

MASTERS OF HORROR

Episode #5 - H. P. Lovecraft's "Dreams in the Witch-House"

by

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EXT. HOUSE - DAY

An old two-story house, on a run-down block of dilapidated houses. The one next door is boarded up. The old house itself seems to stand unevenly, with an odd tilt toward the top. It needs paint and patching, but appears to receive only neglect.

A young man, WALTER GILMAN, stops across from the building and looks over at it. He is weighed down with a large, loaded duffel bag slung on one shoulder, a computer case on the other, and a bulging book bag hanging on his back.

A "ROOM FOR RENT" sign, stained and torn, is taped in a dirty first floor window.

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

WALTER stands in front of an apartment door. He presses the doorbell. No sound, nothing. He presses it again. Again nothing. He KNOCKS. Nothing. He KNOCKS again. The door before him remains closed, but he hears the DOOR OPEN behind him, across the hall, and he turns in time to see --

-- a pale, unshaven face peers out of the opened door. The face belongs to a short old man with wide eyes and a corona of white hair. The old man quickly closes the door when he hears the other DOOR OPEN, the one WALTER stands in front of.

WALTER turns back to see, in the open door frame, a broad, gruff, frowning man, the landlord, DOMBROWSKI.

DOMBROWSKI
What do you want?

WALTER
(sounds like a question)
I'm here about the room.

CUT TO:

INT. TOP FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

DOMBROWSKI climbs to the top of the stairs and steps into the small top floor corridor.

DOMBROWSKI
No pets, no parties, no
loud music. This is a quiet
building.

WALTER trudges up behind him, weighed down with his bags.

WALTER
I'm a graduate student at
the University, doing my
thesis. I need a quiet
place to study.

DOMBROWSKI stops, turns and addresses WALTER.

DOMBROWSKI
A student. Then I'm gonna
need an extra month's rent
in advance.

WALTER
I can't afford another
month's rent. Please, I
really need this apartment.

DOMBROWSKI
Well, I don't like to rent
to students. Young people
have no respect.

He frowns, and turns back to the apartment, crossing the
short corridor. As they pass one door to get to the only
other one on the floor, a BABY'S CRY comes through the
closer door.

DOMBROWSKI
(CONT'D)
That one's on welfare
already. Owes me two months
rent. You know anybody who
needs a place...

He leaves the suggestion open, as he puts a key in the lock
of the far door. It is cracked, its paint chipped. He
unlocks it.

DOMBROWSKI
(CONT'D)
This is the room.

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - DAY

WALTER walks past the landlord into the room. It is a narrow garret with one window. Two walls peel paint, two peel old, stained wallpaper. The ceiling slopes at several angles at once. Rickety furniture -- a chair, table, bureau, single bed, a leaning standing lamp beside it -- furnish the place.

WALTER walks the CREAKING FLOOR as DOMBROWSKI stands in the doorway.

DOMBROWSKI

There's a hundred-dollar
security deposit, for
damage to the furnishings.
Un-refundable.

WALTER lays a hand on the table, and it wobbles on shaky legs. He looks below it, at the baseboard.

WALTER

There's only one outlet. I
need to plug in my
computer.

DOMBROWSKI

You be careful with
anything electric. This
house goes back to the
sixteen-hundreds. You burn
it, you bought it.

WALTER

I guess I could charge the
battery at school--

DOMBROWSKI

If you're trying to bargain
down the rent, forget it.
You ain't gonna find
cheaper than this.

WALTER makes up his mind. He drops his duffel on the bed. It CREAKS.

WALTER

I know. I'll take it.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - LATER

MONTAGE: WALTER lays the laptop on the table.

Then he organizes his books on top of the bureau.

He opens the top bureau drawer, and pulls it all the way out to inspect it further when he notices -- that it has no bottom, just sides, so as a drawer, it's useless. He slides it back in and opens the next drawer, takes clothes from his duffel and stuffs the drawer full.

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - NIGHT

He sits down on the bed, wearing boxer shorts and a T-shirt. He tests the mattress, shakes his head unhappily at its saggy condition, then lies down. He reaches up and turns off the light.

He lies in bed, in the dark, dim moonlight fighting through the single, dirty window.

In the background, somewhere, there is a vague DRONING. It makes WALTER open his eyes and listen. It is a human VOICE, a single, human voice, CHANTING in a regular, continuous rhythm.

WALTER rises from the mattress, turns on the light, and listens more closely. He follows the sound, to the door. He opens the door, and the DRONING CHANT becomes slightly LOUDER. And then it STOPS. WALTER listens to the SILENCE for a few moments, then closes the door.

He gets back into bed, turning off the lamp and making himself as comfortable as possible on the sagging mattress. He closes his eyes.

But after a few seconds of SILENCE, he hears a new noise -- an indeterminate SCRATCHING, quick spurts of SCRAPING punctuated by short SILENCES.

He sits up again, switches on the lamp again, and listens again. But this sound is harder to pin down. He goes to a wall, and puts his ear near it. No, not quite there. He walks slowly along the wall, listening intently, as the SOFT, INTERMITTENT SCRATCHING continues.

He stops in a corner where the ceiling slopes so low he has to hunch over. It meets the walls at an odd angle for a room corner.

But yes, the SCRATCHING sound may be coming from near this spot, inside the walls. He examines the cracked plaster and peeling paint, but it looks solid enough.

He goes back to the bed, but on the way, stops at the bureau and picks out a book. He gets into bed, but does not turn out the light. He props up the pillow, and reads. He looks back at the corner, listens carefully, but the SCRATCHING has STOPPED.

He looks back at his book, but now, from through the opposite wall, behind him, comes the muffled sound of a BABY CRYING.

It disturbs his reading, so he SLAMS the book shut and turns off the lamp.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - DAY

COMPUTER SCREEN: In computer graphics, two two-dimensional rectangular-shaped planes cross each other, creating a line of intersection.

WALTER stares at the screen of his laptop computer, then at pages of a notebook open on the table. He makes some notations, then pulls a slim calculator from his shirt pocket and uses the keypad to make some calculations. He writes again in the notebook. He looks back to the computer, and moves a finger over the touch-pad.

COMPUTER SCREEN: A third rectangle moves to intersect the two crossed planes at a descending angle, making a Y-shaped intersection.

WALTER leans forward, studying the shapes on the screen. He does not notice the SCRATCHING SOUND from somewhere nearby. It STOPS. He checks the notebook, types in more information, watching the screen.

COMPUTER SCREEN: The three planes bend, the Y-shaped crossing buckling outward at the top.

WALTER watches the screen intently, as the SCRATCHING starts again. Now he notices, and looks around for the source of the sound.

WALTER
God damn it.

He gets up from the chair and walks toward the far corner, where the intermittent SCRATCHING seems to come from. He stops at the wall and listens. He puts his ear to the wall, and besides the rasping noise hears a muffled, WHISPERED LAUGHING. Then it STOPS.

He steps back from the corner, curious at what he heard. But then something about the way it looks catches his attention.

The ceiling sags where it meets the two walls. He traces the lines of meeting between roof and walls, then hurries back to the computer. He looks hard at the screen --

COMPUTER SCREEN: -- at the shape made by the computer generated graphics.

He turns the laptop on the table so he can stand between it and the corner of the room and look from one to the other.

They look similar in shape -- in fact, they look the same.

Suddenly, he hears a CRY from beyond the far wall, in the apartment next door. It is a child WAILING -- and then an adult female SCREAM. He doesn't know what to do for a moment, until the SCREAMING recurs, at a higher-pitch of fear. He rushes to the door, and out --

INT. TOP FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

-- into the corridor. The CRYING AND SCREAMING continue behind the neighbor's door. He POUNDS on it.

WALTER
(yelling)
Are you all right?

SOUNDS OF A STRUGGLE rise to rival the SCREAMING voices. WALTER POUNDS on the door again.

WALTER (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Do you need help?

The door swings open. A young woman, FRANCES ELWOOD, stands in it, her face twisted with fear. In her arms she holds a CRYING infant.

FRANCES
It won't stop! It won't go away!

She CRIES OUT, looking down, where a large rat runs around her feet. She holds the child protectively.

INT. FRANCES'S ROOM - DAY

She retreats into the one-room apartment, the rat chasing her. WALTER runs into the room after them.

She stops at the child's crib, and the rat continues to harass them. WALTER kicks the large rodent, and it skids across the floor, into a wall.

The rat scrambles over the rough floorboards, its claws making a swift SCRATCHING sound. It disappears into a hole in the floor near the far wall.

WALTER tries to calm the frantic FRANCES.

WALTER
It's okay -- it's gone now.
It's all right.

But she is still terrified for her child, whom she grasps tightly to her chest.

FRANCES
Don't let it come back --
please, help me.

WALTER
Okay, fine, I'll help you.

He goes to the far wall and inspects the broken floorboard.

WALTER (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

WALTER descends the stairs, with haste and purpose, to the first floor hallway. When he arrives, he hears the DRONING CHANT he heard the night before, but clearer, more loudly. He leans toward the doorway behind which it seems to be originating.

But he has other, more urgent business. He RAPS sharply on the other door, across the hall, the landlord's door. When he does, the CHANTING STOPS.

WALTER stands before the landlord's door, steeling himself for a confrontation. He KNOCKS, hard, again. A DOOR CREAKS behind him, and he turns.

The old man with the shock of white hair looks out. When he sees WALTER see him, he quickly closes the door -- but not all the way. Once WALTER turns back to Dombrowski's door, the old man opens his door a crack and peers out. Through the narrow opening, the old man watches, taking a drink from a pint bottle.

WALTER KNOCKS again.

WALTER
Mr. Dombrowski!

The door opens abruptly, and DOMBROWSKI looms in the frame.

DOMBROWSKI
What do you want?

WALTER
You should know that the woman upstairs was attacked by a large rat.

DOMBROWSKI
Is that what all the screaming was about? I thought somebody was dying. You tell her she better keep it down. And that kid of hers, too.

WALTER
It almost bit the baby! You have to get an exterminator in here.

DOMBROWSKI
Right. So she can claim her kid ate rat poison and try to sue me. You're in on this with her, aren't you?

WALTER
No! This house is infested with rats. I can hear them in the walls.

DOMBROWSKI yells past him, across the hall.

DOMBROWSKI
Did you put him up to this,
Masurewicz? This more of
your nonsense?

The old man peeking out the door shuts it, fast.

WALTER
I saw it attack her, and
her baby. Please, you've
got to do something about
the rats.

The landlord makes a sour face, then turns into his
apartment and disappears for a few seconds. But he shouts
loud enough so WALTER can hear him complaining.

DOMBROWSKI (O.S.)
This house is over three
hundred years old. Of
course it has rats. Every
building in this God-
forsaken town has rats.

He returns to the door with a hammer and a handful of nails.
He thrusts them out to WALTER, who takes them.

DOMBROWSKI
(CONT'D)
Here, you fix it. You want
a lesson, Mister College
Student? Don't trust her
kind. Not married, with a
kid -- I should've never
let her in here.

He SLAMS the door closed. WALTER is aghast, appalled at his
landlord's attitude. The door behind him CREAKS open.

MASUREWICZ (O.S.)
Mister.

WALTER looks around. MASUREWICZ has opened the door a little
further, and leans out toward him. He wears a shabby shirt
and threadbare jacket.

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
You saw a rat?

WALTER
Yes.

MASUREWICZ
A big one?

WALTER nods.

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
With a face.

WALTER looks at him quizzically: what does he mean?

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
A human face.

His words surprise WALTER, and unnerve him. The bedraggled man quickly makes the sign of the cross. WALTER shakes his head and steps toward the stairway.

WALTER
I don't know what you mean.

He starts, then hurries, up the stairs, with the hammer and nails.

MASUREWICZ watches him, a worried expression on his haggard face. He crosses himself again, takes another swig from the pint bottle, and closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - DAY

WALTER and pulls out the top drawer of his bureau, the one with no bottom. He uses the hammer to BEAT on the rear plank of the drawer, until it pulls away from the sides, coming loose.

He rips the rear plank free of the drawer.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCES'S ROOM - DAY

The plank covers the hole in the floorboard, and the hammer POUNDS a nail until it is flush with the surface of the wood.

WALTER, kneeling, inspects his work: he has hammered the plank in place, covering the hole the rat ran into. WALTER rises and turns.

On the other side of the room, FRANCES paces, calming the infant, who has stopped crying.

WALTER
That should do it.

FRANCES
Are you sure?

WALTER
It won't get back in that way.

FRANCES
What about somewhere else?

WALTER
I don't see any other place it could fit through.

FRANCES
It was horrible. It wouldn't leave us alone.

She hugs her baby close to her.

WALTER
Well, you're safe now.

She smiles, relaxing enough at last to feel grateful.

FRANCES
Thank you, our hero.

Now WALTER smiles, too, shyly.

WALTER
I'm Walter Gilman. I just moved in next door.

FRANCES
Frankie, Frances Elwood.
And this is Danny.

She looks down adoringly at her baby.

WALTER
Brave fella.

He holds out a hand, reaching instinctively for the child.
And little DANNY reaches to him, gripping with his tiny hand
WALTER'S forefinger.

FRANCES
He likes you. Can I make
you some tea?

WALTER
No, no, that's okay. I've
gotta get back and study.

FRANCES
You're a student?

WALTER
Grad student, at the U.

He pulls his T-shirt flat against his chest, showing its
"MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY" logo.

She places Danny in the crib.

FRANCES
Some day this guy's gonna
get his college degree.
Thanks again.

He smiles, awkwardly, and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - NIGHT

WALTER sits at his table, reading a paper on a large stack
of them. He makes checks and circles on the paper, then
writes a grade on it, and puts it on the bottom of the pile.
He stretches and YAWNS, lifts a book from the table, and
stands.

He lifts the unsteady lamp and carries it to the bedside,
then lies down in the bed. He opens the book, rests it on
his chest, and reads. He stops reading for a moment, and
listens, for any of the noises that interrupted his study.
But all is QUIET. He settles back into his reading.

He turns the page, studying the text. But he is tired. His
eyelids droop, close, then open, re-focusing on the page.

But he can't keep them open; his eyes close again, the book
falls flat on his chest, and he sleeps.

While he lies unconscious, a SCRATCHING, SCUFFLING sound starts up somewhere across the room, on the other side of the building's front wall, where the ceiling slopes to meet the walls. The SOUND STOPS, THEN STARTS AGAIN.

The odd-angled corner in the far, outer wall, begins to give off a soft, faint, violet-colored glow.

WALTER sleeps peacefully, the open book lying on his chest, as the violet glow grows in size and brightness. The SCRATCHING noise grows faster, more manic. Inside the light there is a sudden burst of brightness.

The CAMERA is LOW, and shoots across the room at the bed. It must be ON THE FLOOR in front of the oddly shaped corner. A rat runs in front of the camera and faces the bed, so we are looking at its body from behind.

The rat moves toward the bed, and the CAMERA FOLLOWS BEHIND. Its claws make a SCRATCHING, SCUFFLING noise as it runs over the wooden floor.

The rat -- BROWN JENKIN -- stops half way across the room, then starts again, scurrying to the bed. The rat stands on its haunches and looks up at the bed from beside it.

WALTER lies sleeping, undisturbed. Claws SCRATCH across a nearby surface, like a hard-back book cover.

BROWN JENKIN
(O.S.)

Walter.

WALTER'S head turns, and his eyes flutter.

Lying on the book, lying on his chest, is the rat.

BROWN JENKIN
(CONT'D)

Walter.

WALTER'S eyes open, and he sees, peering over the surface of the book on his chest, a small face: it is covered with brown, matted hair, with bristled whiskers under the nose and protruding front teeth, like a rat's face. But it is round and flat, not pointed like a rodent head, and its features -- its nose, mouth, and somehow its eyes -- seem human. Dark claws grip the top of the book cover on either side of the face.

WALTER is horrified, not just at the bizarre appearance of the thing, or its ability to speak, but at its sense of malevolent will. He tries to scream, to move, but can do neither. He is powerless.

The nose on the face twitches; its mouth moves; the repulsive, monstrous mix of rodent and person speaks, in a soft but clear human voice.

BROWN JENKIN

(CONT'D)

She's coming. She's coming
for you.

Now WALTER SCREAMS -- until he wakes. The book lies open on his chest, but the furry face is gone. He hears claws SCURRYING over wood, and rises up in the bed to look.

In the far shadows of the dark apartment, a large rat runs away, across the floor, to the odd-angled corner, and into a wide crack in the baseboard.

WALTER jumps out of bed, sweating, wide-eyed, not certain for a moment what is dream and what is real. He tries to regain his wits. He approaches the corner where the rat disappeared, and examines the crack in the lower moulding that widens at the floor. He stares at the crack. Was it a dream?

A KNOCK at the door startles him. He collects himself.

WALTER

Who is it?

FRANCES (O.S.)

It's me, Frankie.

He goes to the door and opens it. She stands in the corridor, DANNY in her arms.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Hi -- uh -- are you okay?

WALTER

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine.

FRANCES

I thought -- I heard -- it
sounded like somebody --
screamed.

WALTER
It was nothing. A
nightmare. I hope I didn't
wake him up.

FRANCES
Oh, no. He slept through a
rock concert once. Are you
sure you're okay?

WALTER
Fine, really, no problem.

He looks over his shoulder -- at the rat hole.

FRANCES
Would you like that cup of
tea?

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCES'S ROOM - NIGHT

Pale liquid pours from a teapot spout into a cup. FRANCES
lifts the cup and carries it to WALTER, who sits on a small
love seat.

FRANCES
It's chamomile. It won't
keep you up.

WALTER
It's okay. I still have
studying to do. Thanks.

FRANCES checks DANNY, who lies sleeping in his crib.

FRANCES
So what are you studying?

WALTER
Mathematics -- higher math.
It's pretty technical, and
boring.

She goes to a bureau, like WALTER'S, opens a drawer and
takes out a pile of clothing, small shirts and jumpers that
must be Danny's.

FRANCES

I had a teacher who used to say, if an idea is important enough to you, you can explain it to anybody. Even somebody who *hated* math.

WALTER sips his tea, then launches into his life's work.

WALTER

I'm working on something called string theory. It's totally non-Euclidean. One of its propositions is that the universe, everything we know that exists, exists on one plane. We call it a membrane. And there are -- we know this by calculations -- a number of other membranes. Other universes. Some with as many as eleven dimensions. Most theorists argue that if two membranes even touched, there'd be a huge explosion, like the Big Bang. But my work shows, I think -- so far, anyway -- that at certain angles, two membranes, maybe more, can intersect. And if you know where they cross, and how to recognize the angles, you could go from one universe to another.

She takes the clothes to a bed where a large, handled bag lies open. She packs the clothes into the bag.

FRANCES

Okay, my teacher was wrong.

She's kidding, but WALTER, self-conscious about his work, changes the subject.

WALTER

Are you packing?

She goes to the bureau and opens another drawer. From this one, she takes a few fine linens and lingerie.

FRANCES

I'm a little behind in the rent, so Dombrowski's evicting us. We're leaving in the morning.

WALTER

He can't do that. You've got Danny.

FRANCES

He did it. We'll be all right.

She packs her things in the bag.

WALTER

Where will you go?

FRANCES

There are -- places. I'll get a job soon and we'll find a better home than this.

WALTER

How much do you owe him?

FRANCES

No. I'm not taking your money.

WALTER

I can lend it to you. It's not a big deal.

FRANCES

I don't even know you.

WALTER

You can pay me back when you get that job.

FRANCES

In one of those other universes, "no" may mean "yes." But when I say "no," I mean it.

WALTER reaches into his pocket and pulls out some bills.

WALTER

Here -- here's fifty
dollars. I bet he lets you
stay another week for that.

FRANCES

You're a student. You can't
afford that. Otherwise why
would you be living in this
rat hole?

WALTER

I grade papers for this
professor, and he pays me.
It's just for a week, 'til
you get a job. So Danny
won't have to go to one of
those "places."

Her resolution wavers. She looks at the money. She looks at
DANNY, squirming in his sleep in the crib. She holds out her
hand, and takes the bills from WALTER.

FRANCES

With this, and what I've
got, he might let us stay.
But I'm paying you back by
next week.

WALTER

Great.

She stops packing and pours herself a cup of tea.

FRANCES

Want another cup?

He does, but the prospect of getting what he wants makes
WALTER nervous. He walks hesitantly to the door.

WALTER

No, I better get back. I've
got to finish those
papers -- and I've got to
study. And -- I better go.

FRANCES

Okay. Good night. And thank
you.

She reaches out to touch him, a reflex expression of her
gratitude. He flinches at her touch, as if afraid, then is
embarrassed by his fear and reaches out a hand to shake.

WALTER
Yeah. Good night.

She smiles at his awkwardness, and takes his hand. They shake, share a look, and he leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - NIGHT, LATER

COMPUTER SCREEN: The computer-generated image of the intersecting rectangles moves, rotates one way, then the other.

WALTER sits on the floor, facing the strange corner, the laptop computer open on the floor in front of him. His finger moves on the touch pad and he intently watches the screen. The lamp has been moved forward as far as its cord will allow, and the bulb has been pointed at the corner, to light it. So it throws WALTER'S shadow onto the angled walls.

Walter looks up, studies the corner, then he studies the screen, then the screen of his calculator. He makes furious notes in his notebook. From below, the DRONING CHANT begins.

WALTER looks at where the drawer front is hammered over the rat-hole, then goes back to his calculations and equations. But the unceasing, monotonous CHANTING bores into his consciousness, and he can't concentrate. He SLAMS the notebook shut, gets up, and heads to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

WALTER descends the stairs, upset. He stops outside MASUREWICZ'S apartment and listens. Yes, the DRONED CHANT comes from inside. It is punctuated, now that he can hear it more clearly, by an occasional WHACK, SOMETHING HITTING WOOD.

He stares at the door, considering knocking. He decides, and KNOCKS. But the CHANTING continues, unabated, unchanged. Frustrated, WALTER KNOCKS HARDER -- and the door swings open.

INT. MASUREWICZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WALTER steps awkwardly, cautiously into the apartment.

It is candle-lit, by one candle. In the weak flickering light he sees a kneeling form, its torso rocking back and forth. It is MASUREWICZ, apparently praying.

Above him, hanging from the wall, is a large carved wood crucifix, with a grotesque yet strangely beautiful carving of Christ in agony.

Wooden crosses of all sizes cover most of the flat surfaces in the room, the tables, dresser, and mantelpiece of a boarded up fireplace.

MASUREWICZ prays in front of an empty chair, on which the sole candle sits. He holds a long string of beads, with a wooden cross attached, and he counts them off with his fingers as he CHANTS. When he reaches what sounds like a slight pause in the praying, and his fingers move from one bead to the next, he drops his head, hard, on the seat of the chair, making a WHACK, and making the candle shake.

MASUREWICZ

(fast, in monotone, and in Latin)
Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of
your womb, Jesus. Holy
Mary, mother of God, pray
for us sinners now and
at the hour of our death.
Amen.

WHACK!

WALTER

Excuse me.

The old man runs through the prayer again, moves beads again, WHACKS his head again. The candle, and its light, shake.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Mister Masurewicz?

It's as if he's not there. Hail Mary, a bead, WHACK!

WALTER (CONT'D)

Excuse me!

One more time, the prayer -- but that was the last bead. MASUREWICZ'S fingers reach the cross. He lifts it to his lips, and kisses it.

Then he lowers his head, chin to chest, crosses himself, and slowly stands. He holds this supplicant pose in front of the wooden crucifixion, then turns his head to WALTER.

MASUREWICZ
You saw it -- the rat --
with the face.

This isn't what WALTER came to discuss, but it's true.

WALTER
It was a dream.

MASUREWICZ
No dream.

WALTER
You put the idea in my
mind. I went to sleep and
dreamt about it.

MASUREWICZ bends over and picks up a long, loose sliver of wood from the floor.

MASUREWICZ
It is her familiar. She is
hunting you.

WALTER
Who? Who are you talking
about?

The old man lights an end of the wooden sliver in the candle burning on the chair.

MASUREWICZ
The witch. Did you see her
in your dream?

WALTER
Look, I just need some
quiet in this house so I
can study. Could you please
pray a little more quietly?

With the lit sliver, the old man lights another candle, on the mantel under the crucifix, then turns to WALTER.

MASUREWICZ
If you see the rat, she is
near. She is coming for
you.

WALTER
I don't believe in witches.

MASUREWICZ lights another candle on one end of the mantel.
He waves out the burnt-down splinter.

MASUREWICZ
You will.

He lifts the candle from the chair, and with a gesture,
offers WALTER the seat.

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
Please.

WALTER
I have to go study.

WALTER is uncomfortable and turns to leave.

MASUREWICZ places the lit candle on the other end of the
mantel, but yells after WALTER.

MASUREWICZ
I see her, the demon bitch.
Many times.

WALTER stops. He is curious, of course, but angry that he
is.

WALTER
What are you trying to say
to me?

MASUREWICZ takes a fresh pint bottle from his jacket pocket.
He unscrews the cap, and holds it out to WALTER, who shakes
his head and hand, refusing.

MASUREWICZ
I come to this house like
you, a young man. Poor man.
Is cheap, is quiet. But
this house, is evil.

He drinks from the bottle, a good hard drink.

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
I live where you live.

He points upward, toward the room above, Walter's room.

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
Then I have dreams. Like
you. Then --

He crosses himself, then takes another drink from the
bottle.

WALTER
You saw her, the witch.

MASUREWICZ
Her eyes. I still see her
eyes.
(beat)
She made me -- do terrible
things.

WALTER remains skeptical.

WALTER
Then why do you stay in
this house?

MASUREWICZ caps the bottle and puts it back in a pocket, as
he stands.

MASUREWICZ
I work, I pray, to stop
her.

He walks over to WALTER, and pulls a carved wood cross,
hanging from a leather string, from inside his shirt. With a
short, powerful yank of his hand, he SNAPS the leather, and
frees the cross from around his neck. He holds it out to
WALTER.

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
Take this.

He takes WALTER'S hand and presses the cross into it. But
WALTER lets it fall to the floor.

WALTER
No -- it was just a dream.

He turns away, hurries to the door, and out of the apartment.

JOE watches him go, then picks the cross up and closes the door. He pulls the bottle out again, and takes a long, long drink.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The house stands with its slight tilt, almost as if it loomed over the street, the town.

WALTER approaches, books and a new stack of papers under his arm. He stops across the street, and looks up at the window to his garret room. He shakes his head, and heads across the street for his home.

INT. TOP FLOOR CORRIDOR - LATER

WALTER trudges upstairs and heads toward his room, when the door to Frances's apartment opens and she steps out, all dressed up and looking great, putting in an earring.

FRANCES

Oh, Walter, can you do me a big favor, please -- please?

WALTER

Sure. What?

FRANCES

I just got a call about a job interview. Could you watch Danny? Just for an hour or two.

WALTER

Uh, okay, but I never baby sat --

FRANCES

You'll be great. He loves you.

She takes him by the arm and leads him into her apartment.

25 INT. FRANCES'S ROOM - DAY 25

She grabs a coat and purse, while WALTER moves to DANNY'S crib.

WALTER

What if he, you know, has
to be --

FRANCES

I just changed him. And fed
him. He should be fine.
He's a good boy.

She leans into the crib, lifts him and gives him a kiss.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I promise I won't be long.
But I really need this job.
And I'll be able to pay you
back.

WALTER

Oh, don't worry about that.
I'd be glad to watch him.

FRANCES

Thank you so much.

She gives WALTER a grateful kiss on the cheek, then heads
for the door. The unexpected kiss makes WALTER a little
light-headed.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Wish me luck.

WALTER

Good luck.

FRANCES

You boys have a good time.

She's out the door, and WALTER is alone with DANNY.

WALTER

Well, I guess it's me and
you, big fella. We should
do some guy things. You had
your first beer yet?

The boy squirms happily in the crib, reaching up at WALTER.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Maybe later, dude. I gotta
grade papers.

He sets his book bag on the table with the books and papers he was carrying. He takes the stack of papers and sits in the rocking chair next to the crib. He pulls out a pencil, and starts to read the top paper. Without thinking, he raises his hand and brushes with his fingertips the spot on his cheek where Frances kissed him. He smiles to himself as he reads.

DANNY GURGLES, and WALTER looks down at him.

WALTER (CONT'D)
I'll tell you a secret, if
you promise not to tell
your mom. I think she likes
me.
(beat)
And I think I like her.

He reaches an extended finger to the baby's hand, and DANNY grips it. WALTER smiles widely. Then he notices, hanging in a corner of the crib, a wooden cross on a leather string.

He raises the cross to inspect it more closely. It is clearly the work of Joe Masurewicz. WALTER shakes his head dismissively.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Don't worry, fella. I'll
take care of you.

He sits back in the rocker and reads.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARKHAM - SUNSET

The sun's setting over a nearby building.

INT. FRANCES'S ROOM - LATER

The orange light of the setting sun streams through the window. All is calm and QUIET, except the CREAKING of the chair as it rocks.

WALTER marks the paper with the pencil. Motes of dust swim lazily in the late-day light, and WALTER starts to drowse over the work, his head dropping slowly.

A soft violet glow seeps from the baseboard of the far wall, the one adjoining his room.

WALTER nods toward unconsciousness, but the baby makes a small CRY, re-awakening WALTER.

The strange glow weakens and fades, and WALTER does not notice it as he continues reading and marking.

WALTER'S eyelids droop, his head leans slowly forward. The sun is setting, the room darkens.

The violet light re-intensifies and spreads up around the plank Walter hammered over the hole in the floor.

The paper drops softly onto the stack of papers in WALTER'S lap; the pencil falls from his fingers onto the floor.

The violet glow finds a way in at the top of the far wall, around the upper molding. Up and down the wall it starts to seep through a seam in the wallpaper, where the paper has aged, cracked, and curled away from the plaster.

DANNY in the crib seems agitated, his limbs swinging and kicking, his small VOICE making urgent noises.

The violet glow intensifies, and seems to move forward, into the room. The strange light coalesces a short distance in front of the wall, as if there were a nearer wall of violet light. In it, a tall shape seems to form.

DANNY, squirms anxiously in the crib, WHIMPERING, as if he were about to cry.

The shape in the glow grows clearer, larger, a silhouette backlit in bright, eye-piercing violet. It is a woman, large but bent over, wearing a long hooded cloak so her face is hidden in deep shadow.

Her form leans toward WALTER'S. His head rises drowsily, eyes slowly opening, and he looks up, at the bent form in front of him, its face is hidden in the darkness of the hooded cloak -- but within the deep shadow, two eyes shine, sparkling, radiant.

He recoils, leans back afraid.

The hunchbacked WITCH slowly straightens, standing tall before him. She opens the cloak, revealing her voluptuous, young, naked body. But her face is still shadowed by the hood, and within its shadows, the pair of shining eyes. She reaches out to him.

Though stunned by her beauty, he is still unsure, disoriented, fearful. He shrinks from her touch.

She reaches up and loosens her cloak; the hood falls back and the cape falls away. It is --

WALTER

Frances?

She leans closer and kisses him. He returns her kiss, reaches out and takes her body in his arms. They lock in an embrace.

WALTER'S head swims; this is what he's dreamt of. Their embrace becomes passionate, his hands exploring her body.

DANNY CRIES, WAILING, limbs flailing as he lies helpless.

FRANCES lies back, and WALTER lowers himself onto her. They are in a bed, writhing to press their flesh against each other. Around them is total blackness, no light or shape. A high-pitched FLUTING rises around them from an unknown source; a vague CHANTING rises under it.

WALTER'S lips find the flesh of FRANCES'S neck, move down to her breasts. Her hands caress his back, lifting his T-shirt, pressing him to her -- but the hands are large, gnarled, arthritic. Their long dark nails, like talons, dig into the flesh of his back, drawing blood.

The pain makes him open his eyes, and he sees that the breasts he kisses are wrinkled, leathery, age-spotted. Surprised, he lifts his head, as a bizarre LAUGHTER rises near him. He looks up at the woman's face --

-- and it is no longer FRANCES -- it is a hag's face, wrinkled and wart-covered, with gruesome, diseased features. But it is the ghastly, dangerous look in her eyes that makes her fearful. Her lips part in a malevolent smile, showing brown teeth. It is the witch, KEZIAH MASON.

WALTER SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - NIGHT

He sits up abruptly, sweating and shaking. He is in his own bed, facing the oddly angled corner of his own apartment, where the ceiling bulges down to the where the walls meet.

Just enough dusk light falls on the objects to let him recognize that HE IS BACK IN HIS OWN ROOM. He is amazed, confused: how did he get back here?

Then it strikes him: Danny!

He rises out of the bed, and runs, almost falling, to the door.

INT. TOP FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

He races down the short hall to Frances's door. He grabs the knob and pulls. It is locked. He can hear DANNY CRYING on the other side. He RAMS the door with his shoulder, but it holds. He RAMS it again.

FRANCES (O.S.)

Walter?

Frances is nearing the top of the stairs. She looks up at WALTER, frantic, then hears DANNY'S CRIES.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Danny!

She races to the top of the stairs, as WALTER puts his shoulder to the door once more, with determined effort. The door holds. Frances pushes him aside and unlocks the door.

INT. FRANCES'S ROOM - NIGHT

FRANCES runs by him to the crib and lifts DANNY, WAILING, into her arms.

FRANCES

(to DANNY)

It's all right, honey, it's okay. Mommy's here.

She turns, furious, on WALTER.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

What happened?

WALTER

I don't know. I just fell asleep for a second.

FRANCES

Where? Why did you leave him?

WALTER
I didn't. I mean -- I
nodded out, right there.

He points to the rocker. The papers he was marking are
spread on the floor in front of it, with the pencil.

FRANCES
Are you on drugs?

He thinks hard, trying to figure out this puzzle. He has an
idea.

WALTER
I need to borrow some
flour.

FRANCES
Flour? Why?

WALTER
The only explanation for
what happened is that I
must have been
sleepwalking.

FRANCES
What are you talking about?

WALTER
I've been having these
weird dreams. Really --
intense dreams. I think
maybe I've started to walk
in my sleep.

A pain marks his face, takes his attention. He reaches a
hand to his back, under his T-shirt, to where it hurts. When
he brings the hand back into view, it is bloody.

FRANCES, shocked again, holds DANNY closer, more
protectively.

WALTER (CONT'D)
I don't know what happened,
but I would never leave
Danny alone. Please,
believe me.

She is confused, but wants to believe, and trust, him.

FRANCES
What do you want the flour
for?

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - LATER

White flour falls from a paper bag onto the floor. WALTER shakes flour onto the floor around his bed. FRANCES, holding DANNY, watches.

WALTER
There. Now if I get out of
bed, even if I'm not
conscious of it, I'll leave
a trail.

FRANCES
Maybe you should see a
doctor about these dreams.

WALTER
You mean a psychiatrist?

FRANCES
We all need help sometimes,
figuring things out.

He walks her to the door.

WALTER
By morning, I'll know for
sure. And so will you.

FRANCES
See you in the morning,
then.

She looks at him with concern and compassion. They share brave smiles, and she leaves.

WALTER takes off his shoes, and pants.

Wearing only his T-shirt and shorts, he gets into the bed, and spreads the rest of the flour from the bag over the steps he took to the bedside. He tosses the bag under the bed, and lies down on his side, still in pain, still in shock. He tries to sleep. He lies still for several moments, then his eyes open.

He sees the moon shining in the window, and dimly in the moonlight, the weird intersection of walls and roof in the far corner.

He shuts his eyes tightly, takes in and lets out a deep breath. He lies, still. His eyes don't open, but his mouth moves as he softly speaks to himself.

WALTER

Just a dream. Just a dream.

SILENCE. Nothing stirs. His eyes press closed; he lies still in the darkness. But it isn't quite as dark as it was, a dim glow spreading slowly over the bedclothes and the features of his face. The light gets brighter and brighter, giving a vaguely purple cast to the skin of WALTER'S sleeping face. The sound of FAST SCRATCHING, SCURRYING claws disturbs WALTER, and, as the purple glow fades, his eyes open.

He thinks he sees something in the darkness, run across the floor and under the bed. He sits up, turns on the lamp, and looks over the side of the bed.

Small prints, like small hand prints, make a trail in the flour, toward, then under, the bed.

WALTER is troubled, but must be brave -- he must find out the truth. He leans over the side of the bed.

He reaches down a hand to the floor to steady himself so he can look under his bed. He sees only darkness.

Suddenly, a hand shoots out from under the bed -- and grabs his wrist. It is a big, rough-skinned, weathered and wrinkled hand. There is a murderous LAUGHTER.

With a powerful yank, the hand pulls him off -- and under -- the bed.

CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC ROOM - TIMELESS

He is pulled into blackness. A candle is lit, it stands in an antique pewter holder. In the wavering candle light he sees her, the WITCH, wearing a seventeenth-century dress, and the long flowing cape, her grotesque face protruding now from the hood.

The high-pitched FLUTING begins; the vague CHANTING follows.

The space feels small, like an interior, a close one. WALTER feels he must lower his head, hunch over.

She points down, and his eyes follow her gesture.

In the candle-lit darkness before him there is a small table, with a large, skin-bound book on it. The book opens by itself, to a blank page. The sickening FLUTE MUSIC, with unnerving VOCAL undertones, softly, incessantly fills the space. A quill pen falls out of the darkness and flutters down to the page, lying on the blank surface.

Now the WITCH holds his wrist, and now SHE lifts it out over the book. She smiles her ghastly smile, and her sparkling eyes control him. She places his hand over the open page of the book, above the quill pen. WALTER is unable to move the hand, the arm; it stays poised there.

The sour MUSIC RISES in tone. The witch lifts the pen and puts it into his hand.

He stares at the pen in his hand -- then looks out of the corner of his eye toward his bare right shoulder, and sees BROWN JENKIN perched there. It speaks softly in his ear.

BROWN JENKIN

S-s-sign.

Then the supernatural rat walks down the length of WALTER'S outstretched arm, jumps onto the book, and, with his large, sharp front teeth, bites WALTER'S wrist.

WALTER tries to wrench his arm away, but it is paralyzed, powerless. He tries to scream in pain and horror, but no sound emits from his throat.

Blood flows from the wound, pouring onto the blank white page.

KEZIAH beside him, her eyes shining with a wild brilliance, finds her voice. Her eyes and her hissing voice command him.

KEZIAH

Sign.

BROWN JENKIN sits up on its haunches, its face fur and whiskers thick with blood. It's half-human features look familiar, very much like Keziah's. The voices of the witch and the familiar merge.

BROWN JENKIN &
KEZIAH

Sign.

Now blood pours from WALTER'S wrist in a heavy flow, in frightening volume. Blood covers the page, the book, flows over the table.

Now WALTER SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

He stops screaming when he notices he is not in the void, but in a bright fluorescent-lit room. He sits at a large wooden table, in a room of floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, filled with large, leather-bound volumes.

On the table before him is a large open book. But its pages are not blank; they are covered with writing, but in a script and language WALTER does not recognize. The writing seems a mix of symbol-based hieroglyphics and cursive characters, clearly handwritten. The ink is thick and reddish brown.

And there are pictures -- deep red/brown-and-white drawings, detailed and graphic. He stares at one --

-- an occult diagram that strongly suggests the computer graphs he has been studying and generating. Two-dimensional planes of stars in various configurations and moons in various stages meet in an odd, bulging angle, like the one his walls make with his ceiling.

WALTER anxiously turns the large, weathered, edge-worn page. It is thick, its surface uneven; it is made of parchment. He leans closer to the book to inspect --

-- a drawing of women, all naked, dancing in a circle circumscribed by flames. One, with a buxom body, has a caricatured face of wrinkled skin, a hooked and hairy nose, and wicked eyes. She looks like KEZIAH MASON. Animals dance with them -- a goat on its back legs, a black cat, and beside the figure resembling KEZIAH is a large, flat-faced rat. In the center of the dance stands a large BLACK MAN.

WALTER looks further down the page --

-- at a sketch of the BLACK MAN. His skin pigment is dark, but his features are Caucasian. His eyes, even in a sketch, seem to shine. A long, wide cape covers his broad, tall body, except his feet, which, upon closer inspection, are not feet at all, but cloven hooves.

On the facing page WALTER finds a series of smaller drawings that break up the unreadable text. One is of a bowl, inscribed with weird figures, like the hieroglyphics in the writing on the surrounding page.

There is another picture, of a curved-bladed knife, the same weird shapes forged into the blade.

And at the bottom of the page, there is a larger drawing, of taloned hands holding an infant child, a baby boy. Blood flows from the child's neck, a wide slice cut into it. The lifestream pours into the inscribed bowl, the curved-bladed knife lying next to it on a small table top.

Something compels WALTER to reach out and touch the picture. The ink has crusted, and particles come off on the tip of his finger. He lifts it nearer to look more closely at the dried, dark red ink. Or is it ink?

Then he notices that his palm is stained a dark reddish-brown, like the writing and drawing in the book. There is a jagged wound in his wrist, the flesh ripped and caked with dried blood.

He looks down, and sees that he is wearing only his shorts, what he went to bed in the night before.

WALTER

Oh my God --

WALTER gets it. He feels sick, and his whole body shivers with cold fear. He SLAMS the heavy tome shut.

The book's cover is so odd, so gruesome, that it stuns him out of his fear for a moment. It is stretched leather, or skin of some kind. And the pattern in it is uncannily familiar. He begins to recognize the features, the arrangement of stretched holes -- eyes, nostrils, mouth -- as a human face.

He recoils, reflexively, grabbing his injured wrist with a hand, fighting back the impulse to be sick.

A hand grabs his shoulder. Panicked, he spins around --

-- and looks into the face of an indignant female LIBRARIAN.

LIBRARIAN

What are you doing here?

This is a restricted area!

WALTER doesn't know what to say. The LIBRARIAN is upset at his appearance, but rouses her courage and her authority.

LIBRARIAN

(CONT'D)

The Rare Book Room is
always locked. How did you
get in?

WALTER

I -- I don't know.

LIBRARIAN

And how did you get that
book? No one has permission
to see the Necronomicon. No
one! Who let you in here?

WALTER, confused and frightened, rises.

WALTER

Please --

But the LIBRARIAN is frightened herself, of this nearly
naked man with bloody scratches on his back. She recoils,
steps back.

LIBRARIAN

Security! Help! Security!

She runs out the door. WALTER, still stunned, looks back at
the book, then runs out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - DAY

The door opens and WALTER rushes in, still in just his
shorts. He looks, hope and fear in his eyes, at the floor.

The floor around his bed is still covered with flour. He
steps closer and bends down to examine the white powdered
surface more carefully.

The flour is full of tracks, but none than can reasonably be
explained. He finds the shape of what looks like a tiny
hand, or a paw-print of a large rodent around his bed. And
at the foot of the bed, going around to the other side, is
another track, a sole and heel, the shape and size of a
large woman's shoe. It makes another trail, to the other
side of the bed.

He follows both trails away from the bed; they lead not to
the door but toward the far wall, the odd-angled corner.

WALTER pulls back from the tracks in the flour, repelled by what they mean.

CUT TO:

INT. TOP FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

WALTER pulls on a T-shirt as he leaves his room, now fully dressed in pants and shoes as well. He goes to the neighboring door and POUNDS on it. FRANCES answers, and the moment she sees him, she knows he is troubled.

FRANCES
Walter, what's wrong?

WALTER
Get Danny, and leave, now.

FRANCES
What? Why?

WALTER
He's in danger.

FRANCES
From who? What kind of danger?

WALTER
The dreams -- they're real.
The witch that haunts this place -- and the rat --
you've seen the rat --

FRANCES
Walter, you're scaring me.

WALTER
They want Danny. For some ritual, some -- sick ceremony. They need a child, to sacrifice.

FRANCES becomes firm, a mother protecting her child.

FRANCES
Listen to me. You have to stop this. You have to see a doctor, get medication. You're not thinking straight.

WALTER

No! No, it's real. It's in
the book -- in the library
-- the walls in my room --
it's where the membranes
meet -- it's how they get
in -- they're hiding in
another universe --

FRANCES

Get help, Walter.

She closes the door on him, but he reaches out and stops the
door with his hand.

WALTER

NO!

INT. FRANCES'S ROOM -- DAY

He pushes through, into the apartment. He runs to DANNY'S
crib, where the child lies on its stomach, sleeping
peacefully. WALTER grabs the wooden cross hanging from the
top of the crib. He turns to FRANCES, and falls on his
knees, pleading, exhausted.

She looms over them, terrified for her child, ready to
attack WALTER. But he holds the cross up, and that stops
her. He is not threatening DANNY, but begging her to listen
to him.

WALTER (CONT'D)

You believe. You believe
it's true, that he needs
protection. Take him away,
away from here. From me.

FRANCES

I have nowhere to go. I
can't afford any place
else. Walter, get a hold of
yourself.

WALTER

They want me to do it, to
take him. They need me -- I
don't know why -- to act
for them. See?

Pathetically, he shows her the wound in his wrist. She is
appalled, sickened, and deeply sad for him.

FRANCES
Oh, God, what did you do to
yourself?

But WALTER is insistent; lives depend on him making her
understand.

WALTER
You must listen to me! If I
go to sleep again, I don't
know if I can protect him.
I don't know if I can
control myself. They want
me to kill your son!

That's it; FRANCES draws the line there. Her sympathy turns
to shielding anger.

FRANCES
That's enough! Get away
from him. Get away or I'll
call the police.

WALTER
Please --

FRANCES
GO! NOW!

Her shout wakes DANNY, who starts to CRY. WALTER looks at
him, small and helpless, with great sorrow. He reaches into
the crib.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
WALTER -- NO!

But he does not touch the CRYING baby. He lays the cross
next to him. Then he rises, tears in his eyes, and leaves.

FRANCES SLAMS the door shut behind him and locks it. She
hurries to the crib and picks DANNY up, holding him close in
a defending embrace. She breaks down, and CRIES with him.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - NIGHT

WALTER sits at the computer, staring, rapt, at the uncanny
corner. He looks even worse than before, unshaven, unwell,
wearing the same clothes as earlier.

He rubs his eyes, hurting from such intense staring. He makes some feverish calculations on his small calculator.

There is a KNOCK on the door. WALTER appears not to hear it. More KNOCKING, this time more earnestly.

MASUREWICZ (O.S.)

Hello?

WALTER hears the voice. He gets up, goes to and opens the door. MASUREWICZ stands in it with a small, cracked cup in his hand. He is clearly shocked and upset by how WALTER looks, but he covers it quickly with a friendly smile.

MASUREWICZ

(CONT'D)

Is just Old Joe. I bring
coffee, from my country.
Very strong.

WALTER

Thank you.

He takes the cup and saucer.

MASUREWICZ

You are having the dreams?

WALTER

They're not dreams. They're
real.

He drinks from the cup; it *is* strong, but it tastes, and feels, good to him.

MASUREWICZ

She has come.

WALTER nods, and sips.

MASUREWICZ

(CONT'D)

Your soul is in peril.

WALTER

Look -- I figured it, out
how she does it. Witches
were astrologers, they knew
science. She must have
discovered the
intersection --

He turns and walks to the odd-shaped corner, to show MASUREWICZ. When he does, the old man sees the bloody marks on the back of WALTER's t-shirt.

WALTER (CONT'D)
She goes back and forth,
between dimensions. If I
can find the secret to the
intersection of the planes,
I can trap her -- and that
thing -- in the other
universe. I can stop them!

MASUREWICZ
You cannot stop them. She
has marked you.

He points to WALTER's bloody back. WALTER touches it; the blood is still wet.

MASUREWICZ
(CONT'D)
She has made you her man.

WALTER
I've got to stop them. If
she comes back again -- I
can't fight her. That's why
she comes when you're
asleep. The unconscious
state is like hypnosis, so
she can make you
do whatever she wants.

MASUREWICZ
No, not unconscious. *More*
conscious. Hear more, see
more,
know more. Is not dreaming
we fear -- is knowing, that
they are strong, and we are
weak. You must run, run
away, now.

WALTER
No. If I go, she'll take
Danny.

MASUREWICZ

She can take him, yes. But she needs a human soul, a man, to make the sacrifice, to complete the ritual. The devil does not thirst for blood; he thirsts for souls.

WALTER

Then I have to stop her -- now.

MASUREWICZ

I tried to stop her. I prayed, and I prayed. I should have run. Run away! Then I wouldn't have --

He can't say it. But WALTER thinks he understands.

WALTER

You killed a child -- didn't you.

MASUREWICZ

Children. I killed children.

He can hardly say it, the guilt is so painful to him.

MASUREWICZ

(CONT'D)

She made me.

MASUREWICZ turns, lifts his jacket and pulls his shirt up -- to show long scars on his back, from deep scratches.

WALTER

Why didn't you turn yourself in? Why didn't you tell them?

MASUREWICZ

I did. They wouldn't believe me.

MASUREWICZ takes a carved wooden cross on a leather string from a jacket pocket and holds it out to WALTER. WALTER looks at it, swinging in the near air, and takes it from him.

MASUREWICZ

(CONT'D)

God have mercy on you.

He crosses himself, turns and heads back down the stairs.
WALTER closes the door.

He turns back into the room, and stares at the strange-shaped corner. He steps into it, reaches out to it, and traces the angles of intersection of the walls, of the walls and the ceiling, with his hands. He strokes the descending plane of the ceiling, and seems especially interested in the pitch of its descent. And then, from the behind the sloping surface, comes the sound of soft SCRATCHING.

He rushes to the bureau, takes the hammer off it, and turns back to the corner. He builds up his nerve, putting the leather thong with the cross around his neck. He steps into the corner.

With his last reserves of strength, he lifts the hammer and SLAMS it into the intersection of the walls and ceiling, again and again, with wearying effort. The blows chip the paint, then the plaster. But he can't beat through.

He stops for a few seconds, BREATHING HARD. He stares at the corner as if it were a living, breathing enemy. Tears in his eyes, he raises a WILD CRY and attacks it again.

But he is losing control of his actions. He SMASHES the hammer against the slope of the ceiling, causing more plaster to fall. He BEATS it and BEATS it, over and over.

He is wearing down, exhaustion overcoming him. At last, he can barely lift the hammer to strike another blow. With one last great effort, he raises the hammer and swings at the odd-angled corner.

The hammer head strikes the ceiling, and breaks through! Wedges of plaster and rotted wood fall to the floor. He has broken a hole in the ceiling.

DOMBROWSKI (O.S.)

Hey!

DOMBROWSKI stands in the open doorway, looking on in angry disbelief.

DOMBROWSKI

(CONT'D)

What the hell do you think --

Then WALTER turns to him, and DOMBROWSKI sees that he has the hammer in his hand, and a very strange look in his face. The landlord's manner changes abruptly.

DOMBROWSKI

(CONT'D)

Don't hit me. I'll call the
cops. Don't hit me --

He runs from the door, and down the stairs. WALTER goes to the door, closes and locks it.

WALTER turns back to his work. He stumbles to the spot where he hammered the hole. It is barely six-inches across, but it energizes him. He flails at it with the hammer, and plaster and wood shards rain down. He hacks at the hole, until he can no longer lift the hammer.

Now the hole is over a foot wide, and noxious air exuding from it makes him put a hand to his face. He looks down at the debris.

Something in the dimly lit pile catches his attention. Under the white chunks of plaster and rotted shards of wood, is something round. He uncovers it and picks it up.

It is a small skull, worn but perfect in shape. It fits in his hand. It must have been a child's.

He looks back up at the jagged hole in the ceiling. Then he goes to the small table, sets the skull down next to the computer, and grabs the chair. He drags it over to the area where the debris fell.

He looks up at the hole in the ceiling, then climbs onto the chair. He stands on it, and reluctantly but steadfastly, lifts his head into the opening.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT

It's dark; the weak room light hardly makes an impression on the seemingly endless darkness.

But he must go on, now that he's started. He drops the hammer, and with his last strength, and considerable difficulty, he lifts himself through the hole, into the dark space.

He starts to crawl, since the surface above him is low, but he cannot see where he is headed. He crawls a few more feet, until a CRUNCHING noise, and something he feels, stops him.

He carefully reaches into a pocket and pulls out the calculator. He presses a button, and its small screen lights up, a pale green. He moves it across his body and points it down, so by its dim light he can see --

-- that his other hand has pushed through the brittle ribcage of a small skeleton, cracking the ribs. By the calculator's weak light it looks like a complete skeleton, except that the head is missing.

He recoils, pulling his hand away. A suspicion makes him hold the calculator up and out, pointed away from him. Its pale green light reveals another skeleton in front of him - lying on top of another skeleton -- and another on top of it.

He moves the light to one side, and finds more sets of bones piled there -- and then in the other direction, too. A low wall of bones and skulls blocks his way.

A short RATTLE of bones makes him turn the light to the side. Loose bones slide down the pile. Another RUSTLING makes him move the light alertly to his other side, where more bones tumble to the dark bottom of the stacked skeletons.

WALTER is starting to panic; his breath is getting short. But he is so tired, the light is so bad, he could be hallucinating. He rubs his eyes.

BROWN JENKIN
(O.S.)

Walter.

Frightened by the voice, he runs the pale light across the bank of bones before him. Nothing, no movement.

BROWN JENKIN
(CONT'D -- OS)

Walter --

He moves the light over the bones, until the heap moves, small bones CLATTERING.

In reflexive fear, he tries to back away and rise up. He BUMPS his head against the low surface above him, and drops the calculator. Now everything is dark. He is disoriented; he looks around but cannot see where the hole was he entered by.

Another brief RATTLE of bones strikes further fear, and shortens his panicky breathing even more. After a moment's silence, a soft, thin FLUTE sound, just above the stillness,

builds. WALTER tries to scramble backwards, but a CRUNCH AND CLATTER of more bones makes him stop and turn.

BROWN JENKIN

(CONT'D -- OS)

She's coming for you.

SOUR CHANTING grows with the FLUTING, and emerging from it is a chilling LAUGHTER. WALTER doesn't know where to turn. A large, gnarled hand bursts through the wall of skeletons and grabs him by the wrist. Its grip is invincible, and WALTER cringes. He tries to fight its strength; he tries to speak. But he can't.

The hand pulls him, at great speed, through the piled skulls and bones, SMASHING as he passes through them, into the deeper recesses of a small, dark attic room.

INT. ATTIC ROOM - NIGHT

WALTER lies on the floor. Before him stands the small table, but the book is gone, and on the table-top is a large metal bowl. Its surface, inside and out, is covered with strange symbols, forged into the metal. Above his head the low ceiling slopes up, to a peaked roof.

Lying on the table next to the bowl is a large knife, with a curved blade, similar symbols forged into its blade. The bowl and knife resemble -- they are -- the bowl and blade he saw in the ancient tome in the library, the Necronomicon.

On the other side of the bowl, lying on the table, is DANNY. He is awake, squirming, and though he looks at WALTER with clear fear in his eyes, he does not cry. The FLUTING AND CHANTING are the only sounds.

Suddenly WALTER'S wrist is lifted, by the weathered, heavy hand that grips it. Next to him is KEZIAH, who holds his arm up and stares into his face with grim, vicious determination.

She leads him to the table. She picks up the knife, and puts it into his hand. Then she lets him go, but her mad look does not leave him. Her mouth opens in a hideous smile, and her eyes sparkle and shine.

He knows what she wants, what he is supposed to do, what he cannot help but do. He looks at DANNY, helpless beside the waiting bowl. He looks at the knife in his hand. He struggles to regain control of himself, to articulate a single word.

WALTER

No-o-o--

Out of the darkness BROWN JENKIN climbs onto the table. It looks up at WALTER.

The blade shakes in WALTER'S hand, as he fights with all his will the impulse he feels. KEZIAH, seeing his struggle, lifts out of the darkness the large book, and opens it.

On the otherwise blank page is a dry stream of blood, that leads to a written word. The writing is in blood, and the word is Walter's name: WALTERGILMAN.

The witch and the rat-like familiar LAUGH, and the sound, merging with the awful MUSIC, makes WALTER dizzy. When he looks down again, the book is gone, and KEZIAH's taloned hands hold DANNY over the bowl. The boy CRIES for his life.

WALTER raises the knife and moves it over the child's flailing body. WALTER battles with himself to keep the blade from threatening the baby. The witch watches, expectantly, excitedly.

WALTER fights against her power, raising his other hand to try to stop the knife from moving. But he is losing the battle of wills, the blade lowering, nearing the baby's body.

The knife-blade descends, slowly, until the blade-point makes contact with the skin of DANNY's neck.

BROWN JENKIN rises on his haunches, wild with anticipation, froth on his fangs.

With supreme effort, WALTER stays his hand. The blade wavers, but does not cut DANNY's flesh.

KEZIAH now is angry, a hellish fury in her face. She hisses at him:

KEZIAH

Kill him.

BROWN JENKIN joins her in the command.

KEZIAH & BROWN

JENKIN

Kill him!

The light in KEZIAH's eyes flashes, and WALTER cannot resist. The tip of the blade pricks the infant's skin, and a drop of blood falls into the waiting bowl.

The witch and the rat GASP in ecstatic triumph.

But with an heroic act of will, WALTER slowly, hands shaking with the effort, lifts the knifeblade from DANNY's throat.

The witch looks on with shock, surprise, as WALTER raises the knife -- and turns it on her. He pushes against her power, the blade moving toward her chest.

Her withered but strong hand lashes out and grabs WALTER by the throat, her face in front of his, like an attacking animal's, her eyes grim with death, her lips pulled back from her teeth.

They struggle. KEZIAH throws down the baby and grabs WALTER's wrist and pushes the blade away. She stares into his face, and turns on the full force of her hypnotic glare, her eyes like brilliant fires.

He drops the knife. It CLATTERS on the table, beside the CRYING baby.

Now KEZIAH smiles, victoriously, horrifically. She releases his wrist and reaches down for the knife. WALTER knows there is only one way to defeat her. He reaches out both hands to her face, and plunges his thumbs into her eyes.

The ghastly MUSIC SHRIEKS, and KEZIAH SCREAMS a piercing cry. He presses harder, with all his soul, boring his thumbs into her eye sockets, blood squirting out and pouring down her face.

But she is not defeated yet. She lifts the knife and thrusts it at him, stabbing him in the shoulder.

WALTER CRIES out and backs away. The witch swings the knife, blindly, attacking, though her eyes are bleeding holes and she cannot see him. He dodges the knife-thrust, but another cuts his arm.

He pulls the cross off his neck and, as she whirls, swinging the blade, he loops the leather string around KEZIAH's throat. He pulls the string taut with all his remaining strength, tighter, and tighter around her leathery neck, choking her.

Though she GAGS and chokes, she swings the knife back at him, cutting him in the leg.

But WALTER is beyond weakness, beyond strength; he acts on sheer will, sheer necessity.

He chokes her with almost mad desperation, to the insane pitch of the FLUTE and mad CHANTING VOICES. Her grip on the knife-hilt loosens; she drops it, and it falls into darkness.

She reaches for the cord around her throat, but cannot weaken its choking hold. She GASPS, desperate for breath.

WALTER continues to strangle her, with all his strength. She goes limp, but still he twists the leather taut around her neck. At last she falls, and he lets her, releasing his grip.

The MAD MUSIC STOPS abruptly, and there is sudden SILENCE. Except for DANNY's voice, CRYING WEAKLY. WALTER lifts him up off the table. He hugs him close to his chest, and stumbles, triumphant but exhausted, into the darkness, back the way he came.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT

He pushes through the barricade of bones, the children's skeletons. They CRACK and CRUNCH under him as he walks unsteadily, stooping under the sloped ceiling, holding the child protectively.

In the dark crawlspace he can barely see, but he keeps moving forward. Then the floor gives way under him, and he falls --

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - MORNING

-- through the hole in the ceiling of his room.

He lands on the floor, on the pile of debris and bones, landing on his back. DANNY lands, safely, on top of him.

The wind knocked out of him, WALTER lies still for a moment, plaster dust and small bones falling on him from out of the hole in the ceiling.

He slowly rises, and takes DANNY in his arms. The brave boy has STOPPED CRYING, and looks up at him, a strong bond between them.

WALTER walks, wobbly, to the bed and sets DANNY down on the mattress. Then he collapses into the chair. He labors to catch his breath, and tries to rub the dust out of his eyes.

He hears DANNY CRYING, and opens his eyes.

On the bed, atop DANNY'S body, is BROWN JENKIN. His fangs are buried in the baby's neck. Blood pours from the child's throat, and flows onto the bed.

WALTER HOWLS in horror, SCREAMS in profoundest agony, and the rat looks up, its hideous face covered in blood.

CUT TO:

INT. TOP FLOOR CORRIDOR - MORNING

Outside Walter's room, FRANCES BEATS on the door frantically. Inside, WALTER'S VOICE is SCREAMING. She weeps as she YELLS.

FRANCES
Walter! Walter!!

Violet light streams from around the door, intense and bright. She POUNDS on the door, pulls on the door handle, shaking the door on its hinges. WALTER'S SCREAMING is unabated.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Help me! HELP!!

CUT TO:

INT. MASUREWICZ'S APARTMENT - MORNING

JOE MASUREWICZ kneels before the crucifix, CHANTING the rosary, trying to pray away the SCREAMS he hears from upstairs, WALTER'S AND FRANCES'S SCREAMING. He raises his face to the carved Christ, his eyes pressed closed but shedding a gush of tears. A door SLAMS somewhere outside the room, and heavy FOOTSTEPS hurry past his door.

CUT TO:

INT. TOP FLOOR CORRIDOR - MORNING

FRANCES BEATS on the door with her fist, weeping and WAILING. WALTER'S SCREAMS still pour from the room, but the violet light is fading. DOMBROWSKI climbs hurriedly to the top of the stairs and hurries to the door, followed by two UNIFORMED POLICEMEN.

DOMBROWSKI
Gilman! Gilman -- damn you.
You're in trouble now.

He moves FRANCES aside, finds a key on a ring of many keys, inserts it in the lock, and opens the door.

INT. WALTER'S ROOM - MORNING

DOMBROWSKI steps in, followed by FRANCES and the POLICEMEN, but they are stopped cold, struck dumb, by what they see.

Dawn, the color of dried blood, breaks in the filthy window. In a corner, where the walls and ceiling meet in an odd angle, morning light illuminates a small cloud of dust and smoke, hovering over a pile of debris -- and what look like bones, many small bones, some still in parts of skeletal remains -- under a hole in the ceiling.

And over by the bed, on the floor, sits WALTER. His howling has drained to an irrational WHIMPERING punctuated by sharp, keen CRIES. His clothes and hands are covered in blood.

In his lap he holds the body of DANNY, dead, his throat cut through. In one fist, WALTER grips the leather string from which hangs the carved wooden cross.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEFTON ASYLUM

A large institutional building. A sign in front of it reads "Sefton Asylum".

INT. PADDED CELL - DAY

A PSYCHOLOGIST is questioning WALTER who now wears a hospital gown, his wounded arm bandaged. A large ATTENDANT stands near the door. WALTER approaches the PSYCHOLOGIST, trying to make her understand. But it sounds as if he is trying harder to make it make sense to himself.

WALTER
She would wait until I was
asleep, then she'd come.
She must have discovered
the intersection --

PSYCHOLOGIST
The intersection.

WALTER

Yes, of universes. It's how
she'd get into my room, and
then
disappear.

PSYCHOLOGIST

This woman would disappear?

WALTER

Yes. She must have been
hiding in another
dimension, traveling
through space and time.

PSYCHOLOGIST

This is why you killed the
baby? An evil witch cast a
spell and made you do it?

WALTER

I told you, I didn't kill
Danny. It was -- it was --

The horrid, grisly memory makes him lose his words. The
PSYCHOLOGIST checks a pad of paper in front of her.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Yes, you told us -- the rat
did it, the rat with the
human face.

The PSYCHOLOGIST approaches him.

PSYCHOLOGIST

(CONT'D)

Gilman, listen to me. You
threatened the child's
mother, you were caught
with the body, you were
covered in the child's
blood. You need to face
what you did.

WALTER wavers. Tears well up and memories torment him.

WALTER

No -- no, I tried to save
him. I killed the witch.
She's still there -- her
body must be there. I'm
telling you the truth!

He breaks down, SOBBING, burying his head in his hands.

The PSYCHOLOGIST shakes her head at this lost cause as she turns to leave the room. The Attendant unlocks the door and follows her.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

She enters the hallway where a POLICE DETECTIVE has been watching the questioning through the small window in the door. The Attendant locks the cell.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Classic paranoid
schizophrenia. Brought on
by the stress of
graduate school, I imagine.

DETECTIVE

Is he competent to stand
trial?

PSYCHOLOGIST

He's intelligent, but he's
totally psychotic. He can't
face what he's done,
probably never will. Either
way, he's going to be
locked up for life.

DETECTIVE

I want to do better than
that.

The locked door at the end of the corridor opens and a man in a jacket that has the letters identifying him as a CSI on the back, approaches them. He carries a large manila envelope.

CSI

(to the DETECTIVE)
I'm not sure you're gonna
like this.

DETECTIVE

What do you got?

CSI
(handing him the envelope)
We recovered skeletal
remains, full and partial,
of over seventy bodies, all
of them children. Most are
infants, less than a year
old.

DETECTIVE
(looking at the pictures)
Jesus. Our Mr. Gilman's
been a very busy boy. So
what's the problem?

CSI
All of the remains we've
tested so far are at least
thirty years old. The
oldest are from over three
hundred years ago.

DETECTIVE
What?

CSI
And the boy Danny -- has
what looks like animal
bites on his neck. Except
the DNA, it's -- it's --

DETECTIVE
Gilman's?

CSI
No. We can't identify it.
It's not like anything
we've ever seen. And then
there's this.

He holds up a clear plastic evidence bag, and inside is the
knife with the carved blade.

DETECTIVE
None of this exonerates
Gilman.

CSI
No, but we have to disclose
to the defense.

DETECTIVE
Go ahead. Who's gonna
believe him?

CUT TO:

INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

WALTER sits in a corner, pale, distraught, distant. His eyes look into unseen dimensions of horror.

INT. ASYLUM CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The ATTENDANT stands at the door, looking into the cell through a viewing slot, checking on the inmate. He shakes his head at WALTER'S sad condition and walks away down the corridor.

INT. MASUREWICZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A hand reaches out and grabs a cross hanging on a wall and lifts it off its nail.

Joe Masurewicz looks, sadly, at the cross in his hand. Then he puts it in a box on the floor -

-- a box already almost half-filled with crosses.

Masurewicz stands back and looks at the wall, dimly lit by a couple of flickering candles: it used to be filled with hanging crosses; now there are only a few left. He goes to another, and takes it down off its nail.

CUT TO:

INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

WALTER, exhausted by his misery, lies down on the padded floor of the cell, curled into the fetal position, facing a padded wall. WALTER'S body starts to tremble, and can hear, too his soft WEeping.

RAT'S POV: A burst of violet light. Then from a low angle, the CAMERA looks across the cell at WALTER who shakes gently, from weak but steady WEeping.

RAT'S POV: The CAMERA moves across the cell floor toward Walter.

INT. MASUREWICZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Another cross falls into the now-filled box.

Old Joe looks down at the box of crosses and shudders. He looks up --

-- at the carved crucifix over the mantelpiece.

He stares up at Christ in agony.

With effort, he lifts the large cross off the wall and places it, Christ's face down, on the floor next to the box.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out his rosary with the wooden cross dangling from it. Sorrowfully, he drops it into the box.

He turns back to the mantel, and blows out the lit candle that rests on it.

Then he steps to the chair, lifts the lit candle from its seat, and blows out its flame. He carefully stands on the seat of the chair.

His head rises up, reaching a new height -- where hangs a rope, tied in a noose. With profound sorrow, he places the noose over his head, around his neck.

INT. ASYLUM CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Suddenly there is SCREAMING, WALTER's voice HOWLING in pain. The ATTENDANT runs into the corridor, to WALTER'S cell. He looks into the cell.

INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

WALTER'S body spasms and jerks, almost lifting itself off the floor. He SCREAMS in a terrible agony of pain.

The ATTENDANT opens the cell door and rushes in.

ATTENDANT

Gilman! What's the matter?
Gilman!

The ATTENDANT grabs his shoulders, trying to hold WALTER still. But his gyrations and spasms are beyond control.

ATTENDANT

Doctor! Doctor!

CUT TO:

INT. MASUREWICZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Masurewicz's feet kick the chair away. He swings and chokes --but we continue to hear WALTER SCREAMING, in VO. The old man's legs kick reflexively, kick spasmodically, kick again, and stop. They swing, lifelessly.

INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

WALTER continues to SCREAM in anguished pain, as the ATTENDANT tries to hold his body still as it arches and twists in agony.

The PSYCHOLOGIST rushes in and gasps as she sees blood, red and wet, soaking the side of WALTER's shirt, low on his torso. He tears at the shirt, pulling it out of his pants.

And through the exposed flesh of his side, a small head appears. It looks up at them, and it's face is strange, bizarre -- like a human face. It is BROWN JENKIN -- covered in blood.

The ATTENDANT jerks back, staring at the rat, dumfounded.

The PSYCHOLOGIST can't believe what she is seeing and steps back as it climbs out of WALTER's body to the floor, and runs, out the cell door --

INT. ASYLUM CORRIDOR - NIGHT

-- down the corridor.

INT. PADDED CELL - NIGHT

The ATTENDANT is in shock. He looks down at WALTER, whose body quivers weakly. He WHEEZES, trying to draw in a breath, his eyes wide. Then he EXHALES, hard, blood spraying from his mouth. Then he STOPS BREATHING, his eyes glaze over, and he is dead. The PSYCHOLOGIST kneels beside him and looks for a pulse. She looks at the ATTENDANT and shakes her head.

He crosses himself.

THE END