

SCRATCHES

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FADE IN:

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

LIVING ROOM

The room walls are wood paneling and vacant of any decoration. Several empty bottles of Jack Daniel's litter the coffee table and the floor around the couch. The television show M\*A\*S\*H blares through the old tube TV.

GEORGE (late 70's, white, male) is slouched over in a cracking leather couch. His elbows tucked perfectly within the worn rips of the arm rests. He is holding a ROCKS GLASS near empty of whiskey.

He is only wearing DISCOLORED WHITE UNDERWEAR. His body is riddled with scars and faded stretched tattoos. His sagging skin has formed goosebumps.

His red eyes are glued to the television.

It's snowing outside.

George refills his glass with a half-filled bottle of whiskey.

He lets out a deep breath. A CHALKY PUFF flows from his mouth. George slams the glass onto the coffee table.

GEORGE  
Goddamn furnace.

George shifts on the sofa, he uses the momentum to rock himself. George slowly stands, wobbling at the hips. His knees pop as he shuffles his heavy feet.

He bumps his elbows into the door frame. He rips a large ARMY GREEN JACKET from the coat rack. He jerks open a drawer retrieving a HAMMER and an ARMY FLASHLIGHT.

George bumps into the wall as he nears the cellar door. He opens it and sways for a moment as he looks down the wooden stairs toward the basement.

He flips the switch of the flashlight and takes the first step down. His heel slips off the first step.

## BASEMENT

George releases the hammer and the flashlight. He tries to grab onto anything, but only manages to make a few SCRATCH MARKS on the wall. His body tumbles and slams into each step.

He lands at the bottom of the stairs on his face. The only sounds heard are faint echoes of laughter on the television and the labored gasps from George.

Blood seeping from his head. His fingers dig into the floor. SCRATCH, SCRATCH, SCRATCH.

## EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

A small porch light squeaks as it swings back and forth. Lighting a small area of the snow covered house.

## EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

The MAILMAN (Mid 40's) pulls up to the leaning mailbox. He opens the mailbox. It is completely full.

The mailman tries to maneuver the bills inside but he cannot get them to fit.

MAILMAN

Come on.

He slams the shift into park and steps out of the truck.

Then yanks the contents of the box out and slams the box shut. He treks through the deep snow and climbs the steps to the front porch.

He peeks through the window. The TV is still on and he can see the full glass of whiskey on the coffee table.

He knocks. No answer.

He knocks again. No answer. He lays the stack of mail on the porch swing.

MAILMAN (CONT'D)

Drunken fool.

He makes his way back to the truck. Clicks his seat belt and shifts into drive. He looks back at the front door.

The mailman furrows his brow and shifts the truck back in park. He pulls out his cell phone and dials a number.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A police cruiser pulls into the driveway. OFFICER THOMASTON (late 20's, white, male) shifts in the driver seat and checks his pristine pomaded hair.

He picks up the last of his homemade sandwich, and takes the last bite. He takes a drink of his coffee. His eyes scan the house and the small cemetery directly beside it.

OFFICER THOMASTON  
That's not creepy.

He steps out of the car. The crunching of the snow beneath his feet is the only sound in the looming silence.

He cautiously climbs the stairs. He looks down at the stack of bills on the porch swing. He looks through the window seeing the television still on and the glass of whiskey on the coffee table.

Officer Thomaston knocks. He waits a moment. No answer.

He knocks again. He waits a moment. No answer.

Officer Thomaston reaches down and tries the doorknob. It's unlocked. He pushes the door open.

He pokes his head into the house.

OFFICER THOMASTON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Hanscott?

No response. He steps inside the door.

OFFICER THOMASTON (CONT'D)  
Police. Mr. Hanscott. This is  
Officer Thomaston from Burnchester  
P.D.

He continues further into the house.

OFFICER THOMASTON (CONT'D)  
Are you home? I'm just here to  
perform a wellness check, sir.

Upbeat music plays from the living room. He rounds the corner.

TV ANNOUNCER  
Tim Wentley! Come on down!

OFFICER THOMASTON  
Shit!

His eyes dart to the TV. *The Price is Right* is airing. He walks over and turns of the television. He looks around the room in utter silence.

He turns and looks at the whiskey bottles strewn everywhere. He takes a step closer and notices the gnats floating in the whiskey glass.

He continues on through the house.

OFFICER THOMASTON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Hanscott? This is Officer  
Thomaston with Burnchester P.D. Are  
you home?

As he investigates further, he is hit with an overpowering nauseated stench.

As he continues through the hallway he covers his face with the pit of his elbow. He places his hand on the grip of his GLOCK 19.

Officer Thomaston spots an open door down the corridor. A light is on inside. He lowers his arm from his nose.

OFFICER THOMASTON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Hanscott, are you there?

The top step comes into view. He turns and looks down the stairs.

OFFICER THOMASTON (CONT'D)  
Dammit.

Officer Thomaston grabs the radio mic on his shoulder.

OFFICER THOMASTON (CONT'D)  
Dispatch, this is 620.

DISPATCH OFFICER (O.S.)  
620, this is dispatch. Go ahead.

OFFICER THOMASTON  
I need a bus to 101 Thomas Hill  
Road.

DISPATCH OFFICER (O.S.)  
10-4, 620. Bus en route.

Officer Thomaston sighs. He pulls out his long, black Maglite. He turns it on and slowly makes his way down the stairs.

## BASEMENT

Officer Thomaston steps cautiously not to disturb George's body. He scans around George and notices the flashlight and the hammer.

He squats down and flashes his light over the body. He inspects the small grooves and George's broken, bloody fingers.

He shakes his head and covers his nose with the back of his wrist. He glances up the stairs, stands up and goes back up.

## LIVING ROOM

Officer Thomaston opens the front door. DETECTIVE CHILDRESS (late 50's, male) is standing there with two PARAMEDICS dragging a gurney up the driveway. Detective Childress unwraps a stick of mint gum and shoves it into his mouth.

DETECTIVE CHILDRESS  
What do we have, rookie?

OFFICER THOMASTON  
Look's like the old man's furnace went out, and he took a spill town the stairs to fix it.

DETECTIVE CHILDRESS  
Unlucky bastard. Let's take a look.

Detective Childress follows behind officer Thomaston.

## BASEMENT

The two officers slowly walk down the stairs as the paramedics wait at the top. Detective Childress squats and inspects the body routinely as Officer Thomaston covers his nose with his hand.

Detective Childress stands, looks around the room and back at Officer Thomaston.

DETECTIVE CHILDRESS (CONT'D)  
I'd say he's been dead a few weeks.  
(BEAT)  
The sauce will kill you.

OFFICER THOMASTON  
Show some respect.

DETECTIVE CHILDRESS  
It's a common thing in winter, rook.

(MORE)

## DETECTIVE CHILDRESS (CONT'D)

Older people don't have good heating so they resort to booze. You get used to this sort of thing.

They both look down at the body. Detective Childress pulls out a pack of gum and holds it out.

## DETECTIVE CHILDRESS (CONT'D)

It helps with the smell.

Officer Thomaston takes one.

## OFFICER THOMASTON

Thanks.

## DETECTIVE CHILDRESS

I don't envy the phone call and hours of paperwork. Good luck.

Detective Childress pats Officer Thomaston on the back and climbs the stairs. Officer Thomaston stands there staring at the body as the paramedics come down.

## INT. APARTMENT - DAY

In the rundown two-bedroom apartment JANET (27, white, female) is scrambling around the kitchen. She frustratedly pulls her hair up into a sloppy pony tail. She is wearing a convenience store uniform.

CONNOR (12, white, male) is laying on the dilapidated sofa reading a worn copy of *CREEPSHOW*. The sun is peeking around a makeshift curtain.

Janet slams her hands on the counter.

## JANET

Connor, have you seen my keys? I'm going to be late.

Connor rolls his eyes.

## CONNOR

No.

Janet snaps her head in his direction.

## JANET

Get up and help me look for them. You can read that later.

Connor sighs. He tosses the comic on the coffee table which is littered with take out boxes and a crusty plate with a half eaten hot pocket. He forces himself up.

JANET (CONT'D)

I could've sworn I left them right here on the counter.

Connor opens the fridge. Inside the fridge is a half gallon of milk, a few condiments, and a jar of pickles. He shakes his head as he pulls the keys out from beside the case of beer.

CONNOR

Found them.

Janet spins around and snatches the keys from him.

JANET

Not a word.

She scoops up her purse. She gives him a quick peck on the forehead.

JANET (CONT'D)

Help me out and clean this place up a little. I'll be working late.

There is a knock at the door. Both of them shoot their eyes over at it. Janet groans as she rushes and opens it.

Officer Thomaston is standing there.

JANET (CONT'D)

Can I help you, officer?

OFFICER THOMASTON

Are you Janet Gale?

JANET

Yes.

OFFICER THOMASTON

May I come inside for a moment?

Janet glances back at Connor then back at officer Thomaston.

JANET

Now's not a good time. I'm late for work.

OFFICER THOMASTON

Ma'am, I have some news about your father.

Janet's shoulders tense up. She keeps her eyes glued to the officer.

JANET  
Connie, go to your room.

Connor stands there a moment. Janet snaps her head around.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Room. Now.

Connor turns and walks to his room.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Come in.

Officer Thomaston enters. He scans his gaze around the tiny unkept apartment.

Janet closes the door. She drops her bag beside it.

She walks over and takes a seat. She gestures to Officer Thomaston.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Please, have a seat.

Officer Thomaston grabs a to-go box and sets it off to the side as he sits.

He gives her a shy smile and is wringing his hands.

OFFICER THOMASTON  
Ma'am, there's no easy way to say  
this but--

JANET  
He's dead.

Officer Thomaston's eyes go wide. He nods.

OFFICER THOMASTON  
Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry--

JANET  
Thank you for informing me. I'll  
make the necessary arrangements.

OFFICER THOMASTON  
Ma'am I need you to come down and  
confirm that it's him.

Janet shakes her head and huffs.

JANET  
You find him at Thomas Hill Road?

OFFICER THOMASTON  
Yes, ma'am. It appears that--

JANET  
It's him then.

Janet stands to her feet.

Officer Thomaston stands up following her lead.

She heads to the door and opens it. Officer Thomaston stops.

OFFICER THOMASTON  
I'm sorry for your loss.

JANET  
I'm not. Have good day, Officer.

Officer Thomaston steps out the door. Connor peeks his head out of the bedroom. Janet is standing there staring at the purse on the floor. She is gritting her teeth.

She snaps out of her gaze and snatches up her purse. She looks over at Connor as he eases out of the bedroom.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Clean up before I get home.

Janet leaves. Connor eases his way to the door and locks it behind her.

INT. VETERAN AFFAIRS - DAY

Janet is sitting in a crowded waiting area. She is flipping through a NATIONAL GUARD MAGAZINE.

VA SECRETARY (O.S.)  
Miss Gale?

Janet places the magazine on the end table and stands. She approaches a counter with thick plexiglass between her and the secretary.

VA SECRETARY (CONT'D)  
How may I assist you today?

JANET  
I'm looking into burial benefits for my father.

VA SECRETARY  
I'm sorry for your loss. Name, date  
of birth and service?

JANET  
Hanscott, George, C. August 22  
1935, Marine Corps.

The V.A. Secretary types on her computer.

Her eyes gaze across the screen.

She gives Janet a slight smile.

VA SECRETARY  
Miss Gale. Would you mind waiting  
in the lobby for a moment?

Janet nods.

The V.A. Secretary pick up her phone and hits a button. She  
eyes Janet as she mumbles into the phone.

Janet takes her seat and watches. The V.A. Secretary nods as  
she listens. She mumbles something. She nods again and hangs  
up the phone.

VA SECRETARY (CONT'D)  
Miss Gale?

Janet steps back up to the counter.

VA SECRETARY (CONT'D)  
Miss Gale. I'm sorry to inform you  
that there are no burial benefits  
available to you.

Janet smirks and nods.

JANET  
The dishonorable discharge?

The V.A. Secretary nods.

VA SECRETARY  
I'm sorry Miss Gale. There is  
nothing--

JANET  
No reason to be. I figured. I just  
thought I would ask. Have a nice  
day.

The V.A. Secretary gives her a sad smile.

VA SECRETARY  
Thank you. You too.

Janet turns and leaves.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

Connor is propped up by a window overlooking the cemetery beside the house. He watched as Janet, the PASTOR, and two GRAVE DIGGERS stand around as the sealed coffin was lowered in the ground.

The pastor closes his bible.

Janet walks closer to the grave and looks down into it.

She stares into the grave for what feels like minutes. She kicks some dirt into the grave.

A large clump of dirt falls into the hole.

She turns and walks away.

The pastor nods to the gravediggers. They begin filling in the grave.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

BASEMENT

Connor is struggling to move a HEAVY DRESSER down the basement stairs. The drawers have been removed.

The bottom of the dresser makes a loud thumping noise as it lands on each tread as he drags it.

JANET (O.S.)

Connor! Bring me another Bud, will ya? This one is piss warm!

Connor groans.

CONNOR

Alright, just give me a minute!

(BEAT)

Talk about bad timing.

LIVING ROOM

Janet is in a reclined position in her ragged faux leather recliner.

JANET

Please hurry! The Commercial's almost over!

She winces as she chugs the last bit of the warm beer.

BASEMENT

Connor struggles but finally manages to get the dresser on a small patch of carpet at the base of the stairs. He inhales deeply as he tucks his shoulder length hair out of his face and behind his ear.

Connor darts back up the stairs.

KITCHEN

Connor rushes across the room.

CONNOR

I'm here. I'm here.

He yanks open the fridge. Connor peers in and frowns.

There is only condiments, an expired half gallon of milk and a twelve pack of Bud in the fridge. There are only THREE BEERS left in pack. He grabs one of the beers and shuts the door.

Janet doesn't look away from the 13" PANASONIC TELEVISION. She reaches out and grabs the beer. She pops the top of the beer can.

JANET

Well, thank you so much but it took you long enough didn't it? Commercial's already over.

She takes a long drink.

JANET (CONT'D)

What the hell were you doing down there anyway? You're causing such a raucous, I can barely hear the television.

Connor rolls his eyes behind her.

CONNOR

I told you last week I was going to move my room to the basement. It's way cooler down there.

(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)

My room feels like a sauna. I can't even open my window because the screen is missing. The damn mosquitos will eat me alive one of these nights if I don't die of heat stroke first.

Connor stretches his arms out to the side and tips his head back dramatically like reenacting a crucifixion.

Janet doesn't look away from the TV.

JANET

Well, hurry up, will ya? That banging is giving me a headache and I have to work a double tomorrow.

Janet shanks her fist on the beer at the TV. A little bit of beer spills out of the can.

JANET (CONT'D)

Ask for a 'T', you idiot. I swear they find the biggest dumbasses to come on this show.

Connor shakes his head and exits.

BEDROOM

Connor grabs a few articles of clothing and a couple books. He goes back towards the basement passing his mother.

LIVING ROOM

Connor doesn't stop as he passes Janet.

CONNOR

I'm finished with all the heavy lifting. Just got a few more small things to bring down. I'll be quiet the rest of the night. You won't hear a peep from me.

Connor pulls his fingers across his lips in a zipping gesture.

JANET

That's good. Thanks Connie.

Janet raises her beer to her brow in a mock salute. Connor furrows his brow.

BASEMENT

Connor has hung up OLD SHEETS around the perimeter using thumbtacks as make shift walls.

His dresser, nightstand, and bed were all in place.

Connor climbs into the bed and grabs his copy of TALES FROM THE CRYPT.

He pulls the blanket up around him, making sure his feet are tucked underneath.

He lowers the book onto his chest and looks around the room.

He smiles and closes his eyes. The only sound is the faint echoes of the TV upstairs.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE- DAY

Connor looks out the basement window. The window is level with the ground and faces the cemetery.

CONNOR

No, thank you.

He uses old, stained dish rags to cover the small rectangular window that was level with the ground and faced the cemetery.

He tapes up posters of PET SEMATARY, HELLRAISER and FRIDAY THE 13TH.

There is a small bedside LAMP and RADIO on his nightstand. A couple sticks of incense burns.

On the opposite side of the stairwell is an old nightlight resembling a lantern. It is plugged in just above the washing machine.

The sound of footsteps above. He looks up and watches the path of the sound. Connor runs upstairs.

LIVING ROOM

Connor squints as the abundance of light hits him. Janet is grabbing her purse off the counter and snatches up her keys.

JANET

I won't be back until late. There should be something in the freezer you can eat.

Connor nods as he passes by her to head to the couch.

She gives him a peck on the top of the head as he passes.  
Janet leaves.

Connor scoops up the TV remote as he jumps onto the couch. He turns on the TV.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

The last scenes of 'ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE DARK?' plays. When the show ends. Connor sits up and looks at the clock on the microwave which displays 11:59. Connor shuts off the TV and places the remote on the armrest of the chair.

He goes to the sink and fills up a glass of water. He heads toward his room.

BASEMENT

Connor walks down the creaky wooden stairs. He grazes his hands against the wall for added support. He pauses.

He examines four deep gashes running down the wall. His fingers delicately run across the grooves. He continues down the stairs.

His bare feet land on the cement floor.

Connor turns on the bedside lamp and picks up an exhausted stick of incense.

He opens the drawer to see he doesn't have anymore in the box. He sighs, then closes the drawer.

Connor climbs on top of the bed and leans back onto his pillow. He picks up the comic book laying on his bed.

His eyes grow heavy as he reads CREEPSHOW.

The comic falls out of his hands and lands on his chest as he falls asleep.

BASEMENT - LATER

Connor is fast asleep in his bed.

A loud noise reverberates through the dark room. SCRATCH...  
SCRATCH... SCRATCH...

Connor opens his eyes and quickly sits up in the bed. The comic book drops, slides off the bed, and onto the floor.

The sounds of the SCRATCHES fade away.

He turns and flips on his lamp.

His eyes scan across the room. Listening.

Silence.

He lays his head back down on the pillow and stares at the ceiling.

His eyes dart toward the stairs as the front door opens. He hears the footsteps of his mother cross the upstairs floor and her keys jingle as they hit the counter.

KITCHEN

Janet quietly pulls open the fridge and drops off the twelve-pack of beer.

She tears the flaps open and hauls out a cold one. She pops the tab and chugs it down.

She tosses the empty can into the sink and quickly retrieves a second beer.

JANET

One for the road.

She heads towards her bedroom and pauses.

She gently opens the door to Connor's old room before remembering he moved downstairs. She stares into the empty room and sighs.

Janet closes the door and continues toward her room.

JANET'S BEDROOM

She enters, feels around in the dark and flips on her bedside lamp.

She sets the cold beer down, and changes out of her work uniform into a nightgown.

Janet passes by the beer.

She crawls into bed and flips off her lamp.

Her closet door slowly slides open.

Heavy lascivious breathing escapes the darkness of her closet. A FIGURE is standing there watching her sleep.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

KITCHEN

Connor is sitting at the kitchen table. He is hunched over a NOTEBOOK working on a sketch of a zombie. There are other PAGES around him of hand drawn severed heads, bloody hands, vampires, and ghosts.

The door opens. Janet enters with twelve-pack of Bud lite. She smiles.

JANET  
How was your day?

Connor doesn't look up.

CONNOR  
It was fine.

Janet walks over to the fridge. She opens the fridge and tucks in the twelve-pack. She examines the bare contents.

JANET  
Let's get you out of the house. We need groceries.

Connor leans back admiring his work. He picks it up and turns it to Janet.

CONNOR  
Check it out. I'd say it's my best yet.

Janet looks at it and then at him and smiles.

JANET  
Go get your shoes on. I want to make it home before Wheel of Fortune comes on.

Connor scoops up his papers and rushes downstairs. The zombie photo drops to the floor. Janet walks over and picks it up. She looks at it and shakes her head.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Creepy.

Connor comes back upstairs and rushes out the door followed by Janet.

INT. SAVE MORE FOODS - DAY

Janet is walking through the frozen food aisle. Connor is right behind her pushing the cart. She stops and gazes over the Hot Pockets.

JANET

Which ones you want?

Connor walks away from the cart and looks into the freezer door beside her.

CONNOR

Ham and cheese. Three cheese pizza  
and Steak and cheese.

Janet opens the door. She grabs the ones he asked for and tosses them into the cart. She looks at his face.

JANET

Would you want corndogs one night  
this week?

Connor shrugs.

CONNOR

I guess.

Janet sadly smirks.

JANET

I know I've been working a lot. I'm  
sure you're tired of frozen  
dinners.

CONNOR

It's fine, mom. I understand.

JANET

Come on. Let's go find the fixings  
for some spaghetti.

Connor's face lights up as he follows.

Janet is looking at the shelves. Connor stops and grabs a pack of OREO'S. He tosses them in the cart.

JANET (CONT'D)

No. Put those back.

CONNOR

Please, mom. I get snacky around  
the house.

JANET

I said no. Put them back now. We're on a Budget.

Connor sinks his shoulders defeatedly. He snatches the pack out of the cart and turns away.

CONNOR

I bet we have money for beer.

JANET

What was that?

He puts the pack back on the shelves.

CONNOR

Nothing.

She irritatedly eyes him for a moment. He doesn't look at her as he slumps against the handle of the cart. She grabs a jar of tomato sauce and dumps it in the cart.

JANET

How about if we stay on Budget and if we have anything left over, I'll take you the comic book store.

Connor nods and follows her.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

BASEMENT

Connor is reading his comic, as the sound of rain splashes on the small window. The faint sound of JEOPARDY can be heard from upstairs.

He closes the comic and lays it on the nightstand. He turns on the clock radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

You're listening to High-Five at Nine. Today's greatest hits. Up next is I Don't Want To Miss A Thing by Aerosmith.

Connor lays back. His eyes begin to grow heavy almost instantly.

The sounds of the music slowly turns to static.

The red station indicator slides up and down the dial. It stops on a classic rock station.

The static clears as John Fogerty's raspy voice and the upbeat guitar plays BAD MOON RISING.

The SCRATCHING sounds start up from the darkness.

It is louder and more aggressive than before. Like roofing nails tearing into a chalkboard.

Connor lifts his head and rubs his eyes.

He can make out the silhouette of a dark figure standing behind the sheet.

Connor furrows his brows as he blinks again. His eyes goes wide at the sight.

BAD MOON RISING continues to blare over the radio. Connor tosses aside his covers. He swings his legs out of the bed and lets them dangle over the edge.

He looks around for somewhere to go but his eyes drift back at the silhouetted figure.

He hastily reaches out for his lamp but accidentally hits it, knocking it down. He races to stand it back up.

He fumbles around and finally finds the knob. The bright light disorients him.

He turns back to look at the silhouette. Nothing.

Connor cocks his head and listens but hears nothing. Connor scoots forward on the bed and drops his feet onto the cement. He creeps forward toward the small gap between the hanging sheets.

He yanks back the sheet but there is nothing there. He exhales a deep sigh of relief.

Connor lets go of the sheet and walks back to the nightstand. He turns off the radio.

Connor climbs back into the bed. He pulls the covers up to his chin.

Connor reaches over and turns the radio back on to drown out the silence. SUMMERTIME by Janis Joplin croons as he tries to go back to sleep.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - MORNING

KITCHEN

Connor is leaning over a bowl of soggy corn flakes at the kitchen table. Janet is bent over the counter, her chin resting in her hands. She is watching the COFFEE MAKER waiting for the slow drip to fill up the glass carafe.

Connor looks up and notices a series of red swollen scratches on her shoulder blade.

CONNOR

Mom, do you remember anything weird ever happening to you in this house when you were a little girl?

Janet shifts uncomfortably.

JANET

What do you mean by weird?

CONNOR

Did you ever see something you couldn't explain? Strange shadows or did you hear any noises?

Janet looks out the corner of her eyes in thought.

JANET

Not that I recall. Though it wasn't such an old house when I was a girl. The cemetery always creeped me out though. Kids tend to have very vivid imagination. I was no different.

Connor pokes around at his cereal with his spoon. He doesn't look up at her.

CONNOR

Do you happen to know how grandpa died? You've never really talked about it.

Janet tips her head back and sighs.

JANET

That's because you know I don't like to talk about him. He was a terrible person. I wanted him to have nothing to do with us. That's why I made sure you never met him. I know he hated me for it, but I didn't give a shit!

CONNOR

No. I know. I mean, I understand.  
That's not why I'm asking though.  
I'm, well, I'm wondering because  
strange things have been happening  
in the basement at night.

He pauses.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Sometimes when I'm down there I get  
the feeling I'm being watched. It  
feels like someone, or something is  
watching me from the darkness.  
There's sometimes a really bad  
smell.

Janet turns her head to the side with one eye looking at  
Connor.

JANET

Well first off, all basements smell  
funny. It's almost like an  
unwritten rule. Secondly, you  
shouldn't be watching those scary  
shows before bed when I'm not home.

Janet grabs a coffee mug from the top shelf of the cabinet.

JANET (CONT'D)

They put ideas in your head that  
get you all creeped out when  
nothing is really there. I'm sure  
your addiction to those horror  
comics you insist on reading  
doesn't help either. You tend to  
have an overactive imagination.

She removes the glass carafe and begins to pour her a cup of  
coffee.

Connor drops the spoon against the bowl.

CONNOR

No. It's not that! I know the  
difference. I love those shows and  
comics because I'm not easily  
scared. It's just that feeling I  
get when i'm down there almost  
makes me sick to my stomach. (BEAT)  
Did they even tell you how he died?

Janet spins around and faces Connor.

JANET

Of course they told me, but I don't feel it's necessarily any of your business, nor is it relevant. Especially since--

She pauses.

JANET (CONT'D)

It's just not, okay? People die, that's life. He was old and lived an unhealthy lifestyle.

She tasks a long slow sip of her coffee.

JANET (CONT'D)

This is a decent enough house. We were lucky to get it in the will and get out of that shitty apartment.

Janet begins to count off on her fingers.

JANET (CONT'D)

I don't have a mortgage, the car is paid off, and the neighbors are quiet.  
(BEAT)  
Well, most of the time.

She winks at Connor with a sly smirk on her face. Connor shoots a smile back.

JANET (CONT'D)

I was worried about this when you decided to move your room down there. All basements are creepy to some extent. Not to mention living so close to a cemetery probably doesn't help either. I assure you, it's completely safe.

She walks back to the coffee maker and tops off her mug, then gives it a stir.

Janet indulges in another drink of coffee. Connor stirs the last few corn flakes floating around in the milk, with his spoon.

CONNOR

Maybe you're right. I'll take a break from the horror comics for a while and see if that helps.

He pauses.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Except, it's more than just the feeling of being watched or the gross smells. I woke up the other night and heard a loud scratching noise coming from somewhere. Do you think we have mice?

JANET

It's an old house, Connie. I wouldn't be surprised if we have a few mice. Hell, maybe even a squirrel found its way in to avoid the heat.

She takes a longer pull of her coffee.

JANET (CONT'D)

It's most likely you were dreaming. Dreams can feel real sometimes. It's like you're really there until you wake up feeling confused or dazed. It happens to me all the time.

Connor nods.

CONNOR

Of course I know that, but it wasn't just the scratching. I actually saw someone too, or something.

Janet sighs.

JANET

Connor--

CONNOR

You wouldn't know this since you never go down there but there's an old nightlight by the washing machine. I could see what looked like a person standing on the other side of the sheets.

JANET

Connor, stop.

CONNOR

It was a tall figure. Well, a shadow at least just standing there like a statue. I didn't know if you had a guest over or something. That didn't make sense. I know it couldn't be you because you refuse to go down there, which I still don't understand.

Janet drops her coffee spoon on the floor. Connor jerks. She bends down, picks it up and rinses it off.

Janet shakes her heads and grits her teeth.

JANET

You were just dreaming. End of this discussion! There was no one in the house. You know I haven't been on a date in years, let alone have some stranger in the house.

(BEAT)

I'm telling you, it was your imagination playing tricks on you. Horror movies and dark cellars are a perfect recipe for the heebie jeebies.

She dries off the spoon and puts it back in the mug.

JANET (CONT'D)

Just promise me you'll take a break from the scary stuff for a while. Read some fantasy comics or those Spiderboy ones. Or how about you read an actual book for once, God forbid!

Connor scoffs to himself.

CONNOR

It's Spider-man. That stuff always bores the hell out of me, but I guess I'll give it a try. Not sure how it'll help, but I suppose it can't hurt.

JANET

I don't care what it is, just no more scary stuff! At least for awhile. No more of those shows either. Watch Full House or The Brady Bunch. I always liked that one.

She takes another long pull of coffee, her eyes locked on Connor.

JANET (CONT'D)

I'm going to be working a lot this week putting in some extra hours. I don't want to be worried about you being creeped out all the time. Deal?

CONNOR

Alright. Alright.

JANET

No more talking about that wretched monster of a man either. He's not worth your time or mine. He's dead and buried. We are lucky to have this house no matter the circumstances with which we got it. Agree?

CONNOR

Agreed.

Connor gets up from the table and carries his bowl to the sink. Janet start to exit the kitchen with her coffee.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Just one more question. I promise. Was grandpa a heavy drinker?

Janet stops. She keeps her back to Connor.

JANET

What would make you ask me that?

CONNOR

Nevermind. I'm sorry. No more questions.

Connor removes the empty beer cans from the sink and stacks them on the counter so he can wash out his bowl. He looks over as Janet slaps a ten dollar bill on the counter.

JANET

Here. Go buy yourself a couple of comic books that aren't scary. Get out of the house. Go explore the town. Make some friends for God's sake. It's supposed to be decent out today. Try to enjoy the summer while it's still here.

Connor dries his hand on the towel hanging from the cabinet beneath the sink. He swipes up the wrinkled bill and slides it into his back pocket.

CONNOR  
Thanks. I will.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

Connor picks up his bike. He jumps up on his banana seat and takes off.

Connor looks both ways at the end of the driveway. He rides to the middle of the paved road.

EXT. FARM ROAD - DAY

Connor passes a large field, filled with cattle.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

He passes the house of their closest neighbors.

He passes a fancy subdivision entrance.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

He stops at a two lane bridge over a set of train tracks. He watches and waits for traffic before crossing the bridge. He passes a green sign that reads: NOW ENTERING BURNCHESTER.

Connor swerves up onto the sidewalk.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Connor stops his bike at the edge of a small baseball field. A group of friends are playing catch and having some fun. He walks to a bench and sits down. A ball is thrown in his direction and lands in front of him. He picks up the ball to throw it back but misses entirely.

He quickly gets back on his bike and rides away.

EXT. STREET - DAY

He rides past a liquor store and a Walgreens. He cruises past the court house and turns right past the Capitol Theater onto Main Street.

EXT. MAINE STREET - DAY

He rides past a coffee shop and corner cafe. He stops outside of an old brick building that was part of the original downtown construction.

EXT. DOWNTOWN COMICS & TABLE TOP GAMES - DAY

He climbs off his bike and pulls it up onto the uneven brick sidewalk. He leans his bike against a faded green light post. He looks at the cracked faded letters in the window that reads: DOWNTOWN COMICS & TABLETOP GAMES.

INT. DOWNTOWN COMICS & TABLE TOP GAMES - DAY

Connor enters through the screen door, triggering a bell above his head.

The clerk, JEFF (Early-fifties, overweight, male) sets down his copy of DAREDEVIL. He doesn't stand up from the wooden stool behind the counter. A small flimsy DESK FAN is blowing in his direction.

The shop has glass cases filled with paintable gaming miniatures and collectables. There are racks full of comic books and shelves of trading cards. The walls are littered with poster and cardboard cutouts of superheroes and other fantastical creatures.

JEFF

Good afternoon, young sir! What can I do ya for? Are you a comic guy or a gamer?

Jeff wipes the side of his bristly face with a handkerchief before slipping on his glasses.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Oh wait, I've seen you in here a bunch of times. You're a reader. An *ed-gema-cated* man!

Connor smiles and approaches the counter.

CONNOR

That's right! I'm a comic guy. I'm looking for something cheap. Something with super heroes.

Connor frowns.

JEFF

Oh yeah? You're normally a big horror fan aren't you? *Tales from the Crypt*, right?

Jeff raises his hands up to either side of his head and wiggles his fingers in a silly ghoulish fashion. He releases a poor imitation of the crypt keeper's laugh.

CONNOR

Yep, that's me alright. *Creepshow* too! Anything horror. Those are my favorites. Although, unfortunately my mother wants me to take a break from horror for a bit.

Connor looks down at the floor and exhales hard. He looks back up and gives Jeff a playful grin.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You know, you have a good memory for an old guy.

JEFF

Oh bummer man! Moms can be such a drag!

CONNOR

Well, some weird stuff has been happening at my house that she thinks is just my overactive imagination.

Connor mocks his mother and uses air quotes with his fingers at: overactive imagination.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I was hoping to pick up a couple Spider-Man comics or something cheesy like that.

Jeff shifts in his stool.

JEFF

Weird stuff you say? What sort of weird stuff?

(BEAT)

Sometimes *kid*, parents just don't understand!

Connor raises an eyebrow.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince,  
1988? Probably too young for that  
one though.

Connor raises both eyebrows.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Ya know, kid, maybe you could use  
and outsider's perspective. I'm a  
bit of an expert when it comes to  
the world of the unknown.

Jeff sits up straight and pretends to straighten an imaginary  
tie.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Not to toot my own horn, but  
I've seen every episode of *Unsolved  
Mysteries*. Even memorized the  
hotline.

Jeff does his best Robert Stack impression.

JEFF (CONT'D)

1-800-876-5353.

Connor chuckles.

CONNOR

Well it's probably nothing like my  
mom suspects, but I recently moved  
my bedroom into the basement of our  
house. It's much cooler down there.  
Anyways, some strange things  
happened a couple of nights this  
week that I can't really explain or  
ignore.

Connor looks around the shop and leans in close to the  
counter. Jeff looks around and leans in as well.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

First it was just the feeling of  
being watched. You know what I  
mean? I really felt like something  
was in the darkness watching me.

JEFF

Ooooooh I definitely know that  
feeling! Humans have some killer  
instincts man, or I guess it's  
called intuition. I've been playing  
a long of Super Nintendo lately.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

*Killer Instincts*, great game!  
Anyways, I digress. Go on!

Jeff wipes his forehead with his bandana.

JEFF (CONT'D)

The name's Jeff by the way!  
Pleasure to meet ya, even though  
I've seen ya in here a lot. You're  
what we call a regular.

CONNOR

Connor. Nice to meet you too.

Connor gives Jeff an awkward half wave.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

So, as I was saying--

JEFF

Do tell.

CONNOR

At first I just felt I was being  
watched. Then it got weirder. There  
were nauseating smells and loud  
scratching sounds.

JEFF

Well that's typical of a basement  
if you ask me.

CONNOR

That's what my mom said and I agree  
but get this.

Jeff leans in as close as he can.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Last night I could've sworn I saw  
the shape of a person standing  
there watching me. When I turned on  
my lamp, the figure was gone.

JEFF

Whoa, ok, that's definitely not  
typical of a basement.

Connor lifts his eyebrows and nods.

CONNOR

See, my grandfather was a really  
bad dude. My mother refuses to talk  
about him.

(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)

After he died, we inherited his house. After what's been happening I can't help but think this weird stuff going on and his death are somehow connected. I can feel the negative energy in the house, especially when I am home alone. Did I mention we live right next to this creepy old cemetery where---

JEFF

Wait a minute. Where did you say you live?

Jeff rubs his thumb and index finger on his cleft chin.

CONNOR

Well I didn't say, actually. It's the older somewhat rundown house out on Thomas Hill Road, right beside the old cemetery. My grandfather built the place in the 60's or something. Now I live there with my mom, just the two of us.

JEFF

Did you say Thomas Hill Road? The old cemetery? Wasn't that last year when he died? Small town, ya know? It was kind of the gossip on the streets for a few days. Oh, um, sorry for your loss by the way.

CONNOR

Thanks, and yes. It's fine though. I never met the guy.

Connor shrugs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Like I said, my mom told me he was a real a-hole. I won't get into details, but mostly because I don't have any.

Jeff looks out the window. He narrows his eyes and begins to nod.

JEFF

Okay. Okay. I do remember hearing about that. Officer Thomaston, the cop that did the wellness check on him is a regular here.

Jeff snaps his fingers.

JEFF (CONT'D)

He fancies himself a *Justice League* fan. Kind of cliché if you ask me, but he's a nice enough guy. Gives us a lot of business.

Jeff shakes his head and looks back at Connor.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Anyways, after the news broke about your grandpa dying I overheard him telling the owner of this shop what happened. He was pretty shook up about it. Guess he needed someone to talk to. They're second cousins or something like that. Cheaper than a therapist I suppose.

Connor steps closer to the counter.

CONNOR

Really? Do you remember any of what he said?

Jeff hesitantly eyes Connor. He purses his lips.

JEFF

I didn't hear all of the conversation. Just enough to satisfy my morbid sense of curiosity. I also like horror comics sometimes but mostly movies. Anyways, I heard him say something about finding your grandfather laying at the bottom of the basement stairs in nothing but his crusty whitey tighties. Unfortunately, he had been lying there for a couple of weeks. Deceased. Broken bones, blood, a real mess. He was starting to decay by the time he was discovered.

CONNOR

Well, what happened to him? Did he have a heart attack or something?

JEFF

Apparently, your grandad was extremely drunk and took a tumble down the stairs.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

During the investigation they found deep scratches on the wall where he tried to stop himself from falling. There were more found on the floor beside his body as if he tried getting up. Determined old bastard. Could have been what forensics experts call cadaveric spasms I suppose because the papers claimed he died instantly from the fall.

Jeff shrugs.

JEFF (CONT'D)

The whole thing sounded fishy to me but that's just conspiratorial Jeff talking. Still I'm not sure why they'd need to lie about it if it was just an accident.

Jeff furrows his brow and eyes Connor. Connor is staring at him listening intently.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Um, are you sure I should even be telling you this?

Jeff looks around the shop nervously.

CONNOR

No no, it's fine, really! My lips are sealed.

Connor motions locking his lips with an imaginary key. Jeff sighs.

JEFF

Maybe there's a reason why your mom didn't want you to know. Please don't tell her I told you. I'm sure that was probably confidential or something.

Jeff looks down and frowns.

JEFF (CONT'D)

It doesn't pay much but I really need this job. I'm sure my boss wouldn't like to hear I've been eavesdropping in on his conversations either.

Jeff wipes more sweat from his forehead with his bandana.

CONNOR

I won't tell a soul, I swear. I understand why my mother wouldn't tell me about it. That's got to be the reason why she never goes down there. (BEAT) Thank you, Jeff. I'm really glad I ran into you today.

Connor looks off to the side. His eyes dart back and forth in thought.

JEFF

Again, sorry for your loss, kid. I know he was your grandpa even if he was a mean guy, but hey, nobody is perfect.

Connor shrugs and nods.

JEFF (CONT'D)

On the bright side, at least you guys scored a house out of the deal! A brilliant philosopher once said, *every silver lining's got a touch of grey.*

Connor raises an eyebrow and tilts his head.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Okay, it was Jerry Garcia in 1987. One of the great philosophers of my generation. But it's still true!

Connor laughs and shakes his head. Jeff smiles.

CONNOR

Thanks Jeff, but like I said, I never met the guy. So, how about that Spider-Man.

JEFF

Follow me, good sir!

Jeff stands up from his stool and waves a 'this way' gesture.

JEFF (CONT'D)

We have an excellent clearance sale going on right now. I'll give you the hookup since we are friends now and all.

Jeff flashes a toothy smile and adds a playful wink. Connor smiles wide and follows him.

EXT. CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

Connor rides his bike up to the back of the cemetery. The cemetery lawn is green with lush grass. Some of the high points have started to turn yellow from the scorching July heat.

He reads the ancient headstones taking note of the dates as he slowly coasts through. He slows to a halt and admires a small headstone:

AMY HAZLETT FEB. 12 1932 - SEP 7 1933.

Connor shudders at the sight and moves on. He turns his front wheel and heads towards the direction of his house. He applies the brakes and stops.

He swings his leg over the seat, and lays the bike on the ground. He carefully sets down the paper bag containing his purchase on top of the spoke of the bike wheel.

He walks over to the patch of ground in front of the headstone. He reads the words engraved on the face of the granite:

George C. Hanscott AUG. 22 1935 -- NOV 29 1997 Served His Country, Rest In Peace

Connor looks up and mumbles to himself.

CONNOR

63 Years old. Served his country?  
If he was a veteran then why wasn't  
he buried with the rest of the  
soldiers at the VA cemetery?

He looks up seeing how close the grave is to the house. It is just over the rusted chain link fence. He turns to hop back on his bike when something catches his eye.

Connor kneels down to get a closer look. At the bottom of the headstone he sees four light scratches gouged into the granite below the word 'PEACE'. He rubs his fingers across it curiously.

His eyes go wide as he jumps to his feet. There are footprints in the soft ground walking away from the gravesite in the direction of the house.

Connor grabs the comics and jumps back onto his bike. He stares at the grave one last time. He rides back toward the house.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

Janet comes in and spots Connor relaxed on the couch. He is flipping through one of his new comics. The house is quiet and the television is off.

She has a brown paper bag rolled up at the top gripped firmly in her left hand. Her purse hangs from her right shoulder. She sets them on the table and walks over to Connor.

JANET

Hey, dude. What you got there?

Connor smiles and tilts the comic so she can read the cover.

JANET (CONT'D)

Spider-Man?

CONNOR

Yeah. I rode down to Main street today on my bike to stop at Downtown Comics. I took your advice and picked up something less scary, but it's a lot less interesting.

He sets the comic on his lap and looks at Janet. Janet places her hands on her hips.

JANET

Well there! Hopefully, you'll stop having those silly nightmares.

She walks toward the kitchen. Connor gets up and follows.

KITCHEN

Janet opens the fridge. She removes one of the bottles of Jim Beam from the paper bag, and puts the other on the empty middle shelf.

She walks to the cupboard, pulls out a tall glass, then opens the freezer.

Connor hears the ice cubes tinkle into the glass. He wrinkles his forehead as he sees her pour a tall drink with just a splash of soda.

JANET (CONT'D)

I brought you home a bottle of Dr. Pepper and one of your favorite Hot Pockets for dinner if you're hungry.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

I'm beat so I don't have the energy to cook tonight. The store was swamped today!

CONNOR

Thanks, mom. I'm not super hungry anyways. Thanks again for the comic money. I actually chatted with the clerk down there. He's a pretty cool guy.

JANET

That's cool Bud, you're welcome! Hope you don't mind if I use the TV? I want to catch a bit of the news before the wheel comes on.

CONNOR

All yours. I'll be heading downstairs soon. Kind of beat from the bike ride today. It was nice to get some fresh air. I even took a little ride through the cemetery.

Janet nods. He pauses and bites his cheek a moment.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Hey, if grandpa served in the military, how come he wasn't buried in the VA cemetery with the other soldiers?

Janet stops halfway into the living room and tips her head up toward the ceilings. She spins around.

JANET

Seriously Connor? I thought we agreed we weren't going to talk about him anymore.

CONNOR

I know. I'm really sorry, but I learned on a field trip a while back that his burial costs would have been covered and everything. It just seems odd is all.

He looks at the glass in her hand and narrows his eyes. Janet takes a long drink. She winces as she inhales deeply through her teeth. She shakes her head and sighs.

JANET

He was dishonorably discharged, then shipped home from Vietnam before the end of his tour. He got into some bad trouble over there. It had to be really bad to be kicked out of a war. Even spent some time in a military prison. I don't know what he did and frankly I don't care to know. He never talked about his time in Vietnam. I mean, why would he? I don't know any more than that.

She takes another long haul of her drink, almost emptying the glass. She snarls.

JANET (CONT'D)

Does that answer satisfy you, Detective Gale? Jesus! I'd think you were writing a paper about him. You've asked me so many questions!

Janet finishes off her drink.

CONNOR

YES. I'm sorry. Not only for asking you all these questions, but for the way he treated you. I know it's hard for you to talk about him.

Connor looks down at the picture of Spider-Man punching a mean looking thug.

Janet sighs and slumps her shoulders.

JANET

Thank you Connie, but you don't even know half of it. To be honest, I prefer to keep it that way. I'd rather you just leave it alone. Don't allow him to live in your head. Just let his miserable ass rot in that grave of his. That's all he deserves!

Connor looks at the TV and points.

CONNOR

News is starting. I'm going to heat up that Hot Pocket. I guess I am hungry after all.

As Connor heads to the kitchen, Janet puts a hand on his shoulder.

JANET

Please don't feel bad Connor,  
You're just curious. I know I  
haven't been very open about what  
my life was like before you were  
born. Being inquisitive is a good  
thing, most of the time. It's just  
that it's a very sensitive subject  
for me, but still, I shouldn't take  
it out on you. Don't forget the Dr.  
Pepper. It's in the paper bag.

Janet leaned over and playfully ruffles his hair. She follows him into the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Janet refills her glass as Connor removes the Hot Pockets from the freezer.

JANET (CONT'D)

You're going to need a trim soon,  
you little hippy.

Connor smiles and shakes his head as she exits.

LIVING ROOM

Janet sits in her chair. She looks down at the glass and sighs.

She takes a long drink, and reclines her chair.

The music from the TV puts an end to the silence.

Connor passes by the living room.

CONNOR

Good night, mom.

JANET

Night, Connie. Sweet dreams.

BASEMENT

Connor is laying in his bed reading Captain America. The only sound is the faint sound of the TV upstairs. His eyes grow heavy. He closes the comic, lays it on his nightstand, turns out the light.

In the darkest corner of the basement, a figure slowly emerges. It stands there watching Connor sleep through a tear in the sheet.

Connor's chest rises and falls. A gnarled hand begins to dig at the wooden house post with long, broken fingernails.

Connor turns his head back and forth.

He opens his eyes to see nothing except the blackness of the basement. He flips over in bed.

SCRATCH... SCRATCH... SCRATCH...

He looks out toward the sheets and gasps. The silhouette of the tall figure is presented on the sheets.

Connor pulls the blankets up to his chin and shuts his eyes.

CONNOR

It's only a dream. It's only a dream.

He opens one eye to take a peek. The figure hadn't moved. He snaps the other eye opened and props himself up on his elbow.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Hello?

No answer. The figure doesn't move.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Hello? Is someone there? This isn't funny anymore.

Still no response. Connor pushes the covers with his feet. He plants his bare feet on the cold floor.

He lowers himself to his hands and knees. Slowly, he crawls on all fours toward the sheets. He peeks underneath where the figure was standing.

There is nothing. No feet. No legs.

He looks up and can still see the shadow behind the sheets. Now he can hear heavy gargled breathing.

A large bare foot drops to the floor, seemingly out of thin air. Connor gasps.

A second foot follows bringing a small amount of dirt that gathered around the feet.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

The sheet moves in and out from the deep heavy breathing.

Connor lifts himself up then falls backwards onto his hands scuffing his palms on the concrete.

Quickly, he moves backwards in a crab walk fashion until his shoulders bump into his bed.

He feels his way up onto the edge of the mattress. He reaches for the lamp and turns the knob. Nothing happens.

He tries a few more times but gets nothing.

Connor yanks the blanket high enough to cover everything but his eyes. His eyes widen in terror as the shadow reaches in, causing the sheet to gently sway.

The huge hand grips the edge of the sheet and starts to pull open the gap. The heavy breathing turns into a a guttural moan.

Connor squeezes his eyes shut. He screams.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Mom!

Connor hears the pounding of running feet above his head. The stairs lights flip on.

JANET (O.S.)

Connor? What's going on? Are you okay?

Hesitantly, Connor pulls the blanket down off of his face. The figure is gone.

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

Connor! Answer me right now!

INTERCUT BASEMENT/ TOP OF STAIRS

Connor is scanning the room. His chest rises and falls rapidly.

CONNOR

Mom! I saw it again! I could see it breathing! I saw it's feet! It tried coming into my room this time! I wasn't dreaming!

JANET

Saw what? What are you talking about?

CONNOR

The person I told you about! I actually saw a hand this time! I could smell its breath! At first it had no feet but then I saw them!

JANET

Oh, Christ, not this again. There is nothing down there, Connor. You were having another nightmare. I shouldn't have let you have the Dr. Pepper before bed. It's my fault. The sugar probably got you all wired up.

Connor punches his mattress.

CONNOR

Mom! I was not sleeping! I know what I saw. Why won't you believe me! It smelled like a pile of dead leaves and roadkill. Look, there's still dirt on the floor! Come see! I think it was trying to get to me. My lamp is blown too. I was trapped in here.

Connor reaches over and tries his lamp again. The light turns on. He narrows his eyes at it but sighs with relief.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Well it wasn't turning on a few minutes ago! I swear!

JANET

Connor, really? You know I have to get up early for work. Why are you playing these games? I was worried this would happen if you moved your room down there.

Janet combs the hair out of her face with splayed fingers. She exhales forcefully.

JANET (CONT'D)

Why don't you grab your pillow and blanket and come sleep on the couch tonight. Tomorrow after work we will discuss the possibility of moving your room back upstairs.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

Maybe it won't be so bad if we can find you a fan or something. I need my sleep, kiddo.

Connor slumps his shoulders.

CONNOR

Fine, mom.

He starts grabbing his things.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I'll be up in a minute.

He huffs and mumbles.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

It wasn't the damn Dr. Pepper.

He leaves the lamp on as he walks towards the stairs. Reaching out to open the sheet, his hand stops halfway.

His eyes widen and his breathing stops.

A DIRTY HANDPRINT on the edge of the sheet remained where the figure had grabbed it. Leaning forward, he puts his nose up close and sniffs it. He cringes and gags before running up the stairs.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - MORNING

LIVING ROOM

Connor watches out the window as his mom tiredly gets in the car. She is dressed for work. She puts her purse in the passenger seat and drives away. He turns away and looks around the living room.

Connor is searching through the living room. He opens the end tables. He moves clothes out of the coat closet and opens a few boxes. He doesn't find anything.

KITCHEN

He is searching through the kitchen. He opens every cabinet. He looks under the sink. He finds nothing.

OLD BEDROOM

He stands in the middle of his old bedroom. He opens the closet. It's bare just like he left it.

HALL BATHROOM

He flips on the light. He looks under the sink. He peruses the medicine cabinet. He comes up empty.

#### BASEMENT

He is browsing through the basement. He looks behind the washer and the dryer. He goes to the far corner. He see's the bulk head door leading outside. There is nothing else there.

Connor defeatedly ascends the basement steps. He stops and looks at the scratch marks on the wall. He snaps his fingers and darts up the stairs.

#### UPSTAIRS

Connor walks past his old room and pauses at the door of his mother's room. He slowly pushes it open. It gives off a faint squeak.

#### MOTHERS BEDROOM

He glances around the room. The bed is unmade. Clothes are piled in the corner. A couple of dresser drawers are not closed completely. The nightstand is littered in old beer cans.

#### MASTER BATHROOM

He walks to her bathroom and flips on the light. The counter is covered in hair products and makeup kits. A bra is hanging from the door. The shower curtain is open and there are strands of long hair clinging to the walls.

He searches under her sink and her medicine cabinet. He finds nothing. He turns off the light and exits.

#### MOTHERS BEDROOM

He pauses for a moment at her closet door. He opens it and flips on the light. He glances around.

Connor looks up and spots the hatch in the ceiling lined with trim.

The lid is a piece of plywood laying across the inside and painted to match the ceiling.

Connor returns with a kitchen chair. He steadies himself as he climbs on it. He reaches up and finds he still can't reach the hatch.

He hops down, grabs the chair and exits.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

Connor's squints and shields his eyes as he walks outside. He walks around to the back of the house. Beside the bulk head doors there is a rusty extension ladder.

He grabs the ladder and shakes off the morning dew. He awkwardly picks it up and carries it around the house.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

MOTHERS BEDROOM

Connor struggles to lift it into the closet. He grunts and groans as he fights it.

He manages to extend it up, set it against the inside of the hole and steadies it at the base.

KITCHEN

Connor rushes to a cabinet by the stove. He opens it and find the green military flashlight.

He flips the switch to test the batteries.

He runs back up the stairs.

MOTHERS BEDROOM

Connor tests the first step and then carefully begins to climb the ladder. At the base of the hatch he closes his eyes.

Connor lifts up on the piece of wood with one hand, holding on to the ladder with the other. He slides the plywood off to the side. Clumps of dust land on his face.

He looks down and swats at his face rapidly in a panic. He shakes out his hair and huffs. He looks back up.

He clears the last three rungs and hoists the upper half of his body into the attic. He clicks on the flashlight while still balancing on the ladder.

The flashlight beam illuminates roof trusses and a few blotches of black mold.

He scans the floor seeing pink insulation with dark oval-shaped mouse pellet scattered along the top.

He also notices rough cut wooden planking forming a sort of walkway lying across the horizontal joints.

His beam drifts to the far end of the room. He can make out a DARK GREEN BOX. A BRONZE PADLOCK shimmers as the light hits it.

Careful not to touch the insulation, he lifts himself the rest of the way up into the attic. He ducks his head down and slowly walks across the wooden planks. He uses his free hand to hold onto trusses overhead, swinging ahead to the next with each step forward.

Sweat rolls down his face. He quivers when his light flashes across the sight of a tiny mouse skeleton. He shakes his head and continues forward.

After a few more steps he is standing in front of the foot locker. It sits on a piece of particle board pushed up against the wall.

Connor kneels down to find the padlock is unsecured, but still hanging from the latch. He inspects the top of the container and notices faded lettering stenciled onto the face of the lid. He wipes away the dust with his hand and reads:

USMC - SGT. GEORGE C. HANSCOTT - US5563891-C

C CO. 3RD PLT- DA NANAG AIR BASE, VIETNAM

Connor removes the padlock and lifts the brass latch. He takes a deep breath and lifts the lid, tipping it against the wall.

On the left side of the container there is a green folder with a large red stamp reading : DISCHARGE FORMS. It is filled with paperwork. He looks underneath to find more paperwork.

On the right side he sees an old pair of BLACK COMBAT BOOTS neatly stacked on top of folded clothing. He picks up the boots and heard a metallic jingling as something fell out.

He picks up a set of DOG TAGS hanging from a beaded chain. He glances his light over it.

HANSCOTT, GEORGE C.

US 5563891 C

O POS

METHODIST

Connor tosses them on top of the pile of paperwork. He gently lifts out the worn green uniform. He notices two patches sewn onto each shoulder of the jacket.

He sees the matching pair of pants that were folded under the jacket. He sets them aside. He looks back into the box.

An old SHOEBOX is sitting in the bottom corner of the foot locker. The word HANOI is written on the lid in a bold black marker. Below the words is a small hand drawn smiley face.

Connor lifts the box out of the foot locker. As he starts to remove the cardboard lid, he freezes. His breath catches.

A scratching noise breaks the silence behind him.

Connor snaps his head around followed by the flashlight. The beam locks onto the tiny pair of shiny beady eyes staring at him from the corner of the attic. The mouse squeaks then scurries into the insulation.

He can see the daylight pouring up from his mother's closet through the hatch in the ceiling. He lets out a sigh of relief. He picks up the shoebox, tucks it under his arm and heads towards the hatch.

#### MOTHERS BEDROOM

Connor pulls the plywood back into the grooves of the trim and descends the ladder. He places the box on the floor and wiggles the ladder free from the closet. He closes the closet door and exits with the ladder and the box.

#### KITCHEN

Connor enters the house. He walks to the box on the kitchen table. He sits there with his hands on the sides of the box.

He spins the box around inspecting all sides. He sets it down and sits up straight. He clears his throat.

He removes the lid.

Inside he finds a small bundle wrapped in a rag. He picks it up and starts to unravel it. It turns out to be a t-shirt. Something falls out of it.

He looks down. His eyes go wide. His mouth drops open.

He bolts to the bathroom and vomits.

Connor steadies himself against the wall as he exits the bathroom.

He puts the back of his wrist to his mouth and squeezed his eyes shut. He tilts his head back and takes in a deep slow breath.

Connor slowly walks over to the couch. He lays down and stares at the ceiling. He swallows hard.

He grabs the remote and turns on the television.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Janet pulls into the driveway. She puts the car in park and brushes her disheveled hair out of her face. She looks at herself in the rearview mirror, trying to look presentable.

She reaches in her purse and pulls out a COUPON for pizza.

JANET

Better than Hot Pockets.

She grabs her purse and heads for the door of the house.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

LIVING ROOM

Connor cracks open his eyes as the door of the house shuts.

*FULL HOUSE* is on the television. Uncle Joey jokes to Danny Tanner pretending his fingers were scissors.

UNCLE JOEY

Oh come on! Cut-It-Out!

Connor rubs his balled fists into his eyes and yawns. Connor's eyes go wide.

CONNOR

Shit.

Connor sits up in a panic. He jumps up and bolts for the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Janet walks in. Connor appears from the living room.

JANET

Hey Buddy! What's goin--

Her eyes lock onto the table. Her arms go limp.

On the table is a collection of old Polaroids. Most of the pictures are stacked up face down but the ones Connor had seen were scattered.

JANET (CONT'D)

What the fuck am I looking at  
Connor?

The purse drops to the floor.

CONNOR

Mom, I have--

JANET

What are these? Where did you get  
them? You better start talking!

Connor steps closer.

CONNOR

I-I found them. In the a-attic. In  
a-a footlocker that-that belonged  
to grandpa.

He cowers as he joins her at the table.

JANET

Jesus H. Christ! What in God's name  
were you doing in the attic?

She scoops up a handful of photographs. She covers her mouth  
with the back of her hand. She gags and swallows.

JANET (CONT'D)

What were you doing up there,  
Connor?

Tears well up in her eyes

JANET (CONT'D)

Answer me!

Connor cowers and steps back from her. Tears begin to fill  
his eyes.

CONNOR

I'm s-sorry Mom! I told you some  
weird stuff had been happening to  
me in the basement, but you  
wouldn't believe me!

Janet lifts one of the Polaroids up close.

It is a photo of a room in a bamboo hut. There are two bodies  
laying on the floor. One is a woman with a bullet hole in the  
middle of her forehead. Blood oozes into her wide open eyes.  
The other is a man with a deep gash across his throat. His  
white tank top is saturated in dark blood.

They are leaned up against each other in the corner of the room. A young soldier is kneeling down beside them. He has a wide grin on his clean shaven face. He is giving the photographer a thumbs up.

JANET

Christ on a fucking stick! That's my father. That's George!

She drops the Polaroid and hesitantly flips to another one. She gags again. She looks away, swallows and bile and takes in a deep breath before looking back at it.

George is focused on sawing an ear off of a dead man with a bayonet. He is smiling.

She drops the photo and flips through some more.

Connor walks over to the counter and starts fixing his mother a drink. He puts ice in a glass and pours whiskey into it.

Janet is wide-eyed.

The next picture involves George pulling a young, crying girl out from under a bed by her arm.

The next picture shows George sitting with his arm around the girl's waist on the bed not far from her dead parents. He is giving another thumbs up with a smile.

Connor hands his mom the chilled glass of whiskey. She takes the glass without looking at him and shakily takes a sip.

The next photo is George cutting off the girl's clothing with the bloody bayonet.

The last photo shows her father on top of the girl and unbuckling his belt.

The glass drops and shatters to the floor. The photos drop into the puddle of whiskey, ice cubes and broken glass.

Janet covers her mouth with her hand. He bolts out the door and vomits over the porch railing.

Connor dives down and retrieves the whiskey dampened photos. He scoops them up with the ones on the counter and wraps them in the shirt. He looks out and sees his mom struggling to steady herself.

He tucks one Polaroid into his back pocket.

He goes to shove the bundle back into the box but something inside catches his eye.

In the box beside the bundle sits a long tin pencil case. He looks over at his mom. She spits over the rail, wipes her mouth, and dry heaves once more.

Connor reaches in and quietly cracks open the case. He jumps back and drops the case. Petrified HUMAN EARS strung together on a long piece of twine spill into the box.

Connor grabs the lid and slams it down onto the shoebox.

Janet walks back into the kitchen and straight to the sink. She cups her hand under the running faucet, raising cool water to her mouth. She leans over the sink, spitting a few times and trying to control her breathing.

She squeezes her eyes shut. She is shaking. She grits her teeth as she takes in a deep breath.

CONNOR

Mom, I-I am really, really sorry for going up in the attic. I would have never gone snooping around if I had any idea--

Janet raises her left hand and tilts her head with a grunt. She points at the chair and releases a slow calculated breath.

JANET

Please sit down, Connor.

She clears her throat and slowly stands up.

JANET (CONT'D)

We need to have a talk.

She takes a deep breath in and slowly lets it out. She opens her eyes and looks at him.

JANET (CONT'D)

There's something I need to discuss with you and it's not going to be easy, so please, please just let me talk.

She pauses clearing her throat.

JANET (CONT'D)

I may have some answers to your questions.

Connor takes a seat. He pushes the box to the far end of the table.

Janet turns and fixes herself a new drink. She takes a sip. She looks up at the ceiling and lets out a quick breath.

She walks over and sits down next to Connor.

JANET (CONT'D)

As you know I had a rough childhood. I've told you many times how my father was abusive and that he would get drunk then take his aggressions out on my mother and I, but mostly me. My mother would fight back but she would pay the price for it. I was too small and helpless.

She takes a larger drink and looks off into the living room. She looks down at her feet and back at Connor.

JANET (CONT'D)

Well

She pauses and sighs.

JANET (CONT'D)

It wasn't just physical and verbal abuse.

She inhales deeply and exhales through puckered lips.

JANET (CONT'D)

He used to go out drinking after dinner until late into the night. Eventually, long after my mom and I had gone to bed, he would stumble back into the house completely shit-faced. I could sometimes hear him talking to himself, but it sound as though he thought someone was with him. Like he was having a conversation.

She takes another drink.

JANET (CONT'D)

Remember, I was just a little girl at the time. Younger than you are now. I had no idea what was going on with him. It happened so regularly, it seemed perfectly normal.

She clears her throat.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Just dad being dad.

She sighs.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Sometimes he would push open my  
bedroom door and just there  
watching me sleep. I wasn't really  
asleep but I would pretend to be  
because I knew it was way past my  
bedtime.  
(BEAT)  
He scared me. I didn't want to make  
him mad.

She takes a drink and breaks eye contact with her son. She  
pauses. She begins to wring her hands together.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. JANET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Young Janet is in bed. Her back is to the door. The bedroom  
door slowly squeaks open. Her eyes are open.

George's silhouette is standing in the doorway.

EXT. JANET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

George is standing there in nothing but his white underwear  
watching with labored breathing. He reaches up and firmly  
grasps the doorframe. His long nails begin to scratch at the  
door jamb.

George staggers into the bedroom. The door gives off a faint  
creak as he shuts it.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

HALLWAY

Young Janet walks down the hallway and starts to pass George.  
He grips her shoulder tightly and playfully grins. Young  
Janet tenses up.

George leans in close and grits his teeth.

GEORGE

If you ever tell your mother I will chain you both up in the basement and scratch out your eyeballs. I'll starve you in the darkness until you're dead.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

KITCHEN

Janet looks down at the floor. Tears are streaming down her face. She snuffles and looks at the glass that she is rotating between her fingers.

She inhales and sighs. She clears her throat.

JANET

This happened off and on for several years until I was a couple of years older than you. Probably fourteen or so.

She clenches her jaw and grits her teeth.

JANET (CONT'D)

My mom was never very attentive, but she started acting suspicious when I asked her to take me to the doctor one day.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

KITCHEN

Janet's mom, JANICE (mid thirties, white, female) is standing in the kitchen propped up against the sink. She is staring at the phone in her hand. She shakes her head and begins to dial.

JANICE

This is Janice Hanscott, Janet Hanscott's mother. I need to speak with Dr. Payette, please.

She is on the phone. Her eyes go wide. The phone drops out of her hand and clatters to the floor.

## JANET'S BEDROOM

Young Janet lying on her bed in the fetal position crying. She is clutching her pillow.

George and Janice are in screaming in the next room. Items can be heard being thrown around. Glass can be heard smashing.

## LIVING ROOM

Janice rushes through carrying a suitcase. George is running to follow.

GEORGE

Stop, right now! I said stop!

Janice bolts out the door. George stops at the door, keeping it propped open.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Get back here God dammit!

## JANET'S BEDROOM

Young Janet is looking out the window. Janice tosses her bag into a taxi. She whips around.

JANICE

Go to hell you bastard!

Janice jumps in. The taxi pulls away. George runs out into the driveway and gets peppered with dirt and gravel.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

KITCHEN

Janet's eyes are bloodshot, with tears streaming down her face. She takes a long drink of whiskey.

JANET

She never even looked at me when she left. That was the last time I ever saw or heard from her. She was disgusted with me like it was somehow my fault, like I was an abomination. She just walked out never looking back.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

She didn't want to stay in this house for another minute. Same way I have felt since we got here.

Connor studies his mom's face. He looks down at his hands.

Janet wipes her eyes and clears her throat. She looks up to the ceiling and controls her breathing.

JANET (CONT'D)

Soon after, I ran away from home. There was no way I would survive living in this house with that animal. That-that monster!

She shakes her head.

JANET (CONT'D)

I was a pregnant fifteen-year-old girl with nowhere to go. An outcast. I hitched rides for several months to get away. I was too scared to leave the state. I knew I needed a hospital.

She smiles slightly

JANET (CONT'D)

That's where I gave birth to a beautiful, perfect baby boy.

She looks down at her condensing glass. She wipes the water away with her thumb.

JANET (CONT'D)

When I turned eighteen I legally changed my name to Gale. As in Dorothy Gale, the girl from my favorite movie as a kid. *The Wizard of Oz*? I didn't want my dad to ever be able to find me.

Connor was holding back tears. He wasn't looking at her. He stared at his clenched fists.

Janet takes a drink and sets it back down in the pooling ring of water on the table. She leans forward.

JANET (CONT'D)

Do you understand what i'm trying to tell you, Connor?

She puts her hand on top of his fists. She is sobbing.

JANET (CONT'D)

You were that baby. You are my only baby. My only child.

Connor shakes his head. He clenches his eyes shut. He turns his head away from her.

JANET (CONT'D)

My father, George, is your father. That's why--

Connor tears his hands from hers. He jumps up, backing away from the table. He kicks the chair out from under him. His face is twisted in disgust as he shakes his head violently.

CONNOR

No! You lie! That's not true! You-  
you said my dad left us before I  
was born! You're a liar! A liar!

Connor stumbles around. He turns and bolts through the kitchen door.

Janet attempts to reach out and grab him but she misses.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Connor jumps off the back porch.

JANET

Connor!

She runs on the back porch.

Connor runs and hops on his bike.

JANET (CONT'D)

Connor! Please come back!

Connor pedals away as fast as he can. He doesn't look for traffic as he turns onto Thomas Hill Road. As he rides into the street a car swerves around him, honking their horn.

EXT. BALL PARK - EVENING

Connor stops at the park. He drops his bike and stands there.

His jaw is clenched. He paces around.

He kicks a metal trashcan, and with all of his might struggles to lift it and tosses it as far as he can. He kicks it again leaving a dent.

He drops down on a park bench and sobs.

After a few moments he sits back up and gets back on his bike.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DUSK

Connor skids to a halt at the end of the driveway. The living room lamp was the only light he can see. The porch is lit by the dim moonlight.

He climbs off of his bike and walks it up the driveway to the house. He scans the front window trying to get a glimpse of his mother but does not see her.

He leans his bike against the wood post under the porch and proceeds to walk up the steps. He pauses at the door.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

Connor enters the kitchen. There are no dishes in the sink. The whiskey puddle on the floor has begun to dry up. Shards of broken glass are still scattered across the floor.

He looks over. The shoebox is no longer on the table where he had left it.

LIVING ROOM

Connor enters the living room. An episode of *M\*A\*S\*H* is on the television.

CONNOR  
She hates this show.

There are two empty bottles of Jack Daniels sitting on the coffee table. He walks over and picks one up.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
Jesus. Is she trying to kill herself?

He shakes his head. He walks over to the television and turns it off as the show's end credits scroll by. He listens but the house is dead silent.

HALLWAY

He walks past his old room and stops at her door. He places an ear to the door. He turns the knob with the utmost care.

He pushes it open just a crack to peek in and check on her. He can hear her snoring. He sighs and slumps his shoulders.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Whose the monster now? As they say,  
the apple doesn't fall far from the  
tree.

MOTHER'S BEDROOM

Connor sneaks into the room and rounds the bed. He pulls the tangled blankets over her shoulders and brushes her hair out of her face with his index finger.

A tall figure is hunkered down in the corner of the bedroom watching. The moonlight from the window illuminates the dirty underwear.

He stands there a moment and watches her sleep in the darkness. He leans over and kisses her softly on the forehead. He tip-toes out of her room and quietly closes the door.

HALLWAY

As the door shuts, he wrinkles his nose. He shakes his head and walks away.

MOTHER'S BEDROOM

The shadowy figure sounds off with a heavy lustful breath as it watches Janet sleep.

KITCHEN

Connor finishes cleaning up the whiskey and broken glass.

BATHROOM

Connor relieves himself and brushes his teeth.

BASEMENT STAIRS

He gazes down the stairs at the floor where his father died. He reaches out and fingers the deep scratches in the plaster on the wall.

BASEMENT

Connor walks down the deep stairs. His eyes lock onto the patch of carpet at the foot of the steps. He steps to the side to avoid it.

He bends down and lifts the patch up. He sees the dark stains on the bottom and the scratch marks on the ground.

He drops the loose carpet and backs away almost tripping over his feet.

Connor lays on his bed and grabs his copy of *Spider-Man*. He stares at it. He opens his nightstand and tosses it in. He reaches under his mattress and produces his copy of *Creepshow*.

As he reads it, he rubs his stomach. He tosses the beat up comic onto the foot of his bed. He gets up and heads for the stairs.

As he reaches for the hanging sheet wall, he is startled. THE ROLLING STONES jam out of his radio speakers with Mick Jagger singing *PAINT IT BLACK*

CONNOR (CONT'D)

What the hell?

He walks over and clicks off the radio. He then picks up the flashlight he found earlier in the day. Connor walks towards the stairs by the nightlight illuminating his way.

Just before he sets his bare foot on the bottom step, the radio switches itself back on at full volume. Connor jerks and flips the switch to the overhead lights, but they don't turn on. He tries the switch again with no success.

He turns on the flashlight and starts to run up the stairs. He glances up surprised to see his mother standing on the top step. Her figure is silhouetted by a dim light shining down from the hallway.

He aims the beam of light up at her and sees her eyes are closed as if she is asleep.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

M-mom?

He gets no response. He moves one foot up a step, keeping the other one on the carpet.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Mom. Wake up. You need to get back to bed. You're going to fall.

The Stones continues to rock out at full blast in the background. The song is heavily distorted blaring out of the small speakers.

Janet takes a heavy step down towards her son. Her long nails dig into the plaster leaving deep gouges. Plaster debris spills onto the stairs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Mo--

His eyes go wide. He freezes.

A tall dark figure is standing behind his mother in the hallway. The enlarged shadow gives a guttural, choked laugh that echoes down the stairwell.

A corpse-like hand with gray boney fingers and long, broken fingernails grabs Janet's right shoulder.

MONSTER

Catch!

The dead hand thrusts forward and pushes Janet's body down the stairwell.

Janet falls with her arms stretched out wide. Connor instantly squares up his body. He puts his arms up to soften her fall.

Her body collides with Connor. He catches her but the force of her body slams him against the wall. His skull connects hard with the stone and mortar foundation.

Janet and Connor both collapse unconscious onto the carpet in a heap of tangled arms and legs.

BASEMENT

Janet slowly opens her eyes. She groans as she grabs her head. She looks around confused.

She looks down to see Connor unconscious beneath her on the floor at the base of the stairs. The flashlight lay next to them on the concrete floor flickering on and off.

The radio has fallen silent.

Janet rolls off of him. She shakes his shoulders.

JANET

Connor? Connor, wha-what's going on?

Connor doesn't respond. Janet steadies herself up onto her knees. She places her hands on either side of his head, cupping his ears.

JANET (CONT'D)

Connor!

She pulls her hands away to see her fingers covered in blood in the glow of the nightlight.

JANET (CONT'D)

Oh my God, Connor! Wake up!

Tears are streaming down her face as she tries to wake him.

A ghoulish laugh echoes down the stairwell. Her breath catches. Her eyes go wide.

Janet slowly stands to her feet. Her legs are wobbly which makes her almost lose her balance. She steadies herself from falling over.

JANET (CONT'D)

Come on Connie, we need to go. Now!

She shoves her hands underneath her son's armpits and lifts him off the bloodied carpet.

A small stream of blood is running from the back of his head, down his neck and staining his t-shirt.

The bloated corpse of her father descends the stairs one at a time with a forceful step. His nails dig into the plaster. Several of his mangled fingernails peel back, barely hanging on to the flesh as they scratch along the walls.

George moves only as fast as his decaying legs will allow. Clumps of dirt and maggots bounce off the stairs with each footfall.

Janet doesn't look back. She drags Connor across the floor.

JANET (CONT'D)

Connor, now would be a great time to wake up, honey!

She drags him to the rusty bulkhead doors. She sets him down on the ground. On all fours, she scrambles up the stairs and feels for the locking bar.

She pushes both doors open simultaneously.

Connor stirs. He rubs his head.

CONNOR

Mmm-mom?

George's feet thud against each stair as he nears the bottom.

JANET  
Connor! You're alright!

She rushes back down the stairs.

JANET (CONT'D)  
Oh thank God! We need to go Buddy.  
Can you walk?

She places her hand under his arm for support. Connor grimaces.

CONNOR  
I think so. My head hurts. What happened.

He is slow to stand up. His mother gently lifts him. Once he is upright, Janet bolts up the stairs to show him the way out.

JANET  
Come on! You need to hurry!

The strobe of the flashlight catches Connor's attention. It gives George's movements an eerie delay effect. In the glow of the nightlight Connor catches a glimpse of the monster.

Connor is frozen in place.

George is wearing nothing but underwear blotched in dark stains. One of his arms is bent in the wrong direction with a bone protruding from beneath the torn flesh. His eyes sockets are hollow and dark. His lips are eaten away. His broken brown teeth and gums are exposed in a vile grin.

GEORGE  
Come be with me. Son.

George stiffly reaches out his arm towards Connor with his brittle clawing arm. Connor reaches out to welcome the invitation.

CONNOR  
D-Dad?

JANET (O.S.)  
Connor! Now!

Connor snaps out of it. He looks up at his mother and clambers up the steps on all fours.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

Connor collapses on all fours at his mother's feet. Janet steps over him, lifts the safety latches and slams down the metal doors. She grabs a nearby rake and quickly slides it under the metal handles of the bulkhead doors.

JANET

Rot in fucking hell, you monster!

She bends down to help Connor to his feet. She glances over him for further injuries. Connor looks at Janet with tears in her eyes.

Janet embraces Connor in a big hug. They stand there for a second in the moonlight.

Her hand returns to the back of his head.

JANET (CONT'D)

Come on, Connie. We need to go.

They limp away from the house.

A small gray mouse scurries along the foundation of the house. It turns and reaches the bulkhead jutting out towards the back yard. It picks up a fat, squirming maggot.

The mouse drops the larva as the bulkhead door is shoved forcefully.

The door does not budge. The loud banging startles the mouse, who runs off into the dark.

The abrasive noise coming from the bulkhead doors stop and all that sounds is the chorus of crickets.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Janet and Connor hobble up the driveway. Their arms are wrapped around each other for support. They stumble up the porch steps and Janet lowers Connor.

Connor settles against the wooden railing. Janet walks up and knocks rapidly on the screen door. She looks back at Connor.

The porch light comes on. An elderly woman peers out from behind a curtain. She swings open the front door.

ELDERLY WOMAN

For Heaven's sake, what happened?  
Are you two okay?

Janet sighs in exhaustion.

JANET  
Hospital.

The elderly woman turns.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
Larry! Get a spare bathrobe and get  
down here!

INT. OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

The elderly couple in the front seat are illuminated by the green glow of the dashboard. They exchange glances but don't say a word.

Janet is in the backseat with Connor laid across the bench. He is resting his head in her lap. Her hand is pressed against the back of his head with a towel.

The car passes by Janet's childhood home. She glances out the window as they pass. She notices the living room lamp on in the living room.

The dark figure of George stands in the window.

JANET  
You can keep the house, you sick  
fuck!

She looks down at Connor and brushes the hair out of his face.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Connor is laying there flipping through the channels on the TV suspended from the ceiling. His head is bandaged. Janet is asleep on the tiny couch.

Connor looks over at her. He sets down the corded remote and leans over to the chair beside his bed. He grabs his pair of shorts he had been wearing the night they ran away.

He reaches into the back pocket and pulls out an old Polaroid. He pulls the beside lamp closer and stares intently at the old photograph.

The picture shows George standing just outside of the bamboo hut. In his hand he holds out his trophy necklace. On his face is the eerily charming smile.

Connor smiles back at his father. He rolls to his side, pressing the Polaroid to his chest and closes his eyes.

On the television, two military helicopters appear on the screen. They fly over a mountain range and hover over medical unit with red crosses on the tent roofs. Gentle guitar plucking and horns of the *M\*A\*S\*H* themes song begin to play.

EXT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

A large truck with DAN'S MOVING COMPANY written on the side backs down the dirt driveway of the old house next to the Thomas Hill Cemetery.

Two rugged looking men, DAN (Middle-aged, black, male) and CRAIG (Mid-twenties, white, male) step down out of the cab.

They walk around and swing open the back doors of the box truck, pulling out several blankets and folded up cardboard boxes.

DAN

This is it. Let's get in and get out before dinnertime. I don't want to miss Carla's meatloaf. That shit dries up fast if it has too much time to sit.

CRAIG

No problem, boss. We'll get it done. You know, a little ketchup can go a long way.

Dan wrinkles his nose.

DAN

Never liked the stuff.

(BEAT)

You start in the bedroom and work your way forward. I'll hit the basement. I'll bring stuff out through the bulkhead and save some time. The other guys are on their way. Start by boxing up the small shit. Save the heavy stuff for when the crew gets here.

CRAIG

You got it. This isn't a bad looking place. I wonder if they're going to sell. With a little work it could easily be flipped.

(MORE)

CRAIG (CONT'D)

The wife and I are looking for a starter home. Kid's due in January. Although, kind of creepy being so close to a cemetery though. Ya think?

Craig scratches his head and looks over at Dan. Dan shrugs.

DAN

Who knows? I can't figure out why they'd leave a house for a tiny apartment in the first place. Not my place either. Long as I get paid. Let's move!

Dan smiles at his pun. Craig just nods and walks away. Dan shakes his head and walks around to the back of the house. He spots the rake jammed into the door handles of the bulkhead.

DAN (CONT'D)

What the hell? Don't they know these doors lock from the inside? This ain't doing a damn thing.

Dan removes the rake and jerks the doors open. He descends into the darkness of the basement.

INT. HANSCOTT HOUSE - DAY

MOTHER'S BEDROOM

Craig enters carrying small stack of flat folded boxes and a roll of packaging tape. He looks around the room.

CRAIG

This job should be a piece of cake!  
Easy money.

He unfolds a box and tapes the bottom. He kneels down to check under the bed. He sees a shoebox tucked away underneath. Craig shakes his head and laughs.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Women and shoes. Probably has twenty more pairs in the closet.

He lays down on his stomach. A scratching noise sounds. He pauses and listens. He shakes his head in denial, reaches under the bed and pulls the box out.

He reads the writing on top : HANOI

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Hanoi? What the hell? These ain't  
no shoes.

Craig opens the lid of the box. He catches a brief glimpse of the war trophy and the balled up t-shirt. He winces and drops the box in disgust.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Jesus! Who are these people?

He jumps as the radio on Janet's nightstand turns itself on full blast. THE ANIMALS hit *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place* blares through the small speakers. The closet doors behind Craig open.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

What the fu--

George's rusty bayonet reaches around his throat.

FADE OUT:

END CREDITS

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