

THE SATURDAY NIGHT GHOST CLUB

by

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Based on the Novel by Craig Davidson

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FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY -- NIGHT

A crescent moon looms over the small town graveyard, casting sharp shadows on the weathered tombstones. It's eerily quiet as we slowly creep through, save the rustle of fallen leaves in the breeze.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

Most people are unsettled by the dark and mysterious. They walk faster past graveyards. They shy away from unnerving topics like death. And they dare not ask questions about that which cannot be easily explained.

(beat)

But not my Uncle Calvin...

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE-UPS of a bike in motion. QUIRKY TRINKETS decorating its frame. All-seeing eyes. Cthulhu beads. An alien head sticker that reads, "*Believe.*"

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

Some say he was an expert in legend and lore, an encyclopedia of ghosts and the most unseemly monsters that lurk in the night... Others say he was just crazy. I'll let you decide.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The BIKE SKIDS TO A STOP outside of a suburban home. As the rider climbs off, we move up... Past acid washed jeans, a gaudy tie-dye shirt, and long frizzy hair...

Until we reveal a man who looks like a Grateful Dead roadie on a perpetual tour of the supernatural, with a face that screams wide-eyed believer. This is UNCLE CALVIN (late 30s).

He glances towards the upstairs window, where YOUNG JAKE (5) looks down, waiting for him. A trepidatious boy whose pajamas don't quite fit over his chubby frame.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

But for me, a scared kid growing up in a nowhere town... He was the best uncle I could ever ask for.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Young Jake's eyes are locked on his CLOSED CLOSET DOOR, imagination running on overdrive. Calvin steps up by his side, sizing up the closet like an old adversary.

CALVIN

I take it this is its lair?

Young Jake nods, keeping his distance. Calvin cautiously opens the closet... Just boxes and toys inside. But that doesn't deter him.

CALVIN

Tell me, Jake, what does this monster look like?

YOUNG JAKE

Uh... Kinda hairy. And slimy.

CALVIN

Like a snake? Or more like a blob?

YOUNG JAKE

A blob. But it can stretch too.

CALVIN

So we're dealing with a hairy, slimy blob with uncanny stretching abilities... Sounds like a Slurper Slug. A rare cryptid, difficult to track, but they're out there... You keep anything tasty in your closet?

YOUNG JAKE

Just my Halloween candy.

CALVIN

Slurper Slug then, guaranteed.

Calvin sets down a battered TOOLBOX. Opens it, revealing an assortment of ODD INSTRUMENTS and bags of COLORFUL POWDER. He fishes through it, searching for something.

But the sound of HUSHED VOICES draws Jake's attention to his CLOSED BEDROOM DOOR. Beyond it, his parents are arguing - CECILIA and SAM (30s).

SAM (O.S.)

I don't know why you always let him do this. Jake's just gonna keep on believing in all this shit.

CECILIA (O.S.)

Well telling him to "stop being a
sissy" just makes things worse.
Calvin's helping the only way he
knows how --

SAM (O.S.)

But who's the one who needs help?

CECILIA (O.S.)

I'm not getting into this again --

It pains Jake to hear them arguing like this...

CALVIN

Jakey-boy...

Young Jake turns to meet his Uncle's resolute eyes.

CALVIN

There are far more pressing matters
than the concerns of non-believers.
If we let this Slurper Slug linger,
it'll find a mate. And a nest of
those little guys would make even a
mortician barf his biscuits.

He pulls a bag of RED POWDER out of his toolbox.

CALVIN

This is cochineal, made from the
crushed shells of beetles. Commonly
used in containment spells. Grab me
some of that Halloween candy.

Young Jake nods. Then grabs some from a plastic pumpkin in
the closet. Places it into Calvin's outstretched hand.

Then watches, engrossed, as Calvin lays a line of candy on
the closet floor between converging barbed lines of
cochineal that end in an expertly laid pile. A trap.

CALVIN

Now the Slurper Slug will traipse up
this path, see, which gets narrower
and narrower until the Slug gets
stuck here in what I call the point
of no return. Then this cochineal
will vaporize it into nothingness.

He closes the closet door. Then looks Young Jake in the eye.

CALVIN

But listen carefully... If you peek inside the closet, the Slurper Slug might escape. So under no condition can this door be opened until the sun rises. No matter what you hear, no matter what you smell, you have to leave your closet closed. Promise?

Young Jake nods vehemently.

CALVIN

By the oath of the White Mage, do you swear it?

YOUNG JAKE

The oath of who?

CALVIN

The pinkie variety will suffice.

Calvin sticks out his pinkie finger. Young Jake links his.

CALVIN

Sleep easy tonight, Jakey-boy. You shall find peace by morning.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- LATER

And sure enough, Young Jake sleeps soundly.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

The thing is, he didn't just believe me... He *believed*. I never questioned why he did and the other adults didn't. I was just glad I had him.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

We move past PHOTOS OF JAKE AND CALVIN through the years. Trick or treating in homemade costumes. Building an epic couch fort. Holding giant turkey legs at a local carnival.

Jake's room emulates his Uncle's persona. Cluttered with skeletal figurines of cryptids, Fangoria magazines, lava lamps, books on spotting mermaids and hunting werewolves. The general decor suggests we're in the MID-1990s.

We find JAKE (12) staring through a magnifying glass as he carefully paints a KNIGHT MINIATURE. A kid who struggles with his weight, which doesn't help his self-esteem either.

His PARENTS' VOICES filter in from outside, causing Jake to tense. He hesitantly rises to look out his window, seeing his Dad standing on the doorstep below.

CECILIA (O.S.)

Are you at least gonna say bye to him?

SAM

My plane leaves in two hours.

CECILIA (O.S.)

So what do I tell him then? Dad's taking a really long trip?

SAM

Tell him whatever you want. Or have your brother say I got eaten by a vampire for all I care.

CECILIA (O.S.)

You're a real piece of shit, you know that!

SAM

Yeah, I'm gonna miss you too.

Jake watches his Dad walk away without glancing back. He climbs into a waiting TAXI... Jake's Mom steps onto the doorstep, PAPERS in her hand, watching it drive away...

Then she steps back inside. The sound of the FRONT DOOR SLAMMING makes Jake flinch.

He takes a shaky breath, restraining his emotions. Whatever he's feeling, he keeps it locked up tight inside.

Then he sits back down, and continues painting his knight...

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

The truth is... Calvin was more than just an Uncle to me. He was my ally, my protector against the most fearsome monster of all...

And now we see that Jake hasn't just painted one miniature, but an ENTIRE TABLETOP. Trees, castles, goblins, dragons...

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

Loneliness.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

RAIN pelts the glass. Lightning flashes. Jake lies awake in bed, listening to the house creak its protests to the storm.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

But as I'd soon learn... Lonely souls
are who the *real monsters* prey upon.

Jake rolls over, forcing his eyes closed. For a few moments, all is calm, just the sound of the falling rain.

Until A DOOR CREAKS OPEN somewhere in the house...

Jake's eyes open. *What was that?*

He sits up, looking around... But he doesn't hear anything except the rain... Then --

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud... HEAVY, HOBBLING FOOTSTEPS.

Jake stiffens, knowing something is very wrong.

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...

When he speaks, he can barely muster a whisper.

JAKE

Mom? Mom, is that you?

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud... Drawing closer...

Until they stop... RIGHT OUTSIDE HIS OPEN DOOR.

Jake's breaths grow faster. His eyes scanning the darkness. But there's nothing there...

Then LIGHTNING FLASHES, casting jagged shadows that reveal --

A DARK INHUMAN FIGURE in his doorway... UNNATURALLY TALL WITH GROTESQUELY MISPROPORTIONED LIMBS.

Jake startles! But the figure fades into the darkness with the lightning...

Jake doesn't move, eyes wide, breathing frantically as he stares into the void. *Did he actually see that thing?*

Then LIGHTNING FLASHES AGAIN -- And now THE DARK FIGURE STANDS CLOSER TO HIM.

Jake moves back in his bed, terrified, pressing himself into the wall, nowhere else to go. But as he looks around, it's dark again... The Figure nowhere to be seen.

Until LIGHTING FLASHES, illuminating THE DARK FIGURE TOWERING RIGHT OVER HIM --

We don't get a good look at it... But JAKE DOES. And he's so horrified, he can hardly breathe.

The FIGURE LURCHES FORWARD, letting out a PIERCING GHOSTLY WAIL. JAKE SCREAMS! But as lightning flashes again --

THE DARK FIGURE IS GONE.

Jake scrambles to turn on his lamp, gasping for breath, looking around. But he's all alone...

And then he peers down and realizes... HE WET HIMSELF. He looks away, horribly embarrassed and ashamed.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Jake opens the washing machine, stuffing his bed sheets inside. Douses them with detergent. He starts the cycle. And stands there in the darkness...

And now the tears come... Tears of humiliation.

But he aggressively wipes them away, fighting them back. Upset with himself for even daring to cry.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake remakes his bed with clean sheets, rain still falling outside. But something more weighs on him.

His gaze shifts to his dresser drawer... Not wanting to acknowledge whatever is hidden inside... But then he opens it. Moves various items to dig out a CRINKLED DRAWING, crudely drawn by a younger Jake...

It's of the SAME DARK INHUMAN FIGURE. Less literal and more abstract.

He's seen this thing before.

INT. KITCHEN, JAKE'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Jake picks at his breakfast, still shaken up, tired from not sleeping.

Cecilia multitasks in her nurse's scrubs, putting away dishes while packing her work bag. An unspoken tension hangs between them...

CECILIA

I should be home by six, so put the casserole in the oven at five. Set to three-fifty and leave the lid on.

She zips her bag. Kisses Jake on the forehead on her way towards the door.

JAKE

Mom?

CECILIA

Yeah?

She glances back, a hint of pain on her face that she tries to hide. They hold each other's gaze...

JAKE

Have a good day.

Not what he was going to say... But that's all he can manage. He goes back to his breakfast. Cecilia hesitates, knowing she should say more. But instead just heads out.

The door closes. Jake sets his spoon down.

EXT. SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET -- DAY

Jake rides his bike past the old STOREFRONTS. They were probably charming decades ago, but their time has passed.

He pulls up to a store all its own, its small parking lot empty. And yet, the very sight seems to give him comfort. He hops off his bike and approaches the antique CARVED WOODEN DOOR. GOTHIC LETTERS forebode --

THE OCCULTORIUM

INT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- CONTINUOUS

Black walls. Dim lighting. Cramped aisles. Jake browses books titled *Practical Demonology*, *Witch Hunting Made Easy*, *The Necronomicon Box Set*. Peruses display cases of tarot cards, ouija boards, do-it-yourself voodoo dolls.

His gaze shifts to the back... Where Calvin stands behind the register, a STUFFED RAVEN looming over it, talking to a COLLEGE BURNOUT holding a perfectly ordinary looking ROCK.

COLLEGE BURNOUT

I don't know man, are you really sure this is from Stonehenge?

CALVIN

Sure am, fair traveler. This particular fragment was smuggled out by an outcast Druid at great peril to his everlasting soul.

Burnout waits for the punchline... But it doesn't come.

COLLEGE BURNOUT

Whoa... Okay, and uh, I don't suppose you have any, you know...

(whispers)

Acid.

CALVIN

Ah... Knew a guy who bought some acid. One night, he thought the cops were at his door so he ate his whole stash all at once. Now he thinks he's a glass of orange juice. Lives in the nuthouse, terrified that someone's coming to drink him.

(beat)

But I do have a special going on all-seeing eyes. Much safer investment.

COLLEGE BURNOUT

Uh... No thanks man. I'm cool.

He sets down the rock and walks out. Calvin turns to Jake.

CALVIN

And *that*, Jake, is why you shouldn't do drugs.

They exchange a smile. Jake continues perusing the aisles.

CALVIN

And what about you, young warlock? What's calling out to you today?

Jake hesitates... Then reaches into his pocket and pulls out the crinkled drawing of the Dark Figure.

JAKE

Do you have any books on monsters that look like this?

He hands the drawing to Calvin, who looks it over. While drawn by a young hand, its effect is still chilling.

CALVIN

Hmm... Those look like... Claws of some kind. And blood. Likely carnivorous. You see it in a late night movie or something?

JAKE

It was in my bedroom.

Calvin's brow furrows. *That* got his attention.

JAKE

I saw it once when I was little. Then it happened again last night. I know that sounds crazy, but I swear to God I was wide awake. Like I could feel its breath on my face. It was there... And then it vanished.

CALVIN

Vanished?

JAKE

Into thin air.

Calvin takes another look at the drawing, concern growing.

CALVIN

Well in that case, I've got good news and bad news, Jakey-boy. The good news is, I know of no monsters that call bedrooms their domain. Lycans, chupacabras, yetis, and the like, they're nocturnal, but generally keep to the outdoors. The bad news is... The recurrence of these spectral encounters concerns me.

JAKE

Spectral encounters?

CALVIN

Monsters don't vanish into thin air... I think you're being haunted.

We can almost see the color drain from Jake's face.

CALVIN

Now, most spirits are harmless. Just reflections of gentle-minded souls. They've merely lost their way and occasionally bump into us on their celestial journey. But this...

(MORE)

CALVIN (cont'd)
 (points to drawing)
 Is not one of those spirits.
 (smiles reassuringly)
 Not to worry though. You've come to
 the right place. Follow me.

Jake tails Calvin as he moves between the shelves, grabbing items and piling them into Jake's arms.

CALVIN
 Hang these rosemary wreaths around
 your room. And these garlic strands
 too. Then burn this sage like incense
 before going to sleep. Oh, and make a
 salt circle around your bed. I'm all
 sold out, but table salt is fine.
 Non-iodized preferably.

He turns, seeing how unnerved his nephew is.

CALVIN
 You're gonna be fine, Jake... A
 restful night's slumber awaits.

A PHONE RINGS. Calvin's head whips around. Only it's not the ordinary phone on the counter. The ringing comes from a NUCLEAR RED ROTARY PHONE in the BACK OFFICE.

CALVIN
 Uh oh, gotta skedaddle. Let me know
 if you have any more problems!

He races for the red phone, leaving Jake standing there.

CALVIN (INTO PHONE)
 Warlock here. This line is secure.
 (listens)
 Crop circles in Kansas City?! Can
 this be corroborated?

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- DAY

Jake steps out, arms full of Calvin's random stuff.

LEXINGTON (O.S.)
 I swear, every time that damn bat
 phone rings, Calvin's whole world
 stops spinning.

Jake turns to see LEXINGTON GALBRAITH (40s), stooped with a hangdog expression, sweeping the sidewalk outside his store:
 "LaserDisc Land - Format of the Future."

LEXINGTON

What was it this time? Sand worm
infestation under the Earth's crust?
Venomous snakes in the ball pit at
Chuck E. Cheese?

JAKE

Something about crop circles.

LEXINGTON

Ha! Of course... Probably the
Lobstermen of Gamma Seven trying to
enslave the human race.

(chuckles)

World would be a boring place without
folks like your Uncle to keep it
interesting, eh kid?

Jake nods.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET -- DAY

Jake rides towards home, passing nondescript houses along
the tree-lined street. Bike basket overflowing with his
spiritual cleansing supplies.

SPLASH! A SODA CAN HITS HIM, rocketing soda into the air,
causing him to nearly crash, ALL THE SUPPLIES TUMBLING OUT.

TWO BOYS ride by on bikes, laughing their asses off. PERCY
(12), small but cruel, and TERRY (12), an oaf for his age.

PERCY

What's all that shit for, fat ass?
Doing a ritual to summon some balls?

Hearing them laugh hurts Jake more than anything. He watches
them pass out of sight.

Then he climbs off his bike and picks up the various items
off the ground, putting them all back in his basket.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Rosemary wreaths and garlic strands hang over the bed and
desk. Sage smokes on the nightstand. Salt forms a protective
circle around the bed, where Jake sleeps soundly...

Until A ROSEMARY WREATH FALLS.

Jake's eyes open. He sits up, looking around... But there's
nothing there. He sighs. *It's fine.* Lays back down to sleep.

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...

And Jake's eyes snap open, heart filling with dread.

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud... Along with that GHOSTLY WAIL.

Jake doesn't dare move, staring at his half-open door. Fear swirling as the footsteps draw closer... And closer... *Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...* Until they stop.

Jake sits up. But he can't see anything out in the hallway. Only darkness. His shallow breaths the only sound.

Gathering his courage, he tiptoes out of bed. The floor creaks as he draws closer to the door... Closer...

Steeling himself, he looks out into the hallway and sees --
Nothing.

Phew. The tension fades from his body, as he pushes the door closed. Turns to head to bed --

And THE DARK FIGURE REACHES OUT OF THE DARKNESS FOR HIM.

JAKE SCREAMS, startling back into the door. He frantically turns on the light --

And THE FIGURE IS GONE. Jake glances around, still reeling, certain he saw it.

Then he notices part of the SALT CIRCLE HAS BEEN SMUDGED. Maybe he did it... Or maybe something else did. He grabs the salt off his dresser and pours more, filling the gap.

CALVIN (PRE-LAP)

This is more serious than I thought.

INT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- DAY

Jake follows Calvin as he refills jars of ingredients.

JAKE

But I did everything you said! It just came back, like none of that stuff was even there.

CALVIN

Spiritual cleansers work wonders on most entities. But if a ghost is particularly powerful, it'll cut through them like ectoplasmic butter.

JAKE

My mom uses salt and rosemary to make chicken. Don't you have anything stronger?

CALVIN

Like chili powder? Jalapenos? Spirits don't work like that.

He puts back the remaining ingredient jars, ruminating.

CALVIN

Have you visited any graveyards lately? Or been fiddling around with a Ouija board?

JAKE

No. No way.

CALVIN

What about your mom... Has she witnessed any anomalies?

JAKE

No. Only me.

CALVIN

Hmm... Well, young minds are more receptive to supernatural energies. But it's still peculiar...

(beat)

Do you remember what happened when you first saw it?

The question hangs... Not what Jake wants to talk about.

CALVIN

Information is power, Jake. Especially against the unknown.

JAKE

I... It was...

FLASH CUT:

YOUNG JAKE (5) stands frozen in the dark hallway outside his room, taking sharp breaths, tears filling his terrified eyes... We hear the horrific GHOSTLY WAIL --

BACK TO SCENE:

JAKE

It was a long time ago... I don't really remember.

Calvin studies him, recognizing that's a lie.

CALVIN

Okay. It's just... Well, to be honest, it doesn't make sense.

JAKE

Which part?

CALVIN

Your house isn't haunted. No one's ever been murdered on the premises -- at least not to my knowledge. It's not built on a burial ground. Even if it was, I perform a cleansing ritual on it every harvest just to be safe. Unless...

(a new thought)

We're dealing with a *wandering ghost*.

JAKE

A wandering ghost?

CALVIN

Ordinary ghosts are restrained. To a house, an orphanage, a graveyard. But a wandering ghost has no such bindings. It can leave its resting place and go out looking for something... Or *someone*.

We can almost feel the shiver run down Jake's spine.

JAKE

But why me?

CALVIN

Difficult to say. Though negative energy has been known to attract malevolent spirits. And from what I've ascertained, there's been a lot of negative energy in your household lately...

Jake's eyes fall, not wanting to go there.

CALVIN

Now a conventional thinker might suggest that what you saw was some kind of metaphorical representation of these recent events... But you felt a *real presence*. Something unnatural.

(MORE)

CALVIN (cont'd)

And now that it's found its way back into your life, it's going to keep coming back.

JAKE

But why'd it come in the first place? I was just a little kid then, there wasn't as much... Negative energy.

CALVIN

That's the mystery we have to unravel. But pursuing a wandering ghost in your home won't do us any good. It can wander away, and then wander back again... So we need to find where it *wandered from*. Could be where it's buried. Could be where it died. Could be where it was murdered. And my guess is it's somewhere nearby...

His ominous words weigh heavily on Jake.

CALVIN

Now I happen to be a bit of an expert on local lore. And there are places around our town known for their paranormal disturbances. We can investigate them one by one. Once we find the right place, we can figure out who this ghost was, and why it's haunting you. Then comes the tricky part... Confronting it.

JAKE

Confronting it? You want to confront this thing?

CALVIN

Well technically, it's your ghost, so *you* have to confront it. But I'll be by your side the whole time.

Dread fills Jake's eyes. He takes a few steps back.

CALVIN

Jake? What were you expecting?

JAKE

I don't know, I figured you'd have something in the shop we could use. You know, from a distance.

CALVIN
For most poltergeists, sure. But not
for what you're describing.

JAKE
Well what if I just ignore it?

CALVIN
Jake, as your elder, I have some
tragic wisdom for you... No
significant problem has ever been
solved by ignoring it.

He steps forward and takes a knee, coming to Jake's level.

CALVIN
This ghost won't go away until it
either gets what it wants, or you
force it to leave... And the longer
you let it linger, the harder it will
be to rid yourself of it.

Jake doesn't respond, absorbing his Uncle's words...

CALVIN
Being haunted is a terrible way to
live... And it'll only get worse.
Specters of malice can drive good
people mad. Loved ones become
helpless to intervene. It's a... A
life of desolation...

He drifts off momentarily... Something deeper buried there.
Then looks back to Jake.

CALVIN
But venturing into the domains of
spirits is no small matter either.
The question is... How brave are you?

Jake looks into his Uncle's resolute eyes.

JAKE
I... I'm not like you.

CALVIN
I think you're braver than you give
yourself credit for.

JAKE
I think you give me too much credit.

They hold each other's gaze... Then -- DING! From the door.
Jake and Calvin turn as --

A Native American boy steps inside. Athletic build with empathetic eyes. He takes in the store, curiosity piqued. We'll soon learn his name is BILLY YELLOWBIRD (12).

CALVIN

More on this later.

(to Billy)

Greetings, fair traveler. What mysteries do you seek?

BILLY

My... My setsuné just died.

CALVIN

Oh, I'm so sorry to hear about your grandmother. How can I help?

BILLY

It happened so fast, I... I never got to say goodbye. I was wondering if you do those things where you, you know... Talk to dead people?

CALVIN

A seance? Don't recommend em', too hard to find a reliable medium these days. But I do have something you might be interested in...

(to Jake)

And you as well...

He begins rummaging around a nearby storage closet.

CALVIN

Have you met my nephew? He's into dead people too. So to speak.

Billy turns to Jake, who's caught off guard.

JAKE

I mean, sort of. Not really.

BILLY

I'm Billy. Just moved here.

JAKE

Jake. Born here.

Calvin comes back to them with a BATTERED OLD SUITCASE. Sets it on the counter and unlatches the brass clamps.

CALVIN

Alright, step closer. You too, Jake. This here is called a Spirit Phone...

He opens the suitcase, revealing an old PHONOGRAPH PLAYER. Rods, sprockets, and gears covered in dust. Though its wires are curiously connected to a more modern SPEAK & SPELL TOY.

BILLY

What's it do?

CALVIN

Opens a connection, as they say. But it's very unorthodox. Using a spirit phone is like patching into a party line. It won't just be your grandma on the other end. There's a million spirits floating around. And not all the dead mean us well...

He exchanges a glance with Jake.

BILLY

Let's do it.

Jake turns, impressed. Because this sure freaks him out.

CALVIN

Then let's see if anyone picks up...

He plugs in the Spirit Phone... Jake tenses as an EERIE HUM RISES. Calvin holds out the Speak & Spell to Billy.

CALVIN

Just type your grandmother's name.

Jake watches with bated breath as Billy types the letters one by one. W-A-U-B-U-N.

CALVIN

Waubun... Lovely name.

Billy presses enter... The device speaks in its creepy voice: WAAaaauuBUN...

And THE PHONOGRAPH'S SPROCKETS AND COGS BEGIN MOVING. Jake watches, eyes widening, as its turn table spins around...

Then STRANGE NOISES emanate from its horn... THROBS and BURRS... Difficult to make out.... Like someone twisting the tuner on a radio without slowing to find a station.

Jake grips the counter, anxiety rising. Billy watches, just as tense. But Calvin is focused, in his element.

The sounds begin to take on more shape and weight... Like DISTANT SCREAMS distorted across sonic frequencies...

And SOMEONE BREATHING... EERIE BREATHING...

Jake listens... He wants out of here.

THE SOUNDS CUT OUT. And an uneasy silence takes hold, everyone staring at the machine...

CALVIN

That was... Hah-ho! A little intense.

They laugh nervously. Jake releases his white-knuckle grip on the counter.

CALVIN

But I don't think we heard her. Just atmospheric harmonics. Might have tuned into a distorted radio feed. Nothing more than harmless signals.

JAKE

Signals...

He nods, trying to convince himself that's all it was.

BILLY

Is there anything else we can do?

Jake turns, seeing how much this means to him. Calvin thinks it over.

CALVIN

Has your grandmother been...
Officially laid to rest yet?

BILLY

No. But we brought her to the funeral home two days ago.

CALVIN

That explains it. We don't have much time then. We'd better go tonight.

JAKE

Go where?

(realizing)

You can't be serious...

CALVIN

Only if you're up for it.

Billy turns to Jake expectantly.

BILLY

I'll go if you will...

Jake's on the hot seat. Hard to say no to someone his age...

EXT. FUNERAL HOME -- NIGHT

A CREEPY BUILDING overlooking the CEMETERY. Dark at this hour. Calvin, Jake, and Billy park their bikes nearby.

CALVIN

Onward. Our mission awaits.

Calvin darts around the side of the building. Billy follows, Jake lagging behind. Calvin stops at a SIDE DOOR.

CALVIN

This leads to the embalming room. Behind it is death. Sanitary and sterilized, but still death. Billy, are you sure you want to go through with this?

Billy nods.

CALVIN

And you, Jake?

Jake sees the look on Billy's face, urging him on. He nods.

Calvin pulls out a KEY.

BILLY

Where'd you get that?

CALVIN

Those of us who traipse about the underworld have our connections.

He inserts the key into the lock and opens the door. Pulls out a FLASHLIGHT. And leads them inside --

INT. FUNERAL HOME -- CONTINUOUS

Jake follows close behind the others, as Calvin's flashlight beam illuminates the creepy embalming equipment. WASHTUBS. GLASS CANISTERS OF LIQUID. STAINLESS STEEL TABLES.

And a wall of VAULTS.

Calvin holds a finger to his lips. *Stay quiet.* Then leads them over, their footsteps the only sound. Jake watches tensely as Calvin scans the vaults, finding the right one.

CALVIN

This is hers... You ready?

Billy nods. Calvin looks to Jake, who nods too. Then Calvin flips the latches on the vault, the sound echoing. He grabs the handle. A METALLIC CREAK as he slowly PULLS OUT THE SLAB... *Crrrreeeeaaaakkk...* Revealing --

A DEAD MAN. Lips like papery worms. Teeth gray and cracked. Jake and Billy recoil at the sight.

CALVIN
 Sorry... My fault.
 (to body)
 Humblest apologies for disturbing
 you, sir. Back to your eternal rest.

He pushes the vault shut.

CALVIN
 Wait... I know where she is.

He heads off another direction. Billy gives Jake a look. *Is your uncle for real?* Jake shrugs. They move on into the --

STAGING ROOM

Where a CASKET rests, illuminated by eerie moonlight.

CALVIN
 She's in there, Billy. I promise.

Billy hesitantly approaches the casket. Turns back to Jake - *are you coming?* Jake takes a breath, then moves to follow. Billy puts his hand on the lid and slowly lifts...

Inside lies an OLD WOMAN, pale but peaceful. Face serene.

Billy stares, holding back his swirling emotions. Jake stands there, not sure what to do.

Then Billy leans forward, whispering words we don't hear to his grandmother. When he's finished, he gently touches her cheek. Takes a shaky breath.

BILLY
 We can go now.

Calvin closes the casket.

Together, they make their way towards the door. But Jake suddenly freezes as he sees --

A SHADOWY FIGURE standing on the far side of the room, watching them. But as Jake focuses, he sees it's not the Figure that's been haunting him. It's the UNDERTAKER (50s).

Calvin grabs Jake by the shoulders and leads him out. But as he does, we see Calvin exchange a knowing look with the Undertaker... Who returns a subtle nod.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET -- NIGHT

Jake, Calvin, and Billy ride their bikes down the street.

BILLY
Thanks for coming.

JAKE
Yeah, sure. It was fun.
(beat)
Maybe fun isn't the right word.

They laugh, tension bleeding away.

BILLY
So you're into ghost stuff too, huh?

Jake turns to Calvin, who shrugs. *It's your call.*

JAKE
I, I guess so...

BILLY
Have you ever seen one?

Jake hesitates. Then nods.

BILLY
Really? What was it like?

JAKE
It's...

How to explain this...

JAKE
It's like a nightmare... But real.
Like every bad feeling in your whole
life hitting you all at once.

BILLY
Shit. That sounds way worse than the
ghost stories I've read.

CALVIN
In my experiences, truth is often
scarier than fiction.

BILLY

So what are you gonna do? Is your family gonna have to move?

JAKE

I... I don't know...

But Billy lingers, waiting for more.

JAKE

Actually... My Uncle and I were thinking of... Doing some ghost hunting. To try and track down the one I keep seeing.

(beat)

Maybe you'd wanna come?

Calvin's pride shines through in a subtle smile.

BILLY

Seriously?! Of course! Wait, where are you going?

CALVIN

Just some sites around town. Places where the film between our world and the spirit realm is as thin as the skin on a soap bubble. Things go slip-sliding through all the time.

BILLY

Hell yeah, that sounds awesome!

CALVIN

We could make it a regular thing... Say Saturday nights? The Saturday Night Ghost Club...

Their eyes meet, liking the sound of it. Billy slows to a stop by a driveway in front of a modest home.

BILLY

Well, this is me... Guess I'll see you guys on Saturday.

He rides towards the house. Jake smiles, Calvin patting him on the shoulder. It's nice to have a friend.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jake and Calvin slow their bikes outside Jake's house. As they do, the front door opens. Cecilia steps out, carrying trash to the cans.

CECILIA
Little late, Cal...

CALVIN
Don't know what happened. All of a sudden, the sun was down and the moon was up. Must've forgotten to flip over my hourglass.

JAKE
I was just helping Uncle C restock the shop.

CECILIA
I called the shop.

She drops the trash in the can and eyes them expectantly.

CALVIN
My sincerest apologies, Cecilia. I was on a very important call -- Speaking of which, and this is highly classified, but I got a most disconcerting tip that rabid, blood sucking, vampire bats escaped from a testing lab in the area. Have you been watching the skies lately?

Cecilia smirks, but quickly hides it.

CECILIA
I'm pretty sure they've been clear, but we'll keep an eye out. Jake, put your bike away and come in. Thanks for giving him something to do, Cal.

JAKE
I'll be right there, mom.

She steps back inside. He immediately turns to Calvin.

JAKE
We can't tell her what we're doing. She'd freak.

CALVIN
Agreed. My sister's a good egg, but she's not a true believer. So for her sake, let's keep our club a secret for members only.

Jake holds up his pinkie finger.

JAKE

By the oath of the White Mage?

Calvin smiles and links his finger with Jake's.

CALVIN

By the oath of the White Mage. See you Saturday, Jakey-boy.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

WIND BLOWS outside, causing a TREE BRANCH TO SCRATCH AGAINST THE WINDOW. *Scratch... Scratch... Scratch...*

Jake stares at it from his bed, imagining the worst. *Scratch... Scratch...*

He rolls the other way, forcing himself to ignore it. But then another sound rises above --

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...

And Jake can't ignore those. He sits up in bed, staring at his closed bedroom door.

Thud, Thud... Then that same GHOSTLY WAIL... *Thud, Thud...*

Jake springs out of bed, TURNING ON ALL THE LIGHTS. Then approaches the door with trepidation. Slowly opens it --

Light spills out of his room into the hallway beyond. But there's nothing out there.

Jake closes his door. Turns, taking in his room. He's the only one here.

And yet, *he senses something...* Something lurking just out of sight. He takes a deep, steadying breath.

JAKE

We're gonna find you...

If the ghost is here, it doesn't respond.

But the tree branch continues to scratch against the window. *Scratch... Scratch... Scratch...*

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET -- DAY

Jake walks alone. He didn't sleep much last night.

PERCY (O.S.)

Hey Jake!

Jake looks up -- SOMETHING HITS HIS HEAD and bounces off --
 BANG! A FIRECRACKER EXPLODES with a loud POP! Causing Jake
 to stumble back and fall.

Percy and Terry approach, holding more FIRECRACKERS.

PERCY

Happy early Fourth of July!

Jake glares up at them, eyes filled with rage. Percy stands
 over him, delighting in his torture.

PERCY

Here's the problem, Jake... My street
 has a strict weight limit. City
 ordinance or some shit. And you're
 way over the max. So we're gonna have
 to blow some of that excess lard off.

Terry hands him another FIRECRACKER. Percy holds a LIGHTER
 to its fuse.

PERCY

T-minus ten seconds. Ten... Nine...

Jake realizes he's serious. Scrambles to his feet and runs.

PERCY

Eight.. Seven... Ah, screw it --

He winds up to throw the firecracker --

CRACK! A ROCK NAILS HIM IN THE FOREHEAD! He drops the
 firecracker and it EXPLODES NEAR THEIR FEET, causing them to
 jump away. Jake looks over to see --

Billy standing across the street... And beside him is his
 older sister, DOVE YELLOWBIRD (14). A skater girl with bell
 bottoms, dyed hair, tank top, and backwards hat. An aura of
 unpredictability about her.

Jake stares, completely taken by her presence. She may as
 well be an angel... A bad ass, skater-girl angel.

DOVE

News flash, ass clowns. We live on
 this street too.

PERCY

If you think I won't hit a girl, you
 got another thing comin', bitch!

Billy steps forward, but Dove yanks him back.

DOVE

I'll take that as a compliment, coming from you. A bitch can push out a baby the size of a watermelon and live to tell the tale. But if I were to throw this rock at your scrawny dick, you'd die a virgin.

SHE TOSSES A BIGGER ROCK in her hand. Now Percy's having second thoughts. Jake watches, in awe of this girl.

DOVE

Did I mention I played baseball for six years? Pitcher. On the boys team. But coach said I threw too wild. So if I miss your baby dick, I'll probably hit your teeth. But they look like they could use some fixing.

Percy suddenly becomes self-conscious of his buckteeth. Dove holds up the rock, a fierceness in her eyes.

DOVE

You gave him ten seconds. I'll give you three. Three... Two...

Percy and Terry take off running. Dove watches them go. Then turns to Jake and Billy with a smirk.

DOVE

Well, that's my good deed for the year. See you boys around.

And just like that, she skates off in the other direction, leaving Jake mind blown. Billy comes up to him.

BILLY

That's my sister, Dove... She's sorta like that.

Jake stares after her, the lightning bolt of first love.

BILLY

You doing anything today?

EXT. POND, FOREST -- DAY

Jake and Billy sit at the edge of a secluded pond, sharing a box of candy.

BILLY

How come no one else comes here? It's not like a toxic waste dump, is it?

JAKE

Naw, it's just my secret hangout.

(beat)

Well, not really secret. It used to be Percy and me's hangout.

BILLY

Who's Percy?

JAKE

The guy with the firecrackers.

BILLY

You were friends with that prick?

JAKE

Just for a summer. He was the new kid in town once too.

BILLY

Don't want friends like that anyway.

Jake nods. But the memory weighs on him...

JAKE

Do you really wanna be my friend? Or do you just not know anyone else yet?

BILLY

I think you're cool, man. And your Uncle's awesome.

JAKE

Thanks. He is pretty awesome.

BILLY

Do you really wanna be my friend? Or do you just like my sister?

Jake chokes on his candy.

JAKE

What are you talking about? That's totally not --

BILLY

Back home, guys would hang out with me just so they could be around Dove.

JAKE

That's... That's crazy.

BILLY

She takes pills, you know.

A moment as Jake absorbs this.

JAKE

She's sick?

BILLY

Kind of. I don't know. She's been to all these doctors. I mean, she doesn't look sick. She's just not always wired right, up here.

(points to his head)

My mom says, Dove acts like the sun... In this never-ending state of heat and light that would burn the rest of us up. Or something like that.

JAKE

Whoa...

BILLY

Just watch out for her, man. Dove acts cool and tough, but I only hang out with her 'cause my mom makes me.

JAKE

But I thought she had a lot of friends. All those guys you said --

BILLY

Those weren't friends. They weren't hanging around 'cause they wanted to go roller blading or take her to a dance, if you know what I mean.

Jake nods, but is no less enamored.

BILLY

At least she had a doctor she didn't hate back where we lived. But now it's like starting all over.

JAKE

So why'd you guys move then?

Billy hesitates.

BILLY

My mom got a new job.

That's definitely a lie. But Jake doesn't press.

INT. KITCHEN, JAKE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Cecilia sits at the kitchen table, working her way through bills while eating leftovers at the same time.

Jake comes from his room, carrying a BACKPACK.

JAKE

Hey... Uncle Calvin and me are gonna have a movie night, and then I was gonna stay over. That okay?

CECILIA

Just nothing R-rated, okay? I don't want a repeat of last time.

JAKE

Duly noted.

He shoulders his backpack and heads for the door.

CECILIA

Hey Jake.

He turns to face her. She hesitates... But then just says --

CECILIA

Just call if you need anything, okay?

JAKE

Okay, mom.

CECILIA

You know what, why don't I just pick the movie.

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- EVENING

Lights glow inside the old shop, decidedly eerier when the sun begins to set. A fitting home for a Ghost Club.

INT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- EVENING

The door dings as Jake steps in. Calvin looks up from putting supplies in his satchel.

CALVIN

Make up a good story for your mom?

JAKE

I said we're doing a movie night. But she said she had to pick the movie.

CALVIN
What's wrong with my movies?
(off Jake's look)
What? *The Exorcist* is educational.

JAKE
And probably why she sent this.

Jake pulls out a VHS tape of *The Sandlot*.

CALVIN
Talk about no practical value.

LEXINGTON (O.S.)
Not to mention VHS.

He steps out of the bathroom.

LEXINGTON
LaserDisc, Jake, tell your mom
everything's going laser.

CALVIN
Jake, I beg your forgiveness. I let
the secrecy of our club slip to Lex
here and he wanted to come along.

LEXINGTON
Every club needs an adult chaperone.

The door dings as Billy walks in... Followed by Dove. Jake's
heart skips a beat.

BILLY
(begrudgingly)
Hey... Is it alright if my sister
comes too?

CALVIN
I'd never turn away a seeker of
knowledge. So long as Jake is cool
with it.

JAKE
(voice cracking)
I'm cool.

DOVE
And here I thought I'd need to submit
a personal essay.

CALVIN

Your application is hereby approved.
I'm Calvin, this is Lex, and this
here is Jake. Our club's founder.

Jake manages a shy wave.

DOVE

Fancy. I'm Dove Yellowbird.
(looks around)
So where'd you get all this weird
shit anyway?

CALVIN

Oh, it comes from all over. This
charm amulet here? From Egypt. This
monkey's paw? Morocco. And this all-
seeing eye is from Romania.

DOVE

And if it all came from a warehouse
in Taiwan, your clientele wouldn't
know the difference, amirite?

CALVIN

Ah... A skeptic. We'll see if we can
make a believer out of you yet.
Alright gang, gather in. Let's call
this club's first meeting to order.

He takes center stage... All eyes on him.

CALVIN

After extensive research, I've
determined the first spiritually
charged locale for investigation. But
before we venture forth... A warning.
We're searching for the spectral
remnants of those who were suddenly
and brutally robbed of life.
Grotesque entities that still crave
closure... And perhaps vengeance.
Those who are ready to make this
trek, step outside... Those who
aren't, there's always Nickelodeon.

EXT. FOREST ROAD -- NIGHT

Flashlight beams pierce the darkness as Calvin leads the
group down a seldom used DIRT PATH THROUGH THE WOODS.

JAKE

Where exactly are we going?

CALVIN

If I told you, you might think better
of coming.

That's not reassuring. The path narrows, but Calvin doesn't
slow. He pushes through branches, and they emerge into a --

CLEARING

Nestled amongst the trees, overgrown train tracks running
through. Up ahead an ABANDONED TRAIN TUNNEL waits. Its dark
mouth open and haunting, like it descends straight to hell.

CALVIN

Welcome to the Screaming Tunnel.

(beat)

Let's get a fire going. Then I'll
tell you all a real ghost story.

EXT. THE SCREAMING TUNNEL -- LATER

A CAMPFIRE crackles, casting deep shadows on the group
sitting around it. The Screaming Tunnel lurking behind them.

CALVIN

There used to be a house not too far
from here... A little wood-frame
jobbie that a family lived in... A
mother, father, and their only son...

His voice is low, drawing his audience in. A storyteller.

CALVIN

But life wasn't easy for that boy...
A childhood accident left him with a
scar from brow to chin.

He runs a slicing finger down his face.

CALVIN

And as he grew, so too did his scar.
You can imagine what happened when
the other kids got a look at him. His
only refuge was to wander these
woods, finding peace amongst the
trees and brooks. A lonely life...

Jake leans in, the story hitting home.

CALVIN

Until one night... When he became a
legend... An ordinary night, not so
different than this one...

Jake's eyes are drawn to the GLOWING EMBERS cast out by the fire. He watches as they transition into --

FIREFLIES in the twilight. And now we are in...

CALVIN'S GHOST STORY

A BOY (12) WITH A SCARRED FACE and 1950s clothing emerges from a trail, carrying a stick that he swings at the grass.

CALVIN (V.O.)

He was out on his own, as he usually was, when they came...

The Boy looks up to see a handful of KIDS approaching, the kind who prey on weaklings.

CALVIN (V.O.)

They said they wanted to play a game, and were one person short. Maybe he was ignorant of their motives, or maybe he was too afraid to resist. Either way, the trap was set...

CUT TO:

Darkness falls as the Boy and the others stand before the Screaming Tunnel, staring into its gaping black mouth.

CALVIN (V.O.)

They told him he'd get to go first...

CUT TO:

The Boy tentatively advances into the darkness, a LIT MATCH his torch. The others just behind him with matches of their own, little balls of flame in the blackness.

CALVIN (V.O.)

Though no matter how far he went, they kept telling him to go just a little bit further...

The Boy doesn't notice as THE MATCHES BEHIND HIM GET FURTHER AWAY... AND EVENTUALLY DISAPPEAR.

CALVIN (V.O.)

But soon, the poor boy realized that this was no game anymore.

The Boy turns, realizing he's all alone... Panic sets in. He moves his match this way, that way. But he's in a void.

CALVIN (V.O.)
 They likely expected he'd stumble his way out. That they'd have a great laugh at his expense. But darkness has a way of swallowing you whole.

The Boy's MATCH GOES OUT, plunging him into PITCH BLACK NOTHINGNESS. His frenzied breaths echo.

CALVIN (V.O.)
 But then came a glimmer of hope...

A FAINT LIGHT reveals the Boy's scarred face. A DISTANT GLOW at the end of the tunnel, beckoning him...

CALVIN (V.O.)
 Perhaps he thought that his 'friends' had come back for him. Or that morning had already come...

The Boy frantically runs towards the light...

CALVIN (V.O.)
 But sometimes, what we so desperately seek, is the very thing we should be running away from...

CUT TO:

The other kids loiter outside the tunnel, waiting for him to emerge. Just a silly prank to them.

But they all freeze when they hear a TRAIN WHISTLE RINGING OUT from within the tunnel... Realizing...

Then THE BOY'S EAR-PIERCING SCREAM echoes from inside, before going abruptly silent.

BACK TO PRESENT:

CALVIN
 And *that*, is why they call it... The Screaming Tunnel.

Jake, Dove, and Billy stare wide-eyed at Calvin. Even Lexington is freaked out.

DOVE
 Holy shit...

CALVIN
 The legend says, if you go into this tunnel at night and strike a match, you'll see him there... Watching you.
 (MORE)

CALVIN (cont'd)
 Then your match will go out, even if there's not a hint of a breeze... And then, it's just you and him in the darkness.

If Jake was nervous before, he's terrified now.

CALVIN
 Time to see if the legend is true.

He reaches into his satchel and pulls out a BOX OF MATCHES.

LEXINGTON
 Really, Cal? You'll scare the bloody daylights out of 'em.

BILLY
 I want to do it!

DOVE
 Hell yeah! Me too.

Once again, all eyes on Jake. He feels the pressure.

BILLY
 Come on, Jake. This is what we're here for, right?

Jake nods. Calvin smiles and gets to his feet. The others follow, looking towards the tunnel. But Jake approaches Calvin, speaking softly so the others can't hear.

JAKE
 Uncle Calvin, the ghost I saw... It didn't look anything like --

CALVIN
 Ghosts often look different in death than in life. I'm betting whatever you saw didn't look human at all.

Jake nods, knowing he's right.

CALVIN
 We'll find out if this is the right place soon enough.

He pours water onto the fire, sending hissing steam into the air. Then turns on his flashlight, the others doing the same. And together, the members of the Saturday Night Ghost Club venture towards the tunnel... Its black mouth looming.

INT. THE SCREAMING TUNNEL -- CONTINUOUS

The group steps in, flashlight beams wandering. They stay close together as they creep forward, footsteps echoing.

Jake aims his light ahead, but there's only more darkness waiting. He hears SOMETHING SKITTER and whips his light towards it. But there's nothing there...

Then Calvin raises his hand, and they all stop.

CALVIN
Everyone turn off your flashlights.

They all do, except for Jake.

CALVIN
Everyone. Or else it won't work.

Jake turns his off too, plunging them into TOTAL DARKNESS.

A MATCH FLARES, the beacon held in Calvin's hand. Bright enough to see their nervous faces, especially Jake's.

CALVIN
Okay now, keep your eyes open...

Jake forces himself to look past the match's glow... Tense seconds pass as they stand huddled together...

Then the MATCH FLICKERS --

Jake's eyes narrow ever so slightly, gripped by fear. And in the blackness, he sees --

A FAINT WHITE SHAPE, illuminated by the match's light... A SHAPE THAT COULD BE A PERSON. Jake's breath catches --

The MATCH GOES OUT, plunging him into the black void again.

And we hear JAKE SCREAM.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE SCREAMING TUNNEL -- NIGHT

JAKE'S POV: Blurry faces come into focus, standing over him.

CALVIN
Easy now. Deep breaths. You alright?

Jake looks up at them, realizing he's lying outside.

JAKE
What happened?

BILLY
You fainted.

DOVE
Went down like a ton of bricks. We
carried you out.

Now Jake's embarrassed. Calvin goes in for the save.

CALVIN
It happens to the best of us.
Occupational hazard.

He reaches down and helps Jake to his feet.

JAKE
But you all saw him, right?

DOVE
I didn't see shit.

LEXINGTON
Me neither.

BILLY
I saw him... I think.

DOVE
Yeah, 'cause you *wanted* to see him.
That's how these things work.

JAKE
Uncle Calvin, did you see him?

Calvin sees the desperation in his nephew's eyes...

CALVIN
Sorry, Jake... It's possible my
sensors are a bit rusty.

And now Jake feels even worse. The others gather their
things to leave. Billy steps up next to him.

BILLY
Jake... Whatever you saw... Did it
look anything like --

JAKE
No...

Billy nods. He puts a reassuring hand on Jake's shoulder, and walks off... Leaving Jake standing there, staring back at the Screaming Tunnel...

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- NIGHT

The shop is dark. But lights glow in an upstairs window.

INT. CALVIN'S APARTMENT, ABOVE THE OCCULTORIUM -- NIGHT

A cozy apartment above the shop. The bare essentials of a bachelor, coupled with decorative pieces of macabre art.

Jake sits at the table, still shaken up. Calvin sets down two mugs of hot cocoa with marshmallows and sits.

CALVIN

Hey... Just because some of us didn't see him doesn't mean he wasn't there.

JAKE

What if Dove's right? What if I just saw what I wanted to see?

CALVIN

Does the entity you see at night feel like your imagination?

Jake shakes his head "no."

CALVIN

Belief is a fascinating thing... No living soul has ever seen a god. And yet, if you believe in one, no one calls you crazy. But with ghosts, folks think we're the weird ones for believing, even if we've actually seen them. Humans are a funny bunch.

Jake smirks, feeling a little better.

JAKE

How many ghosts have you seen?

Calvin ponders the question, sipping his cocoa.

CALVIN

Just my share.

But he doesn't elaborate further.

JAKE

I've only seen this one...

He clenches his cup, but doesn't drink, thoughts weighing heavily...

JAKE

The first time I saw it, I... I thought it was some kind of monster.

Calvin stops mid-sip, realizing Jake is opening up...

CALVIN

Sounds like you've got your own ghost story. I'm listening if you're ready to tell it.

Jake takes a shaky breath. Staring down at the marshmallows melting in his hot cocoa...

JAKE

I... I'm not sure how late it was...

Off the marshmallows, we TRANSITION INTO --

WHITE GLOBS rising within a viscous BLACK LIQUID. It's a lava lamp on a nightstand, as we find ourselves in --

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

Young Jake (5) sleeps soundly in bed. A quiet night...

That's interrupted by the sound of a DOOR CREAKING OPEN somewhere in the house.

Young Jake groggily opens his eyes... He sits up, looking around his dark room. But it's quiet. Then --

Thud, Thud... Those now familiar lumbering footsteps.

YOUNG JAKE

(whispering)

Mom? Dad?

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...

JAKE (V.O.)

I remember feeling my breath rushing in and out. I could hear my clock ticking on the wall. And I felt the cold floor beneath my feet.

Young Jake swings his bare feet to the cold floor.

JAKE (V.O.)

I don't know why I went to look... I wish I hadn't. Maybe then it wouldn't have seen me.

The floor creaks as he tiptoes to the open door... Stepping into the --

HALLWAY

Where he stares into the darkness... But there's nothing --

A SHAPE MOVES.

He gasps, seeing the DARK INHUMAN FIGURE at the end of the hall, shrouded in the shadows. STARING RIGHT AT HIM.

Then IT HOBBOLES FORWARD, wobbling, shaking. *Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...*

Young Jake stands frozen, taking sharp breaths as it draws closer... *Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...*

JAKE (V.O.)

I wanted to run, but my feet wouldn't move. I opened my mouth to scream, but nothing came out.

The Figure lets out a GHOSTLY WAIL, piercing Jake's psyche. His head cranes back and back as the monstrous Figure hobbles ever closer, towering over him.

It comes to a stop, taking in the minuscule child before it.

Then it takes one more step forward into the night light from Jake's room, giving us our first real look at it...

Its face is BLACKENED AND CRACKED, like A DECOMPOSING BURN VICTIM, with BLOOD SEEPING past its EMPTY WHITE EYES.

Young Jake can hardly breathe, tears welling up.

The Figure reaches out a GROTESQUE HAND, CLAWED NAILS DRIPPING BLOOD. We hear YOUNG JAKE SCREAM --

INT. CALVIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT -- BACK TO PRESENT

Jake sits, clutching his mug, scarred by the memory.

JAKE

I don't know what happened after.

CALVIN

Do you remember what happened earlier that day? Did your folks have an argument perhaps?

JAKE

I don't think so. It was just a normal day. I didn't *do* anything.

CALVIN

I know you didn't.

JAKE

Then why did it come back?

He's desperate, looking to his Uncle for answers.

CALVIN

Have you talked to your parents about this yet?

JAKE

My mom doesn't want to talk about anything. She just wants to pretend like everything is fine. And my dad would never believe me. Even if he was still around, I'd never tell him.

(beat)

I don't want to keep feeling like this. I just want it to go away.

CALVIN

We're not gonna stop until it does.

He means it, and that's some comfort.

CALVIN

The Screaming Tunnel was just our first stop. There are other more haunted sites to investigate. We'll find it.

Jake nods warily, knowing the worst is yet to come.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM, CALVIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Overstock from the Occultorium clutters the space.

Jake lies awake in the bed. Sleeping here is even harder than at home. His gaze traces over the various trinkets stashed about. Skulls. Amulets. Voodoo dolls. All creepier in the darkness.

He rolls over, facing the wall. Trying to get comfortable.

Then sounds of WHISPERING seep in from another room... Jake stirs, listening...

It's Calvin's voice, speaking groggily in his sleep. Hard to make out. But amidst the gibberish, we catch some words.

CALVIN (O.S.)
Can't... Over there... I...

Jake sits up, sensing something isn't right. There's fear in his Uncle's voice.

CALVIN (O.S.)
No... I don't... Why are...
(louder)
Stay back! Get out!

Jake scrambles out of bed --

HALLWAY

Jake quickly moves to his Uncle's door, where he hesitates, listening... But it's quiet within. He carefully opens it...

Inside, Calvin sits on his bed, staring off at nothing.

JAKE
Uncle Calvin?

He doesn't respond. Doesn't move.

JAKE
Hey Uncle Calvin, you okay?

Nothing from Calvin... Then --

CALVIN
I'm fine... Just a... Strange dream.

He turns, seeing his nephew standing there.

CALVIN
Back to bed, Jakey-boy. I'm fine.

Jake nods. Then leaves him be, heading down the hall. But he glances back, concerned...

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

A pencil makes jagged strokes on paper, drawing a new image of the Dark Figure. Filling in more details.

Jake sets down his pencil, staring into those haunting white eyes, blood seeping past them. Spread around it are more SKETCHES OF THE DARK FIGURE.

He looks to a thick TOME ON GHOSTS open nearby, definitely from the Occultorium. Flips through it, comparing pictures in the book to his own sketches, searching for a match. Searching for a clue.

KNOCKING on the front door jars his attention. He scrambles to stash everything in the drawer.

INT. ENTRYWAY, JAKE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jake opens the door. His eyes widen as he sees --
Dove standing outside.

DOVE

Oh good. They didn't ship you off to the loony bin.

She steps in past him without being invited.

DOVE

Figured anything was possible after what happened, so thought I'd check in on ya.

JAKE

My mom's not home.

DOVE

Good for her.

JAKE

I... I'm not supposed to have girls over if she's not here.

DOVE

Oh... So this happens all the time.

JAKE

No...

DOVE

Then why's it a rule?

JAKE

It's... I just figure she'd be mad.

DOVE
Well I won't tell if you won't.
(beat)
So whatcha got to eat around here?

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Jake sits on his bed, munching on a Pop-Tart, watching Dove mosey around his room, Pop-Tart in hand. She eyes his quirky trinkets. Opens the closet. Peeks in drawers at random.

JAKE
What are you doing?

DOVE
Collecting intel. Gotta know who my little brother is hanging out with. Wanna make sure you're not hoarding dead rats or spare body parts.

She looks over his intricately painted miniatures.

DOVE
Wish I had that kind of focus.

She opens the drawer containing Jake's ghost drawings, his latest one on top --

DOVE
Damn. Someone's an artist.

JAKE
What, no, that's --

He scrambles to close it, but Dove snatches the drawing.

DOVE
You artists and your neurosis. So what is this freaky thing anyway?

JAKE
It's nothing. Just an idea for a horror story.

DOVE
I love horror! Okay, battle royal: Freddy, Jason, Michael Myers, and Hannibal Lecter. Who's left standing?

JAKE
I, um... I don't know --

DOVE

My money's on Hannibal. He'd just sit back with his fava beans and chianti, and wait for the others to slaughter each other. Then he'd eat their bodies. So what's your horror story about?

JAKE

It's...

Dove eagerly waits. But Jake's got nothing. He sighs.

JAKE

Okay, it's not actually a story... I just draw what I see at night.

Dove waits for the punchline.

DOVE

Oh shit, you're serious.

(beat)

So this is why you all started your Ghost Club.

JAKE

I was gonna tell you... I just didn't want you to think I was a wuss or something.

DOVE

If you're willing to go into some creepy ass forest and stand in a tunnel that some dead kid supposedly haunts, I don't think you're a wuss.

(beat)

Even if you did pass out.

(beat)

But brave people pass out all the time. Like people who give blood.

Jake smiles, relieved.

DOVE

It's cool you draw. My old doctor kept telling me to, said it's therapeutic. What do ya think? Should I take it up?

JAKE

What would you draw?

DOVE

I don't know... Stuff.

She hesitates, a crack in her veneer.

DOVE

You ever feel like... Like you just want to scream at someone?

JAKE

Sometimes...

DOVE

Well I don't need a reason to feel that way. Sometimes it's just --
 (snaps her fingers)
 Like that. Other times, I figure I oughta just end it all. Just rid the world of my presence. But then I feel like I'm floating on a cloud... Like it's so good, but it's not real.
 (beat)
 So yeah, I'd draw all that.

Jake listens, wanting to understand.

DOVE

You're lucky you've got your own club to help you with your shit. I wish there was a club for people like me.

JAKE

Well I'm glad you're in ours.

She looks into his eyes. A moment between them.

DOVE

Thanks Jake.

The sound of the FRONT DOOR OPENING breaks it.

DOVE

Uh oh... Someone's busted.

ENTRYWAY

Jake and Dove step out as Cecilia walks in.

CECILIA

Oh. Who's this, Jake?

DOVE

I'm Dove and I'm leaving. Nice meeting you, Jake's parental unit.

She smoothly steps past out the door. Cecilia turns back to him. He's a deer in headlights.

JAKE

She's... Uh... My friend's sister.
They're new... She said she was
hungry so I gave her a Pop-Tart.

Cecilia smirks at his babbling.

CECILIA

A Pop-Tart? You know there's real
food in the fridge, right?

She tussles Jake's hair as she walks past.

CECILIA

And hold the door open for her next
time.

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- EVENING

The sun sets as Jake pulls up on his bike.

INT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- EVENING

The door dings as Jake steps in, the rest of the club
already gathered.

JAKE

Sorry I'm late.

CALVIN

Not to worry. Ghosts never sleep.

Jake looks to Dove and she nods back, making him smile.

CALVIN

Alright gang, we've crossed one
spectral site off the list. Tonight,
we venture to our next destination...
A sunken wreck.

Lexington stiffens... Something about this unnerves him.

CALVIN

We'll rally to Stagg Lake. Hope you
all brought your sea legs.

LEXINGTON

You sure about this one, Cal?

CALVIN

Course I'm sure. What's not to be
sure about?

LEXINGTON

I... Just might not be a good place for a bunch of kids.

DOVE

Oh pull-eeez... We're hardly kids.

LEXINGTON

You ain't adults either. And some places are better not meddled with.

CALVIN

Lex, no one's forcing anyone into anything. Now whoever's up for it, gimme a hand with this thing.

He pulls out a crumpled, deflated RAFT that's seen better days, riddled with patches. Off their skeptical looks --

CALVIN

She's seaworthy, I promise.

All except Lexington move to help... Which Jake notices.

EXT. LAKE -- NIGHT

A layer of mist hangs heavy. Calvin's raft glides through the water, flashlight beams leading the way.

RAFT

Calvin paddles as the kids pan their lights.

In the distance, Lexington's van is parked on the shore, headlights shining. He sits on the bumper, watching.

DOVE

What a lame-o.

CALVIN

No need for names. We all fear something.

He paddles on as the quiet overtakes them. Then --

CALVIN

Look... Down there.

They aim their flashlights down, revealing the outline of a SUBMERGED YELLOW CAR below the surface.

BILLY

A car? Why didn't they drag it out?

CALVIN

I'm not one to assess the ineptitude of local bureaucracies. Though I like to think it stays where it is because no one wants to go down there... Afraid of what they might unleash.

Jake gazes down into the water, nervous about what remains.

CALVIN

They say it was a frigid night...

DOVE

Who's *they*?

CALVIN

They who first told this story, whose names are lost in the mists of time.

Jake's eyes are drawn to the mist drifting over the water...

CALVIN

And like they said, it was a frigid night, cold enough to see your breath, yet too dry for it to snow...

The flashlight beam transitions into a CAR'S HEADLIGHT as we find ourselves in --

CALVIN'S SECOND GHOST STORY

A 1970s YELLOW CAR heads down a dark road. Inside, a BOY (16) drives with a GIRL (16) beside him, all smiles.

CALVIN (V.O.)

But a pair of young lovers were having no trouble keeping warm and cozy, coming back from a date.

The two of them exchange adoring glances, holding hands.

CALVIN (V.O.)

The boy was of honorable stock. Treated her with the utmost respect. They had a future together. Their love was true. But sometimes even love is no match for fate...

The boy's eyes widen as A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS from the opposite direction suddenly swerves into their lane, ABOUT TO HIT THEM HEAD ON. He instinctively YANKS THE WHEEL --

Sending his car CRASHING THROUGH A BARRICADE and into the darkness beyond. We hear the SPLASH OF WATER.

CUT TO:

The boy's eyes open. He gasps for air. The car FILLING UP WITH WATER, already up to his nose, forcing him under --

He can scarcely see anything in the DARK WATER. Until SOMETHING SHINY stands out -- the GIRL'S EARRINGS. Now he sees her closed eyes, BLOOD seeping out of a head wound.

CALVIN (V.O.)

He didn't know if she was dead or alive. All he knew for sure was that they didn't have much time.

The Boy frantically unlocks his seat belt. Gets it off and pulls the door latch... But the door won't budge. He pushes harder, forcing it open just wide enough.

He reaches for her. But can't free her from the seat belt.

CALVIN (V.O.)

In traditional stories, the hero would save the girl... But ghost stories don't have heroes. And even when that poor boy's heart said he'd rather sacrifice himself than lose her... He couldn't overcome his own instincts to survive.

The Boy desperately struggles to free her... But he can't --

CUT TO:

The Boy breaks the surface of the water, gasping for breath, barely alive... And decidedly alone.

CUT TO:

Something rising out of the dark water... The GIRL'S FACE breaking the surface, EYES OPEN BUT LIFELESS... Followed by her PALE BODY, like a ghost rising from her watery grave... On a backboard carried by RESCUE PERSONNEL.

Nearby, the Boy watches from the shore, sobbing, crying out for his love, hands holding him back from rushing to her.

CALVIN (V.O.)

When they pulled her out, her body was cold as ice, the warmth of their love gone. But her eyes... Her eyes were still open... Searching for her love... Waiting to be saved.

The Girl's lifeless eyes stare off...

BACK TO PRESENT:

Calvin lets his words hang... A sadness in him, feeling for that poor couple.

CALVIN

Now, she wanders still... On the road they last drove. To the places they used to frequent. But no matter how far she roams... This is where she died... And must always come back to.

An unnerving thought as Jake eyes the car in the water.

CALVIN

Legend has it that some nights, you can still see her down there... Waiting to be rescued from her eternal abyss. You only have to dangle in a hand to offer your help.

BILLY

You mean, like... Summon her?

Calvin nods.

CALVIN

But we have something more to offer her tonight.

He holds out his hand, revealing a PAIR OF EARRINGS.

CALVIN

A local collector found these for me years ago. I couldn't verify their authenticity, so I never put them up for sale. But now...

Jake's eyes widen as Calvin lowers the earrings into the water, gently moving them back and forth. *Swish, swish...* The group sits tensely, on pins and needles. *Swish, swish...*

But nothing happens.

JAKE

Maybe she's not here?

CALVIN

Maybe... Or *maybe* we go to 'Plan B.'

He puts away the earrings and begins taking off his shoes.

BILLY

Whoa, seriously?

CALVIN

She died in that car. Only one way to know if she still haunts it.

DOVE

I love this idea!

She's already on her feet. Peeling off her sweatshirt, down to a tank top and shorts. Billy follows suit, not to be outdone. But Jake's not so eager.

JAKE

Uncle Calvin, are you sure we should be doing this...

CALVIN

Only by choice, Jakey-boy. Staying aboard to safeguard the raft is an equally noble task.

He stands and pulls off his shirt --

Revealing that HIS TORSO IS COVERED IN VICIOUS SCARS. Jagged and violent, badly healed by time.

Jake stares, aghast. He's never seen those before. Dove and Billy stop what they're doing, just as surprised.

But Calvin is oblivious, grabbing his flashlight and jumping in the water. He resurfaces, seeing them all staring.

CALVIN

What are you waiting for? Got ourselves a ghost to find.

Jake and the others exchange wary glances. Then Dove jumps into the water. Billy follows a moment after.

Leaving Jake on the raft alone. Nothing noble here.

He starts to peel off his shirt, revealing his flabby stomach. Hesitates, embarrassed. And elects to keep his shirt on. He grabs a flashlight, and jumps in with a splash.

CALVIN

Alright, it's gonna be dark down there. Follow me and stay together.

He dives. Jake and the others follow --

UNDERWATER

Jake looks around, trying to get his bearings.

JAKE'S POV: The water is dark and murky. Can't really see anything except for the beams of their flashlights. He pans his around, until it settles on --

THE SUNKEN CAR. Yellow paint now rusted and faded. Overgrown with weeds after so many years.

He follows the others to it. They shine their lights into the windows, but the glass is too grimy to see inside.

Calvin hands his flashlight to Jake. Then grabs the door handle and pulls... It CRACKS OPEN a little. The others join in, pulling with all their might...

Until THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN. Then they all go up for air --

SURFACE

They reemerge, catching their breath.

BILLY

Okay, who gets the honor?

DOVE

Jake's club, you want to be first in?

Jake's mouth falls open. No way in hell does he want to.

CALVIN

You do seem more attuned to the supernatural. Lead the way.

He gives Jake a reassuring nod. Jake steels himself. *If he's got to...* Then he dives --

UNDERWATER

Jake swims towards the open car door, flashlight in hand, an abyss of darkness inside. The others just behind. With trepidation, he grabs the frame and pulls himself in.

His flashlight provides glimpses of what's left. Everything covered with grime. Cracked windshield. Seats in tatters.

Then Jake freezes, seeing something else...

A SCARF DRIFTING THROUGH THE WATER like a snake. As Jake focuses his light on it, it shifts in the currents, revealing that it's COVERED IN BLACKENED BLOOD.

Jake stares, transfixed. Then he reaches out to grab it... As he does, it flows through the water, revealing the REAR VIEW MIRROR behind it --

With a PALE FIGURE IN ITS BLURRY REFLECTION.

Jake screams, bubbles roiling out as he turns -- But there's nothing behind him. Just light filtering in from the others' flashlights.

SURFACE

Jake breaks the surface, gasping for air. The others come up around him.

BILLY

Holy shit, you saw her, didn't you!

DOVE

It just looked like some dirty scarf.

JAKE

I... I don't know...

BILLY

Calvin, did you see anything?

Calvin is quiet, causing the others to turn to him.

CALVIN

With my eyes, no. But there are many kinds of sight... And I definitely sensed something in there...

He trails off, trying to wrap his mind around it.

DOVE

Well I didn't see or sense shit.

CALVIN

Like I say, ghost hunting isn't an exact science. But not to worry, we'll find what we're looking for.

He gives a stoic nod to Jake, who's still shaken up.

CALVIN

Best board our faithful craft and get back to the land of the living.

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- NIGHT

Jake and Calvin peddle up on their bikes, still soggy.

CALVIN

I'll find you some dry clothes. Just got a new shipment of t-shirts, should be something in your size.

He parks his bike. But Jake eyes him, something on his mind.

JAKE

How'd you get those scars?

CALVIN

Oh those? Got into a tussle a few years back with what I suspect was a werewolf. Or a coyote, hard to be sure. And *that*, is why I never walk alone on a full moon night.

He chuckles, heading inside.

But Jake lingers, not believing him this time.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM, CALVIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jake is asleep in the spare bed. All is quiet...

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...

Jake's eyes snap open.

He sits up, frantically turning on the lights, certain there's something in here. But it's just him. He sits there, breathing heavy. But no more footsteps come.

Then a new thought hits him... Determination filling his eyes. He swings his feet out of bed and creeps to the door.

HALLWAY

Jake steps down the hall, drawing subtle creaks beneath his feet. He passes Calvin's room, hearing his steady breathing within. Keeps going, towards the apartment's door.

On a hook beside it is a CTHULHU HEAD KEY CHAIN. Jake quietly takes it.

INT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- CONTINUOUS

A door opens as Jake steps into the shop. This place is creepy by day, but it takes on a far more ominous aura by night. Every trinket shrouded in shadow, threatening.

But Jake steels himself, making his way down an aisle. He knows what he's after, and it's in the storage closet.

He swings the door open to reveal all sorts of random junk, and amongst it... The suitcase containing the SPIRIT PHONE.

Jake carefully takes it out and sets the Spirit Phone on the counter. Then with a fortifying breath, he plugs it in. Once again, the EERIE HUM rises from it...

He takes the Speak & Spell and types H-E-L-L-O... Then presses enter.

Its creepy voice blares in the silence: *HEEeeeLOOOO...*

Throbs and burrs emanate from the horn, very distant.

Jake leans closer, trying to hear anything. Turns up the volume, but still can't make anything distinct out.

Then he types a new phrase... W-H-A-T D-O Y-O-U W-A-N-T?

WuuuT DOOOo YOoo Waaaant...

The sounds from the horn change pitch... Taking on more shape and weight... Before settling into SOFTLY HISSING STATIC. Static that begins to PULSE...

Hiss, Hiss... Hiss, Hiss... Hiss, Hiss...

Jake's eyes widen. *Could it be? Some kind of message?*

He turns up the volume even more, trying to make out the sound... *Hiss, Hiss... Hiss, Hiss...*

He leans even closer... *Hiss, Hiss... Hiss, Hiss --*

SUDDENLY SPARKS FLY FROM THE WIRING, sending out a LOUD HISS OF STATIC. Jake jumps back as a puff of SMOKE RISES, the spirit phone falling silent.

JAKE

Holy shit...

He catches his breath. *Was it the ghost? Or...* He doesn't seem to know. His eyes pan around the odd shapes and creepy shadows of the shop... But he doesn't see anything lurking.

INT. CALVIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jake quietly lets himself back in, closing the door. He tiptoes back towards his room...

But before he gets there, HE HEARS WHIMPERING... Coming from somewhere else in the apartment. Someone is crying.

Jake listens, more confused than frightened... Seeing a faint light glowing. He creeps towards it, tiptoeing to the edge of the --

KITCHEN

Where Calvin sits at the table, shirt off, scars bare. He whimpers and cries, feverishly SKETCHING SOMETHING with a charcoal pencil on a sketchpad.

Jake watches from the doorway, but Calvin doesn't glance over, unaware of his presence.

Then Calvin lets out a WRETCHED SOB, startling Jake.

Calvin drops his pencil. Cries building... Until another guttural moan escapes him, more animalistic than human.

And this is all too much for Jake. He carefully steps away, not making a sound, leaving his Uncle alone.

SPARE BEDROOM

Jake climbs back into bed, troubled by what he just saw. He lays his head on his pillow, but his eyes remain open...

EXT. OCCULTORIUM -- DAY

The warm sun peeks over the nearby buildings. A new day.

INT. HALLWAY, CALVIN'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jake hesitantly steps out. Listens... It's quiet now. He creeps down the hall, looking into the next room --

Where Calvin sleeps in his bed. The room is a cluttered, disorganized mess, but he's okay.

Jake takes a relieved breath. Then moves on into the --

KITCHEN

And comes to a stop, seeing CALVIN'S SKETCHPAD on the table. He knows he shouldn't. But... He opens it.

And stiffens at the sight of --

The FACE OF A DARK CREATURE, mouth open in a twisted scream. Features rendered in brutal slashes, mostly shrouded in shadow, except for its WHITE EYES.

Chillingly similar to the Ghost that haunts Jake.

Jake stares at it, his frightened mind racing, none of this making sense to him...

He quickly closes the notebook.

EXT. POND, FOREST -- DAY

Jake and Billy are back at the same secluded spot, looking out over the water.

JAKE

It was so weird... Like he was sleepwalking, or in a trance or something. He didn't even know I was there.

BILLY

Creepy... Has it happened before?

Jake shakes his head "no," but there's more weighing on him.

JAKE

His drawing looked so much like what I've been seeing. Not the same, but... Similar.

(beat)

Do you think that maybe... Do you think maybe he could be haunted?

Billy turns, seeing how much this worries Jake.

BILLY

You mean... Like you?

Jake nods. Looking down into the shallow water.

BILLY

I read this book that said sometimes when a ghost haunts someone, if it doesn't get what it wants, it moves on to the next generation in the family. Maybe it started with him... And it came down to you?

JAKE

But why wouldn't he just tell me?

BILLY

Maybe he didn't realize it was happening... Like it's some kind of possession thing... Like he can't control it.

(beat)

Maybe that's how he got those scars.

Jake considers this... And it only unnerves him more.

JAKE

Have you always been into ghosts?

BILLY

Kinda. My dad used to read scary stories to me when I was little.

But he hesitates, something more there.

BILLY

I always liked the idea of them. You know, that someone can come back. Like they're never gone forever.

JAKE

I don't think I'd want to come back.

BILLY

I would.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Jake sits at his desk, absorbed in the pages of a worn book with a photo and write-up on the Screaming Tunnel.

He flips forward. We catch glimpses of more CREEPY LOCATIONS and GHOSTLY APPARITIONS. "Bachelors Grove Cemetery," "The Villisca Ax Murder House," "Griggs Mansion." But he keeps going, not finding what he's looking for.

He sets the book next to a PILE OF OTHERS relating to HAUNTED SITES. Grabs the next one.

CREEPY VOICE

(from outside)

Jake... Jake... Come out of your hole, Jake...

Jake smirks. Goes to the window and looks out at Dove.

DOVE

Hey, did you hear that weird voice too? I think your house is haunted.

JAKE

You coulda just rang the doorbell.

DOVE

That'd be so ordinary.

EXT. SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET -- DAY

Jake and Dove walk past the quiet storefronts.

JAKE

So where are we going?

DOVE
Wherever life takes us.

He waits for more but she doesn't offer anything.

DOVE
So whatcha been doing all week? I've
been batshit bored in this town.

JAKE
Mostly just researching.

DOVE
Researching? Dude, it's summer.

JAKE
Ghost stuff.

DOVE
Right. Of course you are.

JAKE
It's weird... The Screaming Tunnel's
in all the books. It's like
legendary. But I can't find anything
about that sunken car.

DOVE
So?

JAKE
So isn't that weird?

DOVE
Just give it a few more years and I'm
sure it'll be all the rage.

They pass a mom and pop BRIDAL STORE, where several TEENAGE
GIRLS ogle the wedding dresses in the window.

Dove slows, glaring...

DOVE
Look at them... So sad...

JAKE
They don't seem sad.

DOVE
They will be one day. You live in a
town like this and a wedding dress is
the only future you have to hope for.

She watches the girls laugh and chat, totally carefree. The very fact that they're happy seems to sting the most.

DOVE

Screw that conventional bullshit. I'm never getting married.

She keeps walking, faster now. Jake hurries to catch up.

JAKE

You're not?

DOVE

Hell no. Just gonna be me, myself, and I. I'm moving to Europe. Did I tell you that?

JAKE

What?

DOVE

I'd fit in more there. Everyone says it's so much better anyway. You ever been to Europe?

JAKE

No --

DOVE

I'm gonna take up drawing. And painting too. Nothing like commercializing therapy, right?

She's talking energetically fast, but it's unnatural, imbalanced. And Jake is too young to realize...

DOVE

I'll set up an easel right outside the Louvre and scam tourists. Except my work will be good. Like really good. I mean, I could be a prodigy and no one even knows it yet. Seriously though.

JAKE

Dove, slow down --

DOVE

I don't want to stay in Paris forever. Just for like a few months or a year. Then I'll go to college in Australia. That'd be sweet. Major in oceanography or some shit like that. Swim with sharks. Screw high school.

JAKE

But what about your family --

DOVE

You don't have to graduate high school to go to college, you know that? You just need a GED. You can travel the world, experience life, cram some studying in, and just pass a test. Easy as pie.

She's not slowing down. Jake can barely keep up.

DOVE

Think those bridal store bitches are ever gonna go anywhere? Ha! I'll bet my money they all get knocked up before they're old enough to drink.

JAKE

Dove, wait... Just stop for a second!

DOVE

Back home, I had real friends, not like them. Maybe you can meet my friends one day. You can all visit me in Paris. Or Australia. I had so many friends, you have no idea.

JAKE

Why don't we try to find Billy.

Dove stops abruptly to face him.

DOVE

Why?

JAKE

Because you're not making sense.

DOVE

Nothing makes sense!

Jake startles back. Dove bursts out laughing.

DOVE

That's the secret of life! Nothing makes sense! You say you're haunted by a ghost. Does that make sense? No! My dad clobbered my mom with a piece of stove wood and crushed her kneecap. Doesn't make sense! Now here we are, one big happy family, sans one asshole! Does that make sense?

(MORE)

DOVE (cont'd)
I think not! Why should any of us
keep trying to make sense?

Jake's jaw falls open. *WTF... Is she serious?*

JAKE
Billy never told me that...

DOVE
Billy likes to pretend everything's
peachy. You know why he's so into
ghost stories? The people in them are
even more fucked up than us!

She laughs hysterically as Jake just stares.

Then her laughs subside as tears fill her eyes. She turns
away, taking a few steps, not wanting him to see her face.

Jake cautiously approaches. So out of his element.

JAKE
Dove... Hey Dove, it's okay...

She just shakes her head.

JAKE
Dove?

DOVE
I'm such a joke.

JAKE
No you're not.

DOVE
Such a joke...

She wipes away a tear before it falls, sniffing hard.

Then something catches her eye... She takes a breath,
composing herself.

DOVE
Thanks for the walk, Jake. Been fun
knowing ya.

She moves ahead, under the sign for a GREYHOUND BUS STOP.

JAKE
What, wait, where're you going?

DOVE

Wherever the wind takes me. Or as far
as this'll go. Whichever's further.

She pulls out a WAD OF CASH. Maybe fifty bucks in small
bills, but a fortune to a teen in the 90s.

DOVE

Life's short. Misery's long. Gotta
get to the airport somehow.

JAKE

But you don't have clothes or a
toothbrush or --

DOVE

You think I'm crazy, don't you.

Jake stammers, trying to find reasonable words.

JAKE

What, no, I --

DOVE

It's okay... You can say it. *You're
crazy, Dove.* I've heard it before.

JAKE

I --

In the distance, he sees A BUS COMING. Holy shit, she might
actually do this. And he blurts out --

JAKE

I think you're like the sun.

But the phrase causes her to stiffen with a pained twinge.

DOVE

Who told you to say that?

JAKE

Nobody. It was my own --

DOVE

You're lying.

Jake shrinks under her piercing gaze. She sees the bus
approaching and softens.

DOVE

Listen, I'll miss the club. And even though I don't believe in any of that shit... I hope you find the ghost you're looking for.

The bus slows to a stop. The door opens.

DOVE

Be seein' ya.

JAKE

Dove, wait! I'm gonna tell!

DOVE

You're the boss of you.

She climbs up the steps, gives money to the driver.

JAKE

Dove! Dove wait! I, you, you can't --

But she just waves as the door closes, and the bus drives off. Jake watches in dismay...

Then he takes off running back the way they came.

EXT. DOVE AND BILLY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jake runs up the Yellowbird's driveway. Pounds on the front door, heart racing. The waiting is painful. He pounds again.

Then the door opens, revealing MRS. YELLOWBIRD (40s), leaning on a cane.

JAKE

(fast, breathless)

I'm Jake -- Jake Baker --

MRS. YELLOWBIRD

Oh, Billy told me about --

JAKE

Dove got on a bus! To somewhere! The airport, I think! She was talking about Paris and then she just left!

Mrs. Yellowbird's smile fades.

MRS. YELLOWBIRD

Jesus, that girl...

Her expression betraying years of pain and frustration.

MRS. YELLOWBIRD
Which way did it go?

JAKE
To the, um, the east. Down Lewis
Avenue. I could come with you --

MRS. YELLOWBIRD
Thank you, Jake, but this isn't our
first rodeo.

JAKE
Okay, just please have her call me
when --

The door closes, leaving Jake standing there.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake sits at his desk, flipping through the same ghost
books. But he's antsy now, unfocused.

He eyes the portable phone nearby, not ringing. Checks his
watch, which only stresses him more.

Finally, he can't take it anymore and dials the phone. Waits
as it rings... Rings... An ANSWERING MACHINE picks up --

DOVE (ANSWERING MACHINE)
Yo, we're not here. You know what to
do after the beep. And if you don't,
we don't talk to dummies anyway.

BEEP. Jake hangs up. *Where is she?*

EXT. DOVE AND BILLY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jake rides up on his bike. He drops it in the grass and goes
to the front door. Knocks. Waits...

No sounds from inside. He rings the doorbell. And waits...

He looks around. But there's no car in the driveway. No one
up or down the street. He's the only one around.

He trudges back to his bike, not wanting to leave, but not
knowing what else to do. Picks it up --

But then he sees a CAR DRIVING DOWN THE STREET. His spirits
soar as it pulls into the Yellowbird's driveway. He drops
his bike and rushes over.

Dove hops out of the front passenger seat looking chipper,
while Billy gets out of the back, exhausted.

DOVE
Hiya, Jake-o-matic. How's the ghost
research coming?

Mrs. Yellowbird climbs out of the car with strained effort.

MRS. YELLOWBIRD
Inside, Dove. Now.

DOVE
(to Jake)
Guess I'll catch ya on the flip.

Jake's jaw hangs open as he watches Dove follow her mom
towards the house.

MRS. YELLOWBIRD
You can go home now, Jake.
Everything's fine.

Billy follows behind. Jake makes eye contact with him as he
passes. Billy shakes his head and swirls his finger by his
ear... *Cuckoo*. Then goes inside too and the door closes...

Leaving Jake standing there, seeing their family in an
entirely new light...

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- EVENING

Jake rides up, noticing Billy's bike already there. He parks
his and goes inside.

INT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- CONTINUOUS

Jake steps in and sees Dove perusing a nearby aisle like
nothing happened.

DOVE
Sup Jake. Ready for another nice,
normal evening out? Psyche!

She goes back to looking around. Jake exchanges a look with
Billy, who rolls his eyes. Then picks up a trinket off a
shelf, unwilling to say more.

LEXINGTON (O.S.)
I'm telling ya, Calvin, this is going
too far! It's getting dangerous.

Jake hears this and steps deeper into the store...

Where he sees Calvin and Lexington in the back office.
Lexington heated, and Calvin playing it cool.

But there's something... *Off* about Calvin, even by his standards. Unshaven, hair a mess, clothes rumpled.

LEXINGTON

I'm all for helping your nephew, but just not that place.

CALVIN

Lex, it's a site of major paranormal significance. We can't just skip it. What're you so worried about?

Lexington notices Jake standing there and hesitates. But Calvin brightens and steps out of the office.

CALVIN

Got a good one picked out for us tonight, Jake. Scariest yet!

He pats Jake on the shoulder. But all of the weirdness from everyone is making Jake uneasy.

CALVIN

Alright gang, gather up!
(announcer voice)
Live from the world famous
Occultorium... It's Saturday night!

EXT. FOREST PATH -- NIGHT

Footsteps crunch in gravel as the Ghost Club makes its way down the long forgotten path through the trees, flashlights illuminating the way. Calvin and Jake up front, the others a few paces behind. Calvin whispers so only Jake can hear him.

CALVIN

Jake, I want to warn you... This next site isn't like the others. The screaming tunnel's ghost was born out of a cruel prank. The lake's by a tragic accident. But this one... This one was created by an act of pure evil. For all of our sakes, I hope this isn't your ghost.

The path opens up before them to reveal --

THE REMAINS OF A HOUSE

Blackened rubble. Charred support beams point towards the sky like shadowy tusks. A sense of death lingering. Calvin was right. This places reeks of evil.

DOVE

Shit... What happened here?

CALVIN

A tragedy of the darkest kind.

He approaches the house. Only this time, there's trepidation in his eyes. He fears this place too.

DOVE

Third time's the charm, eh boys?

She scampers ahead. Jake exchanges a look with Billy, then moves to follow. Lexington advances uneasily.

Together, the Ghost Club climbs the splintered steps, spreading out to look around. Ash. Charcoal. Not much left.

CALVIN

Just keep your feet on the supports so you don't fall through. Like walking on rails.

LEXINGTON

Hey Cal, I really don't think --

CALVIN

It's fine, Lex. There's enough solid wood left to support us.

Jake is all too aware of the tension between them.

Up ahead, Calvin takes a seat on some collapsed rubble. He motions them over. They all sit around him, waiting with bated breath for him to begin.

CALVIN

You'll, uh... You'll have to forgive me... Everything I heard about this place, I heard third-hand, fourth-hand even. All I know for sure is it happened many years ago, on a summer's night... There was a cold edge on the wind, the first sign that fall was beginning to threaten...

Jake gazes over the rubble...

And as he does, sounds of MUSIC AND LAUGHTER FILTER IN... The burned out house FADING INTO WOOD PANELING AND WALLS, as we find ourselves in --

CALVIN'S THIRD GHOST STORY

We move through the warmly lit home, past PHOTOS OF A YOUNG COUPLE. Laughter from the kitchen draws us in... Where the twenty-something HUSBAND AND WIFE cook dinner together.

CALVIN (V.O.)

A pair of newlyweds built this place. Still basking in the afterglow when they moved in. They were planning to raise a family here, far from the hurly-burly of city life, nestled away on their own little corner of the world...

CUT TO:

Outside, the quaint home glows like a beacon in the DARK WOODS that surround it.

CALVIN (V.O.)

But they didn't go far enough... And the monsters of the world were drawn in like moths to the flame...

FOUR SHADOWY FIGURES emerge from those dark woods.

CUT TO:

Knock... Knock... Knock... The Husband and Wife's heads turn, startled. Then the Husband walks over.

CALVIN (V.O.)

It was late, but not late enough that a visitor couldn't come knocking. Like a wolf in sheepskin clothing, whispering *Little pig... Little pig... Let me come in...*

THE HUSBAND OPENS THE DOOR...

We don't see who's outside. WE STAY ON THE COUPLE, only seeing the shadowy shoulder of whomever is speaking to them.

CALVIN (V.O.)

But a monster, like a ghost, is clever. It doesn't say it like that. It says its car broke down and asks to use a phone.

The Husband turns back to his Wife, faced with a decision...

CUT TO:

BOOTS TRACK MUD into the house.

CALVIN (V.O.)
But it didn't take the couple long to
realize the hell they'd let into
their home...

A GLOVED HAND pulls the phone off the wall. The other hand
brandishes a KNIFE and CUTS THE CHORD.

The Wife shrieks, cowering behind her Husband. But before he
can do anything, they hear the FRONT DOOR BREAKING OPEN, and
turn to see --

THREE MORE FIGURES standing outside, obscured by shadow.

CUT TO:

Moving through the house once again, past photos of the
couple... But now there's a TRAIL OF BLOOD on the floor. We
follow it through the home...

CALVIN (V.O.)
There is... There's no record of what
those men did that night. That's the
only merciful part of this story. But
after they'd done what they came to
do, they left... Vanishing back into
the darkness, never to be found. They
left everything intact... Except for
the two people inside.

We come around a corner to find --

The Husband holding his Wife, bending over her, his body
blocking the worst carnage. She's barely hanging on.

CALVIN (V.O.)
He managed to get her in the car.
Drove to the hospital as fast as he
could. But it was too late...

CUT TO:

The Husband sits alone at the kitchen table, staring off,
surrounded by an unbearable emptiness.

CALVIN (V.O.)
After the funeral, he was left to
live in their house alone. But he was
never truly alone...

CUT TO:

The Husband sleeps on his side of the bed, the other side noticeably vacant.

Knock... Knock... Knock...

He sits up abruptly, looking around. Listening as --

Knock... Knock... Knock...

CALVIN (V.O.)

At first, he thought it was a nightmare. But it returned every night. Again and again.

CUT TO:

The Husband plods through the dark house, HANDS COVERING HIS EARS, as the KNOCKING ECHOES ALL AROUND HIM. *Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock!*

CALVIN (V.O.)

Soon, this little corner of the world became a prison... A prison that drove him mad... And when he couldn't take it anymore, he burned their house to the ground.

BACK TO PRESENT:

The group sits amidst the charred remains of the tragedy.

CALVIN

After the flames died down, he... He found a kitchen knife in the ash... And met his maker by his own hand.

Calvin lowers his head, as if to mourn the dead. Staying still uncomfortably long as the others stare. When he speaks again, his voice is low, not looking up at anyone.

CALVIN

Perhaps he... Perhaps he thought the fire would release her spirit. But some ghosts cling to more than walls and windows. And now... She's left to wander. Knocking on doors... Looking for a home she'll never find... For a husband who'll never hold her again. For a child she'll never bear. Forever alone... Forever searching...

He trails off... Staring away into the charred lumber. Silent as the tension hangs. Jake glances at the others and notices the dread on Lexington's face.

Then Calvin reaches out a hand and *knock, knock, knocks* on the skeletal door frame next to where he sits.

And he waits... As if expecting the door to open.

He raises his hand again. *Knock... Knock... Knock...*

JAKE

Uncle Calvin... You okay?

But Calvin doesn't respond. Eyes vacant, mind somewhere far away, as if in a trance. *Knock... Knock... Knock...*

JAKE

Uncle Calvin?

Dove and Billy are getting worried too. But Calvin keeps knocking, unaware of anyone else's presence. *Knock... Knock... Knock...*

DOVE

(whispering)

Dude, what's wrong with him?

JAKE

I don't know...

Then Calvin stands, turning away from them, staring out the empty door frame. *Knock... Knock... Knock...* Lexington gets up, trying to delicately pull Calvin away.

LEXINGTON

Calvin... Hey Cal... Come on, let's go. Cal. Cal!

Knock. Knock. Knock. Each strike harder than the last.

JAKE

Uncle Calvin, stop! Please!

Knock! Knock! Knock! His knuckles growing bloody from the rough wood. But he doesn't notice. *Knock! Knock! Knock!*

Lexington turns to the others, even more worried than them.

LEXINGTON

Get out of here. Don't look back. I'll get him home.

JAKE

But --

LEXINGTON

No buts. Just go!

Dove and Billy get up. But Jake lingers, watching Calvin. *Knock! Knock! Knock!* Dove puts a hand on Jake's shoulder.

DOVE

Come on, Jake.

Jake reluctantly follows them. But he can't help watching his Uncle as he goes, in no way reassured...

EXT. FOREST PATH -- NIGHT

Jake, Dove, and Billy head back.

BILLY

That place was creepy as shit. Maybe he was more sensitive to it. You know, like you were at the tunnel.

Jake nods, trying to justify it.

BILLY

I read this book once that said in the most haunted places, a really malevolent ghost can take control of someone's body, and make them do all sorts of weird stuff --

DOVE

Jesus Christ, Billy, not now!

BILLY

Well what do you think happened?!

The question hangs...

DOVE

I don't know...

They walk on in uneasy silence.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET -- NIGHT

All the houses are dark. The streets empty. No one else out at this hour. Except for Jake, riding his bike home. Alone now. Only his swirling thoughts for company.

But then he *senses something*... And eases his bike to a stop in the middle of the road. He looks around... Into the shadows... *Is someone there?*

A breeze flutters the leaves on the nearby trees, causing their branches to CREAK. Then --

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...

Jake's eyes widen with horrible recognition.

Thud, Thud...

Jake looks around, searching. But he can't see it. *Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...* Then that GHOSTLY WAIL, excruciating on the ears. And out of the darkness --

The DARK FIGURE EMERGES. About ten feet away, hobbling towards him.

Jake takes off on his bike, pedaling as hard as he can. He glances back. For a moment it looks like he might be safe --

But the Dark Figure hobbles out of the darkness, inexplicably still right behind him.

Jake keeps going, pedaling for his life. Looks back again --

But in spite of how far he's gone, the Dark Figure is still close behind. He can't get away!

Jake pedals even harder, pushing himself to the brink. *Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...* Another GHOSTLY WAIL and --

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake pops the curb and jumps off his bike, running for the door --

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake dashes in and slams the door shut. Then rushes to the window and looks out.

But there's no Dark Figure outside...

CECILIA (O.S.)

Jake... Is that you?

Jake tenses. *Oh shit...* He tries to catch his breath. Fix his hair. Then steps further into the house...

Where he finds Cecilia on the couch, TV on in the background. But she's focused on him.

CECILIA

Thought you were sleeping over at Uncle Cal's.

JAKE

He... He's not feeling well.

CECILIA
What do you mean? He's sick?

But Jake can't hide his concern, and Cecilia realizes there's something more there. She gets up, coming to him.

CECILIA
Jake... What's wrong?

JAKE
Nothing. He's just not feeling well.

He tries to head upstairs but it's not that easy --

CECILIA
Hang on!
(off Jake's look)
What do you mean not feeling well?

JAKE
I don't know... He's just not himself. Why's it matter so much?

CECILIA
Because he's my brother and I know him better than anyone. If something's wrong with him, I need to know right now.

A tinge of emotion in her voice.

CECILIA
Jake, please... Tell me what's wrong.

And Jake realizes just how serious this is...

INT. KITCHEN, JAKE'S HOUSE -- LATER

The tension hangs heavy as Jake sits at the table, expression grave. Cecilia stands, holding the phone to her ear. Then hangs up with an anxious sigh.

CECILIA
He's still not answering.

She leans on the counter, trying to keep her cool, but she's extremely worried.

CECILIA
So let me get this straight... You two haven't been watching movies like you told me... You've been going out to abandoned train tunnels, and underwater cars, and burned houses?

JAKE

It was a Ghost Club... Those were the haunted places.

CECILIA

Is that what he told you? That it'd be some fun summer adventure?

JAKE

No, it... It wasn't like that...

CECILIA

You should have told me.

JAKE

Uncle Calvin said it was for true believers only. We knew you wouldn't understand.

CECILIA

I understand a lot more than you think... And for the time being, it's best that you not see your Uncle. No more Occultorium. No more Ghost Club.

JAKE

But that's not fair --

CECILIA

Go to bed, Jake. You're in enough trouble as it is.

JAKE

But he's being haunted!

Cecilia tenses, deeply disturbed by hearing this.

CECILIA

The last thing I want to talk about right now is ghosts... Now go to bed.

And Jake knows he'll be getting nothing more from her.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake sits on the floor, paging through an old PHOTO ALBUM. Gazing at the images of him and Calvin going back through the years. Trick or treating together. Having a pizza party. Holding up all-seeing eyes in the Occultorium.

He flips further back, into his younger years...

And stops on an old photo of Calvin as a younger man, holding BABY JAKE in his arms.

Only Calvin looks different then. Normal clothes. Brown hair. No conspiratory gleam in his eyes. Not a larger than life Uncle. Just an ordinary guy, smiling at his new nephew.

Jake stares at this man, so different than the Uncle he knows today...

Pling!

He looks up. *Pling! Pling!* PEBBLES HITTING HIS WINDOW.

Jake sees DOVE OUTSIDE, holding her skateboard.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jake sneaks out the door. Zips up his coat.

DOVE
I'm such a bad influence on you.

She rides off. Jake scrambles to get his bike and follow.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- NIGHT

No one around at this hour. The teeter totter and merry-go-round giving off the occasional squeak in the breeze.

Jake and Dove sway on the swings, forward and back...

DOVE
How's he doing?

JAKE
My mom says I'm not allowed to see him for a while.

DOVE
That sucks. So no more Ghost Club?

JAKE
Guess not.

DOVE
I want to say he's gonna be okay...
But I hate it when people say that
shit like they know it's true.

JAKE
So don't say it then.

DOVE
I hope it though.

JAKE

I hope so too.

They sway in silence.

DOVE

I like you, Jake. You don't put on any kind of act. You're not cool and you don't think you are.

JAKE

Thanks. I guess?

DOVE

I'm just saying that you're real, y'know? That makes you interesting.

JAKE

You're interesting too.

DOVE

Ha! If you could slap a tag on me and put me on a shelf, you know what it'd say? "Somewhat damaged."

JAKE

We're all a little damaged.

DOVE

I'm in a special category though. One of these days, your mom will say you can't hang out with me anymore too, just like your Uncle.

JAKE

She wouldn't do that.

DOVE

Sure she would. Haven't you figured it out yet? I'm the girl your mom warns you about.

She hops off the swing, landing gracefully. Breezes over to the merry-go-round. Jake follows her.

JAKE

Where did you go that day? When you got on that bus.

DOVE

Nowhere really.

She slowly spins... But Jake waits for a real answer.

DOVE

My cash grab didn't take me as far as I wanted... Only a few towns over. I tried to con my way into a punk rock show, but the bouncer didn't buy that I was eighteen for a second. Wound up hanging at a 24-hour doughnut shop till my mom and Billy found me. Let's just say the ride home was stressful.

JAKE

Are you gonna try and leave again?

DOVE

I don't know what I'm gonna do in the next minute, let alone tomorrow, or the next day. I just... I just don't want to die like all those other poor souls, you know. Miserable in their own skin, always trying to shed it.

She slows the the merry-go-round to a stop.

DOVE

Do you ever think about your funeral?

Jake shakes his head "no."

DOVE

I do. All the time. How would you want to be posed in your coffin?

JAKE

You get a choice?

DOVE

Why not. You can pick your box and your plot. Why not pick your pose? I mean, most people do the obvious.

She lies down on the ground, closing her eyes, folding her hands across her chest.

DOVE

But I want something more grunge. Like Kurt Cobain style.

She flips the bird with a rock star sneer. Jake laughs.

DOVE

What about you? Pick your pose.

Jake thinks about it. Then lies down next to her. He holds up his hands, face frozen in mock terror.

DOVE
What the hell is that?

JAKE
I'm buried alive.

DOVE
Ooooooh, primo. Some mortician's
getting fired now.

They both laugh, lying next to each other under the stars.

DOVE
Maybe I'll get cremated. Coffins just
take up space anyway. And then
someone can scatter me in the wind.
I'd be everywhere then.

JAKE
Like the sun.

She turns to him, their eyes meeting.

DOVE
Yeah. Something like that.

A shared smile. Their faces close.

Then Dove stands, moseying over to the monkey bars. Jake
gets up, watching her climb.

DOVE
I've gotta get out of this town,
Jake. Hook up with some guy with a
motorcycle and long hair. I'm
flexible on hair length, but the
motorcycle is a must.

We can practically feel Jake's heart breaking...

Dove sees the look on his face and realizes --

DOVE
Oh, Jake...

She goes to him. He looks away, trying to hide his pain.

DOVE
Oh no, I didn't mean to... Shit. It's
just... The things I want are
different from the things you want.

JAKE
I want the same things you do.

DOVE

No you don't.

He can't look her in the eye. She gently takes his hand.

DOVE

This much is true, though... I could pass into the long dark with you.

He lifts his head, not understanding.

DOVE

That's what my setsuné used to call death. Blackness smooth as oil, stretching into forever. She said you've got to think hard about whose hand you're holding when that long dark takes hold. Someone strong and solid, with a good heart. I was holding her hand when she died. If you're still around whenever it happens, maybe you could hold mine.

Jake takes a shaky breath. Then manages a nod.

Dove smiles. Then pulls him in for a hug.

DOVE

Your Uncle's lucky to have you.

Jake forces a nod, trying to hold back tears.

INT. KITCHEN, JAKE'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Jake sits alone at the table, pensively swirling his spoon in his bowl of oatmeal. Cecilia breezes in wearing scrubs, gathering things in her work bag.

CECILIA

There are cold cuts in the fridge for lunch. And no Occultorium or any other ghost stuff. Understood?

Jake nods. She heads for the door.

JAKE

Mom?

(off her look)

Have you heard from him?

Cecilia hesitates, masking her concern as only a parent can.

CECILIA

No, but that's not unusual. He'll get through this. He always does. Just... Let him be. Got it?

JAKE

Got it.

And she's out the door.

But the moment it closes, Jake's eyes rise to the PHONE... The house is quiet, nothing stopping him...

He picks it up and dials a number. Listens as it rings... Rings... Then a click, and SPOOKY MUSIC PLAYS.

CALVIN (ANSWERING MACHINE)

Greetings, fair traveler. You've reached the Occultorium. We may have wandered into another dimension, but kindly leave a message, and we'll get back to you upon our return... Should we return at all...

BEEP. Jake hangs up. Considering his next move...

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- DAY

Jake rides up, getting off his bike.

He goes to the door and pulls on it -- LOCKED. A "CLOSED" sign in the window. He knocks on the door anyway.

JAKE

Hey Uncle Calvin? You in there?

He knocks louder. No response. He presses his face to the window, but there's no activity inside.

Jake glances around, noticing CALVIN'S BIKE, locked tight to a post. Looks up to the little apartment above the shop.

JAKE

Uncle Calvin, you home? Uncle Calvin?

LEXINGTON (O.S.)

Let it go, kid. He's probably still sleepin'.

Lexington comes out the door of his shop.

JAKE

Is he okay?

LEXINGTON

More or less.

JAKE

You're sure?

LEXINGTON

Calvin's strong. Always has been.

He heads back towards his shop --

JAKE

Why were you so scared to go to that
burned out house?

Lexington turns, considering his answer.

LEXINGTON

Maybe I spook easy.

JAKE

I'm not stupid.

LEXINGTON

No... But you're young, kid, and this
ain't just some campfire story
anymore. Trust me. There are some
ghosts you don't wanna go huntin'
for. Leave him be.

He steps back inside...

Leaving Jake feeling no better about the situation. He
sighs, frustrated. Then glances into the Occultorium window
one more time. Eyes tracing over everything inside.

Then something catches his attention... The SPIRIT PHONE
sitting on the counter.

And suddenly, a new idea hits him... He grabs his bike and
rides off.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME -- DAY

Foreboding, even in daylight.

Jake pulls up on his bike, taking it in with braver eyes.

INT. FUNERAL HOME -- DAY

The door creaks open as Jake enters. Not a welcoming place.

He makes his way in, eyeing various coffins on display in a
side room, lids open... Ready for occupants to fill them.

UNDERTAKER (O.S.)

May I help you?

Jake startles as the Undertaker walks up behind him, the same man who was lurking when Calvin brought them at night. His eyes narrow as he sees Jake's face.

UNDERTAKER

You're Calvin's nephew.

Jake nods.

UNDERTAKER

Here to see another dead body? I have several lying in wait...

JAKE

No... Thank you... Actually, I... I wanted to talk to you.

UNDERTAKER

Has there been a death in the family? Typically I handle the arrangements with someone slightly... Older.

JAKE

No, it's not that... Well, at least, not recently. There's this old burned out house past the edge of town...

The mere mention makes the Undertaker uncomfortable.

JAKE

My Uncle Calvin said two people died there. A wife and a husband. I need to know if it's actually true.

UNDERTAKER

It's not really my place to be telling you --

JAKE

You don't understand. Whatever happened at that house, to those people... Their spirits... I think they're haunting my Uncle. He's in trouble. Please.

The Undertaker is torn, but he sees Jake's desperation.

STORAGE ROOM

Jake follows the Undertaker into the dark, musty room, filled with shelves of boxes and filing cabinets.

The Undertaker pulls one open, leafing through. Then he pauses. And PULLS OUT A FILE. He turns to Jake, considering.

UNDERTAKER

Are you sure you want to see this?

Jake is nervous... But he's come too far now. He nods. The Undertaker hands him the file. Jake hesitantly opens it...

Revealing a PHOTO OF A DECEASED WOMAN (20s) IN A CASKET. Serene but soulless. Jake flips past more photos of the Undertaker's work, eerie in their every detail.

UNDERTAKER

You really don't know...

JAKE

Know what?

UNDERTAKER

Surely you've seen pictures of her...

Jake shakes his head, no idea what he's talking about. Flips another page. Scanning through information.

Name: Lydia Sharpe. Age: 29. DOD: 08/14/86.

And then he suddenly freezes, his hands starting to tremble. Because no ghost story could ever prepare him for this...

SPOUSE: CALVIN SHARPE

Jake stares at the name...

JAKE

That's... That's my Uncle's name.

The Undertaker takes a shaky breath. Then nods.

JAKE

But that's impossible... He's never been married.

UNDERTAKER

He was once. Your Aunt Lydia was buried ten years ago... Right outside in this very cemetery.

Jake takes in the image of the woman in the casket. Stunned beyond words... Her haunting image boring into his soul.

JAKE

But what about the other person?

UNDERTAKER

What other person?

JAKE

My Uncle said two people died there.
That her husband killed himself. But
he's still alive.

UNDERTAKER

Hers was the only body to come
through my doors. There was no other.

And that leaves Jake even more rattled.

EXT. POND, FOREST -- DAY

Jake and Billy sit at the pond's edge.

BILLY

But he's never even mentioned her?
Not even once?

JAKE

Never.

BILLY

And if he was her husband and her
husband didn't die...

JAKE

He's still haunted.

(beat)

I think it's her, Billy. The ghost
I've been looking for. It's like you
said. When a ghost doesn't get what
it wants, it starts haunting the next
generation in the family.

BILLY

But... Your ghost doesn't look
anything like her.

JAKE

Uncle Calvin said ghosts can look
different in death than in life. Even
not human at all.

The unsettling thought sinks in.

JAKE

He's been acting like she doesn't
exist for years... Maybe all she
wants is to see him again.

(MORE)

JAKE (cont'd)

You know, *really* see him. Say
goodbye. Like you and your setsuné.

BILLY

You can't take your Uncle back to
that house.

JAKE

Maybe there's another place... If the
story's true, she didn't die at that
house, she died in some hospital.

(beat)

But I know where she's buried.

BILLY

I don't know man... This seems like a
bad idea... If you're right, your
Uncle's been living with this ghost
for a long time. It could be really
powerful. Maybe there's a reason he's
never confronted her.

JAKE

The whole reason we started the Ghost
Club was to confront ghosts.

BILLY

I know. But I thought it'd be fun.
This is getting too real.

JAKE

It was always real.

BILLY

So maybe we should stop then. Just
leave it alone.

JAKE

We can't just pretend like something
bad isn't happening.

Billy doesn't reply, getting more uncomfortable.

JAKE

Dove told me why your family really
moved here. What your dad did.

BILLY

What?

JAKE

It's okay man.

BILLY

Dove told you? Dove's crazy. She says bullshit all the time, you seriously believe her?

But his reaction is enough for Jake to know it's true.

JAKE

My dad hasn't called me once since he left... Sometimes I'm kinda glad though. If he found out about the Ghost Club, he'd just say I was a sissy or a weirdo. I get what it's like to have your dad be an asshole.

BILLY

My dad's not an asshole! He... He's just living somewhere else for a little while.

He looks away, unable to make eye contact.

JAKE

I'm really sorry about what happened.
(stands up)
But ghosts don't just go away on their own. Not until they get what they want or you force them to leave.

He grabs his bike.

BILLY

Jake...
(off Jake's look)
Just be careful, okay?

Jake meets his friend's worried gaze. Then nods. *I will.*

INT. HALLWAY, JAKE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

All the lights off. Far past bedtime.

Jake peeks out of his room... The coast is clear. He tiptoes down the hallway. Then pushes open a door into the --

MASTER BEDROOM

Where his mom is fast asleep.

He silently makes his way to the dresser... Where his MOM'S PURSE sits. He reaches in and grabs her ADDRESS BOOK.

CECELIA STIRS. Jake freezes... But she doesn't wake.

And he slips back out the door.

JAKE'S BEDROOM

A flashlight snaps on, illuminating the address book. Jake flips to Calvin's entry. Numbers for "Home," "Occultorium." And a third phone number -- "FOR EMERGENCY ONLY."

Jake dials the emergency number on the portable phone. Waits as it rings... Rings... Rings...

CALVIN (FROM PHONE)
Warlock here. This line is secure.

Jake smirks. Then muffles his mouth with his hand and garbles his voice, sounding as foreboding as he can manage.

JAKE (INTO PHONE)
This is the Watcher. I've heard reports of strange happenings at the Oak Park Cemetery. Ghosts rising from their graves.

Silence from the other end. Jake waits, growing nervous --

CALVIN (FROM PHONE)
Can this be corroborated?

JAKE (INTO PHONE)
That's why I called you. My sources tell me you can be trusted. Meet me there at midnight.

CALVIN (FROM PHONE)
Wait... Who are you? I've never heard of the Watcher.

JAKE (INTO PHONE)
That's because I'm always watching...

He cringes, not his best line, but --

CALVIN (FROM PHONE)
Of course. See you at midnight.

Jake hangs up, proud of himself.

INT. ENTRYWAY, JAKE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jake tiptoes down the stairs. He quietly opens the door and steps out into the night. The door creaks closed behind him, and as it clicks shut --

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, JAKE'S HOUSE -- SIMULTANEOUS

His mom's eyes open. She sits up in bed, looking around...

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Jake pedals down a lonely road, armed with only a flashlight. He crests a hill to see --

THE CEMETERY

Where our story began... Crescent moon looming above, casting sharp shadows on the weathered tombstones. Eerily quiet, save the rustle of fallen leaves in the breeze.

Jake pedals closer, trepidation building. But he soldiers on. Until he reaches the ARCHWAY separating the graveyard from the rest of the world. Stows his bike there.

Then shines his flashlight ahead... At the ROWS AND ROWS OF TOMBSTONES waiting for him. He checks his watch...

The sound of a clanking bike chain makes him turn.

And there's Calvin, pedaling towards the cemetery. Jake signals with his flashlight, motioning him over.

But Calvin doesn't look well. Even more scraggly and short on sleep than last time. He slows as he sees --

CALVIN

Jake? What are you doing here?

JAKE

My mom was getting suspicious, so I used an alias to protect the club.

CALVIN

You mean... You're the Watcher?

(chuckles)

Like a supernatural secret agent.

JAKE

Something like that.

(beat)

I found her, Uncle Calvin. The ghost that's been haunting us.

Calvin's brow furrows.

CALVIN

The ghost?

JAKE

You said we needed to find where the ghost came from and confront it. If we go to her grave together, I think maybe she'll show herself.

He steps through the archway... Heading down a path between the tombstones. Calvin hesitantly follows.

CALVIN

I'm not sure I understand...

JAKE

You'll see.

They trek further, passing grave after grave. Calvin's unease grows with every step. Frightened by this place.

JAKE

This is it...

He slows, shining his light onto A STATUE OF A HOODED WOMAN WITH ARMS OUTSTRETCHED, looming over them. Her stone eyes forever open, face etched in the subtlest smile.

Jake turns, taking in his Uncle's face...

Only Calvin doesn't seem scared or sad... More... Confused... Like when you haven't seen someone in a very long time, and you're struggling to recall their name.

But then his gaze steadies, remembering...

CALVIN

Ah yes... Black Agnes.

Jake's eyes narrow. *Who?*

CALVIN

She... She, uh...

(struggling)

She lived here with her husband a long time ago... Back in the horse and buggy days. Till one night, she... She drowned... Drowned in the river. Now she wanders... Her dress blackened by mud and grime --

JAKE

Her name's not Agnes.

CALVIN

It's... It's not?

JAKE

It's okay... We don't have to be
scared of her anymore.

He shines his light on the grave's inscription --

L Y D I A S H A R P E

And as Calvin stares at the name, the faintest hint of
recognition begins to shine through...

CALVIN

She... She has my last name...

He looks up at the stone face, those familiar stone eyes...

CALVIN

But I... I don't know a Lydia...

Confusion washes over Jake's face.

CALVIN

Or maybe I... No...

JAKE

Of course you know her. She was --

Calvin shakes his head violently, startling Jake.

CALVIN

I'm not... I don't...

His trembling hands frenzy through his hair. Jake takes a
step back, growing more alarmed.

CALVIN

Her name's Agnes... She... She
drowned... I...

And Jake realizes he's made a terrible mistake bringing his
Uncle to this place --

CECILIA (O.S.)

Jake! Calvin!

CECILIA HURRIEDLY APPROACHES.

CECILIA

Jake, get away from him!

Jake moves away as his Mom rushes to her brother.

CECILIA

Calvin? Cal?

Calvin takes deep, steadying breaths.

CALVIN
I uh... I feel a little strange...

He gazes at the statue.

CALVIN
Does she... Does she look familiar?

CECILIA
She might... What do you think?

CALVIN
I... I don't know...

Cecilia gently wraps a hand around his arm.

CECILIA
Maybe it'll come back to you another day... Besides, there are a lot of Sharpes in this area.

CALVIN
Yeah... A lot of Sharpes.

He tilts his head... Looking up into those stone eyes...

Then he reaches out, touching the statue's outstretched hand... And smiles slightly, returning hers.

CALVIN
Humblest apologies for disturbing you, fair maiden. Back to your eternal rest.

And with that, he steps away, following Cecilia.

CALVIN
Whoever she is, I wish I'd known her... Must've been beautiful.

CECILIA
Must've been. Want a ride home?

CALVIN
Yeah... I'm awfully tired...

Jake watches as his mom leads Calvin away...

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake sits on his bed, in a daze. Unable to wrap his mind around this reality. He looks up as his mom walks in.

JAKE

Mom, I'm sorry, I didn't know --

CECILIA

You didn't know because I didn't tell you... You did what you did because you love your Uncle.

JAKE

But why doesn't he remember her?

She sighs, sitting down next to him.

CECILIA

Some things you leave buried hoping they stay buried.

(beat)

I was gonna tell you what happened when you were older... But I guess that's now.

She strokes his hair.

CECILIA

I know Uncle Calvin told you some ghost stories... If you're ready, I'll tell you one more.

Jake nods. Cecilia takes a shaky breath.

Then she picks up one of Jake's ghost books off his nightstand, flipping through it.

CECILIA

It all started here...

She comes to a stop on a familiar image.

JAKE

The Screaming Tunnel?

CECILIA

That's where your Uncle Calvin and Aunt Lydia had their very first date.

Jake stares at the tunnel, seeing it with a new perspective now... And as he does, the old photo DISSOLVES INTO THE REAL PLACE as we find ourselves in --

OUR LAST GHOST STORY

The Screaming Tunnel stands foreboding as ever. YOUNGER CALVIN and LYDIA step towards it, taking in the sight.

They're in their 20s. Calvin in conservative slacks and shirt, with skeptical eyes. While Lydia looks more like Calvin in the present, a hippy without a care and that all too familiar wide-eyed gleam.

CECILIA (V.O.)

They met in college. Believe it or not, your Uncle was studying physics. Back then, he only believed what could be seen. Until he met Lydia, whose passions lay in the mysterious unknown...

CUT TO:

Calvin and Lydia step into the tunnel, holding a flashlight. Huddled close as their footsteps echo.

FLASHBACK:

Calvin leads Jake and the Ghost Club into the same tunnel. They turn off their flashlights, bringing us into darkness. And from that darkness --

BACK TO GHOST STORY:

LYDIA LIGHTS A MATCH. She and Calvin stare into it...

CECILIA (V.O.)

But inside that tunnel, something magical happened...

The two of them gaze into the light together... Then their eyes meet. A shared smile and laugh.

And then a sweet KISS. That life changing kiss when you know you've found your love.

CUT TO:

We move through the same warm home we saw in the previous ghost story. Only now CALVIN AND LYDIA ARE IN THE PHOTOS. Laughter from the kitchen draws us in... Where Calvin and Lydia cook dinner together.

CECILIA (V.O.)

After they got married, they built a house outside of town. They were planning to raise a family there.

CUT TO:

That same house we saw in Calvin's ghost story. Glowing like a beacon in the DARK WOODS that surround it.

CECILIA (V.O.)
 Calvin called it their own little
 corner of the world. And it was...
 Until one night...

The FOUR DARK FIGURES emerge from the woods.

CUT TO:

Knock... Knock... Knock... Calvin and Lydia's heads turn,
 startled. Then Calvin walks over to the door.

CECILIA (V.O.)
 The truth is, Jake, there are things
 out there far scarier than ghosts...

CALVIN OPENS THE DOOR... It's not a monster outside, but a
 MAN. A little scruffy, shivering in the cold.

MAN
 I'm so sorry to bother you, but my
 car broke down and my kids are gonna
 be worried sick. Could I trouble you
 to use your phone? Only be a minute.

Calvin hesitates. Then smiles sympathetically.

CUT TO:

A GLOVED HAND pulls the phone off the wall. The other hand
 brandishes a KNIFE and CUTS THE CHORD.

CUT TO:

Moving through the house once again, past the photos of
 Calvin and Lydia. But now there's BROKEN GLASS. Upended
 furniture. And a TRAIL OF BLOOD, leading us to see --

Calvin holding Lydia in his arms, bending over her, his body
 blocking the worst carnage. She's barely hanging on.

CUT TO:

A 1970s YELLOW CAR speeds down a dark road. The same car
from Calvin's second ghost story. Calvin drives frantically,
 shirt covered with blood, gripping his wife's hand.

CECILIA (V.O.)
 Your Uncle drove her towards the
 hospital as fast as he could.

Calvin looks over to his wife, holding a SCARF to her wound,
 trying to stem the flow of blood...

And the car drifts over the center line... HEADLIGHTS from the opposite direction. CALVIN IS ABOUT TO HIT THEM HEAD ON. HE YANKS THE WHEEL --

Sending his car CRASHING THROUGH A BARRICADE, into the darkness beyond. We hear a SPLASH --

CUT TO:

THE CAR IS FULL OF WATER. Calvin frantic, desperate for air, scarcely able to see anything. Until SOMETHING SHINY STANDS OUT in the dark water -- LYDIA'S EARRINGS.

FLASHBACK:

Jake watches as Calvin lowers those SAME EARRINGS into the water, gently moving them back and forth. *Swish, swish...*

BACK TO GHOST STORY:

Something rises out of the dark water... LYDIA'S FACE breaking the surface, EYES OPEN BUT LIFELESS... Followed by her PALE BODY, like a ghost rising from her watery grave... On a backboard carried by RESCUE PERSONNEL.

CALVIN WATCHES FROM THE SHORE, sobbing, crying out for his love, hands holding him back from rushing to her. He struggles against them, his whole world coming apart.

CUT TO:

Calvin sits alone at the kitchen table in his house, staring off at nothing.

CECILIA (V.O.)
Afterwards, he went back to live in
that empty house...

CUT TO:

Calvin sleeps on his side of the bed, the other side noticeably vacant.

Knock... Knock... Knock... He sits up, looking around.

CECILIA (V.O.)
But her ghost lived on in his mind...

CUT TO:

Calvin plods through the dark house, HANDS COVERING HIS EARS as the KNOCKING ECHOES ALL AROUND HIM. *Knock! Knock! Knock!*

FLASHBACK:

Calvin stands in the remains of the burned out house, KNOCKING HIS HAND AGAINST THE DOOR FRAME OVER AND OVER AGAIN, as Jake and the others watch in dismay.

BACK TO GHOST STORY:

Calvin continues to cover his ears, tears flowing. Only NOW WE DON'T HEAR KNOCKING. IT'S ALL IN HIS HEAD.

CECILIA (V.O.)

And when he couldn't take it anymore,
he burned their home to the ground.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Cecilia takes another shaky breath, tears welling up as Jake listens intently.

CECILIA

He... He found a knife in the
rubble...

FLASHBACK:

Calvin pulling off his sweatshirt in the raft, revealing that his TORSO IS COVERED IN VICIOUS SCARS.

BACK TO PRESENT:

CECILIA

He almost died. Though I like to
think that what saved him is some
part of him still wanted to live...
For those of us he had left.

Her gaze rises to meet Jake's... And the realization dawns.

JAKE

He came to our house that night...
Didn't he?

His mom solemnly nods. And suddenly, everything comes flooding back to Jake, as we --

FLASHBACK:

To Jake (5) sitting in his bed in his dark bedroom,
listening as --

Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud... Echoing closer.

CUT TO:

Jake steps into the hallway... And stops on sight of --

THE DARK FIGURE at the far end. It wobbles and shakes, unsteady. Then it sees Jake... And moves towards him...

Jake stands frozen as the Figure hobbles closer... *Thud, Thud... Thud, Thud...* Letting out a WAIL OF AGONY... Only it doesn't sound like a ghost... It's a person in excruciating pain. And then it steps into a faint patch of light --

And we see IT'S CALVIN.

SKIN AND CLOTHES BLACKENED BY SOOT FROM THE FIRE. BLOOD SEEPING out of the wounds on his torso. Tears streaming down his face. He stumbles forward, REACHING OUT WITH BLOODY HANDS TOWARDS --

YOUNG JAKE SCREAMS, HORRIFIED.

CECILIA RUSHES TO PULL HIM AWAY, shielding him as --

CALVIN COLLAPSES onto the floor.

We move back, taking it all in... Cecilia frantically struggling to help Calvin... As Young Jake cries, traumatized by the sight.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Jake sits on the bed, no longer that little boy.

JAKE

He's my ghost...

CECILIA

I'm so sorry I didn't tell you... But telling you meant telling you everything. And the thought of it broke my heart because I saw how you looked up to your Uncle. Watching you two grow close has been one of the greatest joys of my life.

JAKE

But why doesn't he remember?

CECILIA

I don't know... Perhaps the same reason you didn't. It's how his mind dealt with the trauma.

Her words linger, as Jake begins to understand...

CECILIA

He'd lost so much blood that night, the doctors had to put him into a coma. And when he woke up weeks later... He didn't remember anything. Not the men who came out of the woods. Not the car crashing into the lake... He didn't even remember his wife. It was all buried under superstitions, conspiracy theories, and... Ghost stories.

She lovingly strokes his hair.

CECILIA

This town *is* haunted for him. It's full of his ghosts... But once you sense their presence, they disappear again.

She wipes away her tears.

CECILIA

After what happened, your dad didn't want Calvin in our lives anymore. He thought he was crazy. But I couldn't throw him away like that. I love my brother. I keep his secret because... To do anything else would wreck him. The few others who know keep it because they care about him too. And now, it's time to ask you...

She takes Jake's hand...

CECILIA

One day, your Uncle may turn a corner... But until then, I need you to promise to keep this secret. Some ghosts are meant to wander. Can you promise me that, Jake?

Jake meets her gaze with all of the strength and fortitude he has gained. Then nods, resolute.

JAKE

By the oath of the white mage.

Cecilia smiles, wrapping her son up in a hug. They sit there on the bed together, holding each other close.

EXT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- DAY

Morning's light casts a warm glow on the old shop.

Jake pulls up on his bike. Parks it in his usual spot out front. Eyes the "Open" sign in the window. But he hesitates, uncertain what he is going to find inside.

Then he takes a fortifying breath... And steps through the shop's antique wooden door.

INT. THE OCCULTORIUM -- CONTINUOUS

The door dings as Jake steps in, glancing around. But Calvin is nowhere to be seen.

His gaze drifts over the aisles... The tarot cards, ouija boards, and books on everything that goes bump in the night. Seeing it all with wiser eyes now.

CALVIN (O.S.)
Greetings, fair traveler...

Jake turns as his Uncle emerges from the back.

CALVIN
What mysteries do you seek today,
Jakey-boy?

The question hangs... Hard to tell his state of mind.

JAKE
Just... Browsing around.
(beat)
How you feeling, Uncle Calvin?

CALVIN
I'm... Pondering a mystery myself.
Had the strangest dream last night...

Jake tenses. Calvin comes around the counter, brow furrowed.

CALVIN
I was walking amongst tombstones. And
all around, ghosts were rising from
their graves like mist after a rain.
My heart was pounding. But then...

A smile curls across his face, remembering...

CALVIN
A brilliant glow pierced the darkness
like a lighthouse through a storm...
And this beautiful angel emerged. She
reached out her hand... And when I
touched it, all my fear was washed
away... Then I drifted off into the
most peaceful slumber...

He gazes wistfully, still caught up in the memory. And Jake smiles, knowing his Uncle is going to be okay.

CALVIN

Course I have no idea what it all means. Could've just been that burrito I ate. Dreams are funny like that. Never been my specialty.

(beat)

Speaking of specialties... I've been ruminating on your ghost, and I've broadened the scope of our inquiry to include some additional sites of --

JAKE

I found my ghost.

CALVIN

What? You did?! But who was it? Did you establish spectral communication? Why was it haunting you?

Jake searches for the right words...

JAKE

He was... Hurt. He'd lost his family... But he wasn't ready to move on yet. I don't think he was trying to scare me. I just think he... He didn't want to be alone anymore. But whenever he's ready, I'll help him find what he's looking for.

Calvin gazes at his nephew, beaming with pride.

CALVIN

Like I said, Jake... You're braver than you give yourself credit for.

But then he lowers his voice, that familiar gleam back.

CALVIN

Though a word of caution... I just got off a very important call, highly classified. Apparently, some baby crocodiles have found their way into our town's sanitation system. So just be sure you're not *too brave* when you sit down on your commode...

Jake smirks, but quickly hides it.

JAKE

I'll be careful.

CALVIN

Though I suppose... Now that you've found your ghost, there's not much need for our ghost club anymore...

A tinge of melancholy. Jake sees how much this means to him.

JAKE

I mean... Ghosts live forever, right? No reason our club can't live on too.

The thought of that makes Calvin smile. Jake raises his pinkie finger. Calvin locks it with his. A promise made.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET -- EVENING

Autumn has arrived, the trees blazing with red, yellow, and orange. HALLOWEEN DECORATIONS on lawns and houses.

The members of the Saturday Night Ghost Club stroll down the sidewalk together, trick or treating. Jake is a vampire, Billy a wolfman, Dove is Carmen Sandiego on her skateboard. And Lexington, being who he is, is just dressed normally.

But Calvin is fully in his element. Decker out as a ghoul in a homemade costume and impressive makeup.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

As we grow up, we stop believing in the things that my Uncle does. Society beats that stuff out of us. But to find an adult who really sees the world the way a kid does... Who believes in what a kid believes...

Jake turns to Calvin, gazing with mature admiration.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

Some may call that a tragedy... But I don't see it that way. I consider my Uncle a miracle.

Lexington veers off, heading to his parked van.

LEXINGTON

Gotta get back to the shop, big movie rental night. Cal, you want a ride?

Calvin stops and stares up at the sky.

LEXINGTON

Cal?

CALVIN

Looks like no full moon tonight.
It'll be safe to walk.

LEXINGTON

Suit yourself. Later ghost hunters.

They continue down the street as Lex drives off.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

Lex remained a loyal friend to my
Uncle, dutifully keeping his secret.
Though his business sense never
improved. After the advent of DVDs
forced him to close LaserDisc Land,
he opened up a camera shop instead,
and called it... Polaroid Dreams.

EXT. DOVE AND BILLY'S HOUSE -- EVENING

The Ghost Club stops in front of the Yellowbird House.

BILLY

Bye Calvin! See you at school, Jake!

DOVE

Or in the spirit realm, whichever
comes first. Lates!

Jake waves as they head towards their house together.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

Billy started seeing a therapist too.
Eventually he'd talk about what
happened with his dad. But his love
of ghost stories lived on. After
college, he drove across the country,
exploring haunted sites and writing
books. His first was called, "Tales
from the Occultorium" and was
dedicated to my Uncle.

Jake's gaze drifts to Dove, watching her do one last
skateboard trick outside before going in.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

I'd never fall for anyone as hard as
I did for Dove Yellowbird. You always
fall hardest the first time. I
haven't seen her in years, but Billy
tells me she lives in a bohemian loft
in San Francisco. She took up drawing
and sure enough, was a natural.

(MORE)

ADULT JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 She sent me a piece for my birthday
 once. It was called, "The Long Dark."

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- EVENING

Jake steps in. Sets down his pumpkin of Halloween candy.
 Then opens the drawer with his drawings of the Dark Figure.
 Flips through them... Only they aren't scary to him anymore.

He tosses them in the trash, no need for them now.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)
 As for me... I'd like to think I
 followed in my Uncle's footsteps and
 became a ghost hunter... Of sorts.

INT. SMALL AUDITORIUM -- DAY

We move past a poster reading, "Neuropsychology New Student
 Orientation - The Ghosts of our Past: Coping With Trauma.
 Special Guest - Dr. Jacob Baker, Ph.D."

A small gathering of GRADUATE STUDENTS listen as ADULT JAKE
 (40s) speaks from the podium with a mature confidence.

ADULT JAKE
 Our brains are the most haunted sites
 in the world. Filled with the ghosts
 of our pasts. The ones we bury away.
 The ones we try to forget. And if we
 tell ourselves our ghost stories long
 enough, they can become our reality.

A familiar gleam in his eye. He may as well be Calvin
 telling stories around the campfire.

ADULT JAKE
 But like my Uncle, we are the truth
 seekers... Wading through the spooky
 forest that is the human mind. We
 don't always know where we're going
 or what lurks around the next corner.
 But we soldier on, seeking to shed
 light on our patients' mysteries.
 Whatever they may be...

(smiles)

So today... I'd like to formally
 welcome you into our Ghost Club. And
 as members, you're expected to never
 stop braving the night.

The audience applauds. As it quiets, a STUDENT raises her
 hand. Jake motions to her.

STUDENT

Dr. Baker, is your Uncle still with us?

ADULT JAKE

He is. Still running the Occultorium. And still the best Uncle a kid could ask for.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET -- DAY

A young boy, NICHOLAS (5), walks down the sidewalk, timid and skittish in his little Iron Man costume. Nestled safely between Adult Jake and Older Calvin (70s), walking on either side. Other costumed Trick or Treaters stroll past.

They come to a house with a PUMPKIN FULL OF CANDY on the porch, and a SCARY MECHANICAL GHOST looming over it, lighting up and making spooky sounds. Cheesy to us, but frightening to five-year-old eyes.

ADULT JAKE

Go on...

But Nicholas hesitates, fear shining through.

CALVIN

Nicholas, did your dad ever tell you about the ghosts haunting this town?

Nicholas looks up to Jake, who responds with a coy shrug.

CALVIN

It's true. But don't be afraid...

He kneels down in front of Nicholas.

CALVIN

Most of them mean us no harm. Merely harmless reflections of gentle-minded souls. They've just lost their way. Now they wander the great unknown in search of peace, wishing to guide us to safety whenever we're in danger. And sometimes, just before you fall asleep at night, you might see one of them shimmering... Watching over you.

Nicholas smiles. *That doesn't sound so bad.*

CALVIN

And *that*, is why I'll always believe in ghosts.

Nicholas turns to the mechanical ghost, not so frightening anymore. He scampers up to it and grabs a piece of candy out of the pumpkin. Jake can't help but smile, moved by the sight. Calvin holds out his hand to his grand-nephew.

CALVIN

Come along, Nicky-boy. My sources tell me they're handing out full-sized candy bars on Walnut Lane...

Nicholas takes his great Uncle's hand and they all head off down the street together. And we can't help noticing how happy Calvin is trick or treating with his family.

ADULT JAKE (V.O.)

I don't know why such awfulness befell my Uncle... All I know is that deep down, where he keeps his ghosts, he also keeps his strength. He's the strongest man I've ever known.

We move up and away as they walk past goblins and monsters navigating the neighborhood, out for candy and adventure...

Until we land on a GHOST DECORATION hanging from a tree, fluttering in the breeze...

FADE OUT.