

BIOHAZARD

THE
BEST
GAMES
EVER

FRESH BLOOD EDITION



THE WITCH ELM

'Pilot'

Written by

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The figure gives no answer.

When she's only a few meters away, the light dims. Morrigan comes to a halt and she sees it's just a lantern light.

But holding it... A WOMAN IN RAGS. Age indistinguishable from all the filth covering her face. She gazes blankly at Morrigan - no emotion whatsoever behind her grey eyes.

Morrigan stares at her anxiously.

YOUNG MORRIGAN (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. I thought you were...
 (thinks; speaks sternly)
 You can't use that light past
 curfew. You need to put it out.

The Woman In Rags remains as still as a statue.

YOUNG MORRIGAN (CONT'D)
 My mum says the German's attack the
 light. We need to stay in the dark.

Again, nothing. A wind blows the lantern in the Woman's hands - causing a strange shadow to drift across her face.

Finally, Morrigan succumbs to the sense of dread building.

YOUNG MORRIGAN (CONT'D)
 I'm-- I'm going to go get her now.

Morrigan goes to twist herself around on her crutches when--

--THE LIGHT FROM THE LANTERN GOES OUT.

Leaving the Woman In Rags shrouded in darkness, silhouetted only by the moonlight. She lowers the expelled lantern to her side and stands still, facing Morrigan, for a terrible beat.

Morrigan swallows, suddenly feeling vulnerable and exposed.

After a hard moment, Morrigan decides to back off. She starts shuffling away when a GUTTURAL VOICE freezes her on the spot:

WOMAN IN RAGS
 A girl went into the woods.

Almost against her will, Morrigan turns to face the Woman.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
 Who?

WOMAN IN RAGS
 The one you're searching for.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
Annabella?

Concern replaces the fear in Morrigan's eyes.

YOUNG MORRIGAN (CONT'D)
But she'll get lost in there.

Morrigan gazes into the dark woods with some alarm.

WOMAN IN RAGS
Then let us go find her.

The Woman In Rags slowly turns and starts ambling towards a clearing in the woods - enticing Morrigan to follow.

Torn, Morrigan looks to where her house stands, *safety*, and then back to the Woman In Rags at the edge of the forest...

10 **EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - NIGHT**

10

Morrigan follows the Woman In Rags through the murky woods to the best of her abilities. Her crutches crunch loudly against the fallen leaves. Whereas the Woman In Rags seemingly floats without causing a sound - always a few steps ahead.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
She went all this way? This far?

She gets no response.

Morrigan glances over her shoulder: the clearing already far behind in the distance. Anxious, Morrigan comes to a stop.

YOUNG MORRIGAN (CONT'D)
Perhaps I should go get my mum...

Again, no response. Morrigan turns back around to find--

--The Woman In Rags has vanished.

Alarmed, Morrigan scans the darkness surrounding her.

A wind picks up, soft at first, but quickly growing heavier.

It's enough to make Morrigan start back for the clearing posthaste. She begins staggering forward on her crutches.

The wind rasps against the tree leaves.

Sweating despite the winter air, Morrigan continues to pick up the pace, distressed. Her crutches teetering along until--

--SNAP!!!--

--One of her crutches gives way -- THE WOOD SPLINTERING LIKE A BROKEN BONE -- Morrigan cries out -- and collapses to the forest floor -- hitting her head HARD against a tree stump.

Then. Silence. The wind dies down as if by command.

Morrigan lies on the floor. Eyes closed but still breathing.

Something shifts from the trees behind her. Coming closer...

THE WOMAN IN RAGS.

She looms above Morrigan and stares down with her dead eyes.

11

EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - DEEPER IN - NIGHT

11

Morrigan's eyes snap open as she comes to. Fighting disorientation, she gazes down at her feet and realises--

--She's standing up, without any support.

Shocked, Morrigan starts hyperventilating. She sways and stumbles, expecting to hit the ground, but her legs support her weight - *with strength Morrigan has never felt before.*

But before she can take pleasure in the fact--

--Something WAILS ahead of Morrigan. Pained. Almost feral.

Morrigan looks up and... her jaw drops.

She's stood in front of the WYCH ELM TREE - the very same one from her nightmares. But this is all too real.

The unnatural caterwaul continues on.

It's coming from the tree... no... from inside the tree.

Morrigan stares at the tree. Her eyes are bug wide with fear.

Then -- the wailing abruptly CUTS OUT.

A terrible silence plagues the air.

After a beat, Morrigan takes her first steps on her new, strong legs. She treads lightly and approaches the tree.

The branches of the wych elm shiver as if they are alive.

The tree looms over Morrigan as she reaches it. Her small frame engulfed by the mammoth, monstrous wych elm.

She stares dead ahead into a hollow cavity inside the trunk. It's filled only with darkness. A pitch-black void. Then a WHISPER floats out from the tree. Pained. Terrified:

GIRL'S VOICE
H--H--Help-- Help m--me...

Morrigan flinches at the sound of the voice.

GIRL'S VOICE (CONT'D)
H--help.

Morrigan's heart pounds in her chest. She takes a step closer towards the cavity. Then peers into the darkness within. A tense beat goes by.

GIRL'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Morrigan. Help me.

A tear runs down Morrigan's cheek. *What or who is she seeing?* Before we can get an answer we--

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLES:

T H E W I T C H E L M

12 **BLACK** 12

A strange BUZZING sound grows right into our ears, and--

13 **EXT. RENNER HOUSE - JACOB'S BEDROOM - DAY** 13

A pair of eyes snap open, wide with terror.

JACOB RENNER (16) jolts up in bed. He's handsome, already built with a strong athletic frame that suggests devotion.

Jacob trembles - unsure whether the buzzing was part of his nightmare or not. That is until...

...SOMEONE in his room bursts into uncontrollable laughter.

Horrified, Jacob touches his long wavy hair and finds...

...bald patches. Freshly shaved.

Jacob glares across his bedroom to find CONNOR MASON (16), apparently Jacob's best friend, rolling around in hysterics on a blow-up mattress on the floor.

There's an electric razor in his hand.

Jacob feels his shaved patches of hair again, appalled.

JACOB
You absolute dickhead.

CONNOR
What? You shouldn't've slept in.

Jacob explodes -- In a flash, he's on top of Connor, smacking him on the arm.

JACOB
You-- Dick!

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Baldy!

As they wrestle, our focus turns to the window by Jacob's bed.

14 **EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS** 14

Outside, a JUMBO JET scorches the morning sky, passing high over the same, but more built up and modern, TOWN that faces the same, but not as thick, forest area.

LEGEND: Stourbridge, 2001

15 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - JACOB'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS** 15

Back in the room, Jacob has Connor pinned down. Connor is clearly the weaker of the two, slimmer and hollow-eyed, but he's still chuckling away - despite his position.

JACOB
Think it's funny, yeah?

With a wry smile, Jacob forces the electric razor out of Connor's hand. He holds it to Connor's head and clicks it on.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Dare you to laugh now, you fuck.

The razor buzzes away, threateningly, but Connor only giggles some more - he is enjoying this too much for Jacob's liking.

Jacob plunges the razor straight down the middle of Connor's head. Huge sheaves of hair fall around him. Once he reaches the back, Jacob clicks the razor off. Finished. For now.

He rolls off Connor and gazes in amazement at his handiwork.

Surprisingly not bothered, Connor grabs a nearby mirror and studies his ridiculous new hairstyle, slightly impressed.

CONNOR

Aye, the top looks good n'all but I'mma wee bit disappointed with how ye've styled the back if I'm being brutally honest.

Jacob cracks up. Connor smiles with him.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Ya dad's gonna be out for blood.

JACOB

I'll say we're joining the marines.

CONNOR

The marines? Who you plannin' on scrappin' with?

JACOB

Anyone. After I'm done with you.

Jacob leaps at Connor again, razor at the ready.

16 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY**

16

A handful of letters and flyers fall through the letterbox.

At the sound, NOLAN RENNER (40s) comes bounding down the stairs. He's Jacob's father, though he has none of his son's athleticism but to compensate he dresses smart, hair combed, suit & tie. Always looking to impress.

Excited, and apprehensive, Nolan snatches the letters off the floor and shuffles through the various bank statements and takeaway menus until he finds the letter he was hoping for.

Marked in the top corner... BLACK CAT PUBLISHING HOUSE.

17 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY**

17

With the letter in hand, Nolan creeps into the bathroom, carefully locking the door behind him - not to be disturbed.

He takes a seat on the toilet and considers the letter again.

A silent prayer. Then, Nolan peels open the letter.

He reads the first line:

'--I regret to inform you--'

Panic rising. He reads the second line:

'--we will not be publishing your manuscript for--'

Nolan immediately tears the rejection letter in half... And then into quarters... And then into tiny little pieces.

The tantrum passes. Nolan, red-faced, sighs and gets to his feet. He catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror, noticing that his tie has become crooked during his outburst.

He straightens it. Pulling it tight to the collar. Too tight. But Nolan keeps at it until his neck starts to bulge--

ELLE (O.S.)

Honey, could you finish yourself off in there?

Nolan pulls his tie loose and gasps - a little too loudly.

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

Nolan, are you okay?

NOLAN

Yeah. Yeah. Just be one minute.

Nolan bends down and gathers up the remains of his shredded letter. He lifts the toilet lid - ready to dispose of the evidence when...

...He pauses and squints into the toilet bowl, confused.

The toilet is blocked. Clogged up with a mountain of HAIR.

18

INT. RENNER HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

18

Nolan exits the bathroom and comes face-to-face with ELLE RENNER (40s), Nolan's second wife, playful with a sardonic sense of humour.

ELLE

Sounded like a struggle.

NOLAN

Someone, erm, blocked the toilet.

ELLE
Someone?

NOLAN
It was full of hair, not...

ELLE
...Shit? Well, there's a change.

Elle beams a smile at her husband. Nolan fakes a laugh back, too distracted by the rejection to play along. He moves off.

NOLAN
I better go find the culprit.

Sensing his disposition, Elle pulls Nolan back before he can escape.

ELLE
Something up?

Nolan stares at her - thinking of answering truthfully.

NOLAN
Yeah, I'm just-- It was a real mess, Elle.

ELLE
(frowns; confused)
Erm, okay...

Nolan half-smiles sadly and moves on.

19

INT. RENNER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

19

Now with FULLY SHAVED HEADS and dressed in shabby school uniforms, Jacob and Connor pour themselves some cereal.

Nolan comes storming in.

NOLAN
Jacob, did you...

He trails off at the sight of the shaved heads.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Christ, what on earth is this?

JACOB
(plays dumb)
What?

NOLAN
This! Your bloody hair.

Jacob spoons cereal into his mouth and turns to Connor, who looks back as if he's only just noticed the shaved head.

CONNOR
You had a trim?

JACOB
No. Have you?

CONNOR
Don't think so.

NOLAN
Okay, quit the double act.
(to Connor)
C'mon, what's your mother going to think I let you get up to, Connor?

CONNOR
She's used to the shaved look these days, Mr Renner.

Nolan blushes but pushes through the embarrassment.

NOLAN
Okay, but what about everyone else?

JACOB
Nobody will care, Dad.

NOLAN
Well, I care. Because, it's just...
you both look like part of a gang.

Nolan expects the word to have some impact on the boys. It doesn't. They resume eating their cereal much to his dismay.

Elle floats into the room. Stirs the coffee pot.

ELLE
(spots the boys; smiles)
Ahh, mystery solved.

Nolan gives her a curt look.

ELLE (CONT'D)
(clears her throat)
So what's with the new look, Jacob?

Jacob ignores her and slurps arrogantly from his cereal bowl.

Elle shrugs her shoulders at Nolan and fills a thermos.

ELLE (CONT'D)
I gotta run anyway.

Disappointed, Nolan shakes his head at Jacob then turns his attention to Elle.

NOLAN
Where to today?

ELLE
Abernathy farm. Hoping for just one or two sick cows but... who knows.

NOLAN
Okay, well try and have a nice day.

ELLE
I won't.

Elle smiles, masking a hint of sadness, and kisses Nolan on the cheek. Then she turns for the door when--

--AN ELDERLY WOMAN (70) is revealed to be blocking her path.

She's haggard looking. Dishevelled grey hair. Bags under her eyes. A confused expression on her face - as if she's lost.

ELDERLY WOMAN
I saw a light.

It's MORRIGAN, but sixty years older.

Everyone falls silent and shares a worried glance.

NOLAN
Mum, what the hell are you on about?

MORRIGAN
(snaps to)
What?

NOLAN
What?

Morrigan looks around and realises where she is.

MORRIGAN
Oh nothing. Something from a dream.
(notices Elle staring)
What're you looking at?

ELLE

Something from a nightmare I think.

Morrigan grunts at her before moving off to the coffee pot.

With Morrigan's back turned, Elle silently mouths over "tell her" to Nolan, who gives her a "I don't wanna" grimace back.

MORRIGAN

(without looking)

I can hear you.

Elle eyes a stern look over to Nolan and then takes her leave.

With a sigh, Nolan turns back to the boys.

NOLAN

You two. We're off in fifteen.

Nolan takes his mother by the arm and in a hushed voice:

NOLAN (CONT'D)

And what the hell is up with you?

20

INT. RENNER HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

20

Nolan and Morrigan are in the garage, not your traditional garage, it's more of an archive. Filled with piles and piles of old newspapers, books and journals. All sorts of junk.

Amongst them stands the majestic grandfather clock. Still TICKING away. Pendulum swinging healthily. Though, this seems to have come as a surprise for both Morrigan and Nolan.

NOLAN

I didn't think it worked.

MORRIGAN

It hasn't. Not since I was a child.

NOLAN

Maybe Jacob messed around with it.

Depleted, Morrigan takes a seat in a worn-out armchair and starts shuffling through the nearest pile of newspapers.

Nolan regards her with a look of worry.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Elle said you weren't in your room last night.

MORRIGAN

What's she doing going in my room?

NOLAN

Mum. It must get freezing in here.

Morrigan ignores him, tosses a newspaper into a pile by Nolan's feet. The faded date on the front page reads 1941.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

And all this clutter is kind of becoming a bit of a nuisance too.

MORRIGAN

It's not clutter. It's memories.

NOLAN

Well, it can't be healthy. What if you get pneumonia or something?

MORRIGAN

I'm as fit as a fiddle.

NOLAN

Of course you are. But...

(beat; nervous)

Look. It makes me feel bad, seeing you live... like this. There are better places than my garage. So... So, Elle and I were thinking--

MORRIGAN

(interrupts; abruptly)

Not happening.

NOLAN

What?

Morrigan looks up from her newspaper. Gives a hard stare.

MORRIGAN

I said it's not happening. I'm only seventy, you shit.

NOLAN

I wasn't suggesting--

MORRIGAN

--I know what you're suggesting. What she's suggesting.

Nolan falls silent - chastened like a schoolboy. He absent-mindedly picks up a book from a pile, flips through it.

Morrigan returns to her newspaper pile.

MORRIGAN (CONT'D)
We can throw the papers out when
I'm done with them.

NOLAN
Okay, great. So you've found
whatever you're trying to remember?

MORRIGAN
Not even close.

NOLAN
Oh, okay then.

Annoyed, Nolan shakes his head and leaves the garage.

Once alone, Morrigan looks up from her newspaper and eyes the grandfather clock.

-- TICK -- TICK -- TICK -- TICK -- TICK -- TICK -- TICK --

21

EXT. SCHOOL - CARPARK - DAY

21

Nolan exits his car, briefcase in hand. Jacob and Connor fall out of the backseat. Nolan notices their uniforms are a mess.

NOLAN
Come on guys, sort those ties out.

They ignore him - eager to find their friends amongst the flood of SCHOOL CHILDREN entering the gate. Before they can, Nolan pulls his son back.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Hold on a second.

JACOB
What?

NOLAN
(to Connor)
He'll catch up, Connor. Go ahead.

Jacob gives Connor a nod of approval and then Connor goes off to join the crowds, leaving father and son alone.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Aren't you two not getting too old
for sleepovers and... this?

He points to Jacob's shaved head. Jacob shrugs, uncaring.

Disappointed, Nolan tries waiting him out. Fails.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

No more, Jacob. You're both a bad influence on each other. And that makes me look substandard.

JACOB

Christ, Dad. It's only hair.

NOLAN

No. It's about the image you present. And the way you behave around Connor, it won't get you far.

Jacob rolls his eyes.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

So, no more. Understand?

Jacob feigns acknowledgement and pulls away, angry. He storms off to find his friends. Nolan waits a moment, straightens his blazer, then heads into the school - ready for work.

22 **EXT. ABERNATHY FARM - DAY**

22

Cows MOO in the distance, distressed.

Elle stands outside her car, awkwardly pulling up a hooded coverall over her clothes - a biohazard suit.

JANE (50s), Elle's colleague, also dressed in a biohazard suit, approaches Elle. Elle smiles, gestures to the suit:

ELLE

Are these really necessary?

Jane says nothing. Elle sees the grim expression on her face.

ELLE (CONT'D)

(dread creeping in)
What?

23 **INT. ABERNATHY FARM - BARN - DAY**

23

Now, up close, the MOOS are deafening, panicked.

Elle, surgical mask on, has her gloved fingers inside a COW'S MOUTH. She wipes away some froth and finds several BROKEN BLISTERS on the animal's gums. Elle examines them.

Next, she turns her attention to the cow's legs and lifts one.

She finds red ulcerative LESIONS in between the hooves.

Saddened, Elle gets to her feet and gives the distressed cow a gentle, sympathetic stroke with her gloved hand.

Elle gazes down the barn.

There must be a HUNDRED COWS huddled together.

She glances back over to Jane. Deeply disturbed.

ELLE
All of them?

JANE
(nods solemnly)
The sheep as well.

Elle gazes back at the cattle with wide, fraught eyes.

24

INT. RENNER HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

24

Morrigan pulls out an old, barely illegible, newspaper. She scratches off some dust to see the date: 24TH MARCH 1941.

She peels open the pages and her eyes drift to the grandfather clock... The swinging pendulum... The incessant ticking...

Ignoring it, Morrigan concentrates on the newspaper, searching through the mostly unreadable articles.

... The swinging pendulum ... The incessant ticking ...

Morrigan whips through the newspaper faster, ripping a few pages as she does. Her face growing with frustration.

... The swinging pendulum ... The incessant ticking ...

Finally, it becomes too much. Morrigan throws the newspaper and picks up a book and--

MORRIGAN
Stop.

--Hurls it at the grandfather clock.

It hits dead on, cracking the glass.

But it doesn't stop ticking.

Morrigan stares at it, surprised by her outburst. She rubs her face and looks to the floor where she notices--

--The crumpled newspaper she tossed. It's open on a page with a small headline that reads: VANDALS TARGET WYCHBURY OBELISK.

Curious, Morrigan gets up from her armchair and retrieves the newspaper. She studies the headline and the black and white photograph accompanying it:

It shows a tall STONE OBELISK atop a hill. There's a simple graffiti tag, written in white paint, on the side that reads:

W H O P U T B E L L A
I N T H E W I T C H E L M ?

Morrigan stares down at the photograph. Fear behind her eyes. Her hands start to shake as something comes back to her when--

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Help me.

Morrigan jumps, wide-eyed, at the sound of the whisper.

Her eyes dart around the garage. Searching for the voice.

But she's all alone.

Morrigan looks back at the paper. Then to the grandfather clock where she notices--

--A LOOSE COMPARTMENT - must've come undone with her throw.

Morrigan places the newspaper carefully on her armchair and then staggers over to the grandfather clock. She bends down and, with some struggle, pulls the panel loose.

It's dark and hollow inside, dusty, untouched for some time.

Morrigan reaches a hand inside, feels around and-- there!

She pulls her hand back out to reveal a RED LEATHER JOURNAL in her grasp. Perplexed, Morrigan opens the first page.

It reads: 'The accounts of one, AGATHA PENDLE'

Morrigan frowns, confounded - this is her MOTHER'S DIARY.

25

INT. SCHOOL - CHANGING ROOM - DAY

25

Jacob and his classmates are getting changed into their PE kits. The room is full of laughter and testosterone.

Jacob spots Connor heading over but then a tall, bulky kid, PETER DEANS (16), grabs Connor, placing him in a headlock.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
It's an important part of history.

STUDENT
It's bloody grim.

NOLAN
Well, the history of humanity is grim. Or rather, it's apparent that we only remember the worst parts. The Holocaust; slavery; the diseases and plagues. Anyone know why that is?

Nobody gives a suggestion. Nolan answers himself.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Because remembering the horrors and the tragedies of our past, of our ancestors, is the only way we can grow. We learn from their mistakes.

Nolan nods sadly - expecting his words to have some weight. All he gets is a student, DAVE, on the front row chewing gum.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Dave, spit that out.

29 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY** 29

Morrigan drops her mother's diary onto the kitchen table. For a long moment, all she can do is stare down at the journal.

To help, she pulls out a bottle of red wine from a holder and coffee mug from a cupboard and fills the mug to the brim.

Finally, Morrigan flips open the dusty journal. She takes a heavy sip of the wine and skips through the pages until she reaches a header that reads: JANUARY 2ND, 1941.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

30 **INT. PENDLE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (1941)** 30

AGATHA PENDLE sits in an armchair by the grandfather clock. Her face is full of sorrow as she reads from a newspaper.

The headline reads:

GERMANS ATTEMPT TO SET CITY OF LONDON ABLAZE

There's a photograph of St Pauls surrounded by flames.

Agatha studies it then she takes the newspaper and carefully places it in a wooden box atop a pile of others.

YOUNG MORRIGAN (O.S.)

What are you doing with those?

Agatha jolts at the sound of her daughter's voice. She turns to see Young Morrigan by the doorway, crutch under her arm.

AGATHA

Ah, just preservation. Best to keep a record for those who come after.

Morrigan nods and shuffles awkwardly on her crutch.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

(i.e: the crutch)

How are you finding them?

YOUNG MORRIGAN

Uncomfortable.

AGATHA

I'm afraid Doctor Thompson insists. They take the pressure off your legs.

Morrigan, looking sorry for herself, gazes off to the window.

YOUNG MORRIGAN

I saw that black cat again.

AGATHA

Outside?

Morrigan nods and hobbles over to the living room window.

Agatha rises from the armchair and joins her. They gaze out into the back garden. Hagley Woods looms in the background.

YOUNG MORRIGAN

I don't think she has a home.

AGATHA

Not many do these days.

Agatha sighs and places a hand on Morrigan's shoulder.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Like your cousin, Morrigan. You remember Annabella, yes?

Morrigan nods.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
Well, she needs a home now. A
family to look after her.

A pregnant pause.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
Is Aunt Lydia gone too?

Agatha bites her tongue and then nods.

Sullen, they both turn their attention back to the window.

31 **EXT. PENDLE HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - DAY (1941)** 31

Agatha tends to some weeds in the garden. Pulling them out.
Morrigan, wrapped up in a coat, sits in a chair. Watching her.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
What's wrong with those ones?

AGATHA
Just weeds. They'll kill all the
other plants if we let them be.

Agatha dumps a load of weeds into a wooden bucket.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
They make the other plants sick?

AGATHA
In a way, yes.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
Like a disease.

Agatha freezes. She turns to look at Morrigan solemnly.

AGATHA
No. Not like that.

Morose, Morrigan stares down at her withered legs.

32 **EXT. FIELD - DAY (1941)** 32

Agatha opens her back gate and steps out from her garden and
into the field of grass bordering the ominous woods. She
empties to the basket full of weeds onto the floor.

Agatha moves to go back when something catches her eye:

A FIGURE stood amongst the trees by the border of the woods.

Whoever it is seems to be focused on Agatha, watching her.
 Agatha squints for a clearer view but then, just like that--
 --The Figure has vanished. Disappeared back into the woods.
 Agatha frowns with slight confusion when suddenly--
 --Morrigan CRIES OUT from back in the garden.

33 **EXT. PENDLE HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - CONTINUOUS (1941)** 33

Agatha rushes in to find Morrigan collapsed in a heap on the floor. She dashes down to her daughter's aid.

AGATHA
 Morrigan! What happened?

Morrigan is crying, clutching her leg.

Agatha tries to soothe her, wiping away the tears. She sees the crutches have been left unused by the chair.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
 Why didn't you use the crutches?

Morrigan doesn't answer, only cries harder.

Concerned, Agatha lifts the slip of Morrigan's trousers to discover a horrible black bruise, already formed on her ankle.

Agatha studies at it, afraid. Then she looks up to see--

--A BLACK CAT, shabby, ruffled fur, sitting by the open garden gate. Staring at Agatha with intense yellow eyes.

Agatha stares back. Deeply unnerved.

34 **INT. PENDLE HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT (1941)** 34

Agatha bathes Morrigan in the tub. Gently washing her leg.

Morrigan is still sniffing back some tears.

Agatha looks fraught with worry.

35 **INT. PENDLE HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (1941)** 35

A flame from a candle flickers on the bedside table.

Agatha is sat up in bed. Writing in the red leather journal.

Then Connor comes jogging from around the corner, flustered and concerned, and Jacob's smirk fades.

JACOB

What?

CONNOR

Mr Bell-end is goin' to Thorne.
Apparently, you coulda broken fat-boy's leg.

JACOB

Guess they wouldn't believe me if I said it was an accident, right?

Connor gives a sardonic shrug. Carrie tries to exchange a worried look with Robyn but her concern isn't reciprocated.

ROBYN

Who cares? Peter is a prick anyway.

CONNOR

That may be. But news travels fast and when Jacob's dad catches wind...

JACOB

(with a sigh)
...He'll probably make a point of bollocking me in front of Thorne.

ROBYN

Lame.

JACOB

He'd sell my soul if it meant not damaging his fucking 'image'.

CARRIE

Maybe you could apologise to Peter?

Jacob raises an eyebrow at her.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Or not, y'know. Whatever.

She looks off, embarrassed.

Jacob rises and slings his rucksack over his shoulder.

JACOB

Fuck it. I'm clearing off.

CARRIE

You're skiving?

JACOB
Yup. Wanna join?

It's an open question to the group.

It's only Carrie who doesn't look up for trouble.

CONNOR
Well if you disappear then I'm
guessin' I'll be your dad's next
target. So, nothin' for me to lose.

ROBYN
Anything to get out of maths with
Creepy Carlton... Plus we can put
Carrie's weed theory to the test.

They all turn to Carrie with peer pressure glares. She bites her lip nervously before finally nodding in agreement.

38

INT. SCHOOL - NOLAN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

38

Everyone is out for lunch apart from Nolan, who's behind his desk with a half-eaten sandwich, and Dave, the student Nolan caught chewing gum, now in detention but still chewing away.

Nolan is attempting to mark essays. Dave chews louder and louder until Nolan has to give Dave his attention.

NOLAN
What did I tell you?

DAVE
It's lunch.

NOLAN
So?

DAVE
I can chew at lunch.

NOLAN
Not when you're in detention,
imbecile.

Dave stares at Nolan blankly. Keeps chewing. Nolan is about to start when-- His desk phone rings. Incoming call.

With one eye on Dave, Nolan answers.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Oh, Jackie. Thanks for calling.

Nolan spins around in his chair, speaks in a hushed voice.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

...I know it was a favour but... if we just tried another publisher.

(listens; heart drops)

What if I've got something else in the pipeline?... Okay, I haven't at the moment but, y'know, when I do... Could be something really terrific. In fact, I can guarantee it and--

The call ends from the other side.

A moment of despair. Nolan eventually puts his phone down. He slowly swivels around in his chair and locks eyes with Dave.

Dave smiles back, mockingly, at Nolan.

Nolan isn't in the mood to give Dave his time, he retreats to his essays with a heavy sigh. Then--

--There's a knock at his door. Nolan looks up.

MR THORNE (60s), the school's headmaster, is revealed to be at the door. A frustrated look in his eyes.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(smiles; surprised)

Headmaster?

THORNE

Nolan. We need to talk.

NOLAN

Erm, okay. What about?

Thorne doesn't answer. Instead, he scowls at Dave, who, on cue, nervously swallows his gum, now absolutely terrified.

THORNE

Get out.

Within a second, Dave bolts out of the room. Leaving Nolan all the more anxious. Thorne closes the door and sighs.

THORNE (CONT'D)

We need to talk about Jacob.

Nolan tenses up.

A SIGN is hammered into the ground by the entrance road to the farm. The notice reads in big bold red lettering:

NO ADMITTANCE
FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

There's now a flock of PEOPLE IN BIOHAZARD SUITS around. Several DIGGERS and JCB TRUCKS are tearing up the fields. The noise is loud and chaotic.

Further away, Elle watches the diggers at work. She's stunned, her mind reeling. She turns to Jane at her side.

ELLE
This can't be real?

JANE
It's spread around the country in less than two weeks. We have sites like this at every infected farm.

Jane passes Elle a folder. Elle opens it and reads.

ELLE
Fucking hell. 'Contiguous cull.'

JANE
All animals within three kilometres of the source... This being ours.

Disgusted and discouraged, Elle shuts the folder.

ELLE
It's a fucking slaughter.

JANE
The disease is rampant, Elle. We do what we've gotta do to contain it.

Elle gazes at the diggers... and the fresh trench below them.

ELLE
(clutching at straws)
Didn't an F&M vaccination work for Taiwan back in '97?

JANE
What? You got a miracle cure somewhere up your sleeve?

Elle gazes at a HERD OF CATTLE being led out of a barn.

ELLE

All the calves are separate right?

Jane nods.

ELLE (CONT'D)

Can you keep it that way?

40

EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - DAY

40

Jacob and Carrie trudge down a path in the woods in silence. Connor and Robyn are further ahead, chatting away. Flirting.

Eventually, Carrie attempts conversation.

CARRIE

Why'd you do it?

JACOB

Huh?

CARRIE

Y'know, the thing with Peter.

JACOB

Like Robyn said, he's a prick.

CARRIE

But he's always been one.

Touché. Carrie presses on.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

He must've done something, said something, to make you do that?

JACOB

Guess so.

Jacob doesn't budge an inch. Leaving Carrie out of options. As they walk, she opens up her rucksack and pulls out... a bag of weed. She shows it to Jacob. His eyes light up.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Holy shit. You actually have it.

CARRIE

My dad'll kill me if he finds out.

JACOB

That's fucking--

CONNOR (O.S.)
 (shouts from up ahead)
 --Unbelievable.

Connor has clocked the bag in Carrie's hand, beaming.

Jacob and Carrie catch up with them. Everyone looks excited, except Carrie - who is trying her best to hide her nerves.

CARRIE
 We can only have a little.

Jacob looks up and down the path they're on.

JACOB
 Should probably stray off the path.
 Lots of dog walkers come this way.

CONNOR
 Aye, aye captain.

Connor starts off into the woods. The others follow.

41 **INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

41

An English class is in session. Silent. Tense.

There's a KNOCK at the door. It's opened to reveal Nolan. He looks nervy as the TEACHER and all the STUDENTS gaze at him.

NOLAN
 Sorry to disturb you but could I...

He trails off when he notices a vacant desk - Jacob's place.

The Teacher looks up to him, dumbfounded.

TEACHER
 I thought you'd taken him out
 already, Nolan.

The colour drains from Nolan's face. Anger builds.

NOLAN
 No worries.

He shuts the door, leaving the class at peace.

42 **INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

42

Nolan stands, seething. On the verge of another tantrum.

43

EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - DEEPER IN - DAY

43

Jacob takes his first drag on a joint. He exhales and tries not to succumb to a coughing fit. He fails.

Connor and Robyn burst into the laughter. Carrie a nervous chuckle. The four of them are sat underneath a large tree deep in the woods. They are all alone.

Once he's recovered, Jacob holds out the joint for Connor.

JACOB

Laugh it up, dickwad.

Connor takes the joint and expertly takes a drag. Much to the annoyance of an embarrassed Jacob.

CONNOR

What? My ma used to smoke nigh on fifty ciggies a day. Occasionally, the odd one would go missin'.

He holds the joint out to Carrie. She doesn't take it.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You not want any?

CARRIE

Well, my dad usually smokes out of a bong. Think I'd prefer to take it like that. Gets you really high.

ROBYN

We don't have a bong.

CARRIE

Yeah, I know but--

ROBYN

--Why'd you even bother stealing it if you're not gonna have any?

Carrie stutters. Her eyes flash to Jacob, embarrassed.

He doesn't notice. He's preoccupied with a protruding ROOT from the tree he's leaning against. It's oddly misshapen and all the grass around the root is black and scorched... dead.

Robyn snatches the joint from Connor's hand.

ROBYN (CONT'D)

Well, I'm having some.

She takes a harsh drag. Immediately regrets it.

Another one lost to the coughing fit. Connor laughs along.
Carrie finally caves and grabs the joint from her friend.

CARRIE
Give it then.

She takes a little puff. Doesn't inhale.

CONNOR
(through laughter)
You've gotta do it properly.

Jacob is ignorant to what's going on. Trance-like, he feels and then pulls at the root from the tree - it doesn't budge.

Jacob tries again and--

JACOB
Ahh--

--He pulls his hand back with a gasp, as if he's been burned.

He gazes at the palm of his hurt hand. There's a small BLACK SPLINTER underneath his skin. He tries to pull it out when--

CONNOR
Jacob?

JACOB
Huh?

Jacob looks up. Connor is staring at him, hand outstretched, offering him the joint.

CONNOR
Another shot at mowin' the grass?

Jacob smiles - forgetting the splinter and takes the joint.

As the foursome continue on, we pull back and realise they are all sat underneath... the brooding WYCH ELM TREE.

44

INT. RENNER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

44

The bottle of wine is now empty. Morrigan, tipsy, is still completely absorbed in her mother's diary. Eventually, she stops and rubs her tired eyes. She gets up from her seat.

Morrigan moves over to the sink. With a shaking hand, she pours herself a glass of water.

Morrigan takes a sip and gazes out of the kitchen window:

Beyond the back garden, HAGLEY WOODS stands across the field. It's barren - the trees haven't seen spring for some time.

Morrigan drops her gaze when she catches sight of--

--A SHABBY BLACK CAT (the same from 1941?) sat in the garden. Staring directly at Morrigan with unflinching yellow eyes.

Morrigan's expression darkens as she stares back.

The cat never drops its gaze. Never blinks. Never moves.

Morrigan looks to the diary on the table, waiting for her to return. Her resolve hardens. She heads back to the diary.

The next header reads: FEBRUARY 3RD, 1941.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

45 **INT. PENDLE HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY (1941)** 45

The front door opens and Agatha enters, carrying a small suitcase. Following her is...

...ANNABELLA RICHMOND (17). A pale-skinned girl with sad, vacant eyes that suggest her mind is constantly elsewhere. She enters the house but barely registers her surroundings.

Agatha shuts the door behind them and regards Annabella.

AGATHA

Are you hungry, Annabella?

Annabella doesn't respond.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Morrigan has made you up a room.

Again, nothing. The girl is completely shellshocked.

Agatha sighs and ushers Annabella down the hallway.

46 **INT. PENDLE HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - DAY (1941)** 46

Young Morrigan sits organising a few books at a desk when Agatha and Annabella enter. Morrigan smiles at her cousin.

YOUNG MORRIGAN

Hello.

Annabella gives nothing to Morrigan either.

Morrigan motions to the books.

YOUNG MORRIGAN (CONT'D)
Mum and I picked these out for you.

Annabella silently walks to the bed and perches there.

Agatha and Morrigan exchange a worried glance.

AGATHA
Come. Let's give Anna some space.

Morrigan nods and pushes herself up. She reaches out for her crutches but accidentally knocks them to the bedroom floor.

They land with a loud BANG.

Annabella gasps suddenly. Eyes suddenly wide and fraught.

Agatha steps in and picks up the crutches for Morrigan. Then she tries to soothe her panicking niece.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
It's all right. Don't worry. We're safe, dear. You're safe here now.

Annabella continues to breathe heavily.

Guilt-ridden, Morrigan takes her crutches and moves to the door. She looks back at her cousin on the way out, pensive.

YOUNG MORRIGAN
I'm sorry.

AGATHA
Go on. She'll be fine, Morrigan.

Morrigan looks uncertainly at her mother and then exits.

Agatha sits next to Annabella on the bed and rubs her back.

47 **INT. PENDLE HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT (1941)** 47

Annabella is asleep in bed. Curled up in the foetal position.

Holding up a candle that's casting a warm glow into the room, Agatha lingers by the door, watching her niece. After a beat, she blows out the candle and leaves.

48 **INT. PENDLE HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (1941)** 48

Agatha is dozing in her bed. Eyes closed but barely asleep.

WHISPER (O.S.)

Help me.

Agatha jolts. She twists around, trying to locate the source.

AGATHA

Hello?-- Annabella?

There. Agatha spots a glimpse of a figure in the dense woods. She starts after it.

52 **EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - DEEPER IN - MOMENTS LATER (1941)** 52

Agatha pushes through some shrubbery and falls into a clearing. Here there is no wind. Just a sinister silence.

Agatha looks ahead and finds herself standing--

--The Wych Elm Tree. Illuminated by the pale moonlight.

Agatha gazes up at the monstrosity in astonishment and--

END FLASHBACK.

53 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - KITCHEN - PRESENT DAY** 53

Morrigan turns onto the next page and--

--SHE FREEZES UP - suddenly overcome with fear.

Instead of her mother's writings, there's a picture of the WYCH ELM TREE on the page. Scrawled madly. With an oversized trunk. Sharp, overhanging branches... And that hollow cavity.

Below it, in scribbled handwriting, are two words:

' I T P R O M I S E S '

Confused, Morrigan touches the drawing, haunted by it when--

--THE JOURNAL SUDDENLY COMBUSTS INTO FLAMES.

Startled, Morrigan whips her hand back and jumps to her feet. She falls back against the kitchen wall, just as--

--The flames vanished just as quickly as they appeared.

Stunned, Morrigan stares at the pages of the book.

They remain unburned. As if the fire was never really there.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)
Destroy it, Morrigan.

Morrigan jolts again at the sound of the unearthly whisper.

She looks around the kitchen but... she's all alone.

For a dark moment, all Morrigan can do is stand there, terror-stricken. She gapes down at the journal, paranoia seeping in.

54

EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - DEEPER IN - DAY

54

Jacob, eyes red - slightly high, studies the twisted branches of the wych elm tree that loom over his head. Robyn is laid flat out beside him - completely stoned, Carrie's paranoia has hit full force, and Connor fidgets - restless and bored.

CONNOR
 Should we head? Or smoke some more?

Carrie toys with the remaining weed in the bag, concerned.

CARRIE
 There's enough in here to put back.
 My dad will never know. Nobody will
 know. If I put this back. As it is.

ROBYN
 Chill out, Carrie.

CARRIE
 I am chilled.

She is not. Connor kicks Jacob - grabbing his attention.

CONNOR
 Ready to go back? Face the big man?

JACOB
 I might just stay here forever.

CONNOR
 The hunchback of Hagley Woods eh?

JACOB
 Man, who you calling hunchback? You
 couldn't outrun Chubby Chelsea.

CONNOR
 It's called bein' polite.
 (to Robyn and Carrie)
 Am I not a true gentleman, ladies?

ROBYN

Fuck off.

CARRIE

Jacob is a lot bigger, Connor.

CONNOR

Well now ya'll insultin' my honour.

Connor staggers to his feet, stands over Jacob.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

See, not so big.

Jacob laughs and pushes himself up. He towers over Connor.

In response, Connor grabs a low-hanging branch on the wych elm tree and, with some struggle, pulls himself up. He sits there above Jacob's head.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Ta-da. Taller again.

JACOB

We really doing this?

CONNOR

Afraid I got you beat, Jakey-boy?

Jacob gives a wry smile - secretly enjoying the competition. He feigns a sigh, takes hold of the wych elm and begins to pull himself up.

Robyn leans up - she couldn't be less interested.

ROBYN

I'm gonna need to roll up again if
I'm to put up with these fucktards.

Carrie shields her baggie and shakes her head.

As Jacob finally pulls himself off the floor, Connor climbs up even higher - challenging Jacob to follow.

CONNOR

Strugglin', little man?

JACOB

Shut up.

Jacob, searching for footing, places his foot inside the HOLLOW CAVITY of the wych elm - *we've seen it before.*

Jacob lurches up, pushing his full weight on the cavity and--

--CRACK! -- THE CAVITY GIVES WAY--

--JACOB LOSES HIS GRIP. FALLS--

--AND HITS THE GROUND WITH A HARD THUD.

Carrie jumps up with a short scream, dropping her bag of weed to the floor in the process.

CARRIE

Jacob!

Jacob lies there on the ground. Eyes closed. Then, he grimaces - the wind taken well and truly out of him.

JACOB

Fuck...

Connor jumps down from the tree and lands on steady feet.

CONNOR

(smiles; victorious)

See. All the evidence needed to prove that Connor Mason is, in fact, the bigger man.

He waltzes around, cheering - enjoying his moment.

Robyn breaks out into laughter.

Carrie rushes to Jacob's aid as his embarrassment sets in. Jacob's face reddens as he gets to his feet but then--

--Jacob's eyes lock onto the BROKEN CAVITY in the wych elm... His breath gets caught in his throat... The fall forgotten.

At his side, Carrie notices Jacob's sudden disposition.

CARRIE

What?

Jacob ignores her. His eyes widen. His face pales.

Carrie follows his gaze then gives out an involuntary gasp.

It cuts short Robyn's laughter and Connor's gloating.

They both look to the wych elm and instantly freeze up.

ROBYN

Holy shit...

Staring back at them from inside the cavity... a SKULL.

FMD - SUBSEQUENT VACCINATION

Elle smiles to herself, this is what she needs.

A landline phone on her desk rings. Elle picks it up.

ELLE

Elle Renner speaking.

NOLAN (VOICE)

Yeah, it's me.

ELLE

Hey sorry, honey. I'm just about to head back to the site--

NOLAN (VOICE)

No, I need you to meet me at home.

ELLE

Sorry?

NOLAN (VOICE)

It's okay. It's Jacob, he's gonna cost me my job, Elle. We've got to talk some sense in him, together.

ELLE

This is a bad time, Nolan. They're going forward with a cull the whole livestock in Abernathy and maybe--

NOLAN (VOICE)

--You're part of this family. Just stop by home on the way, please...

Elle sighs and grimaces. She picks up the Taiwan folder.

ELLE

You're really going to ruin my cool step-mum image, y'know.

65

EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - DAY

65

ON JACOB'S UNCONSCIOUS FACE. As he's being dragged by the armpits through the woods. His eyes shuffle behind the lids--

--And he suddenly jolts awake with a cry.

Jacob rolls to the side, freeing himself from CONNOR's grasp.

JACOB

Get away-- Get away!

CONNOR

Jacob, calm down. Calm down.

Jacob jumps up to his feet, frenzied. He glares at the trio of Connor, Carrie and Robyn in front of him. They all look concerned and frightened. Carrie has clearly been crying.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Come on, Jacob. It's me.

Panting, Jacob reorientates himself. He calms down and tries standing tall, only to notice a wet patch around his groin.

His face reddens further--

JACOB

I-- didn't--

CONNOR

It's okay, innit. You're okay.

He looks to Carrie and Robyn for support. They nod along.

ROBYN

The fuck was that?

Jacob collects himself, tries to rack his mind. Fails.

JACOB

I-- I don't know.

CARRIE

It was a fit, a seizure, when you touched... We should get you to the hospital. And then we tell the police about that... thing.

CONNOR

No. We just go home.

CARRIE

What?!

CONNOR

We just go home, forget about it.

ROBYN

Connor, we saw a skull, a fucking dead person, in that tree.

CARRIE

And what about Jacob?

Connor turns to Jacob, places a hand on his shoulder.

CONNOR

He's fine now. Right?

Jacob half-nods - still deeply disturbed. He glances at the palm of his hand. There's a BLACK BRUISE around the splinter.

Connor carries on running the show.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
We ain't gonna tell anybody.

ROBYN
What? Connor, we saw--

CONNOR
--Nada. At least for today. We meet tomorrow and discuss what then but not now while we're high as kites.

Carrie face suddenly drops - a realisation hits. She feels her pockets to no avail. She gazes up, crestfallen.

CARRIE
I left it.

ROBYN
Left what?

CARRIE
My dad's weed. I must've dropped it.

Robyn tries taking charge.

ROBYN
Then we go back and get it. Then we call the police or somebody.

Jacob is ignorant to the debate. Horrified by the infection the splinter has caused in the palm of his hand.

CONNOR
Go then. But there ain't no way in hell I'm ramblin' on back to that fuckin' tree. You can, but not me.

He stares hard at Robyn - defying her to go. She remains as still as a statue.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Thought so. Seein' as we ain't venturin' back, then we ain't pickin' up Carrie's weed. And if we don't pick up the weed then we can't tell anybody about the tree.

Connor gazes at all three of them in turn. No one answers.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Comprende?

Jacob looks up from the palm of his hand and nods.

JACOB
We go home.

66 **EXT. TOWN - DAY**

66

The evening is quickly fading into an early autumn night. Elle's car moves slowly through the empty suburban streets.

A radio plays inside.

RADIO HOST (VOICE)
Despite the concerns of the National Farmers' Union, the Government is confident the apparent epidemic will soon be under control...

67 **INT. ELLE'S CAR - DAY**

67

Frustrated, Elle clicks off the radio and drives in silence until she pulls into the driveway of the Renner House.

68 **EXT. RENNER HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY**

68

Elle steps out of her car and heads for the front door when she spots the Black Cat sitting upright on the doorstep.

ELLE
And who are you?

Elle leans down to pet the cat when--

--The cat arches its back and hisses, threatened by Elle.

Elle recoils and the Black Cat scampers off.

69 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY**

69

Elle enters, closing the door behind her. Oblivious to how eerily quiet the house is. She gazes up the nearby stairs.

ELLE
Jacob, you in?

Nothing. Just silence. Elle sighs and starts up the stairs.

ELLE (CONT'D)

Nolan!!

74

EXT. RENNER HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - DAY

74

Elle darts out of the back door and sprints to Morrigan.

Nolan comes out after her and sprints past her.

NOLAN

Mum!

Nolan falls to his knees bedside Morrigan and rolls her over. His mother's body is limp. Her lips blue. She's unconscious.

Elle leans and smells the alcohol in the air around Morrigan.

ELLE

She's wasted.

NOLAN

What? No-- I think she's hurt.

(tries to stir her)

Mum?-- Mum?

Morrigan remains out for the count.

Now panicked, Nolan lifts his mother up. Elle helps him.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I'll get her to the hospital.

(desperate)

You'll stay and wait for Jacob?

Elle hesitates.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Elle, be a parent to him for once,
Christ.

Elle sighs and gives in.

ELLE

Sure. Yeah.

Nolan nods and together they heave Morrigan to the back door.

Unaware of the red journal open on the barbecue.

The pages flip in the wind.

Revealing manic drawing after drawing of the witch elm tree.

75

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

75

Jacob, Connor, Carrie and Robyn emerge from the woods and step into a crossroads. They stand there under the orange glow of a street. All of them silent. All of them distressed.

Finally, Connor resumes the captain's role again.

CONNOR

So we're in agreement, yeah?

Carrie and Robyn look shamefaced but they eventually nod.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

We'll decide what to do tomorrow.

ROBYN

Right. Whatever.

She turns her back to them and starts her walk home.

Carrie lingers for a moment, guilty eyes on Jacob.

CARRIE

I'm sorry...

JACOB

For what?

Carrie goes to answer, but quickly changes her mind. She scampers off after Robyn. Leaving Connor and Jacob all alone.

Connor tries to brighten the mood.

CONNOR

She still likes you then. Even despite the piss in your pants.

Jacob half-laughs, still embarrassed about the fact.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I'mma fuckin' with you.

JACOB

Yeah. You wanna stay round tonight?

CONNOR

(dithers, looks away)
I better not, Jacob. Not tonight.

Jacob nods, hiding his disappointment.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I should get goin'.

He starts to move off when Jacob finds his voice.

JACOB
Why so against telling people?

Connor stops mid-stride, avoids Jacob's gaze.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Nobody will care about the weed
when they find what's in the tree.

CONNOR
I know. It's just...
(face falls; saddened)
Best I'm not involved in anything
with my mum the way she is. Best I
don't bring the police and a dead
body into the house too. I give her
enough stress anyway, y'know.

Connor falls silent. He turns and starts up the road.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Get back safe, Jacob.

JACOB
You too.

With a gesture of goodbye, Connor walks away.

Once clear, Jacob checks the palm of his hand again. The black bruise around the splinter has grown in size.

He grimaces and starts to head off down the street.

Jacob glances up as he walks and catches sight of--

--A SHAPE. Underneath a broken street light in the distance. Obscured by the darkness. Though it seems to be watching him.

Jacob blinks and -- THE SHAPE DISAPPEARS.

Jacob picks up the pace with his walk, paranoia building.

76

INT. RENNER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

76

Elle paces around the kitchen impatiently.

She looks to the clock on the wall (around 8pm) and then to the Taiwan folder and her car keys on the centre table.

Elle grimaces to herself, torn, before she makes a decision.

ELLE

Fuck it.

She grabs a notebook and a pen off the kitchen side and quickly writes down: GRAN IN HOSPITAL, DAD WILL CALL HOME.

Then Elle grabs her keys and the folder before she departs.

77 **EXT. STREETS - NIGHT**

77

Jacob speed-walks down the street. Occasionally, looking over his shoulder. But he finds nothing but darkness behind him.

A beam of headlights appear in front of him. A car speeds down the road, heading Jacob's way. He looks as it passes--

--Elle is behind the wheel. She doesn't see Jacob.

Perplexed, Jacob watches her car disappear down the road.

78 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

78

Jacob closes the front door behind him as quietly as possible. He locks it before turning to face the long, dark and empty hallway in front of him. He swallows, still nervy.

JACOB

Dad?... Gran?...

No response. Jacob glances up the stairs.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Gran?

Nothing. Jacob's chest starts to pound, his vulnerability begins to show, as he realises he might be all alone.

79 **INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT**

79

Nolan sits by himself, framed by posters about flu-jabs and vaccinations. Sickness surrounds him. He's been here a while.

He rubs his tired eyes when a DOCTOR (50s) approaches.

DOCTOR

Mr Renner.

Nolan rises from his seat. Alarm in his eyes.

NOLAN

Hey. Everything okay? She okay?

DOCTOR

Can you remember the last time your mother visited the hospital, Mr Renner? Her local GP perhaps?

Nolan racks his memory. Shakes his head.

NOLAN

No, but... what's wrong with her?

DOCTOR

That's difficult to determine. Your mother has barely a medical record for us to work from...

The Doctor stops, deliberates his next words. Nolan presses.

NOLAN

Why does that matter?

DOCTOR

The head injury is nothing to be concerned about. Just a scratch, if anything... But we found signs of trauma in the x-ray. Severe trauma.

NOLAN

Okay. That sounds pretty bad.

DOCTOR

Our scans found Morrigan has undergone some major injuries in the past. Yet we have no record.
(beat; sternly)
Has your mother ever broken, or suffered fractures, in her legs?

Nolan shakes his head, not fully understanding.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

When she was younger perhaps?

NOLAN

I don't-- She barely remembers her childhood but-- What are you saying?

83

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT WARD - CONTINUOUS

83

Morrigan lies in bed. Awake. Alert.

DOCTOR (V.O.)

There are signs of several fractures throughout her body.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Even some spinal curvature. By all
 accounts, with that level of trauma,
 Morrigan shouldn't be able to walk.

Her eyes lock on a pair of crutches placed across the room.

84 **INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

84

Confounded, Nolan can only half-laugh.

NOLAN
 That's quite the conclusion you've
 jumped to-- She can clearly walk.

DOCTOR
 If I was jumping to conclusions,
 then I'd say it's a miracle your
 mother survived past childhood.

Nolan shakes his head in disbelief.

85 **EXT. ABERNATHY FARM - NIGHT**

85

A warm glow bathes in the smoky night air.

Elle's car pulls up opposite the farmer's field. Elle kills
 the engine and quickly steps out of the car.

She's staring ahead, her face full of sorrow and... failure.

Out in the field, smoke rises from a FLAMING TRENCH.

COW CARCASSES are piled within. Burning away.

Elle silently steps forward. Clearly devastated. But still,
 her eyes are set on the horrific sight, focused on...

...A pair of HOOVES stuck up in the air atop the carcass
 pile. They're small, probably once belonged to a calf.

Elle finally turns away. She cannot bear to look any longer.

86 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

86

The house-phone RINGS impatiently.

87 **INT. RENNER HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

87

It echoes through the house.

Jacob steps out from the safety of his bedroom and, with some trepidation, approaches the mouth of the stairs.

He gazes down into the darkness, wary.

However, the ringing is loud and persistent - calling him.

88

INT. RENNER HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

88

Jacob reaches the bottom of the stairs.

He flicks the light switch on the wall, expecting the hallway to light up but nothing happens. He tries again. Same result.

Jacob gapes at the doorway leading into the kitchen at the end of the hall. The phone continues to SCREECH from within.

Jacob puts on a brave face and starts forward when he catches sight of a--

--SILHOUETTE stood in the darkness of the kitchen.

Jacob freezes on the spot.

He squints, trying to make out the FIGURE through the dark...

...It looks like an OLD WOMAN. Her back turned to Jacob.

JACOB

Gran?

She doesn't move.

Doesn't respond or acknowledge Jacob's call in any way.

The ringing phone finally CUTS OUT.

Leaving the house in a void of suspenseful silence.

Jacob swallows, bordering on panic.

His voice croaks with fear.

JACOB (CONT'D)

G-Gran?

The Old Woman slowly looks over her shoulder to reveal--

--The dirty, twisted face of the WOMAN IN RAGS. She glares at Jacob with eyes that pierce through the darkness.

Jacob stumbles backwards, too horrified to even cry out.

He just stares at her for a moment.

And she stares right back.

Finally, the horror of the sight breaks Jacob. He bolts for the front door behind him. He pulls at the handle but the door refuses to open. Panicked, he looks over his shoulder.

SHE remains by the kitchen doorway. Watching him in amusement.

Giving up on the door, Jacob turns and bounds up the stairs. He reaches the top without ever looking back behind him.

89

INT. RENNER HOUSE - JACOB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

89

Jacob slams his bedroom door shut. He overturns a nearby dresser and shoves it in front of the door - barricading, and trapping, himself inside.

A hard moment passes.

Jacob stands back, panting - on the verge of tears.

And then -- FOOTSTEPS from the hallway outside his room.

Jacob holds his breath. Following the sound with his eyes.

The footsteps come to a stop right outside of his door.

Jacob glares at the doorknob - praying it doesn't move.

There's another long, terrible pause.

Then the footsteps move away. Seemingly back down the stairs.

Jacob finally breaks down into tears. Though they aren't tears of relief but of utter distress.

Then he GASPS from a sudden sharp pain.

He clutches his hand with the other and opens his palm to reveal the SPLINTER... surrounded by black infection. The splinter itself is now, somehow, HUGE. Breaking the skin.

Panicked, Jacob collapses onto his bed. He pulls in his bedside lamp close - illuminating his outstretched hand.

Jacob surveys the splinter like an alarmed surgeon. He pumps himself up and grips the end of the splinter in his palm with his thumb and forefinger, ready to pull. But unaware that--

--THE BEDROOM WINDOW OPENING BEHIND HIM. SLOWLY AND SILENTLY.

Oblivious, Jacob commits and starts pulling the splinter out.

He whimpers in pain. Tears rolling down his cheeks.

Jacob jerks the splinter up... revealing it's longer and thicker than it first seemed. It's impossible but... it's like there's a **WHOLE SMALL STICK** underneath his arm.

As Jacob continues on... A **HAND** appears at the open window.

Meanwhile, Jacob notices his wrist: the rest of the stick is visible underneath his skin, moving like a dislodged bone as he pulls the splinter free. Shocked, Jacob cries out again.

With a final heave, Jacob wrenches the stick free. It flows out of his palm. Blood leaks from the hole it left behind.

Jacob studies the stick, horrified but almost relieved. It's just like one of the sharp twigs seen on the wych elm tree.

He casts it aside when he notices small vines, like black veins, appear under his skin around the wound in his hand.

Jacob watches in horror as the vines grow and spread up his arm, til they reach his neck... and protrude on his face.

Then Jacob's body stiffens, he seizes up and collapses back on to his bed. He lies there, eyes wide but unable to move.

And that's when he sees--

--The Woman In Rags looming over him. She glares down at him.

Jacob's heart pounds in his chest. But he still can't move.

He can only watch as the Woman In Rags slowly hovers her filthy hand over his face.

She strokes his cheek as the vines inside Jacob continue to grow. They eventually reach the whites of Jacob's eyes and--

90

EXT. HAGLEY WOODS - NIGHT

90

The wind screeches, screams, around the wych elm tree.

We're drawn to it, moving in closer and closer until we come face-to-face with the skull inside the heart of the tree.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT