leaps to his feet with Hector
in his arms
But as he's about to reach the ladder
He's SHOVED from behind
Peter flies forward - Hector sails through the air
Peter hits the ground hard, his chin smacking the macadam
But worse is what lies ahead of him
He looks up to see Hector BROKEN in HALF
Peter twists his head back
Standing behind him, no emotion on his face, is Brian
He remains emotionless as he circumvents Peter to Hector's
remains
And STOMPS them into mush

PETER
Stop it!

Peter scrambles to his feet and rushes towards Brian
But Brian turns to face him and Peter freezes
While Peter trembles with fury, Brian is stone faced
Peter realizes that all the other children on the playground
have stopped to watch them, waiting for something to happen

He clenches his fists

Uses his forearm to wipe the tears welling in his eyes

Then turns and RUNS

The RECESS MONITOR sees Peter running off the school grounds

She tries to chase after him - blows her WHISTLE

INT. CLASSROOM

Grading quizzes, Miss Devine perks up from her desk when she hears the whistle blowing outside

She bolts to the WINDOW just in time to see

MISS DEVINE

Peter!

He disappears from the playground

OUTSIDE

Peter runs

He runs across roads

He runs through fields

He runs through woods

He runs up the lonely hill

And finally, he runs to the front door of the spooky old house

But he stops - his hand hovers above the knob

Knowing what kind of trouble will be in store for him inside

He instead trudges into the

BACKYARD

His feet crunch dead leaves as he walks past the garden

And to the GNARLED TREE

But as he's about to climb onto the SWING

He hears something, a loud noise coming from inside the house

A WHIRRING

Curiosity overwhelming him, he approaches the house

The sound gets louder and louder the closer he gets to the

KITCHEN WINDOW

He stands on his tippy-toes to see inside

He sees his Mother

She's standing at the kitchen counter operating a BLENDER
full of GRAY GRUEL

EXT. THE ROAD

A CAR screeches to a halt at the bottom of the hill

Miss Devine hurries out of the vehicle

She looks up the hill with panic in her eyes

EXT. BACK YARD

Peter watches as his Mother turns off the blender

She pours the sickening concoction into a CUP

She opens a DRAWER and removes a KNIFE

With both in hand, she starts to walk out of the kitchen when

The DOOR BELL chimes

Both Peter and his Mother freeze

He watches Mother rest the cup and knife on the counter and
disappear down the hall

He hears the front door open

MOMENTS LATER

The BACK DOOR flies open

Mother and Miss Devine rush into the backyard but stop when
they see

Peter sitting solemnly on the swing

Miss Devine breathes a sigh of relief, rests her hand on her heart

But Mother stares daggers

Peter doesn't look either in the eye

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Peter sits at the top of the STAIRCASE clutching the bars of the railing

He strains to hear the conversation happening in the

KITCHEN

Miss Devine sits at the KITCHEN TABLE dabbing her eyes with a tissue

MISS DEVINE

I am so sorry.
It's completely my fault.

Mother is at the counter pouring two cups of COFFEE

MOTHER

Peter can be a difficult child.
I'm sorry he put you through this.

She hands Miss Devine her cup and sits down across from her

MISS DEVINE

Goodness no, Peter is the sweetest--

MOTHER

He will be punished accordingly.

MISS DEVINE

Oh no.
No, I wouldn't want that.

MOTHER

Oh? What would you want?

Miss Devine tries to read her big, bright smile

MISS DEVINE

All I mean is...

She struggles to find her words

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

I think, perhaps...
There might be something else going
on.

Mother sips her coffee

MOTHER

Please. Do tell.

Miss Devine hesitates before reaching into her BAG

She removes Peter's PICTURE and places it on the table

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What is this?

MISS DEVINE

I was hoping you might be able to
tell me.

Mother rests her mug on the table

She picks up the picture - examines it closely

MOTHER

Peter painted this?

MISS DEVINE

For the holiday.
Most of the children drew monsters
or witches, but Peter...

MOTHER

I see.

MISS DEVINE

It's probably nothing, but--

Mother folds the paper in half

MOTHER

You're right. It is nothing.
A spooky picture. For the Holiday.

But Miss Devine isn't satisfied with that

MISS DEVINE

But you can understand why one
might be concerned, no?

MOTHER

Peter has always had a very active
imagination.

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

For years he would wake his Father
and I up in the middle of the night
with tales of ghosts and spectres.
His flights of fancy are not
something I'm eager to indulge.

MISS DEVINE

Often these things can be a sign of
a deeper issue.

MOTHER

Oh? What are you implying?

MISS DEVINE

I'm not implying anything.

MOTHER

But you are.

Miss Devine is disarmed by her smile

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Please. If you believe there to be
an issue, I should be aware of it.

She can't help but feel she's in treacherous waters

MISS DEVINE

Children sometimes have trouble
expressing what's wrong with them.

MOTHER

So there's something wrong with
Peter?

MISS DEVINE

...I just wanted to bring it to
your attention.

MOTHER

And now you have.

Mother stands

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's getting late, Miss Devine. I
still have quite a bit to do before
my husband returns from work.

She takes Miss Devine's untouched coffee

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I appreciate you coming and...
Expressing your concerns.

She dumps it in the sink then throws Miss Devine a cheerful and utterly insincere smile

Miss Devine nods

MISS DEVINE
Have a good evening.

Miss Devine stands as Mother places the mugs in the sink

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

From behind the railing

Peter sees Miss Devine opening the front door

As she exits, she glances up at Peter

She gives him a small wave

And after a moment

Peter waves back

She smiles wistfully

As she turns to leave out the door

She notices for the first time that there a BARS over all the windows

She furrows her brow, but chooses not to think any more of it

She closes the door behind her

And for a moment, it's quiet

Until Mother appears at the bottom of the stairs

And she's holding the FOLDED PICTURE

MOTHER
Peter...

Peter scurries backwards

PETER
I'm sorry!

Mother stomps up each step while

Peter crawls backwards faster and faster until he reaches his

BEDROOM

He runs and darts behind his bed but

Mother follows him inside

She looms in the doorway and displays the picture

MOTHER
Tell me what this is.

Peter cowers behind the bed

PETER
It's just a picture...

Mother trembles with fury

MOTHER
A picture of what?

PETER
Not anything.

She steps forward

MOTHER
A picture of what?

PETER
Nothing!

She's about to scream back when they both hear the front door open

Peter goes white

But Mother gets her temper under control

FATHER (O.S.)
Hello?

Peter's eyes plead for mercy from his Mother

MOTHER
(Calling)
Honey. Come upstairs.

Peter shrinks down below the bed as they listen to Father come up the stairs

He appears in the doorway next to Mother

FATHER
What's going on here?

MOTHER
Peter ran away from school today.

FATHER
He what?

She hands him the picture

MOTHER
And he painted this.

Father assesses the picture

FATHER
Did he now...

He shakes his head

FATHER (CONT'D)
I thought we were finished with
this nonsense.
Isn't that right, Peter?
I thought you were a big boy.

PETER
I am...

FATHER
You're not.
Not when you insist on subjecting
your Mother and I to make believe.

MOTHER
You assured us you had outgrown
these fantasies.

FATHER
Do you know what this is?

He rips the picture into pieces

FATHER (CONT'D)
This is a lie. Are you a liar?

PETER
No.

FATHER
You are. You're a liar.

PETER

But...

This is a mistake

PETER (CONT'D)

But...

Don't do it

PETER (CONT'D)

But I hear her though...

Oh no

For a moment, all is still

It starts slow

Father's face turns red

He convulses with anger

He lets loose

FATHER

SHE
ISN'T
REAL!

Peter cowers behind the bed

Father's outburst surprised even himself

He composes himself and rubs his temples

Sighs

FATHER (CONT'D)

Do we need to ground you?

"Ground you"

Peter jumps to his feet, his eyes wide

PETER

No!

FATHER

What do you think Mother?

PETER

No, no, no, no, no!

She crosses her arms

MOTHER
I'm not sure...

Peter crawls on his knees towards them

PETER
Please, please, please don't ground
me! I promise I'll be good!

His parents look down at him on the floor

MOTHER
This...Girl...

PETER
I made her up!

Neither looks convinced

PETER (CONT'D)
Please don't ground me.

It could go either way

But after a long, pregnant silence

Mother sighs

MOTHER
Fine then.
But if we hear any more talk--

PETER
You won't.

FATHER
Good.

Mother reaches into her pocket and removes a

KEY RING

She and Father step out into the hall

MOTHER
There will be no supper.

Mother closes the door

Locks it

Peter listens as they go downstairs

When he no longer hears their footsteps, he rises to his feet

Tries the knob - confirms that yes, it is locked

His shoulders sink

He plods back to his bed

Sits on the edge facing the window

Tears build in his eyes, snot drips from his nose

He CRIES

But in between sniffs and whimpers

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Peter...

Peter tenses

He cranes his neck back to look at The Wall

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

*I didn't meant to get you in
trouble...*

He turns back to the window

PETER

Be quiet.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Please don't cry...

He wipes his tears

PETER

I said be quiet.

You aren't real.

I'm making you up.

He looks down at his dangling feet

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Why did you run away from
school...?*

Peter thinks

He turns around

Sits on the edge of the bed facing The Wall

PETER
Because of Brian.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
Is Brian your friend...?

PETER
No.
I don't have any friends.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
What did Brian do...?

PETER
He broke my pumpkin.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
That was mean of him...

PETER
He *is* mean.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
Why...?

Peter shrugs

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You shouldn't let people be mean to you, Peter...

Peter considers this

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You should do something about that...

Yeah, *he should*

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Peter...?

He's lost in thought

TAP

TAP

TAP

On the third TAP

A STRIP of WALLPAPER peels off The Wall, exposing the WOOD behind it

That snaps Peter out of his trance

He looks down at his feet

PETER

I shouldn't be talking to you.

He crawls underneath the covers

Lies facing the window

PETER (CONT'D)

You're just make believe.

MORNING

Rain patters against the window

Peter wakes to the sound of his door being unlocked

The door opens, but that's all

He hears his Mother's footsteps going down the stairs

INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING

Peter walks onto the bus

He stares at his feet as he makes his way to the back

And although he doesn't want to, he can't help but glance at

Brian's seat - it's VACANT

He pauses for a moment before continuing to the back

He takes his seat in the last row

Stares ahead at where Brian should be

INT. CLASSROOM

The children file into the classroom

Miss Devine waits patiently at her desk for

MISS DEVINE

Peter.

He stops

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

She *is* sorry - incredibly so

He can see that in her eyes

But he doesn't say anything - just drops his things in his cubby and goes to his desk

He sits down

Notices Brian's desk is EMPTY

LATER

The entire class stands with their hands on their chests

They all face the FLAG in the corner

THE CLASS

I pledge allegiance
To the flag
Of the United States of America
And to the Republic
For which it stands
One Nation
Under God--

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Peter jumps

Miss Devine goes to the classroom door and opens it

A MOM stands on the other side

Miss Devine looks back at Peter before joining her in the hallway

Peter can't hear what they're saying, but he picks up on

MISS DEVINE

I think that would be very nice.

Miss Devine comes back inside, followed by the Mom

And Brian

He's holding a PUMPKIN

Peter slinks down in his seat

Brian hesitates a moment but his Mom pushes him forward

He gradually weaves through the desks until he reaches Peter

Peter feels everyone's eyes

Brian holds out the pumpkin

BRIAN

I'm sorry, Peter.

Peter stares at the pumpkin's painted face

It's stupid and bad and looks *nothing* like Hector

MISS DEVINE

That was very nice of Brian, wasn't
it Peter?

Peter glances up at Brian's blank, soulless expression

Then to Miss Devine's hopeful smile

Peter takes the pumpkin from Brian

Raises it above his head

And HURLS it at the ground by Brian's feet, smashing it to
pieces

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Peter!

Peter's face turns red, he vibrates with anger

Brian shows no emotion

Miss Devine rushes between the two of them

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Hey!

She looms over Peter

He shrinks in her shadow

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

That was bad, Peter.
That was very bad.

She turns to Brian

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Take your seat, Brian.

Brian returns to his desk

She looks back to Peter

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
I am so disappointed in you.

Peter seethes

He focuses that anger on the back of Brian's head

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Peter sits at the edge of the playground clutching his knees to his chest

He watches Brian hanging from the monkey bars

He waits

And waits

And waits

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Peter stares at the CLOCK above the door

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

The BELL rings

All the Children stand from their desks and swarm the cubbies

All except Peter who watches Brian collect his coat and backpack

When the chaos has dissipated

Peter goes to his cubby and puts on his coat

As he heads out the door

MISS DEVINE
Bye Peter.

But Peter's already gone

Miss Devine goes back to the papers she's working on
But something isn't sitting right
She looks to the hallway

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Brian trudges down the corridor
Peter follows him, getting closer and closer
Miss Devine pokes her head out of her door
Just in time to see Peter catch up to Brian by the STAIRCASE
And SHOVE him from behind
Miss Devine sees Brian disappear off the stair's horizon
And the world shifts beneath her feet
Time slows
She sprints down the hall
She hears the dull THUD of meat
The sharp CRACK of bones
And when she arrives next to Peter at the edge of the stairs
She hears a HOWL like a wounded animal
She looks down in horror at what lays at the bottom
While Peter looks down with pride

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE, LOBBY - AFTERNOON

In a GLASS ROOM, ADULTS shout at each other
Brian's Mom yells at Peter's Mother
Peter's Mother yells back
The Principal yells at both of them
But Miss Devine - sitting in the corner - remains silent
Her eyes are glassy - her complexion pale

She stares off into the middle distance

Peter sits outside the glass, watching it all from the lobby

He lets his arms dangle and his feet swing

He remembers

Miss Devine taking the stairs three at a time

He remembers

The revulsion on her face

He remembers

The bone protruding from the leg

He remembers

The screams of agony

He remembers

And he smiles

Without thinking, he places his finger against the wall

TAP

TAP

TAP

From inside the Glass Room, Miss Devine looks at Peter

And he looks back at her

TAP

TAP

TAP

INT. THE CAR - EVENING

Peter sits in the back seat

He looks out the window and counts the raindrops sliding down the glass

Mother watches him from the REARVIEW

MOTHER

Expelled...

She shakes her head

Peter says nothing

INT. THE FOYER

The front door opens

Peter stares ahead at what awaits him down the hall, in the
KITCHEN

Father, sitting at the kitchen table, stroking The Cat on his
lap

MOTHER

Go on.

But Peter doesn't move

So she shoves him

He walks glacially down the

HALL

The floorboards creak with every heavy step

But he isn't going fast enough

So Mother grabs him by the scruff of his neck and drags him
into the

KITCHEN

Father puts The Cat on the floor, stands, and

Pulls out a CHAIR

Mother forces Peter onto the seat

His Parents stand looking down on him, their arms crossed

He stares at his feet

For a long time, no one says a word

FATHER

I don't know what to do anymore.

MOTHER
Don't you have anything to say for
yourself?

Silence

FATHER
Peter.

PETER
Brian was mean to me.

MOTHER
So you sent him to the hospital?

FATHER
We don't solve our problems with
violence, Peter.

Peter clenches his jaw, prepares himself for what's to come

PETER
She said I shouldn't let people be
mean to me.

The air leaves the room

MOTHER
...Who said that to you?

He shrugs

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Peter.
Who said that to you?
Who have you been speaking to?

He gives no reply, which is the only answer they need

FATHER
Oh Jesus Christ.

He SLAMS his hand against the wall

FATHER (CONT'D)
JESUS CHRIST.

He grabs the table and hurls it across the room

But then he takes a breath

Regains his composure - rubs his temples

FATHER (CONT'D)
This is the last straw, Peter.

He looks at Mother

She nods

FATHER (CONT'D)
There's only one thing that's
worked in the past.

No

Peter grips the sides of the chair - his fingers turn white

FATHER (CONT'D)
We have to ground you.

He knew it was coming but it hurts all the same

Peter remains completely still, every muscle tense

Mother grasps Peter's arm

And Peter SCREAMS

She tries to pull him but he won't release the chair

Meanwhile, Father goes to the REFRIGERATOR, braces himself

And slides it away from the wall revealing

A DOOR

Mother yanks Peter and the chair topples to the floor

Peter jumps to his feet and RUNS down the HALL into the

FOYER

He tries to open the front door

But it's LOCKED

Mother marches from behind

With nowhere to go, Peter falls to the floor and kicks his
legs furiously

But Mother manages to grab an ankle

He screams and claws at the floor as he's dragged back into
the

KITCHEN

She pulls the thrashing Peter across the floorboards

With her free hand, Mother reaches into her pocket and retrieves the KEY RING

She hands the keys to Father who unlocks the door leading to the

COLD

DARK

BASEMENT

Father descends the stairs and disappears into the shadows

Mother hoists the screaming and struggling Peter into her arms and carries him into the dark

Footsteps echo throughout the cavernous room

Father turns on a single, exposed LIGHT BULB that reveals

A METAL DOOR in the damp floor

When Mother and Peter are close enough

He lifts the heavy door revealing

THE PIT

Mother brings him to the hole in the ground

MOTHER

Make use of your time.

She lowers Peter into the hole

FATHER

Think about why you're down there.

She drops him and he hits the moist dirt with a dull thud

Peter scrambles to his feet - tries to climb out

But there's no use

He weeps

PETER

Please don't!

I'll be good!

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)
 I swear I'll be a big boy!
 Please please please don't!
 She's not real! I know she's not
 real!
 Please don't leave me down here!

Father and Mother look down at him

His pleas fall on deaf ears

The door SLAMS CLOSED

IN TOTAL DARKNESS

He's all alone

Completely, utterly alone

He jumps as high as he can

He scratches at the walls

He screams and bellows and wails

But it does him no good - he's trapped

His crying subsides

He sits on the cold, wet ground

PETER (CONT'D)
If you're not real...
If you really are my imagination...
Please...
Talk to me...
I don't want to be alone...

He waits

And waits

And waits

PETER (CONT'D)
Help me...

But nobody can

Nobody will

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Devine stands in front of the class with her clipboard

MISS DEVINE

Katie D?

Katie D raises her hand

KATIE D

Here.

Miss Devine checks her name

MISS DEVINE

Ryan G?

Ryan G raises his hand

RYAN G

Here.

Check

MISS DEVINE

Peter--

She stops herself

She looks to the empty desk in the last row, furthest corner

And for a moment, she's lost in thought

But she remembers herself

Shakes her head

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Elizabeth J?

LATER

Outside the WINDOW the children take their recess

Inside, Miss Devine sits at her desk grading math quizzes

But try as she might to concentrate, she can't focus

She puts her pen down and sighs

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

While The Cat eats from its bowl

Mother opens the refrigerator

She removes a TUPPERWARE container

Brings it the BLENDER and opens the lid
 A stew of LEFTOVERS sits congealed inside
 She dumps its contents into the blender
 Behind her - the PHONE RINGS
 She turns - eyes it suspiciously
 It keeps ringing
 So she walks across the kitchen and answers it

MOTHER

Hello?

Miss Devine paces around the **CLASSROOM**

MISS DEVINE

Hi. Is this Peter's Mother?

MOTHER

...It is.

The flatness in her voice immediatly telegraphs to Miss Devine that this was a mistake

But too late now

MISS DEVINE

This is Miss Devine.

MOTHER

What a delight.

She walks back to the blender

MISS DEVINE

I'm sorry to call, but I...
 I wanted to check in.
 How is Peter doing?

Mother glances to the refrigerator

MOTHER

He's thinking long and hard about
 what a bad boy he's been.
 The other one?

MISS DEVINE

Brian?
 His Mom says he'll be back in class
 for Halloween.

She takes a breath

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
I want to apologize again--

Mother turns the blender ON

Miss Divine grimaces at the sound

Waits for it to stop

Mother lets it run until the concoction has turned gray

MOTHER
What was that?

MISS DEVINE
I said I want to apologize.
For what happened.
I can't help but feel responsible--

MOTHER
No. It was entirely Peter's doing.

MISS DEVINE
Have you figured out what school
he'll go to?

Mother dumps the gruel into a CUP

MOTHER
Here. At home.

MISS DEVINE
...Oh.

MOTHER
Peter is an delicate child.
An isolated environment is more
suited to his needs.
This is for the best.

She opens the DRAWER and retrieves a KNIFE

Miss Devine closes her eyes and prepares herself

MISS DEVINE
May I speak with him?

Mother opens her mouth to respond when

She looks up at the ceiling

TAP

TAP

It's faint

But there is definitely a noise coming from upstairs

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Hello?

Mother turns her attention back to the phone

MOTHER

I don't think that would be appropriate.

MISS DEVINE

Oh...

TAP

TAP

TAP

MOTHER

I must go.
Thank you for the call.

Mother hangs up

Looks back at the ceiling

Miss Devine, meanwhile, listens to a dial-tone and is left feeling even worse than she did before she called

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Mother slowly ascends the stairs, cup in one hand, knife in the other

TAP

TAP

TAP

She cautiously walks down the hallway, the floorboards creaking with every step

She gets closer and closer to the incessant TAPing

Until she stands facing The Wall

She pounds her fist against the wood

MOTHER

Shut up!

Then nothing - silence

THE DARKNESS

It's quiet and still

All that can be heard is Peter's steady breathing

Until the heavy door is UNLOCKED

The door is opened

And a blinding light illuminates the hole

Peter squints at the silhouettes of his Parents above him

They look down at their filthy child below

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Peter's urine-stained underwear soaks in the sink while

Peter sits naked in the bathtub, the water black from all the grime

Mother turns off the faucet and sits on the edge

She soaks a WASHCLOTH in the dirty water

Takes him by the chin

MOTHER

I know your Father and I can be strict.

She scrubs above his eyes

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Our punishments harsh.

His cheeks

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Perhaps even cruel.

She glides the cloth along his arm

MOTHER (CONT'D)

But one day you'll realize what we
do is born of love.

Scrubs the dirt and blood underneath his fingernails

MOTHER (CONT'D)

That this is all for your own good.

She places her hand on his shoulder and pushes him forward

She runs the cloth across his BACK

Over the SCARS

The four, jagged LACERATIONS that cross his spine

She traces her finger along the raised flesh

MOTHER (CONT'D)

To keep you safe.

She sits him upright - smiles

Kisses him on the forehead and stands

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Dry off.
It's time for supper.

Mother leaves the bathroom

Peter listens to her descend the stairs

He grabs the TOWEL

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Peter walks into the kitchen to see

Mother and Father sitting at the table under the family
portrait, dinner plates before them

They both smile at him

MOTHER

Come.

She pulls out his chair

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Sit.

Skeptically, Peter takes his place at the table

Mother and Father stare at him as he sits on his hands

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Aren't you hungry?

He makes a show of taking a bite, then sets his fork back on the table

FATHER
Well Son...
Did you have a good think?

Peter nods

FATHER (CONT'D)
What about?

PETER
About how I need to grow up
About how I need to be a good boy.
Stop acting out.
Stop telling fibs.

MOTHER
That's very nice to hear.

FATHER
We're both very proud of you.

Mother and Father reach across the table and take each others hands

MOTHER
Things are going to be different
now, Peter.
You won't be attending school any
longer. I will be your teacher.
Lessons will begin in the morning.

FATHER
The three "R"s.
Do you know what those are?

Peter shakes his head

FATHER (CONT'D)
Reading, writing...and 'rithmetic.

Father laughs

MOTHER

Not only will you finally receive a proper education, but I'm confident you and I will have a lot of--

THUMP

It came from upstairs

Mother and Father go absolutely still

They look to the ceiling, then to each other, then to Peter

But Peter has no reaction at all - simply chews his food

After he's swallowed

PETER

A lot of what?

They both relax

MOTHER

A lot of *fun*.

Father musses his hair

FATHER

You're a good boy, Peter.

MOTHER

A *big* boy.

FATHER

That's right. A big boy.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter's all tucked in

Father stands by the doorway, Mother sits on the edge of the bed

She's reading from a picture book

MOTHER

"Well look at that! This is the end of the book, and the only one here is...ME.

I am the Monster at the end of this book.

And you were so scared!

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I told you and told you there was
nothing to be afraid of."

She closes the book - Peter smiles

He may be a big boy, but he still loves that one

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Good night, Peter.

She kisses him on the forehead, then joins Father in the
doorway

PETER
Good night, Mother.
Good night, Father.

They close the door

He listens to their footsteps travel to the end of the hall

Hears their bedroom door close

His smile vanishes

He sits up in bed, moves to the edge

Looks to The Wall

PETER (CONT'D)
Are you real?

He waits

PETER (CONT'D)
I said are you real?

And waits

PETER (CONT'D)
Talk to me.

And waits

PETER (CONT'D)
Talk to me!

THE GIRL (O.S.)
I'm real, Peter...

He nods - he knew it

He crawls off the bed and drags himself across the
floorboards

PETER
Where are you?

THE GIRL (O.S.)
I don't know...
It's dark...

PETER
How long have you been there?

THE GIRL (O.S.)
As long as I can remember...

But then

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No...

No?

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I remember a room...
A bed...
Toys...

Peter looks around his room

He has those things

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There was a ball...

Peter looks to his closet

PETER
...Was it red?

THE GIRL (O.S.)
What is...red...?

PETER
Red is...a strawberry.
A fire truck.
Blood--

THE GIRL (O.S.)
Yes.
It was red...
Oh, how I loved to play...
How I wish I had it now...

PETER
Wait.

Peter stands

Slowly walks to the closet, careful not to make too much noise

He gently turns the knob and opens the closet door

The RED BALL falls out and bounces across the floor

Peter clasps his hand over his mouth

That was too loud

He watches it roll to The Wall

He looks to his bedroom door

Waits to hear his parent's door open

It doesn't

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Is that it...?

Is that my red ball...?

He nods

PETER

Yes.

And for a moment, the room is quiet - but then

SCRATCH

At first, Peter isn't sure of the source of the sound

SCRATCH

But then he sees it

SCRATCH

Where the wall meets the floor

SCRATCH

The WALLPAPER - it's protruding

As if a finger is poking from the other side

PETER (CONT'D)

Stop!

She does

Peter starts to tremble

He listens for his parent's bedroom door again

Silence

After his nerves have calmed, he creeps his way back to
The Wall

Gets down on his knees and with his thumb and forefinger

He takes hold of the peeling wallpaper

And pulls - just for a second

Simply testing its resilience

But it separates from the wall with a satisfying rip

So he keeps pulling

And slowly, inch by inch

Reveals a HOLE

As soon as he realizes what he's done, he lets go

Scurries backwards

Allows the wallpaper to fall back into place

When he catches his breath

PETER (CONT'D)

You're my sister...aren't you?

There's a silence

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Yes...

He gulps

PETER

Why are you in there?

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Mommy and Daddy...
They said I was bad...*

Peter nods

PETER
They say that to me sometimes.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
Peter...

PETER
Yes?

THE GIRL (O.S.)
May I play with it...?

It takes him a moment to understand what she means
When he does, he picks up the BALL - looks to The Wall
And decides "yes"
So he crawls back to The Wall
Peels back the paper - curls it so that it stays put
And looks into the deep, dark, absolute darkness of The Hole
It isn't big, but the small red ball will fit
So he readies himself
And rolls it inside and it disappears into the darkness
Then he waits
And waits
And waits
Until the ball rolls back

MORNING

Morning light floods through the window
Mother gently opens the door to Peter's room
Sees him sleeping soundly
She glides across the floor and sits on the edge of his bed
Caresses his face

MOTHER
Peter. Wake up.

Peter opens his eyes

MOTHER (CONT'D)
It's almost time for school.

He smiles - nods

PETER
Okay.

Mother stands and moves towards the door

Then stops

All of Peter's TOYS have been propped up and displayed
against The Wall

INT. STORAGE CLOSET - DAY

Mother pulls the chain that turns on the LIGHT

She digs through the old board games and cleaning products
before she finds

A stack of WORK BOOKS

She blows off the dust and turns off the light

INT. KITCHEN

Mother sits at the kitchen table, a work book open before her

She rubs at its pages with a pink eraser

MOTHER
(Calling)
Ring, ring, ring.
That's the bell.
Heaven knows you don't want to be
late for your first day of school.

Peter walks into the kitchen

Mother closes the book, stands, sweeps the eraser residue
into her hand, and throws it away in the sink

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Please everyone take your seats.

Peter pulls out a chair and sits at the table

He looks at the old math work book on the table in front of
him

Mother stands in front of the table with her hands clasped before her

She puts on her best "Teacher Voice"

MOTHER (CONT'D)
For the first lesson of the day, we
will be learning multiplication.

She stifles a self-satisfied smile

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Won't you all open your books to
page 15.

Peter opens his book

He can't help but notice that - despite being erased

There's still the faint trace of already answered questions

LATER

Mother paces back and forth while Peter furrows his brow

PETER
M...A...

He pauses

MOTHER
...Go on.

PETER
...I...?

She nods

PETER (CONT'D)
N...D...E...R
Remainder.

MOTHER
Very good, Peter.
How about..."Hostile."

Peter thinks

PETER
Hostile.
H...O...S...T

CUCKOO - CUCKOO - CUCKOO

Peter and Mother both turn to the CUCKOO CLOCK hanging on the wall - to the BIRD popping in and out

Mother bites her lip and sighs

MOTHER

Okay...
Time for a break.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Mother sits Peter down on the couch

MOTHER

You've earned a few minutes of
television.

She turns on the TELEVISION SET

A black & white movie plays - a WOMAN walks down a dark alley

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Oooh.
This is a spooky one.

She turns up the volume

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Stay put.

She goes into the kitchen - Peter watches the movie

The woman in the film hears footsteps behind her, but every
time she turns around - no one is there

Peter hears the BLENDER running in the kitchen

Over the sound of the movie, he hears Mother's footsteps

He listens as she goes upstairs

Hears the creak of the floorboards above him

Then a GROAN

As if heavy furniture is being shifted above his head

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Mother works at the stove while Peter does his homework at
the table

Father walks through the kitchen with a grin on his face
He saunters over to Mother

FATHER
Something to add to the stew.

She turns to see him holding up a DEAD RAT
She screams and smacks him

MOTHER
Get that out of here!

He laughs as she hits him again
Peter watches as he takes it out to the backyard

FATHER
Poison's working.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Peter is wearing his pajamas as he brushes his teeth
After he spits and rinses
He looks out into the

HALLWAY

He creeps out of the bathroom - Walks to the BOOK SHELF
And kneels down
He grazes his thumb along the deep scratch in the floor from
all the times the shelf has been moved

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter sits facing The Wall
The wallpaper has been peeled back - The Hole is exposed
And the red ball comes rolling out
Peter catches it - rolls it back

PETER
What's your name?

After a moment

THE GIRL (O.S.)
I don't know...
I...
I don't have one...

It rolls out again

PETER
 But everyone has a name.

He rolls it in

THE GIRL (O.S.)
I don't know any girls names...

Rolls out

PETER
 There are girls at school.
 Some are named Katie, or Mary, or
 Tabitha, or Sarah.

In

THE GIRL (O.S.)
Sarah...
I like that...

Out

PETER
 Sarah, then. That's your name.

In

He waits for the ball's return

But it doesn't come out again

THE GIRL (O.S.)
Peter...
Help me...

He stares at The Hole

He knew this was coming, and he looks away

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Please...

He doesn't say anything

He clutches his knees to his chest

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let me out...

PETER
I don't know how.

He can sense her disappointment

PETER (CONT'D)
...I'm sorry.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
I'm so hungry...

Peter nods - that he can handle

PETER
Okay.

He slowly heads to the door

PETER (CONT'D)
I'll get you an apple--

THE GIRL (O.S.)
No.

He stops

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Meat.

Looks back at The Hole

PETER
What?

THE GIRL (O.S.)
Bring me meat...

Silence

PETER
Why?

He stands frozen by the door

THE GIRL (O.S.)
*Please...
Bring me meat...*

For a while, he does nothing

PETER

All right.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The moon shines through the window

Peter uses its light to navigate the kitchen on his hands and knees

He moves slowly, deliberately - the dark amplifying every sound

He reaches the refrigerator - takes hold of the handle

And pulls open the door

The light from inside cascades throughout the kitchen

Revealing Mother behind him

MOTHER

What are you doing, Peter?

Peter yelps - slams the door closed

He turns to Mother now lit only by moonlight

PETER

I...

He catches his breath

PETER (CONT'D)

I wanted a snack.

She doesn't move

MOTHER

It's very late.

Peter touches his stomach

PETER

...I couldn't sleep.

MOTHER

You're not supposed to be out of bed.

He looks at his feet

She takes a step forward - he takes one back

She opens the refrigerator door

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mother closes Peter's bedroom door

MOTHER (O.S.)
Go to sleep.

He hears the key ring - hears the door LOCK

And when he hears Mother's footsteps travel down the hall,
hears her bedroom door close

He goes to The Wall

Peels back the wallpaper

And places a pink slice of lunch meat outside The Hole

And then he waits

THE GIRL (O.S.)
What is this...?

PETER
Bologna.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
I said to bring meat...

PETER
It is meat.

Silence

PETER (CONT'D)
This is all we have.

He holds his breath

Then watches as the bologna is dragged inside

PETER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

THE GIRL (O.S.)
*It's okay, Peter...
You tried...
Thank you...*

But then he hears whimpering

Followed sobs

PETER

Please.
Don't cry.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Peter...
I'm sick...
I...
I think I'm dying...

PETER

...I can try and get medicine,
or...

THE GIRL (O.S.)

I'm scared...

He stands impotently in the center of the room

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I need to get out...
I need your help...

PETER

I told you.
I don't know how.

He listens as she sniffs - takes a breath

THE GIRL (O.S.)

There's a door...

He wipes the tears from his eyes - nods

PETER

I know there is.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

You do...?

He looks to the hall

PETER

It's in the hallway.
Behind the book shelf.
It's how she feeds you.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Yes...

A long quiet - they both think

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You'll need the key...

PETER
She always keeps it on her.
I could never sneak it.

But he has a thought

He walks to the window

Looks out into the back yard

PETER (CONT'D)
I have an idea.

INT. BUS - MORNING

All the CHILDREN are dressed in their HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

Brian is dressed as a FOOTBALL PLAYER - an injured one

His leg is in a CAST

As they approach the spooky old house on the hill

He looks out the window

And as the bus roars past the house

He sees Peter standing in the window

Watching

INT. BATHROOM

Peter stares out the window at the bus speeding by

When its gone, he goes back to brushing his teeth

He return to the mirror - stares at his reflection

He stops brushing

Lets the toothpaste froth from his lips like a rabid beast

Lets it dribble down his chin

He spits

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Mother paces back and forth as Peter furrows his brow

PETER

A...F...R...A...I...D
Afraid.

MOTHER

Very good.

CUCKOO - CUCKOO - CUCKOO

They both turn to the cuckoo clock - to the bird popping in and out

Mother looks to Peter and smiles

INT. LIVING ROOM

Mother sits Peter on the couch

She turns on the television set then goes to the kitchen

A black & white movie is playing - a girl bangs on a door begging her mother to let her in

But the begging and banging stop and blood pools under the door

Peter hears the blender in the kitchen

Hears Mother go upstairs

INT. STAIRCASE

As Mother ascends the staircase

Peter creeps to the bottom

He listens to her walking down the hall

Hears the groan of the bookshelf being moved

He darts away into the

KITCHEN

And to the back door

He swings it open and runs into the back yard

Past the garden, past the gnarled tree
And to the Shed

INT. STAIRCASE

Mother descends the stairs

When she reaches the bottom, she walks down the HALLWAY and
into the

KITCHEN

Where she stops

She looks at the back door - at the screen door blowing in
the wind

She looks into the LIVING ROOM

Where Peter is still sitting on the couch watching television

He looks over to her with an innocent smile

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

PARENTS and TEACHERS alike stand as audience, gawking and
waving at

The PARADE of children in their costumes

Miss Devine forces a smile as she watches the procession of
superheroes and princesses

She sees Brian limping by on his crutches, and the smile
fades

But only for a moment before she remembers herself

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

The sun is just beginning to set

The first TRICK-OR-TREATERS have begun to prowl

Miss Devine's CAR pulls into the driveway of her HOUSE

INT. MISS DEVINE'S LIVING ROOM

Miss Devine sits on the floor of her living room, bathed in the TV's light as she plunges a KNIFE into a PUMPKIN

She carves a face, periodically looking up at the television

A black & white film is playing

A WOMAN with dark black hair enters her apartment to find a NOOSE hanging from the ceiling

Miss Devine gets chills

She pops out the last chunk and admires her handiwork

She bites her lip

She can't help but notice it looks an awful lot like Hector

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Father sets the table while mother ladles SOUP into three bowls and

Peter finishes pouring three glasses of MILK at the counter

He looks back at his parents

Neither of them are paying him any attention

Father sits as Mother brings the tray of soup bowls to the table

FATHER

I was thinking after dinner we could make a bowl of popcorn and the three of us watch a scary movie.

What do you say?

Mother takes her seat

MOTHER

Oh, I don't know.

Peter distributes the glasses

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I don't want Peter having nightmares.

He takes his seat between them

MOTHER (CONT'D)
He already has so much trouble
sleeping.

FATHER
Nah.

He musses Peter's hair

FATHER (CONT'D)
Peter's a big boy, aren't you
champ?

Peter swirls the soup around with his spoon

MOTHER
We'll see...

Peter glances up as Mother is about to sip her soup, but then

RING RING

She stops - puts the spoon down

Mother and Father exchange glances

RING RING - the DOORBELL

Mother sighs

She stands up from the table and walks up the hallway towards
the front door

Tense, Father stares at Peter

Peter stares at his soup

They hear the front door open

CHILDREN (O.S.)
Trick or treat!

Father relaxes

He brings the spoon to his mouth and sips

FATHER
Mmmm.

He sips another spoonful - and another

MOTHER (O.S.)
We don't have any candy.

But after a moment - he frowns
Peter watches as Father looks into his bowl
But when Mother walks back into the kitchen
He continues eating as if nothing was the matter

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Trick or treaters.

FATHER
Did you turn the porch light out?

MOTHER
I did just now.

She takes her seat
Father takes another sip and stifles a shiver

FATHER
It's very good, honey.

MOTHER
Thank you, dear.

FATHER
Don't you think, Peter?

PETER
Uh huh.

FATHER
Did you do anything differently?

Mother shakes her head as she blows the steam off her spoon

MOTHER
Same recipe as always.

Father nods
He drinks from his milk and grimaces
Peter holds his breath as Mother finally takes her first sip
And then her second
By the third, the taste cannot be ignored - she winces

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Oh goodness.

Father puts his spoon down

FATHER

Right?

Mother sniffs her bowl

Takes a fourth sip just to be sure

Spits it back

MOTHER

That's terrible.

She gulps down her milk

But that's just as bad as the soup

She retches

MOTHER (CONT'D)

My God, what is...

It's at that moment she realizes Peter hasn't touched his meal

He's simply been sitting swirling his spoon

She looks to Father

He understands

He knocks his chair over as he bolts up from the table

He runs towards the back door and out into

BACK YARD

Sprints past the garden

Past the gnarled tree

And into

THE SHED

Where he finds on the shelf

An empty spot where the RAT POISON used to be

INT. KITCHEN

Mother slowly backs away from the table shaking her head

MOTHER
What did you do, Peter?

He doesn't look up - simply swirls the spoon

MOTHER (CONT'D)
WHAT DID YOU DO?

Father runs back into the kitchen

FATHER
Call 911!

As Mother goes for the PHONE

Father GRABS Peter by the shirt and YANKS him up from his chair and

SLAMS him into the wall

The framed portrait is knocked from the wall and SHATTERS onto the floor

Mother gets to the phone, holds it to her ear, dials, only to realize

Peter cut the cord

Father's eyes bulge with rage as he hoists Peter into the air

He screams like an animal in Peter's face

But then he stops - as if the sound is caught in his chest

Rage gives way to confusion

He drops Peter and clasps at his throat

Backs away - stumbles

Peter scrambles away and watches from the hall as

Father VOMITS black BILE all over the floor

Terrified, he looks to Mother for help but she remains paralyzed

He vomits again - even more this time - and moans in pain

He collapses onto the floor

Spasms in a pool of his own sick
Suddenly, a moment of clarity washes over Mother
She looks at Peter in the hall
Rushes to the drawer
Grabs the KNIFE and darts after Peter into the

HALLWAY

Spitting up over herself, she chases Peter to the

STAIRCASE

Peter goes as fast as he can, taking two steps at a time but
Mother is right behind him, knife in hand
Just as he reaches the top, Mother GRABS his ankle
He falls
She yanks him backwards - he grasps the railing
Turns to see vomit spewing from her mouth
He KICKS
His foot hits her between the eyes
She lets go of his ankle and falls backwards
Down

And

Down

Step

After

Step

He hears the dull THUD of meat
The sharp CRACK of bones
Until she lands in a heap at the bottom of the stairs

Peter stares in disbelief at the sight of her lying there,
her body contorted in unnatural angles

He catches his breath as he watches her side pool with blood

The knife in her hand as gone through her back

She doesn't move

And for a while - a long, long while

Everything is quiet

Eventually, Peter looks down the hall at the book shelf

Then back to his Mother

When he finds the strength

He slowly descends the stairs

The closer he gets to the bottom, the slower he goes

Until he finally reaches the bottom

He does his best to avoid his Mother's eyes staring up the
ceiling

Still holding onto the railing

He reaches out and puts his hand in her pocket - nothing

He tries the other - hears the jangling of KEYS

He carefully extracts the key ring from her pocket

When Mother GRABS his wrist

Peter screams

MOTHER

Peter...

He tries to pull away, but he can't

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Don't...

She tries to lift her head

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Don't let her out.

Vomit drips from her lips

Her head falls and her grip loosens

Peter pulls away

And the life leaves Mother's eyes

Silence

Nothing but the sound of Peter's labored breathing - until

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Peter...

He looks upstairs

INT. PETER'S ROOM

Peter stands in the doorway and stares at The Wall

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Peter...

Are you there...?

He shifts his weight

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Did you do it...?

Are they gone...?

PETER

Yes.

The Girl squeals with delight

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Did you get the keys...?

He takes a few cautious steps forward then stops himself

Tosses the keys

They land outside The Hole

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Thank you, thank you!

But I can't get out myself.

You need to move the shelf.

You need to unlock the door.

He looks down at his feet

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Peter...?

He shuffles across the floor to The Wall
 Picks up the keys
 Then he notices something
 He takes hold of the peeling wallpaper
 And pulls, separating it from The Wall
 He steps back, pulling it more and more, revealing the wood
 underneath
 Finally, the strip rips off and falls to the floor
 Peter takes in the sight of the exposed wall
 It's covered in crisscrossing SCRATCHES
 Just like the ones on his back

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Keys in hand, Peter slowly approaches the BOOK SHELF
 He closes his eyes - takes a deep breath
 Readies his stance - positions his fingers between the shelf
 and the wall
 And pulls
 It doesn't budge

PETER

It's too heavy. I can't move it.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

No, Peter!
You can!
I believe in you!
You're a big boy!
A big, strong boy!

His shoulders sink
 He tries again - pulls harder
 The shelf moves an inch

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

See!
You can do it!

He pulls and tugs and wrenches
 And with every brief exertion of strength
 The shelf moves further and further from The Wall
 Until it gets caught on an uneven floorboard
 Peter grits his teeth
 Sweat drips from his forehead
 The shelf begins to TIP
 He steps backwards, shuts his eyes, and covers his ears as
 The shelf CRASHES to the ground

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Peter!
Peter, are you hurt?

Peter opens his eyes, takes his hands off his ears
 He stares at the DOOR in The Wall

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Peter...
Answer me, Peter...
Are you all right...?

PETER

I'm okay.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Yes!
We're almost done!
Unlock the door!
Let me out!
Let me out, Peter!

Peter looks at the keys in his hand
 He looks to the door - looks to the staircase
 He shakes his head

PETER

No.

Silence

THE GIRL (O.S.)

Peter...

PETER

I can't.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Yes you can, Peter...
You have the key...*

Tears well in his eyes

PETER

I'm scared.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*There's no reason to be scared...
You're doing the right thing...
Let me out...*

He doesn't move

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Let me out!

BANG

BANG

BANG

Peter throws the keys

He covers his ears and sprints to the stairs but stops when he sees Mother's dead eyes staring back at him

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Let me out!

BANG

BANG

BANG

He runs the other direction

Leaps over the fallen book shelf

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Let me out!

And runs into his

PARENT'S ROOM

He slams the door closed

He sprints to the bed

And dives under the covers

EXT. MISS DEVINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A GHOST, a SPACEMAN, and an ICE SKATER stand on the porch

The door opens and Miss Devine - in her witches hat - is on the other side with a bowl of candy

CHILDREN

Trick or treat!

MISS DEVINE

Wow! You look great!

She holds out the bowl

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

You can each take two.

They reach and grab handfuls before running off

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

You're welcome.

She's about to turn back inside but then stops

She looks at her pumpkin at the end of the porch

INT. MISS DEVINE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miss Devine flips through the directory

She dials her phone and holds it to her ear

But all she hears is a persistent BEEP

The call cannot be connected

She hangs up

EXT. MISS DEVINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Miss Devine peers out the front window and looks for trick-or-treaters but there's no one outside

She turns out the porch light

INT. PARENT'S ROOM - MORNING

Morning light floods through the window

Peter is asleep under the covers

The clock strikes 6:30am and the ALARM rings

Peter slowly emerges from the sheets

It wasn't a dream - he gulps

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Peter looks out into the hallway

He sees the tipped over book shelf and the door in the wall

PETER

Hello?

Nothing - silence

He creeps across the floor to the staircase and looks downstairs

His Mother is still dead on the floor

Flies swarm her corpse

The Cat nibbles on her face

PETER (CONT'D)

Hey!

It ignores him

Peter disappears down the hall and into his room

He return with the red ball

He throws it at The Cat - it hisses and skitters away

Peter takes a deep breath then proceeds down the

STAIRCASE

The steps groan under his feet

He covers his ears to hide from the buzzing of flies and steps over his Mother

His feet stick to the drying blood on the floor

INT. KITCHEN

Peter maneuvers around his Father's body and the puddles of bile

He gets CEREAL from the closet and MILK from the refrigerator

INT. LIVING ROOM

Peter carries his bowl of cereal to the couch

He takes a seat and turns on the television

A black & white Christmas movie is playing

He glances at the KITCHEN - at his Father's glassy eyes - then looks back at the TV

INT. KITCHEN

The Cat stares at its empty food bowl

It looks to Peter watching TV in the LIVING ROOM

Then saunters over to the body on the kitchen floor

As it sniffs the cold, dead flesh - it hears

SCRATCH

It raises its head - flicks its ears

SCRATCH

SCRATCH

It wanders out of the kitchen

INT. PETER'S ROOM

The Cat stands waiting for

SCRATCH

SCRATCH

SCRATCH

That

It sees the wallpaper and smells the bologna outside The Hole

The Cat stalks towards The Wall and sniffs the meat

It moves closer and closer

INT. LIVING ROOM

The cereal crunches in Peter's ears as he eats

He doesn't hear the cat YOWLING upstairs

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Devine stands in the empty classroom in front of the Halloween pictures

She stares at the blank space on the wall where Peter's painting was supposed to go

She begins taking them down

LATER

Miss Devine finishes hanging the last of the Thanksgiving decorations just as

STUDENTS spill into the room

MISS DEVINE
Good morning.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peter sits at the kitchen table writing in his work book

A blanket is draped over his Father's body

He solves a math problem by counting on his fingers

CUCKOO - CUCKOO - CUCKOO

He watches the bird pop in and out of the cuckoo clock

He looks to the refrigerator

LATER

Peter stands on a chair by the counter

He pours leftovers into the blender and starts it

He watches the food turn to gray mush

Once it's finished, he pours the gruel into a cup and starts out the door

But he stops when something on the floor catches his eye

He crouches down and picks up the FAMILY PORTRAIT, now free from its frame

He realizes the photo has been FOLDED - so he unfolds it

And for the first time he sees the full picture of his family

Mother, Father, Peter as a baby, and standing next to them

His SISTER concealed under a SHROUD

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Peter carries a cup of gruel up the staircase

He reaches the summit and starts down the hall

Then stops

He drops the cup

His face turns white and his blood curdles

Because the door in the wall is OPEN

A bloody CAT BONE sticks out from the lock

She got out

All he can do is stare into the darkness

Eventually he cranes his neck and looks to his bedroom, his parent's bedroom, the bathroom

She could be anywhere

He looks down the stairs, past his Mother, at the FRONT DOOR

He gulps

The sprints down the

STAIRCASE

He takes two steps at a time

But just as he's almost reached the bottom

His Mother's corpse is DRAGGED out of sight

He falls backwards and scrambles back up the stairs

But he stops when he hears it

Biting and crunching and slurping

She's FEEDING

He clasps his hands over his mouth to stifle his whimpers

But one small cry escapes his lips

She stops eating - goes quiet

Then

THE GIRL (O.S.)

I hear you Peter...

He hears Her FEET stomp across the floor

He spins and bolts up the stairs

He hears her racing behind him

Getting closer and closer and closer

INT. PETER'S ROOM

Peter darts into his room and slams the door closed

BANG

BANG

BANG

He presses his back against the door and digs his feet
 He feels in his pockets

PETER

No...

Then hears the jangling of KEYS outside his room

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*It's okay, Peter...
 You don't have to come out...*

He hears the door LOCK

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*You can stay in there as long as
 you like...*

He listens to her footsteps walk to the stairs

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*I'll be waiting for when you want
 to come out and play...*

And then she's gone

Peter slides down the door and hugs his knees

He crawls across the floor

And hides under his bed

INT. CAR - EVENING

Miss Devine sits in traffic

She fiddles with the radio but all she can find is static

She stares ahead at the unmoving vehicles and sighs

The only cars getting anywhere are the ones turning right up
 ahead

As she watches car after car pass her, a thought occurs

She chews her lip

And makes the right

EXT. THE HOUSE - EVENING

The sun sets behind the spooky old house atop the lonely hill
No one could know the terrors within
Miss Devine's car comes to a stop on the road below

INT. CAR

Miss Devine looks up at the house

MISS DEVINE
This is stupid

She puts the gear back in drive
But she doesn't take her foot off the brake
She sighs - back to park
She turns off the engine

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
This is so stupid.

EXT. THE HOUSE

Miss Devine climbs out of her car
She rubs her arms in the autumn chill
She climbs up the hill
Walks onto the dark PORCH
And rings the doorbell
She shivers and waits but there's no response
She rings again - knocks
But maybe they're not home - the lights are out
She sighs and turns around

MISS DEVINE
So stupid.

But as she heads down the hill
She hears the GROAN of hinges

She looks back

The front door is OPEN

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Hello?

Silence

INT. FOYER

Miss Devine peers through the doorway and gazes into the darkness

A RUG covers the blood on the floor and the deep shadows hide the other horrors

MISS DEVINE

Helloooo?

INT. PETER'S ROOM

Peter opens his eyes

He's lying under his bed and it's dark and he definitely heard something

MISS DEVINE (O.S.)

Is someone home?

No

Peter scrambles from out under the bed and rushes to the door

He beats his fists against the wood

PETER

Miss Devine!

INT. FOYER

Miss Devine hears the pounding upstairs

She hears the terror in his voice

MISS DEVINE

Peter?

She rushes up the STAIRS

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

She follows the sound of Peter's screams to the hall

MISS DEVINE
I'm coming!

She jumps over the fallen bookshelf and runs to Peter's door

She tries the knob but it's locked

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)
I can't open the door!

She frantically looks around for any clue as to what to do next

It's only then that she realizes what he's been yelling at her

PETER (O.S.)
You have to get out!

MISS DEVINE
What?

PETER (O.S.)
She escaped! She's in the house!
You have to leave before it's too late!

She tries to comprehend

MISS DEVINE
I don't understand. Who is in the house?

PETER (O.S.)
The Girl!

Then she sees the door and the cat bone sticking from out the lock

MISS DEVINE
What is...

As Peter continues to pound at the door

Miss Devine crouches and looks into the dark

As she gets closer and closer

BANG

She jumps to her feet - it came from downstairs

She hears the jangling of KEYS

PETER (O.S.)

Run!

She doesn't - she walks up the hall to the STAIRS

She looks down and sees the front door is SHUT

PETER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

RUN!

She looks back at Peter's door finally starting to take him seriously

MISS DEVINE

I'm going to go get help.
I'll be right back.

INT. FOYER

Miss Devine hurries down the stairs and grabs the door

But it's LOCKED

MISS DEVINE

No.

She twists and pulls but it's no use

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

No no no no.

She goes to the WINDOW - grabs the BARS

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

No!

She hears the CREAK of floorboards

She freezes - the hairs on her neck stand on end

She turns and looks into the darkness, realizing she's not alone

After a moment of quiet that lasts an eternity

She realizes what she's staring at is not a shadow

Because it MOVES

She sprints through the HALLWAY into the

KITCHEN

But she doesn't see the LUMP under the blanket

She TRIPS and flies forward

Her chin smacks into the linoleum

She moans in pain and grabs her knee

She sees the disturbed blanket and Father's head

She screams and scrambles to her feet but collapses in agony

She tries again, dragging herself to the BACK DOOR

But that's locked too

Thinking fast, she lunges for the counter and pulls out
drawer after drawer until she finds

A KNIFE

The footsteps get closer and closer and closer

Her eyes SHUT, she spins and SLASHES

Knife scrapes against bone, blood splashes across the floor,
and an inhuman CRY pierces her ears

Miss Devine falls backwards, crashing into the counter

She continues wildly swinging the blade through the air

But she's alone - for now

She climbs to her feet

Holding the knife in front of her, ready to strike at any
moment, she moves across the kitchen and steps on something

She looks down at the KEYS under her foot

She grabs them just as she hears another CRY from somewhere
in the dark

She turns and darts for the BACK DOOR

She hears the tearing of sinew and ripping of flesh

She fumbles with the keys, trying one after another in the lock until finally - it turns

But she stops herself before opening it

She looks at the ceiling

MISS DEVINE
God damn it.

She leaves the door and turns around just as

Something flies through the air

Miss Devine dodges it as it SMACKS into the door behind her, shutting it closed

Mother's head rolls across the floor and looks back at Miss Devine

She hears the footsteps approaching

She rushes into the

LIVING ROOM

Guided by the light of the TV, Miss Devine backs away ready to stab

She backs into the wall and realizes there's nowhere else to go and the footsteps are slowly getting closer

She thinks fast - dives behind the couch

She looks out from underneath, the knife trembling in her grip

The TV flashes various patterns of light across the floor

Until it's UNPLUGGED, plunging the room into darkness

Miss Devine holds her breath as the floorboards groan under footsteps

And then silence

Followed by the sound of someone SNIFFING the air

After a moment

She hears a giggle

INT. PETER'S ROOM

Peter hears her SCREAM

PETER

No!

He pounds impotently against the door but it's no use

He's forced to listen to the carnage down stairs - the crashing and the breaking and the wailing

He can't stand it - he presses his hands against his ears

And he stays like that for a long while

Until finally he takes his hands away

It's quiet - he knows what that means

He falls onto his knees and sinks

Then he hears FOOTSTEPS running up the stairs

Charging down the hall

He crawls backwards away from the door

He hears the jangling of keys

He hides behind his bed

He sees the knob twist and the door open and

Miss Devine on the other side

MISS DEVINE

Peter!

He can't believe what he's seeing

She's covered in blood, with deep LACERATIONS cut across her body

But she's ALIVE

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Quickly!

He jumps to his feet and runs to the door out into the

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Miss Devine grabs his hand and pulls him across the hall

They leap over the shelf and Miss Devine picks Peter into her arms as they run down the STAIRCASE

FOYER

Miss Devine carries Peter to the bottom of the stairs

She sets him down and hobbles to the door

She fumbles with the keys

PETER

Hurry!

She's trying

PETER (CONT'D)

That one!

She shoves the key in the lock but before she turns it

A DROP of BLOOD lands on her hand

She looks UP

And SCREAMS

.
.
.

INT. THE WALL

Peter wakes with a GASP

He's in the **DARK** - he can't see a thing

All he can hear is the blood pumping in his ears and his panicked breathing

Wherever he is - it's small and it's cramped

He bangs into the edges with every move

He whimpers and cries and smacks against the wood

He shifts around before seeing
 A single beam of LIGHT on the floor
 He rushes to it and crouches down
 He looks through The Hole into
 HIS ROOM

PETER
 Hello...?

He hears the CREAK of floorboards

PETER (CONT'D)
 Miss Devine...are you there?

After a moment

Miss Devine's SEVERED HEAD is dropped onto the floor
 He screams and wails and howls until his voice is hoarse

THE GIRL (O.S.)
*It's okay Peter...
 You're safe...
 No one can hurt you anymore...
 Not your bullies or your parents or
 anyone else...*

He reaches his hand through The Hole

PETER
 Please...
 Let me out...

THE GIRL (O.S.)
*You'll get used to the dark...
 You'll find comfort in the cold...
 We have plenty of meat...
 And when we run out...
 I'll find us more...*

He retracts his hand

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I brought you a gift...

She rolls the RED BALL through The Hole

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*Your big sister is going to take
 care of you...*

He hears her footsteps creeping to the door

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now good night...
Sleep tight...
Don't let the bed bugs bite...

She turns off the light

Closes the door

He's all alone

In the dark

In the cold

PETER
Help me...

THE END