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The Invisible Universe and Other Screenplays

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THE INVISIBLE UNIVERSE AND OTHER SCREENPLAYS

by

Edward Howarth

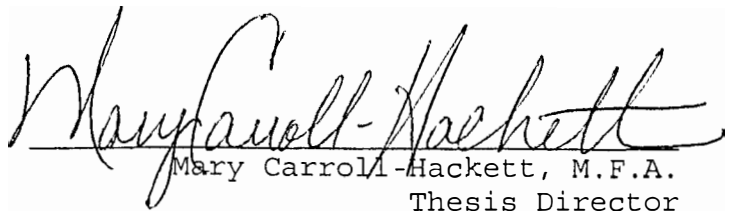
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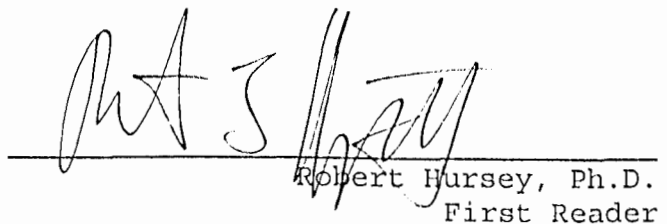
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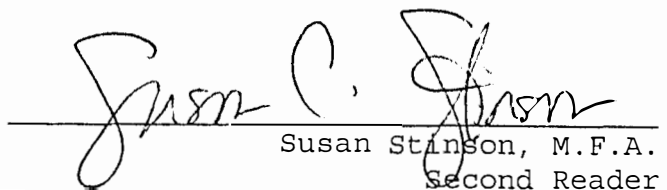
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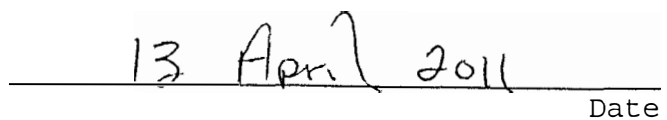
Department of English and Modern Languages

April 2011


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Edward Howarth. THE INVISIBLE UNIVERSE AND OTHER SCREENPLAYS.

(Under the direction of Mary Carroll-Hackett.) Department of English and Modern Languages. April 2011.

In the science fiction classic, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), Roy Neary sacrifices everything, his job, his friends, his family, to pursue an answer that he believes will provide him with a new and better life. With nothing but hazy visions of alien spaceships, and a five note tune lingering in his memory, Roy is nevertheless willing to step outside of his emotional security and risk everything. Science fiction cinema is full of these characters, from Roy in *Close Encounters*, Truman in *The Truman Show* (1998), to Evan in *The Butterfly Effect* (2004), these are people not content with the drudgery of their everyday lives, but driven to find something more. This 'more' comes in many forms, from a government hidden secret, to a key moment in the past that unlocks a better future. This 'more' pushes the boundaries of believability, and can sometimes alter both time and space. However, though this 'more' might take a variety of forms, its goal is always the same: to provide a character with a new and better life. My characters are similarly driven by this need, whether it is Jintsy in "The Final Horror of Count Ferdu," who sneaks out in the hope of finding something more than cheap costumes and props in Count Ferdu's dilapidated mansion, or Arty in "Sundown," willing to follow a letter from his dead wife, and

abandon years of healing, for one night with his loved one. These characters follow their own hero's journey. More often than not, however, they are not traditionally heroic. In "The Invisible Universe," though Neddy's need to reconcile with his estranged daughter is admirable, we are reminded that it was his need to find something more, and his resulting negligence, that drove them apart in the first place: 'Mom says that when I was born, you kept calling me 'it'.' In "The Date," Eugene's systematic lies end up trapping him, blissfully hopeful, in a hopeless apocalyptic wasteland. Heroic or not, collected in this thesis are people who question their everyday existence, and are willing to step outside their own emotional safety to find the answers, at whatever the cost.

Dedicated to Ashley Maser, for her unending patience, and for always knowing the right thing to say. Also thanks to Jon Norcutt, for never knowing the right thing to say.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to Susan Stinson, who through her kindness and guidance made me feel less like a stranger in a strange land. Also, to Mary Carroll-Hackett, for pointing my head down and showing me the path of tradition, and introducing me to a certain bloke by the name of Conan. Finally, to Dr. Brett Hursey, for showing me that writing should be fun, and if I'm not having a blast doing it, then I shouldn't be doing it at all. I would also like to thank everyone who's laboured over these stories in workshop. You're too numerous to name, but I'll never forget any of you.

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The Final Horror of Count Ferdu

By

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INT. COUNT FERDU HORROR MOVIE/ INSERT

The crack of THUNDER, the CRASH of an ORGAN.

Bursts of lighting illuminate the stone walls of a crypt. The stonework is flat, cheap, crudely painted. Think an Edward D. Woodward flick.

RUGGED MAN (40s) swings a flaming torch through the shadows.

He's jittery, constantly turning, trying not to keep his back to anything for too long.

RUGGED MAN

I know you're here, Ferdu. Your vampire tricks won't work this time.

Behind the rugged man a shape unfurls from the murk.

Rugged man turns. His eyes bulge; he SHRIEKS.

INT. TAMBLIN RESIDENCE, TV ROOM - DAY

It's dingy, dirty. Trash lies in heaps. We pass the family portraits. One of them shows a family of four: two boys, a mother and father. The father's face has been scratched out.

On the carpet, JINSTY (12) stares intently at the television screen. He's sporting a vampire cape, and has fake fangs stuffed into his mouth.

RUGGED MAN (O.S.)

Come out, Ferdu. Show yourself.

A shadow moves behind Jinty. He's too fascinated to notice.

INSERT - TV/ COUNT FERDU MOVIE

Rugged man drips with sweat.

He flails the torch around the crypt, but he's not watching his step.

His foot catches on a cracked floor slab.

He tumbles onto the stone.

The torch rolls away and is stopped by a POLISHED DINNER SHOE.

We move up, slowly, to reveal COUNT FERDU (70s). He's a bloated vampire, caked in cheap make-up. This vampire has clearly had a bit too much blood, and far too little exercise.

But Rugged Man reels back, terrified.

END INSERT

Jintsy leans forward, eyes glued to the screen.

Behind, we become aware of a similar shadow creeping toward Jintsy.

INSERT - TV/ COUNT FERDU MOVIE

Ferdu descends on Rugged Man, fangs bared. He HISSES.

FERDU

What's the matter, Esteban? Are you scared?

Rugged Man snaps his head back, lets out a WAIL -

END INSERT

The shadow grabs Jintsy, rips him back.

Jintsy WAILS.

We can now see that it's an older boy, a bit taller than Jintsy. This is Jintsy's older brother, RUDY (14).

RUDY

The god damn bus is here.

He releases Jintsy, stomps over to the window.

He throws open the curtains. Sunlight floods the room.

Jintsy glares at him.

We hear the SOUND of a HORN.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

A school bus waits at the end of the drive.

INT. SCHOOL BUS/ MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Rudy plays around with some of his FRIENDS (14).

VOICE (O.S.)

Rudy?

Nothing.

VOICE (O.S.)

(louder)

Rudy?

This gets Rudy's attention.

SIMON (12) a bookish-looking boy, taps his shoulder.

RUDY

What, Simon?

Simon jabs his thumb toward the back of the bus.

SIMON

It's Jintsy.

Rudy glances to the back of the bus...

... where Jintsy is being pinned by a LARGE KID (12). Jintsy

claws at his attacker, HISSING like Count Ferdu.

RUDY

Takes a look at his friends. He sighs, vaults over the seat. His friends LAUGH amongst themselves.

AT THE BACK OF THE BUS

Rudy yanks away the large kid, jabs a warning finger at him. The boy doesn't look too pleased about this, but retreats.

Jintsy keeps HISSING, clawing.

He sets him down on the seat, but Jintsy's back up. Some of the kids in the bus giggle.

Rudy glances around, very aware that he's being watched.

RUDY

Sit down, Jintsy.

Jintsy keeps SNARLING. He ducks under his cape, regards Rudy through slitted eyes.

RUDY

Okay, okay.

Rudy, still self-conscious, pulls a small vial, like a perfume bottle, from his pocket. There's a cross marked on the glass. He uncorks it, sprinkles some on Jintsy.

Jintsy snarls worse than ever, as if in pain. He pretends to melt, until he's face down on the seat.

RUDY

(hissing)

You back, yet?

Jintsy looks up.

JINTSY

Am I what?

The bus slows.

Rudy grits his teeth, turns around, and lurches back toward his friends.

INT. TV ROOM - NIGHT

MOM (40 going on 90) sits reclined in an old armchair. She's a bloated lady wrapped in an ash stained dressing gown. A long, elegant cigarette burns between her fingers. She's mute, distant, utterly miserable.

Rudy looks at her for a beat, then crosses into -

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rudy yanks open the fridge.

Inside, a whole shelf is crammed with little bottles of tomato juice.

He scowls.

RUDY
(to Mom)
Mom, I told you not to buy any more
tomato juice.

A beat.

RUDY
Mom?

Nothing.

Rudy grits his teeth.

He scans the shelves. There's a few jars, some condiments. Not a lot to eat.

Rudy slams the fridge closed.

INT. TV ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mom's eyes remain locked on the TV.

Rudy brandishes the tomato juice.

RUDY

So this is dinner?

Mom swivels her eyes over to him, looks for a long beat.
They go back to the television screen.

Rudy waits for a response. None comes.

INT. KITCHEN - SOME TIME LATER

Rudy dumps the tomato juice into a pan.

He looks up.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

VARIOUS KIDS (14) play ball on a park across the road.

BACK TO RUDY

Who looks at them longingly.

Rudy stirs the tomato juice.

There's a THUMP from upstairs.

INT. JINTSY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Simon and Jintsy are watching an old Ferdu flick on the TV.

INSERT - TV/ COUNT FERDU MOVIE

Ferdu has his claws wrapped around the throat of a buxom
victim.

END INSERT

Rudy crosses the room, turns the TV to another channel.

JINTSY

Hey!

RUDY

You're not watching that.

Jintsy brandishes the remote, turns it back to the channel.

Rudy lunges for him.

In the BG, we see that Ferdu's been staked in the heart, and lies dying against a crypt wall. The picture fades, the credits roll.

They struggle on the floor.

INSERT - TV

The channel flickers over several channels. It lands on a news report.

NEWS READER

... spells the end for a local legend.

BACK TO JINTSY AND RUDY

Jintsy and Rudy keep struggling.

SIMON

Hey you guys...

Jintsy looks up. Rudy takes the opportunity to toss Jintsy sideways onto the rug. He swivels round.

INSERT - TV

A FEMALE REPORTER (40s) stands in front of a ruined mansion. Written on the screen is the title of the story: 'Local Landmark Scrapped.'

FEMALE REPORTER

For years, faded horror icon and Westbrook local, Seymore Ferdinand, known by his fans as 'Count Ferdu,' has dwelled within the walls of this historic building.

INSERT - PICTURE OF FERDU

A picture of a MIDDLE-AGED FERDU (40) comes up on the screen. He's rather dashing, nothing like the bloated man he'll become.

END INSERT

FEMALE REPORTER (CONT'D)

After rising to fame in the fifties and sixties, Ferdinand's popularity sharply declined in the seventies. But a horror fan to the core, Ferdinand continued to produce, moving the stages to his mansion here in Westbrook, where he made picture after picture, only a few of which are still available on DVD.

INSERT - PICTURE OF FERDU

The image fades to grayscale.

FEMALE REPORTER (V.O.)

In his later life, Ferdinand dropped from the public view. Then, two weeks ago ...

The picture fades to black.

Back to the reporter.

FEMALE REPORTER (V.O.)

... he disappeared entirely. A search was conducted, but all that was found was a letter, which authorities speculate to be a

suicide note.

END INSERT

The reporter pulls out a crumpled letter.

FEMALE REPORTER

(reading)

Dear fans, I am retreating from this mortal realm, but leave you with my final gift to the night. I have left one final scare haunting Westbrook. Come find it, if you dare. Ferdu.

The reporter folds the letter.

FEMALE REPORTER

Now, Ferdinand's mansion is scheduled to be stripped and demolished tomorrow morning. Will his final scare, which many presume to be a last, unreleased movie, turn up in his remaining items at auction? Who knows. But what we do know is that, with the demolition of Ferdinand's mansion, we say goodbye to a troubled, but iconic, local legend. This is Sandra Davies for WNC, reporting from Westbrook.

INT. JINTSY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jintsy and Rudy both stare at the screen.

Rudy glances at Jintsy.

Jintsy doesn't say anything.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Rain hammers the windows.

Rudy flicks through the channels. His mother sleeps in the armchair. Her mouth is open, comatose. There's a half-empty glass of wine clasped in her hands.

INSERT - TV

We scroll through a weather report, commercials, then to a familiar sight...

Count Ferdu raises his bloated head from the neck of a victim. He casts his head back, lets out a HORRIBLE LAUGH.

END INSERT

A long beat while Rudy watches. Finally, he flicks it off, rises from the chair.

INT. JINTSY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rudy pushes the door open, drifts inside. A shape SNORES beneath the covers of the bed.

Rudy nudges it, softly.

RUDY
Hey Jintsy.

A beat.

RUDY (CONT'D)
Jintsy.

Nothing.

He takes a seat on the bed.

RUDY (CONT'D)
You know I didn't mean that earlier, right?

Still nothing.

He notices something that shouldn't be there. The glint of a pair of glasses.

Rudy rips the covers off...

... and reveals a very nervous Simon.

RUDY (CONT'D)
Where's Jintsy?

SIMON
I promised not to say.

Rudy grabs him.

This convinces him.

SIMON (CONT'D)
He said he was going to find
Ferdu's big scare.

RUDY
At the mansion?

Simon nods.

RUDY
When did he go?

Simon squirms.

A beat while Rudy tightens his grip.

SIMON
Maybe an hour.

He takes a swing at a lamp, knocks it over. He sits down on the bed.

He glances at Simon.

RUDY
He wants to run off, that's his

problem.

A contemplative beat.

RUDY

I got other things things to do.
Besides, he's got to start looking
out for himself.

SIMON

It looked pretty old, that place.

RUDY

Yeah.

SIMON

I tried to tell him not to.

Rudy seems to struggle with a decision.

RUDY

Is he wearing the cape?

Simon nods.

Rudy gets up, walks briskly out of the room.

EXT. DARK STREET/ MOVING - SOME TIME LATER

Rain pounds the road. Rudy is on his bike, pedalling fast.

Rudy peers ahead.

Through the wash of rain, we see a single light flickering
in the distance.

He speeds up.

EXT. OUTSIDE FERDU'S MANSION - SOME TIME LATER

Rudy skids to a halt outside Ferdu's ruined mansion. It's

half-collapsed, with bordered up windows. The wind picks up the shutters, SLAMS them against the moldering walls.

Rudy looks around, and sees ...

... another bike, lying on its side in the grass. The dynamo light is still glowing.

Rudy dashes up to -

THE PORCH

He tries the large door. It's bolted shut.

He looks around, runs back out into the rain, around to -

THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE

Where he sees a window ajar. Fresh mud trails up the wall where someone has recently climbed in.

INT. FERDU'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Rudy hoists himself up through the window, leaps down onto the floor.

RUDY

Jintsy?

It's dark, enormous, moldering.

RUDY

Jintsy?

Nothing.

Rudy pulls a flash light from his back pocket, flicks it on.

The beam drags over damp peeling wallpaper, a rotten carpet. Ruin.

Rudy creeps forward.

Something CLATTERS far off in the house. Rudy follows the sound sideways to a doorway.

He toes the door. It CREAKS open ...

HALLWAY

Long and ominous. At the opposite end is a single door, open ajar. For a brief moment, there's the flutter of a weak light beneath, like a candle being extinguished.

Rudy approaches the door.

A fresh burst of wind slams against the house. Rudy jumps. He composes himself.

He reaches the door, pushes it open...

Another burst of wind. There's a WILD, INHUMAN SHRIEK, and something large collides with Rudy.

He's thrown to the floor, struggles with a dark shape.

Rudy SCREAMS. He rips at the shape.

His fingers close over material. He rips away a black cape...

... and exposes Jintsy, grinning.

Rudy doesn't share his enthusiasm.

RUDY

We're going home.

He dusts himself off.

JINTSY

When did you stop being fun, Rudy?

Jintsy jumps up, starts searching the room.

JINTSY

Look at all this cool stuff...

Jintsy wanders out of the room.

INT. FERDU'S SECRET STUDIO/ HALLWAY- MOMENTS LATER

It's dingy, and probably once decadent. Years of neglect have ruined the wallpaper, stained the carpet.

The walls are bulging with damp. Cracked display cases are lined in a neat, orderly row. The posters inside are from some of Ferdu's old flicks: 'The Vampire Cometh,' 'Long Live the Undead.'

The posters inside are old, past their prime.

Jintsy is admiring one.

As we move from poster to poster, a younger Ferdu grows older, plumper, until we rest on one final poster: 'Crypt-O Graph.' He's snarling, cheeks rouged.

He looks utterly ridiculous.

RUDY (CONT'D)

I can't believe I used to find these scary.

JINTSY

Used?

RUDY

Yeah.

Rudy touches a display case, tenderly wipes away some dust.

RUDY (CONT'D)

They're old and stupid.

Jintsy scowls, cocks an ear.

RUDY (CONT'D)

What?

JINTSY

You hear that?

RUDY
(listens)
Hear what?

DOWN THE CORRIDOR

A long, murky corridor extends into blackness.

BACK TO JINTSY AND RUDY

JINTSY
Footsteps.

DOWN THE CORRIDOR

Nothing moves. It's as silent as a Tomb.

JINTSY (CONT'D)
Ferdu's close...

RUDY
No, he's not.

JINTSY
I can feel him.

Jintsy strides forward.

He stops just shy of where the outside light cuts off, on a void of blackness.

RUDY
(turns)
No one's here, Jintsy. Come on,
it's time to leave.

The flashlight beam moves down to the end of the corridor, illuminating a scarred wooden door. On it, a peeling sheet of paper reads 'The Horror Continues.'

Jintsy grins, moves toward the door.

AT THE DOOR

He lays a finger on the wood, taps it.

JINTSY

Let's see...

He pushes it open. It CREAKS loudly.

Jintsy guides the flashlight beam into the new room.

INT. FERDU'S SECRET STUDIO/ LARGE ROOM - MOMENT LATER

Junk lies everywhere in heaps.

There's so much of it: boxes and costume racks, tombstone props, piles of fake bats and spiders. Think everything kitsch in horror movies, amateurish tricks. Think cheap plastic skeletons, Halloween masks.

Still, it's dark. Lots of places for childhood fears to hide.

Jintsy moves into the room, shines the flashlight over everything.

JINTSY

Look at all this.

RUDY

It's junk.

Jintsy scowls, points the beam up at his face, contorting it with shadows.

Rudy scoffs.

RUDY (CONT'D)

It's time to head back, Jintsy.

He goes to leave, but is stopped by...

... a CREAK from somewhere in the darkness.

Jintsy's heard it, too.

He points the flashlight down into -

THE DEPTHS OF THE STUDIO

More boxes, clutter, cheap props, extending into darkness.

The torchlight sweeps over a plywood wall, what can only be the backing for a set. We follow it further down, to a narrow opening.

BACK TO JINTSY

Who creeps forward, gliding the flashlight beam over...

THE BACK WALL

A huge box of more props.

JINTSY

Can you believe this?

He ducks down, rifles through the box.

JINTSY (CONT'D)

This is all from 'The Nightmare of
Count Ferdu.'

He looks back at Rudy, grins.

Rudy rolls his eyes.

JINTSY (CONT'D)

You remember that one?

Rudy shakes his head, slowly.

Jintsy pulls out a rubber snake. He holds it in his hands like it were a real snake, ready to strike.

JINTSY

Remember? This is the snake that got the girl. It was in the crypt, after Carlos thinks he's killed Ferdu, and -

Rudy shakes his head.

JINTSY
Sure you do, look -

He points at -

A TOMBSTONE

Which reads 'Alicia Del Morte - R.I.P'

BACK TO JINTSY

JINTSY (CONT'D)
That's her grave, right there.
(sighs)
This is amazing, this is -

RUDY
Junk.

Jintsy frowns, plucks a crucifix from the wall.

JINTSY
You didn't used to think it was
stupid.

INT. TAMBLIN RESIDENCE, TV ROOM - FLASHBACK

Jintsy and Rudy sit cross legged on the carpet, engrossed by the television screen. They're both wearing pajamas with cartoon bats and spiders on the fabric.

INSERT - TV/ COUNT FERDU MOVIE

ALICIA DEL MORTE (20s) tears through a dark, misty graveyard.

She's terrified, glancing back all the time.

She stumbles over roots.

JINTSY (V.O.)

Alicia Del Morte was terrified of becoming Ferdu's next victim, so she tried to flee the village.

Alicia trips, flops over onto to the grass.

She tries to get up, but something keeps her in place...

She looks down at her foot...

It's looped by a tree root.

JINTSY (CONT'D)

But she was no match for Ferdu.

She yanks at the foot, tries to break loose. She's PANTING hard.

ACROSS THE GRAVEYARD

We see Ferdu emerge through curls of fog.

END INSERT

Rudy and Jintsy lean closer to the TV, mouths open.

INSERT - TV/ COUNT FERDU MOVIE

Alicia frantically yanks at the root, but to no avail. She isn't going anywhere.

Ferdu's closing in, barely five feet away.

JINTSY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She can't escape, so what does she do?

Alicia fumbles beneath her top, pulls out a wooden crucifix.

She holds it up, SHRIEKS.

But it doesn't faze Ferdu, who smiles, and keeps gliding forward.

All we can see now is the crucifix, held by Alicia's hand.

She SCREAMS IN HORROR.

The crucifix becomes -

END INSERT

BACK TO THE PRESENT

INT. FERDU'S SECRET STUDIO/ LARGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- The crucifix in Jintsy's hand, which he holds close to Rudy's face.

JINTSY

And that was this crucifix. Cool,
right?

Jintsy swoops forward, extends his cape outward into wings.

JINTSY (CONT'D)

(imitating Ferdu)
Your blood is mine, Rudy.

He descends upon Rudy.

His mouth opens, showing fake fangs.

Rudy laughs, controls himself. Rudy shoves him away.

RUDY

That was before Dad left.

Jintsy turns on him.

JINTSY

You're scared, admit it. You were
always scared. One time, you went
running from the room, like this...

Jintsy runs away.

JINTSY (O.S.)

(imitating Rudy)

I'm Rudy; I'm so scared.

We hear him SCREAM like a little girl.

The floorboards wobble beneath his feet.

Jintsy keeps fooling around.

There's a loud CRACK.

The floorboards give way. Jintsy plummets down.

RUDY (CONT'D)

Jintsy!

He runs forward, peers over the ragged hole.

There's nothing down there but darkness.

RUDY

Hold on, I'll find a way down!

He looks around, dashes for a door.

INT. FRONT HALL/ 2ND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

An enormous front hall, with a regal set of stairs leading down.

Rudy flies down the stairs.

INT. FRONT HALL/ 1ST FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Huge heaps of junk. A twisted maze of boxes. He picks his way through.

The junk ends at a dark sheet, speckled with stars.

Rudy extends a hand, tests it.

He pokes it once, twice.

He moves closer, grabs a bunch of it in his hand.

He RIPS the curtain away. Reels back. There's...

... Nothing.

The curtain drops back into place. Rudy keep moving, following the curtain.

It ends at another entryway.

AT THE ENTRYWAY

A breeze disturbs the curtain.

Something CREAKS inside.

He shuffles through the entryway.

We move upward. Over the doorway, a sign reads: 'Finale - The Crypt.'

INT. CRYPT SET - MOMENTS LATER

It's the same crypt from the film at the beginning.

Another CREAK.

Rudy's jittery, constantly turning, trying not to keep his back to anything for too long.

Behind him, a shape unfurls from the murk.

Rudy turns around, YELLS.

The shadow engulfs him, drags him down to -

THE FLOOR

Rudy's back THUMPS against the flagstones. Dust rises.

He's writhing with the shadow, trying to kick it off.

The flashlight bounces away.

Light falls over the figure's face, revealing it to be...

Just Jintsy, again.

JINTSY

Your blood is mine, Rudy.

Jintsy rolls off, SHRIEKING with LAUGHTER.

Rudy grits his teeth, lunges for him.

Jintsy kicks up, catches Rudy square in the gut.

Rudy buckles to the floor.

Rudy snarls, then...

... Unexpectedly ...

... He starts to laugh.

JINTSY

Rudy?

Jintsy slowly approaches. Rudy's still laughing.

JINTSY

Told you this stuff was scary.

RUDY

You don't think I want it to be
scary?

Tears roll down Rudy's face. They're not tears of joy.

Jintsy doesn't say anything.

Rudy climbs to his feet, openly crying.

RUDY

I want this stuff to be scary. I
do. But then Dad left, and Mom's
useless, and ...

Jintsy looks away, uncomfortable.

RUDY (CONT'D)

... I just want to be a kid again.

JINTSY
(mumbles)
Then do it.

Rudy snuffles, clenches his fists.

LAUGHTER BOOMS around the room.

Jintsy and Rudy whirl around.

FERDU (O.S.)
Congratulations, traveller. You've
come this far. Now, are you ready
for the horror of Ferdu's final
scare?

Rudy and Jintsy share a look. Jintsy grins.

Slowly, Rudy grins, too.

An ORGAN CHORD CRASHES, then a DRUM ROLL.

FERDU (O.S.)
Are you ready for the unspeakable
torment, the thrill of a lifetime?

THE SOUND of THUNDER CRASHES.

FERDU (O.S.)
Are you ready?

JINTSY
Yes!

RUDY
Yes!

There's a CREAKING from above.

FERDU (O.S.)
Here it is... Here's Ferdu.

A trap door in the ceiling falls open. A dark shape connected to a rope tumbles down.

It knocks Rudy to the ground.

ON THE GROUND

Rudy groans, rubs his back.

A pair of polished shoes swing into view.

Jintsy Takes a step back, eyes wide.

Rudy glances up, notices Jintsy's expression.

RUDY (CONT'D)

What?

He gets up, wipes his hands clean, turns...

... And comes face to face with Count Ferdu's corpse.

It's Ferdu, alright, hanging from a noose. Still in his vampire costume, his face is caked with make-up, a rivulet of blood dried on his upper lip.

Tied around his neck is a sign. It reads 'Boo'.

Jintsy falls backward, WHIMPERS.

Rudy's eyes switch from the Ferdu to his brother.

JINTSY

Pulls his knees up, trembles. He's freaking out.

JINTSY

(blubbering)

It's dead; it's dead.

Tears roll down his cheeks.

Rudy stares at the corpse in horror for a long, arduous beat. He looks back to his brother.

Jintsy looks like a little kid: vulnerable, terrified.

Rudy stiffens, as if summoning strength.

He looks at Jintsy, gives him a sad look.

He LAUGHS LOUDLY.

THE CORPSE

Sways slightly. A breeze flutters the sign.

Jintsy looks up at Rudy, perplexed.

RUDY

Marches up the corpse.

He extends a finger.

Jintsy looks up, watches.

Rudy pokes the body, once, twice. He wipes away some of the make-up.

He wipes his fingers on his jeans, grimaces.

Behind, we see Jintsy staring. He's not crying, any more. From this angle, Jintsy can't see Rudy's face, but we can.

Rudy composes himself, cracks a brave smile.

He shrugs and pushes the body, sets it swaying.

He turns.

RUDY

(to Jintsy)

It's a stupid, cheap trick.

ON THE FLOOR

Jintsy sniffs, wipes his cheeks.

JINTSY
It's fake?

Rudy nods, slowly.

Jintsy jumps to his feet, creeps over to the corpse.

He gives it a tentative little poke.

Behind him, Rudy grimaces.

He pokes it again, harder.

JINTSY (CONT'D)
Are you sure?

He looks back at Rudy, who grins.

RUDY (CONT'D)
It's a stupid piece of crap.

JINTSY
It's not stupid.

RUDY
It's for kids.

Rudy strides back toward the doorway.

RUDY (CONT'D)
I told you all this stuff was
stupid.

Rudy looks back.

RUDY
We're going home.

Jintsy looks at the corpse one more time. He follows.

SEQUENCE - RUDY AND JINTSY EXIT THE MANSION

-- They pick their way silently back through the props.

-- Jintsy plucks up a crucifix, examines it.

-- They reach the entryway.

EXT. FERDU'S MANSION/ WINDOW - SOME TIME LATER

They climb out through the window.

The night is quieter, now. Still.

Rudy stares hard out into the night, struggling with what he's just seen.

Jintsy pops some vampire fangs into his mouth, starts running around the grass.

JINTSY

Your tricks won't fool me, Ferdu.

He trips, falls over.

Rudy grimaces.

RUDY

We need to go home. Stop being...

Jintsy jumps up.

RUDY (CONT'D)

... a kid.

Jintsy hisses, runs for his bike.

RUDY

(to himself)

A stupid kid ...

He watches as ...

ON THE PORCH

Jintsy swoops around, pretending to be a vampire.

BACK TO RUDY

Who sighs, looks longingly at Jintsy.

INT. TAMBLIN RESIDENCE - DAY

Jintsy sits on the floor, watching the TV. He's dressed in his vampire cape.

INSERT - TV/ COUNT FERDU MOVIE

A FEMALE VICTIM (20s) SHRIEKS as Ferdu descends on her.

Ferdu plunges his fangs into her neck.

On the floor, Rugged Man looks up.

RUGGED MAN

Noooooooo!

Ferdu glances up. The female victim is limp in his arms.

END INSERT

Rudy grabs Jintsy's shoulder.

Jintsy swings around.

RUDY

The god damn bus is here.

Jintsy hisses, jumps up. He runs for the door.

Rudy lingers on the television.

INSERT - TV/ COUNT FERDU MOVIE

Ferdu grins.

FERDU

For her, the nightmare is over. But
for you, Esteban...

Rugged man reels back.

FERDU (CONT'D)
... the nightmare has just begun!

He BURSTS into DEMONIC LAUGHTER.

Rugged man falls back.

RUGGED MAN
No, no!

END INSERT

Rudy clicks off the set.

He stands there, watching the dead screen.

We hear the SOUND of a school bus HONKING.

We hear the sound of CHILDREN LAUGHING outside.

Rudy stares at that screen.

The Invisible Universe

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INT. NEDDY'S APARTMENT/ SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

A father and daughter sit at either side of board game. The father is NEDDY (40s). He's a bookish looking guy.

The daughter SAM (13) couldn't look more bored.

Neddy throws the dice.

NEDDY

Ha!

He moves the game piece methodically across the squares. He hits a ladder and zooms half-way up the board.

Sam glances at a dead television in the corner.

SAM

Can't we just have it on in the background?

Neddy acts like he hasn't heard.

NEDDY

Your turn.

Sam rolls her eyes.

Neddy notices.

Sam chucks the dice, then thumps her piece across the board. She hits a ladder.

NEDDY

Tough luck! But you know...

SAM

(imitating Neddy)
In another universe...

NEDDY

In another universe...

SAM
You know what's a better universe?
Mom's house.

Sam looks gloomier than ever.

NEDDY
How's your dinner?

He indicates a half empty bowl of yellow mush on the table.

SAM
Gross.

NEDDY
You love ice cream.

SAM
Not for lunch and dinner.

NEDDY
You liked that when you were
younger.

SAM
When I was five, maybe.

Neddy looks more than a little wounded.

NEDDY
The game's not done.

SAM
This is stupid.

Neddy looks at her long and hard.

NEDDY
It's what two people who like each
other are supposed to do.

Sam moves her marker all the way to the 'Goal' square.

SAM
Look, we're done liking each other,
Neddy.

Sam crosses her arms.

Neddy grabs the marker, then stops dead. He seems to realize what Sam just said.

NEDDY
Did you just call me 'Neddy'?

SAM
(bitterly)
That's your name, isn't it? Neddy.

NEDDY
You don't call me that. You call me
'Dad.'

SAM
Neddy Neddy Neddy Neddy...

NEDDY
Let's finish the game.

SAM
I'm going to bed.

NEDDY
But the game.

Sam stomps from the room.

We hear a door SLAM.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Pleasant suburbia. A well-kept lawn.

Neddy parks up behind a BMW.

Sam can barely wait for the car to stop.

She flies out of the vehicle.

THE LAWN

Neddy closes the car door and make his way up the lawn.

He passes...

OVERGROWN FLOWERBEDS.

They seem to disturb Neddy.

He pauses at the mailbox.

INSERT - THE MAILBOX

The door is not quite closed. It's cracked ajar.

BACK TO NEDDY

He pushes it firmly shut.

EXT. THE FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy knocks, waits a beat.

The door is opened by a homely looking woman. This is Neddy's ex-wife, SUSAN (40s).

SUSAN

Hello, Neddy.

NEDDY

Hello, Susan.

A weird beat.

NEDDY (CONT'D)

Sam should be in there, somewhere.

Susan nods, slowly.

NEDDY

Well, I'll see you in two weeks.

He turns to leave.

SUSAN

Wait.

Neddy stops.

She opens her mouth, closes it. Finally, she just blurts it out.

SUSAN

We're moving. Up north.

Neddy takes a step back.

NEDDY

When?

SUSAN

Next month.

Another arduous beat.

NEDDY

When will you be back?

SUSAN

It's not a holiday, Neddy.

NEDDY

Don't I get a say in this?

Susan hardens.

SUSAN

You had a say in it back when she was growing up. You know, when you weren't around.

NEDDY

I was busy.

SUSAN
You're a math teacher!

NEDDY
I'm a math professor.

Another beat. Neddy sighs.

NEDDY
I'm trying to make things right.

Susan softens, just a little.

SUSAN
You can't make it perfect.

NEDDY
I can make it better.

SUSAN
It takes time.

Neddy gives her a blank look.

NEDDY
I don't have time now, do I?

Susan looks off into distance, a little guilty. She melts a little.

Neddy can see it.

NEDDY
I want to take her on a trip. A
real trip, not just a visit to the
apartment.

A long beat while Susan considers.

SUSAN
Where?

NEDDY

I don't know. What does she like to do?

Susan gives him 'one of those looks.'

SUSAN

She's thirteen, she doesn't like to do anything.

NEDDY

What about lakes?

Susan cocks an eyebrow.

INT. CAR/ MOVING - THE NEXT WEEK

Sam stares glumly out the window. In the glass, we see mountainous scenery whip by.

At the wheel, Neddy's wearing a tacky-looking fishing hat. It's crisp, clean, brand new.

NEDDY

Let's get some good driving music, huh?

He flips through the channels. A OPERA SINGER SHRIEKS, then the slow, doleful twangs of a COUNTRY MUSIC BALLAD.

Neddy switches it off.

He reaches down.

He pulls up a fishing hat, identical to the one he's wearing. He holds it out to Sam.

NEDDY

Let's get this party started.

Sam just stares.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The car WHIZZES on.

We move up, and see dark blue mountains dominating the horizon.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOWN - LATER THAT DAY

Quaint pine buildings. Restaurants. A real family town.

INT. CAR/ MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks as bored as ever.

NEDDY

Me and your mother used to come here before you were born.

THROUGH THE GLASS

Another rust brown Ford rounds a bend. We get a very brief look at the passengers.

It's Neddy and Sam, or two people who look EXACTLY like them.

The car WHIPS by.

Neddy swivels his head. He can't believe it.

SAM

Mom said that when I was born, you kept calling me 'it'.

Neddy looks through the rear view window.

INSERT - THE MIRROR

The alternate car rounds a bend.

END INSERT

SAM
Instead of 'she'.

Sam continues to stare out of the window.

He shakes his head, blinks his eyes, clearly mistaken...

EXT. LAKESIDE CABIN - AFTERNOON

We get a good look at the cabin. It's kind of shabby, but right on the water. A jetty extends out into the lake. Mountains and trees surround it. Neddy's ford is parked in the drive.

EXT. DOWN ON THE JETTY - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy stands like a warrior by the water. He takes a deep breath.

Behind, Sam's playing a GameBoy.

Neddy keeps looking out over the water. He notices something and squints hard across the lake.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE

Sits another cabin. It's got a similar set up, also with a jetty.

NEDDY

Turns around, takes a long hard look at his own cabin, turns back to the water.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE

Two blurry shapes mill on the grass.

BACK TO NEDDY

The other cabin seems to bother Neddy.

SAM

How long do we have to be here?

Neddy stares across the water.

Sam turns around and slinks back up toward the cabin.

INT. CABIN CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy bustles through the door straining under the weight of an enormous pink suitcase.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He heaves it onto a small single bed. The force causes it to crack open, revealing something ...

... strappy.

He plucks at the strap, and pulls free a small bra.

He stares at it like it were a gun.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Neddy and Sam sit with a Snakes and Ladders game between them. Neddy shakes a pair of dice.

He throws them onto the table.

Sam huffs.

Neddy notices.

He seems to remember something, and leaps up from the table.

NEDDY

Come on.

He runs from the room.

Sam looks after him, then reluctantly follows.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy digs around in the trunk while Sam shivers on the drive.

NEDDY
(to himself)
Gotcha.

He leans back and pulls an enormous old telescope from the car. Dusty and dented, this thing has clearly seen better days.

But this doesn't discourage Neddy, who holds it out with more than a hint of pride.

Sam cocks her head, touches it.

Neddy tilts his head.

NEDDY
Come on.

EXT. ON THE JETTY - MOMENTS LATER

Fog rolls over the water.

The telescope stands by the water's edge while Neddy makes a few adjustments. Behind, Sam shivers, but there's definitely more than a hint of curiosity, now.

Neddy peers through the lens, makes one last adjustment.

NEDDY
Ta-da!

He stands back. Sam pads up and squints into the eyepiece.

SAM
Everything's all blurry.

Neddy stiffens.

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Ta-da!

He stands back. Sam pads up and squints into the eyepiece.

SAM
Everything's all blurry.

Neddy stiffens.

NEDDY
Adjust it a little.

Sam twiddles a knob, shakes her head. She steps away from the telescope.

SAM
It's a piece of junk.

NEDDY
Do you know how much that cost?

SAM
It's an expensive piece of junk.

He steps up to the lens, makes some adjustments.

Behind, Sam retreats back up the grass.

Neddy twists the knob a few more times, then gives the whole thing a thump.

He sighs, stares out across the water, and notices...

THE HOUSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE

A light burns on the lawn.

He yanks the telescope in the other cabin's direction, squints through the eye piece.

THROUGH THE LENS

We sift through the shadows and murk to the other side of the lake. We focus in, until we have a clear view of the cabin.

We move sideways a little, and see...

A RUST ORANGE Ford Focus parked in the drive.

NEDDY

looks up, puzzled.

BACK THROUGH THE LENS

We move down the lawn, and see...

An alternate Neddy and Sam. They're squatted amongst a pile of building materials: bricks, shovels, bags of cement. They seem to be discussing something. Alternate Neddy points down, and Alternate Sam does something we haven't yet seen: she laughs.

Alternate Neddy smiles, claps her on the back.

NEDDY

He keeps watching.

BACK THROUGH THE LENS

Alternate Neddy and Alternate Sam climb to their feet, dust themselves off. Alternate Sam makes some silent little joke, which sets them both laughing again. They stroll back up to the cabin, where they disappear through the doorway.

We move back down the lawn, to whatever it is they're building. It's too early to tell.

BACK TO NEDDY

NEDDY
(yelling)
Sam. Sam.

Neddy looks back up the grass.

AT THE CABIN

Sam rocks in a chair, eyes glued to the GameBoy.

SAM
What?

NEDDY
Come see this.

SAM

See what?

NEDDY

You have to come see it.

Sam flicks the GameBoy off and stomps down the grass.

Neddy indicates the lens.

Sam peers through, shrugs. So?

SAM

What am I looking at?

NEDDY

Don't you see it?

SAM

There's a pile of bricks.

Neddy opens his mouth, considers, but after seeing the look Sam's giving him, shuts it.

Sam shakes her head and wanders back up toward the house.

Neddy stands alone on the water's edge. We hear the cabin door SLAM.

In the silence that follows, we hear the sound of water lapping at the dock. The alien cry of some insect from the mist.

INT. CABIN CORRIDOR - EARLY MORNING

Neddy cracks the door to Sam's room.

THROUGH THE CRACK

Sam sleeps.

BACK TO THE CORRIDOR

Neddy keeps moving.

EXT. EDGE OF THE JETTY - SOME TIME LATER

It's another misty morning. The clouds drift low over the water, exposing snippets of the surrounding trees and mountain.

Neddy peers through the telescope. He turns it this way and that, clearly not having much luck.

THROUGH THE LENS

We search the other side of the bank, seeing only mist and shadow. Suddenly, a cloud moves aside. We see the other cabin.

NEDDY

Brandishes a ruler. He holds it up to the other cabin. He moves his thumb along, appears satisfied.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy jumps into the car. He takes a quick questioning look at the house.

The engine rumbles to life. The car grinds away.

INT. CAR/ MOVING - MOMENTS LATER.

Neddy guides the car around narrow roads, keeping the lake to his left. He peers back.

THROUGH THE TREES

We see his cabin receding away. He removes the ruler and holds it up, not looking at the road.

A TRUCK HORN BLARES. Neddy looks just in time, swerves aside as a huge truck ROCKET'S BY. He catches his breath, then turns back around.

EXT. CLEARING BY THE WATER - SOME TIME LATER

Neddy picks his way through dead tree branches, swipes away leaves. Above, we see his orange Ford parked up by the roadside.

He arrives on the water's edge.

From Neddy's POV, we see across the lake, to Neddy's cabin.

BACK TO NEDDY

He looks around, but there's nothing. No alternate cabin or alternate car or alternate jetty.

EXT. THE TOWN - AFTERNOON

Neddy's Ford splutters to a halt by a large library.

He climbs out, makes his way inside.

INT. LIBRARY/ COMPUTER ROOM - SOME TIME LATER

Neddy squints at a computer screen.

ON THE SCREEN

We see various search results for 'parallel universes.'

BACK TO NEDDY

Who bites his lip.

INT. LIBRARY/ THE STACKS - LATER STILL

Piles of science text books surround Neddy. Above him hangs a sign marked 'SCIENCE AND ASTRONOMY.'

Among some of the text books are 'Parallel*Universes Theory.'

Neddy flicks through a book, grunts, and casts it aside.

CLERK (O.S.)

Sir?

A CLERK (30s) scowls down at him.

CLERK

Do you need any help, sir?

Neddy glances at the piles of books around him.

NEDDY

Yes, do you know anything about
parallel universes?

The clerk wasn't anticipating this.

EXT. END OF THE JETTY - AFTERNOON

Neddy's now perched on a chair, a large new book on his lap.
He stares intently out over the water.

ACROSS THE WATER

The mist has lightened, and we can make out the other cabin.
There's no one around, just that half-completed structure

THROUGH THE TELESCOPE

Alternate Neddy and Sam make their way down the lawn to the
construction site.

NEDDY

(to Sam)

Sam! Come over here

A long beat while he peers out over the water.

Sam arrives reluctantly by his side.

SAM

What?

NEDDY

Look at this.

Sam looks into the telescope.

SAM

Can we go home, now?

NEDDY

Don't you see it? Those people?

SAM

I can drive. I can work it out.

Neddy looks like a beached fish, snatches back the telescope.

Sam slinks away.

THROUGH THE TELESCOPE

We watch as Alternate Neddy and Alternate Sam continue work on whatever it is they're building. Alternate Sam's movements are strong, confident. Alternate Neddy mouths some instruction, and she nods, bounds to a bag of cement, and drags it back.

We concentrate on Alternate Sam, now. Her good humour and cheer are unmistakable. She's a completely different kid.

Now we move down and linger on the structure.

BACK TO NEDDY ON THE TELESCOPE

He glances up. The look in his eye is unmistakable. He has an idea.

EXT. AT THE WATER'S EDGE - LATER THAT DAY

A cement bag THUMPS onto the grass. Then another.

Neddy hauls construction supplies from the trunk of his car, now parked by the water.

Sam appears by the car.

SAM
What the hell are you doing?

NEDDY
Grab a trowel.

SAM
What are you doing?

Neddy skips over to the Jetty, grabs the ancient telescope, and makes his way back over.

NEDDY
What are we doing.

He plonks it down, adjust the stand so it's facing the other side of the lake.

NEDDY
(glances back)
Go on, grab a trowel.

Sam looks from his GameBoy to the construction supplies. She considers it for a long beat. Finally, she shrugs. What the hell?

She bends down, picks up a trowel.

Neddy grins.

NEDDY
Okay...

A beat while he looks through the telescope.

NEDDY
We need to dig a hole. Star shaped.

SAM
What are you looking at?

NEDDY

C'mon, c'mon.

He comes back over, picks up a spade, starts digging.

EXT. AT THE WATER'S EDGE - LATER THAT DAY

The construction is taking shape. Sam's on her knees, bricking the walls.

Neddy's at the telescope.

NEDDY

Good, now...

A beat while he watches.

THROUGH THE TELESCOPE

Alternate Sam carries over a stack of PVC pipes.

BACK TO NEDDY ON THE TELESCOPE

NEDDY (CONT'D)

We're going to need some PVC pipes.

SAM

Pipes?

NEDDY

Yeah.

THROUGH THE TELESCOPE

Alternate Sam dumps the pipes on the grass.

Alternate Neddy comes over, claps her on the back. He notices a loose strand of her hair. Carefully, he moves it back around Alternate Sam's ear.

BACK TO NEDDY ON THE TELESCOPE

We linger for a long beat while Neddy watches.

He turns around and looks at Sam.

Sam has a loose strand of hair.

Neddy reaches out, goes to wipe it back.

She flinches.

SAM

What are you doing?

Neddy pulls back sharp.

NEDDY

Nothing.

Sam keeps digging.

SAM

What is this thing, Neddy?

NEDDY

(beat)

I don't know.

SAM LAUGHS.

Neddy slowly turns, dumbfounded.

BEGIN SEQUENCE - NEDDY AND SAM WORK ON THE STRUCTURE

-- Sam lowers bricks into place.

-- Neddy turns from the telescope, mouths an instruction.

-- They both haul more supplies from the car: paint cans, paint brushes.

-- The structure is taking shape, though we still have no clear idea of what it is.

END SEQUENCE

EXT. AT THE WATER'S EDGE - EVEN LATER THAT DAY

Evening is setting in. The sky's darker. A breeze flicks the corners of the tarp.

Sam wraps her arms around his chest. She looks tired, frustrated.

Neddy, stone-faced, is still at the telescope.

SAM

It's cold, Neddy.

Neddy doesn't say anything.

SAM

Neddy?

Nothing.

SAM

Let me guess: it isn't correct, right?

NEDDY

I'm trying to concentrate.

SAM

It isn't perfect enough for you?

NEDDY

We just need to wait, is all.

Sam retreats up the grass, toward the cabin.

NEDDY

Just a little longer.

The cabin door SLAMS.

This gets Neddy's attention.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy raps on Sam's door.

NEDDY

Sam?

Nothing.

NEDDY

C'mon, Sam.

Still nothing.

Neddy rests his head against the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy pours himself a drink, leans back against the counter.

He stares out of the window.

THROUGH THE GLASS

We see the dim outline of the unfinished structure.

NEDDY

Stares for a long, arduous beat, then moves over to the window. He places a hand against the glass.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

We move away from the structure, and see a single light burning across the lake. It's where the alternate cabin is.

Neddy's fist clenches.

EXT. AT THE WATER'S EDGE - CONTINUOUS

Neddy stomps down the bank to the water, drink in hand. When

he reaches the water, he just keeps on going.

Feet, shins, waist, the water keeps on rising.

When he's up to his chest, he takes one last sip of the drink and throws the glass out into the water.

He swims.

EXT. OUT IN THE WATER - CONTINUOUS

Neddy swims hard. Steam rises from the water. It's almost too dark to see.

Ahead, the light on the other side burns.

Neddy gasps, takes in a lungful of water, but keeps on going.

He struggles against the current. Water splashes up into his face.

A buoy emerges from the dark.

Neddy grabs it, clings to it.

BEHIND

Neddy's cabin is nothing but a hazy blur.

He gasps, spits out some water, looks back for a long, hard beat. He's clearly exhausted.

He sets back off at a crawl, splutters, but doesn't get far. He retreats back to the buoy.

From Neddy's POV, we see the water stretch far way into the distance. It's completely dark, impossibly far away.

There's no sign of the alternate house.

Neddy coughs violently, spits up some water. He's done, wiped, defeated.

EXT. AT THE WATER'S EDGE - SOME TIME LATER

Neddy lurches out of the water, stumbles up the bank.
He pauses at the structure, stares down at it blearily.
He slumps down onto the grass.

INT. CABIN CORRIDOR - EARLY MORNING

Sam stirs awake. We hear the SOUND of a HAMMER POUNDING
AGAINST WOOD.

She jumps out from the bed, pads over to the window.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

We see Neddy slumped in front of the structure. He's soaking
wet, still in his pyjamas. The sound we heard is him
POUNDING absently at the structure with a hammer.

BACK TO SAM

She cocks her head.

EXT. AT THE WATER'S EDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Sam makes her way down the hill.

The sound of POUNDING continues.

AT THE STRUCTURE

Neddy hasn't budged. His eyes are glazed, tired, void of
activity.

SAM

Neddy?

Neddy acknowledges her with a vague nod, and keeps pounding. His arm is basically working on its own.

INSERT - THE STRUCTURE

We see the hammer strike a brick, and shatter it in two.

SAM

She looks down for a long beat.

INSERT - THE STRUCTURE

The hammer breaks up the brick further.

SAM

She cracks a tiny smile.

NEDDY

He notices, and slowly looks down to the structure.

INSERT - THE STRUCTURE

The hammer takes on more force. It hits another brick.

The hammer swings harder, shatters the brick.

NEDDY AND SAM

She keeps smiling.

Neddy takes a swing at the paint can. It falls over, starts leaking bright pink paint.

Sam grabs another paint can, cracks it open.

She dumps it all over the structure.

EXT. DOWN THE BANK - CONTINUOUS

We see Neddy stand up and start stomping on the structure.

Sam pours another bucket of paint on top.

EXT. THE STRUCTURE - SOME TIME LATER

The structure is a mess. It's completely smashed-in, covered in paint.

Sam and Neddy sit on the grass, looking at it.

They regard each other for a beat.

EXT. NEDDY'S EX-WIFE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Neddy pulls up behind the BMW.

INT. NEDDY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Neddy and Sam sit in silence for a few beats.

NEDDY

Well, goodbye for now.

SAM

I guess.

He turns to her, holds his hand out. They shake awkwardly.

Neddy opens his mouth, considers something, then shuts it.

SAM

Well, see you.

She opens the door, goes to leave.

NEDDY

Sam?

SAM

Yeah?

NEDDY
I'm going to...

He trails off. They stare at each other.

Neddy points at her hair.

NEDDY
You have a loose strand.

Sam just sits there.

Neddy leans forward, wipes the strand back around her ear.

Sam lets him, then climbs out of the car.

She nods.

Through the window, we see Sam nod, turn, walk away.

Neddy sits in the car for a long beat.

He looks up at...

THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

A car just like Neddy's drives by.

BACK TO NEDDY

He turns, looks off...

EXT. DOWN THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

The car rounds a corner, giving us just enough time to see the Alternate Neddy and Alternate Sammy, laughing at some private joke.

INT. THE CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Neddy nods, slowly.

FADE OUT.

Billy and the Squinkosaurus: An Animated Fable

By

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EXT. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD - CHRISTMAS MORNING

We move down a suburban street, lined with large, rich houses strung with Christmas decorations. We keep moving, and pause on a smaller, shabbier home. Whoever lives here must be pretty poor. We move toward it.

INT. BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE - MOMENTS LATER

BILLY (10) bounds into the living room. Behind, his MOTHER and FATHER (40s) shuffle in with that 'just out of bed' look.

It's a small but cheerful tree, with a little pile of presents sitting beneath.

Billy is practically bursting with excitement. He avoids the pile of presents, and instead begins searching the room.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

His head darts into view.

He frowns. Whatever he's looking for, it isn't here.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

A bulb flickers to life, illuminating a rusty old Station Wagon, some damp boxes, but nothing else.

Again, Billy frowns.

INT. BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE - SOME TIME LATER

Billy sits by a pile of unwrapped presents: oranges, a lumpy scarf, a bar of chocolate. He doesn't look too happy.

His mother and father share a mischievous glance. The father pulls a larger box from behind the sofa. He holds it out: Ta-da!

Billy lurches for it. He rips it open. This has to be it, this has to...

He looks down into the box for an arduous beat. He dips his hand inside, and pulls out...

... a puny looking dinosaur toy. He regards it like it were a dead bird. He tilts the box, revealing the product name: 'Squinkosaurus.'

His father takes the squinkosaurus, opens a small hatch, and plants two AA batteries in there. He flicks a switch, then places it back in Billy's hand.

The squinkosaurus lurches to life. Completely life-like. It stumbles around unsteadily on his palm, opens its mouth to roar. What comes out is barely a squeak.

Billy's parents beam.

Billy doesn't share their enthusiasm.

The squinkosaurus falls over.

INT. BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE - LATER THAT MORNING

The squinkosaurus stalks the carpet.

It tries unsuccessfully to bite a ribbon in two, so squeaks at it instead.

AT THE WINDOW

Billy stares glumly outside.

EXT. THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

A HUGE DINOSAUR, a story high, stomps by. A KID (10) carrying a remote control scurries after.

Nearby, a FATHER (40s) finishes emptying a petrol can into another MASSIVE DINOSAUR. This one's the size of a car.

He flips a hatch shut, and the beast lurches to life. It bellows a DEAFENING ROAR. The kid claps his hands in delight.

INT. BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE - MOMENTS LATER

Billy looks utterly miserable.

There's a tap at his shoulder.

He turns, and his parents hold the squinkosaurus out.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Billy is pushed down the garden path by his parents.

He's deposited on the curb. His parents beam, then stroll back up toward the house.

The squinkosaurus stumbles around the curb, squeaking.

Billy self-consciously moves his foot in front of it. The squinkosaurus can't help but look a little hurt at this.

ACROSS THE STREET

The NEIGHBOURHOOD KIDS play with their dinosaurs.

A GIRL WITH GLASSES (10) holds out a hoop for his dinosaur. But the hoop is far too small. The dinosaur bites it instead.

Suddenly the street goes quiet.

Something causes the kids to stop dead. They stare, mouths agape.

A lithe shadow glides across the tarmac.

A KID WITH BRACES (10) drops his remote control.

The shadow moves over...

BILLY

Who looks up...

And is confronted with a sleek, athletic-looking dinosaur. Perched on top is a regal looking RICH BOY (10) in an aerodynamic chrome helmet.

He struts the dinosaur out into the street, like a champion racing horse. In comparison, the other dinosaurs look like broken-down mules.

RICH BOY

Race?

He points to...

THE END OF THE ROAD

The rich kid looks one of the neighbourhood kid's dead in the eyes. The kid shies away.

RICH BOY

Race?

The neighbourhood kids all stare at the floor. So do the dinosaurs.

From the squinkosaurus' POV, we see Billy...

...who resembles the other kids: defeated, embarrassed.

The squinkosaurus looks at its legs. Looks back to Billy.

Beat.

It puffs out its chest, rears back.

Billy suddenly falls back. He looks like he's about to hit the floor. Instead, he moves forward. he bounces down the street. He twists his head around, perplexed. How's this happening?

A look below shows us. The squinkosaurus has Billy on its

back. It lurches forward, clearly struggling, but surprisingly fast.

The rich kid notices, and takes chase.

The race begins.

The squinkosaurus dashes up the pavement, with Billy barely able to cling on.

AT A CORNER

It leaps over a hose, weaves around a parked car.

BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF THE STREET

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD KIDS cheer.

FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

The rich kid is closing in.

Both dinosaurs are now almost side by side.

The squinkosaurus puffs, squeaks. It looks like it can't take much more. It slows...

The rich kid takes the lead.

This lights a fire under the squinkosaurus. He pushes forward, harder, and draws level with the rich kid.

AT THE END OF THE STREET

The finish line draws near.

The squinkosaurus moves over, close at the heels of the racing dinosaur.

It extends its head, opens its mouth...

... and bites down HARD on the racing dinosaur's ankle.

The racing dinosaur lets out a roar of pain, trips, and tumbles over. The squinkosaurus breaks ahead, also trips,

and sends Billy flying past the finish line.

The neighbourhood kids go crazy. They run up to Billy, hoist him onto their shoulders.

The rich kid kicks the crumpled heap that is now the racing dinosaur. One of its legs is twisted, a piece of junk. The rich kid storms off.

Billy smiles the smile of a champion.

He looks down at the curb, and his smile fades.

ON THE CURB

The squinkosaurus has lost both its legs. It lies there, wheezing and squeaking.

Billy leaps down, cups the squinkosaurus in his hands.

The squinkosaurus tries to get up, fails. It nibbles Billy's finger.

Billy strokes the squinkosaurus's spine. Then looks OS.

He seems to get an idea.

EXT. STREET - SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE

The neighbourhood kids ride around on dinosaurs, racing each other.

The girl with glasses holds the hoop out for his dinosaur. It stuffs its head through. The kid claps.

Suddenly they stop, turn their heads.

A lithe shadow slips over the tarmac...

It's the racing dinosaur. This time, it's not the rich kid riding, but...

The squinkosaurus. It sits perched in a tiny saddle, a thin set of reins clutched in its claws. Seated behind is Billy,

smiling broadly.

The other kids, relieved, keep playing in peace.

Billy pats the squinkosaurus' head. It lets out a little squeak, snaps the reins.

Billy and the squinkosaurus gallop off down the street.

Sundown

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EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - MORNING

The road is quiet, split into a fork. A mid-range car slows to a halt. Above the RUMBLE of the engine, we hear the SWISH of wind in the trees limbs, the odd CRY of some sort of wildlife in the dense undergrowth.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

ARTY (late 30s) scrutinizes a creased map. He's bookish man with thick glasses, kind of crinkled looking, like a comfortable coat. He pulls the map right up to his face, lowers it, peers out of the windscreen.

THROUGH THE WINDSCREEN

We see the fork. There are no signs, no indication of where each direction goes.

BACK TO ARTY

Who touches a finger to the map, traces a line. He looks back up, nods his head. He folds the map, cranks the car into gear.

EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The car crawls forward, takes a right.

INT. MOUNTAINSIDE GAS STATION - SOME TIME LATER

Through the dusty glass we see Arty's car pull up, park.

AT THE DOOR

An overhead bell TINKLES. Arty strolls in, face hidden by the map. As he comes down the aisle, we see that it's a warm and dusty place, kind of retro in its decor. Not the sort of place you'd expect to see in the middle of nowhere.

Mid-aisle, Arty collides with a floor display: a mesh rack crammed with foil wrappers. He tries to grab for it, but too late. The wrappers spill everywhere.

He gets on his knees, scoops up the packets and fits them back on the display. He grabs a stray one by his shoes, looks at it, lingers.

INSERT - FOIL WRAPPER

"ATOMIC GUM". Beneath it, a boy straight out of a nuclear family portrait beams, mouth thick with candy.

END INSERT

ARTY (CONT'D)
Atomic Gum? I used to love this.

He adjusts his glasses, stands, eyes on the gum.

SHOP KEEPER (O.S.)
Need some help there, friend?

Arty glances up.

AT THE COUNTER stands SHOP KEEPER (late 50s), a warm-faced man, all smiles.

Arty flashes an embarrassed grin, like a kid who's done something wrong, and knows it.

ARTY
I'm sorry about this.

SHOP KEEPER
I wouldn't worry too much.

Arty picks his way down to the counter.

ARTY
(still fixed on the gum) I
didn't even know they still
made this. I used to love it
as a kid.

Her points to the wrapper.

ARTY

Look, it's still got the original price.

He glances at a display near the cash register. Other foil packets of a different design.

ARTY (CONT'D)

(chuckles nervously) Now, I know they stopped making those!

SHOP KEEPER

We get them in, so they got to be still making them somewhere, right?

Arty shakes his head in disbelief, looks at Shop Keeper. He tilts his head, as if seeing him for the first time.

SHOP KEEPER (CONT'D)

Something wrong, friend?

Arty keeps staring for a beat, shakes his head, composes himself.

ARTY

No, I mean... You just look familiar, that's all.

SHOP KEEPER

I'm told I have that sort of face, friend.

(points to Arty's map)

You lost?

ARTY

(nervously)

You could say that. I'm looking for...

He pulls a folded letter from his jacket pocket, carefully unfolds it, like it's made of tissue paper.

ARTY (CONT'D)
(scans the page)
... Rockridge Sundown.

SHOP KEEPER
(thumbs left)
It's just half a mile down that
way. You got business there,
friend?

Arty wipes his glasses, doesn't look up.

ARTY
It's a little strange.

SHOP KEEPER
I'm used to strange. Try me.

A darkness comes over Arty's expression.

ARTY
My wife sent me a letter, asking me
to meet her there.

SHOP KEEPER
Well that's not strange, my wife
sends me letters all the time. She
travels all over the country.

Now there's a deep sadness to Arty. He fumbles in his
pocket, pulls out his wallet. His hands tremble. He slips
out a photograph, hands it over to Shop Keeper.

ARTY
Maybe... you've seen her?

Shop Keeper peers at the photo. Arty leans forward, holds
his breath. Shop Keeper whistles appreciatively.

SHOP KEEPER

She does look familiar, but then I
might be confusing her with a movie
star. She certainly looks like one.

(jabs at the bottom of the
photo)

This photo's over two years old.
Look at the bottom, here.

Now Arty looks close to tears.

ARTY

That was the last picture I ever
took of her.

He pauses, shakes his head. He snatches back the photo.

SHOP KEEPER

Before what, friend?

ARTY

Never mind. Just a little down that
way, was it?

He backs up toward the door.

SHOP KEEPER

That's right.

AT THE DOOR

Arty opens the door. The bell TINKLES. He pauses, looks
back.

AT THE COUNTER

Shop Keeper beams.

AT THE DOOR

ARTY

You really do look familiar.

AT THE COUNTER

SHOP KEEPER

I just have that sort of face,
friend.

Arty moves out into the sunlight. The door closes.

AT THE COUNTER

Shop Keeper keeps smiling.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The engine RUMBLES to life. The car pulls out. We move up through the tree branches. Hidden in the limbs is a sign. It reads 'Rockridge Sundown: Where Memories Last - 1/2 mi.'

EXT. ROCKRIDGE SUNDOWN MAIN STREET - SOME TIME LATER

It's a warm looking, sunlit place bustling with happy-looking people strolling down pavements so clean, you'd be hard pressed to find a single stray gum wrapper. Think a 1950s utopia.

Arty's car comes into view, moving slow. We follow it down the street.

Arty glances this way and that, drinking in the town.

AT A BUS STOP

PRIM WOMAN (50s) checks her watch. She moves her hand into a paper bag, pops candy into her mouth.

BACK TO ARTY

Who stares after her, face utterly perplexed.

ARTY

I know her.

AT THE CURB

Arty parks up, gets out of the car. He closes the door, as

if in a daze, and makes his way down the sidewalk.

OUTSIDE THE REEL DEAL DINER

It's a film themed place, with movie reels painted all over the sign. Arty looks up, grins.

ARTY (CONT'D)
(mumbles)
I remember this place.

He peers in through the window.

ARTY (CONT'D)
It's all exactly the same.

EVAN (late 20s) rushes by. He bumps into Arty,

EVAN
(laughs)
Oh, sorry Arty. Didn't see you there.

Arty leans in real close, stares him up and down. He breaks into a grin.

ARTY
Evan, is that you? No, it can't be. I haven't seen you since...

EVAN
Since last night? Hope you're not feeling too sour about the poker game. We all have bad nights, Arty.

ARTY
No... I haven't seen you in years, Evan. Or her...

He stares across the street.

AT THE BUS STOP

Prim lady pops some more candy into her mouth.

ARTY (CONT'D)

That's Mrs. Everett, isn't it? From high school? She hasn't aged a bit.

EVAN

Of course it's Mrs. Everett, Arty. Are you feeling okay?

Arty points around the street.

ARTY

And that's Mr. Cunningham. He used to live next door.

DOWN THE STREET

MR. CUNNINGHAM (60s) strolls down the sidewalk, adjusts his tie.

BACK TO ARTY

ARTY (CONT'D)

Mrs. Carlyse, Brett Mayer, Austin Odom.

EVAN

(brow furrowed)

Yes, that's right. Are you sure you're okay, Arty?

ARTY

(mumbles)

Some of these people should be dead... and these places.

He points to the diner.

ARTY (CONT'D)

These didn't come until later. It's like someone took my memories, my best memories, and stuck them all in this town. And that man at the gas station.

He laughs triumphantly, claps his hands.

ARTY (CONT'D)

That was Mr. Artechoke. I knew I recognized him.

EVAN

You don't seem well, Arty. Maybe you should go home? I'll tell Mr. Woodruff you're sick, or something. I need to swing by the store, anyway.

ARTY

Mr. Woodruff? I work in the model airplane shop?

Evan furrows his brow.

EVAN

Go home, Arty. Get Linda to look after you. You really don't look right.

Arty stops dead. He grabs Evan's shoulders.

ARTY

Linda? She's here?

EVAN

(slowly)

That's right. She's where she always is, at your house.

ARTY

Where?

EVAN

Um, twenty-four on fifth street. I think I should drive you...

But Arty bounds down the pavement, toward the car. He yanks the door open, jumps in. The car ROARS to the life, pulls away.

EVAN (CONT'D)
(calling after)
Rest up for the party tonight,
Arty. You're still coming, right?

But the car's long gone.

EXT. ARTY'S HOOUSE - SOME TIME LATER

It's a model of perfection. A real-estate company's dream. White, spotless. A perfectly kept lawn rolls down to the curb, flowing around a stone path like a green stream.

AT THE CURB

Arty's car pulls up. He leans over, looks at the house. Something catches his eye.

INSERT - MAILBOX

Fire engine red, with 'Mr and Mrs. Proust' printed on the side.

END INSERT

Arty leaps out, leaves the car door wide open.

AT THE DOOR

He leans against the wood, breathless. He raises his hand to knock, but instead lowers his trembling hand down to the knob.

INT. ARTY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

It's a warm, clean and orderly place. You'd be hard-pressed to find a speck of dirt. The only sound is the WHIR of an overhead fan. Arty moves inside, carefully closes the door.

ARTY
Linda?

There's no reply. He treads down the living room.

ON THE MANTLE

Various pictures of Arty and Linda, all smiles.

BACK TO ARTY

Who picks one up, grins. He sets it back down, moves further into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Arty pauses in the door frame, eyes fixed on -

AT THE WINDOW

LINDA (late 20s), stands there back to Arty.

AT THE DOOR FRAME

ARTY

Linda?

She turns, startled. She's a vision, like something straight out of a movie.

LINDA

Oh, Arty! You startled me!

He rushes to her, takes her in his arms.

ARTY

Linda! I thought you were dead.

LINDA

(laughs)

But you were only gone a few hours.

Arty pulls her closer, touches her cheeks, her hair, her shoulders.

ARTY

Is this real?

LINDA
You do say some strange things,
Arty.

He pulls her into a long, lingering kiss. She breaks away,
laughs.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Well you're full of life today.

ARTY
You look ten years younger.

LINDA
Well I was going to save this for
later, but since you're saying
things like that...

She moves over to the counter, plucks up a large, wrapped
parcel. She hands it over. Arty carefully unwraps it,
revealing -

INSERT - BOX COVER

A model airplane kit.

END INSERT

Arty bounces with boyish energy.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Do you want to start making it now?
There's time before dinner.

He sets the box down, grabs her hand.

ARTY
Let's go for a walk. I want to look
around.

Her brow furrows.

LINDA
But dinner might burn.

ARTY
That's not important.

EXT. ROCKRIDGE SUNDOWN MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

Linda and Arty stroll, hand in hand. Arty points everywhere, beaming.

ARTY
And there's Frank Scott, and Donny.
(yells)
Donny. It's me, Arty.

He laughs, plants one on Linda's cheek.

ARTY (CONT'D)
Everyone's here.

We follow them down the street. Cars RUMBLE by. They pass a flower shop.

OUTSIDE THE FLOWER SHOP

A kindly-looking old lady, MRS. WRIGHT (70s) is stooped over, tending to a basket of flowers.

ARTY (CONT'D)
Hello Mrs. Wright. Got anything new
in today?

She straightens, cracks her back.

MRS. WRIGHT
Nothing special right now.
(to Linda)
Hello...

Her gaze hardens, just a tad.

LINDA
Hello, Mrs. Wright.

MRS. WRIGHT
You two all ready for the party
tonight?

ON THE OTHER SIDE

A SHABBY MAN (40s) strolls with a little girl. She's running and skipping. He looks like he's bursting at the seams with happiness. He can't keep his eyes off her.

BACK TO ARTY

ARTY (CONT'D)

(frowns)

I don't remember him.

Linda tugs his arm, tries to get his attention.

LINDA

C'mon Arty, let's go home.

ARTY

Who is that?

LINDA

We can have dinner and you can make your airplane, like always, remember? I got some paste instead of glue so you can build it and break it down and make it again another time, the way you like it.

He glances back at Shabby Man, but settles on Linda.

ARTY

I'm sure it'll come to me.

She smiles.

INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Arty sits over the pieces of his model airplane. The box lays empty nearby. The parts are all carefully laid out. Arty rubs his hands, beams. He glances up.

AT THE COUNTER

Linda shreds lettuce into a bowl.

LINDA

It really is going to be quite a bash tonight. The whole town's turning up.

ARTY

I can't wait.

Linda turns, wrinkles her nose.

AT THE TABLE

ARTY (CONT'D)

I'm still thinking about that man, though.

AT THE COUNTER

Linda stops.

AT THE TABLE

Arty plucks up a few pieces, sizes them up.

ARTY (CONT'D)

I just can't place him. Maybe I met him once, and just forgot about him?

LINDA (O.S.)

Maybe you should stop thinking about that.

ARTY

I know, but it's driving me crazy.

AT THE COUNTER

Linda SLAMS her hands on the counter.

LINDA

You always do this. You always try and pick everything apart.

AT THE TABLE

Arty gets a hurt puppy look in his eyes.

ARTY
I'm just trying to remember the
guy, that's all.

AT THE COUNTER

Linda SIGHS, doesn't say anything.

ARTY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. Look, I've probably just
forgotten him, that's all.

He gets up, moves over to her.

AT THE COUNTER

He wraps his hands around her waist.

ARTY (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry.

LINDA
And you'll stop thinking about that
man?

ARTY
I'll stop.

She turns around, kisses him. Arty moves back across the room to the table, sits down. He plucks up a bottle of paste. The label catches his eye.

ARTY (CONT'D)
Why, this is glue, lovely. I won't
be able to pull it apart if I stick
it with this.

LINDA
I just grabbed it.

ARTY
That's okay. The shop's still
probably open, I'll just nip out
and grab some.

She fixes him with a pleading look.

LINDA
But dinner...

ARTY
I'll be five seconds.

He's at the doorway, pulling on his coat.

LINDA
I'll come with you.

ARTY
(laughs)
I know the way.

LINDA
I still want to come.

ARTY
I'll be right back.

LINDA
(calling after)
Don't speak to anyone.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Arty pauses, looks confused. He glances back, keeps moving.

EXT. ROCKRIDGE SUNDOWN MAIN STREET

Arty strolls down the pavement, looking around. He's smiling, but not quite so warmly. His eyes rest on -

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD

'Mike's Mini-Mart.'

He goes to cross the street, but pauses.

DOWN THE PAVEMENT

The Shabby Man walks toward us. The little girl darts around him. He's still watching her every move.

ARTY (CONT'D)
(to the man)

Hey!

LINDA (O.S)

Arty!

He turns.

IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION

Linda sprints over.

She leans on his shoulder, panting.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You forgot your...
(fumbles in her pocket)
... wallet.

ARTY
(frowns)
I have my wallet.

He pulls it out, waves it. Linda looks over his shoulder. Arty turns, and sees -

DOWN THE PAVEMENT

The little girl tugs the shabby man away.

BACK TO ARTY

Who frowns.

LINDA
Silly me. It was my wallet!

Arty doesn't say anything. Linda grabs his hand.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Dinner's ready.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Orange sunlight streams through the windows. It's almost sundown. Arty sits at the table, the model parts all pushed to the side. Linda comes into view, plops a plate down in front of him.

LINDA
I can't believe you spoke to him,
after what I said.

ARTY
I was just curious. I thought if I
asked him, maybe I'd remember.

LINDA
(huffs)
Do you always need to know
everything?

She slumps into the opposite chair, plucks up her fork, spears a carrot.

ARTY
I didn't think there was any harm
in it.

LINDA
I asked you not to, and you did it
anyway. Isn't there harm in that?

ARTY
I guess.

LINDA
Sometimes you make me so angry,
Arty.

ARTY
I don't want that.

LINDA
Aren't you happy, here, with me?

He leans across, takes her hand.

ARTY
I am.

LINDA
It's just, when you do things like
that, it makes me think you don't
like being here with me.

His hands tighten on hers.

ARTY
That's not true.

LINDA
So you're going to stop this?
You're going to stop pulling
everything apart, and just be
happy?

ARTY
Of course, I'll do anything.

He releases her, leans back, moves his food around.

LINDA
We're going to have a good time at
the party.

Her mouth opens, she looks at

INSERT - WALL CLOCK

Which reads a quarter past seven.

END INSERT

She leaps from the table.

LINDA (CONT'D)

The party.

She hurries around, grabs Arty's hands, tries to yank him from his seat.

ARTY

(laughs)

Can't it wait a little?

He points to the food.

LINDA

Don't you love me, Arty?

ARTY

What's the big rush?

LINDA

Please Arty, won't you do this for me? Please?

The light in the room darkens.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

Fog builds up against the windows. There's a sound of a distant bell TOLLING.

BACK TO THE TABLE

Linda, ear cocked, breathes heavily.

LINDA (CONT'D)

That's the sound, the party's starting. We have to get there now.

She grabs Arty.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Don't you love me, Arty? Don't you want things to stay the way they are?

He kisses her feverishly.

ARTY
Of course.

LINDA
Then we need to go.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Linda pulls Arty outside, glances up at the sky. The street is quiet, still. A thick fog drifts down the road, fuzzing the surrounding houses. Linda breaks into a run.

ARTY
(yelling)
Linda.

She disappears into the mist.

ARTY (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Linda.

LINDA (O.S.)
Follow me!

ARTY
I can't see you!

She laughs SHRILLY.

LINDA (O.S.)
Follow the sound of my voice!

He rubs mist droplet from his glasses, squints ahead, takes off at a run.

ARTY
Don't leave me, Linda.

LINDA
Follow me...

He takes off at a run. We follow him down the street.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Now we can hardly see anything. The fog is too thick, just dark shapes growing darker in the fading light.

Arty makes his way through some hedges, passes through a rusting gate. We hear Linda's SOFT FOOTSTEPS THUDDING in the distance. Arty BREATHES HARD.

ARTY

Where are you, Linda?

No reply. The ground becomes rockier, unstable. Long grass trips him at every step. He rubs his glasses, extends his hands for balance. All around him, we see the dark shapes of tree trunks.

ARTY (CONT'D)

Linda?

We hear the TOLL of that bell again, low and distant. Arty stops, panting. He cocks his ear, raises his finger, seems to work out the direction. The bell TOLLS constantly.

He makes toward the sound at a run. He stumbles down a slope. The bell TOLLS louder, closer.

The muted shape of a structure melts out of the fog ahead. As Arty moves closer, we see that it's a cabin. A single light burns in the window, like a beacon.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

He tries the door. It RATTLES, but doesn't give. Sweat trickles down his face. It's almost completely dark. Sundown.

ARTY

(desperate)

Linda?

He turns around, panting. The SOUND of his breath DIMINISHES, so that now all we can hear is the distant LAP of water.

We look out into the fog. There's a RUSTLING somewhere ahead. The sound GROWS, until it's echoing all around. Whatever's out there, there's a lot of them.

ARTY (CONT'D)
(weakly)
Linda?

SHABBY MAN (O.S.)
Maggie? Where are you, Maggie?

AT THE SIDE OF THE CABIN

The Shabby Man emerges. He's shaking, panic-stricken.

SHABBY MAN (CONT'D)
Maggie?

He spins wildly, notices Arty, stumbles over.

SHABBY MAN (CONT'D)
Please, I'm looking for my little girl. She ran away.

Arty opens his mouth to respond, but is drowned out by...

LOST WOMAN (O.S.)
Henry? Henry?

THROUGH THE FOG

A LOST WOMAN (50s) trips out of the fog.

AT THE CABIN

She grabs Arty's shirt, pulls him close. Tears stream down her cheeks.

LOST WOMAN (CONT'D)
Please, I'm looking for my husband.

THROUGH THE FOG

Now more people emerge from the fog, all lost-looking,

shaking, crying.

LOST MAN

Paul?

LOST WOMAN #2

Alex?

LOST LITTLE GIRL

Mum?

BACK TO THE CABIN

Arty trips back against the cabin, takes off his glasses. He tries to clean them, but his hands are shaking hard. He fumbles, drops them.

AT ARTY'S FEET

The glasses land in the grass.

BACK TO ARTY

Who bends, pats around, closes on the glasses. He goes to slip them on, but pauses. We HEAR that CRUNCHING sound again, louder, coming from all around.

THROUGH ARTY'S EYES

We look out into the surrounding fog. Large, twisted shapes lumber toward us, from all directions. It's too blurry to make out any distinct details, but these things are huge, monstrous.

As they get closer, their burning eyes pierce through the darkness.

AT THE CABIN

Arty trips back, flails onto the grass. Thick fog washes over him, the darkness closes in, fades everything.

SCREAMING.

INT. MOUNTAINSIDE GAS STATION - DAY

A beaten-looking car pulls up, parks. Out steps a WOMAN (30s), she's puffy-eyed, dishevelled, like she's seen better days. Still, there's something like a hopeful glint in her eyes.

She leans into the car, pulls out a map, then looks up at the gas station. As the lady walks toward the door, we move upward, over the roof, up into the tree branches.

We hear the SOUND of the door bell TINKLING. We move up further, to the road sign. 'ROCKRIDGE SUNDOWN - Where Memories Last 1/2 mi.'

 OLD LADY (O.S.)
 (muffled, from inside the gas
 station)
 You look lost, friend.

The Date

By

Edd Howarth

edd.howarth@gmail.com
306 A Randolph Street,
Farmville, VA 23901

INT. A LARGE SPACE - DAY - EUGENE'S DREAM

We're looking straight into the face of a plump, lightly sweating man dressed in a blazer and a huge red bow tie. This is EUGENE (40). Despite his age, he looks like a young boy about to receive his first kiss.

Floodlights blaze overhead. Behind is bright, hazy.

A plump hand comes into view. Each finger is heavy with fat rings, rhinestones as big as meatballs.

The fingers touch the fabric of the tie, linger there for a beat.

We now get a view of the owner. It's a large, heavy-set woman in a shawl. Enormous hooped earrings dangle from her ears. This is DONNA BARTLEBY (38).

She leans in for a kiss.

Eugene puckers up, leans forward...

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm BLARES.

In the corner of the room, we get a good view of a large lens. It blinks softly. This is one of the many eyes of MR. SCOTT. Think a friendly, British HAL.

MR. SCOTT

Beep, beep. Time to wake up, sir.
Time to wake up!

EXT. A VIEW OF THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The whole house is heavily fortified. Morning sunlight slips over steel shutters lining the walls. The shutters bear the stamp of the manufacturer: 'ALTEX HOME DEFENSE'.

On the roof, solar panels tweak.

With a METALLIC GROAN, the shutters begin rolling up.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The house prepares for the morning.

Coffee percolates.

Toast pops up from a toaster.

Robotic arms crack an egg into a hot pan.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

We focus on a bed, where a large person stirs beneath the covers.

MR. SCOTT

November 14, 2042. Time to wake up,
sir, time to wake up.

Eugene, dressed in spotted pyjamas, untangles himself from the covers.

He stretches, turns toward the lens of Mr. Scott. He spreads his arms theatrically.

EUGENE

Good morning, Mr. Scott.

MR. SCOTT

Good morning, Sir.

EUGENE

What a beautiful day...

MR. SCOTT

(beat)

It certainly is, sir.

EUGENE

Blinds up, Mr. Scott. Blinds up!

At the window, the Venetians shoot up. Sunlight streams onto the carpet, revealing the outside world...

A smoldering, destroyed street.

A nuclear wasteland.

Eugene bounds out of the room.

INT. THE STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene hops the banister, grinds slowly to the bottom.

EUGENE

Do you know what day it is today,
Mr. Scott?

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene seats himself at the breakfast table.

EUGENE

Mr. Scott?

MR. SCOTT

Today is Saturday, November 14th,
2042.

EUGENE

I know what day it is, Mr. Scott. I
mean, what day is it today?

MR. SCOTT

Items for today, November 14th.
Item number one: Check the gutters.

Eugene shakes his head, no.

MR. SCOTT

Item number two: rake the leaves.

Eugene pops an entire boiled egg into his mouth, chews it down.

He waggles a finger up at the lens.

EUGENE

Mr. Scott, do you have a malfunction? Today is the day of my date!

A WHIRRING sound comes from within the walls. It's the sound of processors. The sound of Mr. Scott thinking.

EUGENE

(frowning)

Don't you remember, Mr. Scott? It was rescheduled from yesterday.

A beat. Nothing.

Eugene rolls his eyes.

EUGENE

Come on, Mr. Scott. Read me back the last message from Ms. Donna.

MR. SCOTT

Message. Yesterday. 11:17pm. 'Am very sorry, Eugene. Have to take a rain check because of the rain. Let us do tomorrow at nine. Donna'.

EUGENE

Make a note of it now, Mr. Scott. Nine o'clock. What food do we have in the pantry?

Eugene leaves the table.

He flings open cupboards, searches inside.

MR. SCOTT

Pantry: twelve bags of powdered eggs, two boxes of bacon, sixteen pints of whole milk...

EUGENE

I know the basics, Mr. Scott. But what date food do we have? Italian food? Wine? Oysters, maybe?

MR. SCOTT

(slowly)

I will have to get back to you on that, sir.

Eugene closes the cupboard, claps his hands clean.

EUGENE

Excellent, Mr. Scott.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene throws open the closet doors.

IN THE CLOSET

Clothes hang neatly on hangers. In the centre, separated by a wide breadth of space hangs a neatly pressed suit.

He pulls this from the closet, drapes it carefully on the bed, then turns back to the closet, bends down.

We move down the closet, seeing as we pass a navy blazer. Clipped to the lapel is an Altex Home Defense employee badge. It reads "Eugene." We keep going, all the way to the bottom of the closet. We end at a pile of bow ties.

On top sits a large, red one. It's the same one from the dream.

AT THE BED

Eugene places the bow tie with the suit, stands back and admires the layout.

EUGENE

Mr. Scott?

MR. SCOTT

Yes, sir?

EUGENE

It's time to prepare for my date.

MONTAGE - EUGENE AND MR. SCOTT PREPARE FOR THE DATE

-- In the kitchen, robotic arms crack eggs into a bowl.

-- Eugene polishes the stairwell banister, tests it with his finger. It looks pretty clean to us. Nevertheless, he keeps polishing.

-- In the kitchen, the bowl is poured into a pan.

-- Eugene organizes a stack of magazines on the coffee table. He dusts the surface.

-- Eugene is back polishing the banister. Behind, we can see the lens of Mr. Scott watching. We linger here for a few beats.

-- Eugene re-organizes the same stack of magazines. He glances up at a clock, which reads '14:34'.

-- Eugene plumps cushions on the couch.

-- He dusts a collection of plastic flowers.

-- Eugene peers out of the front window, frowns...

END MONTAGE

INT. DOWNSTAIRS CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene grabs a rake.

We follow him to the doorway.

He flings open the door, and the white hot light of the outside world becomes -

INT. ALTEX SALES FLOOR - DAY (FLASHBACK)

- an overhead light. We move down to the showroom floor.

Wide and spacious. Lit like a car showroom.

Soft MUZAK plays overhead.

Eugene shows a model house to YOUNG MAN (30) and YOUNG WOMAN (30).

EUGENE

Where as the gold models only have
the regular exterior shielding...

He taps the walls, which THUNK loudly.

EUGENE (CONT'D)

... the platinums come equipped
with this enhanced patented
exterior shielding.

He presses a button on the table.

Shutters slide up around the house, fitting tight to the
shape of the walls.

The young woman has her face buried in a pamphlet. She looks
up.

YOUNG WOMAN

And those protect against
everything?

EUGENE

Fires, earthquakes, tsunamis...
nuclear bombs.

The young woman flashes her husband a worried look.

But the young man seems disgruntled. He points at the
pamphlet.

YOUNG MAN
But it says here that both
have the patented shielding.

The young woman gives her husband one of those looks.

YOUNG WOMAN
Stephen, we're having a baby.

YOUNG MAN
I'm just saying that they're the
same damned thing, with a four
thousand dollar difference.

Eugene leans back, pats the display model warmly. Then he
looks hard at the man.

EUGENE
I hate to take sides, sir. I really
do. But in this case, I'm going to
have to go with your wife.

The young man looks from Eugene to his wife, clearly
outnumbered.

EUGENE
I have the platinum option myself.

YOUNG MAN
(sneering)
You mean the gold edition?

The young woman plucks the pamphlet from his hands.

YOUNG WOMAN
And you guarantee complete
protection?

Eugene smiles the universal smile of all salesmen.

EUGENE
Guaranteed.

YOUNG WOMAN

We'll take it.

The young man rubs his neck.

EUGENE

Grand! Now, if you'll just follow
me to my office...

He trails off. Something has caught his attention.

This something is Donna Bartleby. She's at the other end of
the floor, waiting to be served.

Eugene adjusts his tie, stares at her for a longing beat.

EUGENE

(to the couple)
Will you excuse me?

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

EXT. FRONT YARD - EARLY EVENING

The sky is darker, now.

A soft wind rustles the gnarled, black limbs of a tree.

We get a good view of Eugene's house, which is a vibrant
white, barely touched by the devastation. This could be any
suburban house.

Eugene rakes charred leaved into a pile, looks up. His gaze
lingers on -

- Destruction. Flattened buildings. Buckled roads. Cars
overturned against tree trunks.

In both directions, the roads lay empty.

The wind picks up. Across the street, a mail box CLATTERS
onto the road.

Eugene leans against the rake.

EUGENE
(deep in thought)
From which direction do you think
Ms. Donna will be approaching, Mr.
Scott?

The response comes from a speaker mounted on the side of the house.

MR. SCOTT
I did not quite catch that, sir.

EUGENE
I was wondering, Mr. Scott, from
which Donna will be arriving. From
the front or the back? Perhaps the
side?

MR. SCOTT
It is hard to tell, sir.

EUGENE
You seem to be evading my questions
today, Mr. Scott. Remind me to to
take a look at your access panel
before Ms. Donna arrives.

MR. SCOTT
That would be a good idea, sir.

Eugene makes his way back to the house.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene throws the rake back into the closet, then heads upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Eugene steps into his dress pants.

EUGENE
Reduce the lights, Mr. Scott. And
play something romantic.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The lights dim.

A stereo plays ROMANTIC MUZAK.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene HUMS along while he clips the bow tie into place.

He scoops a set of cuff links from a dresser, looks up to
the window.

AT THE WINDOW

The sky is completely dark.

BACK TO EUGENE

Who twiddles the links into place.

EUGENE
Set the flood lights going, Mr.
Scott.

EXT. A VIEW OF THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Enormous lights rise from the roof, CLACK on. They flood the
surrounding street.

The lights begin to blink on, off, on off, like a signal.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

EUGENE
Ms. Donna should certainly be able
to see that, Mr. Scott?

MR. SCOTT

(beat)

It is a very strong possibility,
sir.

Eugene nods, tugs his sleeves.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The table is eloquently set for two.

Eugene stands back, stares appreciatively at the setup. He leans forward, strikes a match, and lights a candle.

He takes a seat at the table, all smiles.

INT. EUGENE'S CAR - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Eugene smiles the exact same way. His work shirt is unbuttoned at the collar, tie loose. Rain drums on the car roof.

He's looking through the glass at...

ACROSS THE STREET

... a store window. It's small, purple, mystical looking. The front reads "Donna's Fortunes". Inside the glass, through a haze of smoke, we can just make out Donna Bartleby. She's leaning over a crystal ball. A CLIENT sits opposite.

BACK IN THE CAR

A NEWS READER speaks on the radio.

NEWS READER

News highlights: A Kansas Wal-Mart was evacuated today. Further bomb threats plague the East Coast.

In Eugene's lap sits a stack of Altex Home Defense

brochures.

NEWS READER (CONT'D)
Peace talks continue between the
United States and Great Britain.

Eugene toots his horn.

ACROSS THE STREET

Donna whirls around, peers over.

NEWS READER (CONT'D)
Is this a time to be afraid?

After a beat, she gives a shy little wave.

NEWS READER (CONT'D)
No. This is a time to not be alone.

BACK IN THE CAR

Eugene's grinning face becomes -

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. KITCHEN - SOME TIME LATER

- the same smile, only fixed.

The candle SPUTTERS low near the base.

His eyes swivel toward the window.

AT THE WINDOW

We see the burnt road and overturned cars, the piles of
twisted metal and scrap wood. It blinks on, off, on, off.

Slowly, he stands, and makes his way over to the window.

He watches for a long, arduous beat.

The beacon plays softly across his face.

EUGENE

(slowly)

Is it possible that Ms. Donna did not equip her house with the defense package, Mr. Scott?

When Mr. Scott speaks next it's in a soft, halting fashion. If we didn't know any better, we would think he was feeling sorry for Eugene.

MR. SCOTT

Incoming message from Ms. Donna, sir.

Eugene turns toward the lens.

MR. SCOTT

Message reads: Can not make it tonight, Eugene. Ate a bad steak. My hair is not correct. Let us reschedule for tomorrow?

Eugene blinks, working the note through his brain.

Neither Mr. Scott nor Eugene say anything for a few beats.

Finally, Eugene buys it.

EUGENE

I suppose that gives us a whole new day to plan.

MR. SCOTT

I agree, sir.

Eugene grins, then slaps the table.

EUGENE

Well, never mind. Never mind at all. There's always tomorrow, isn't there, Mr. Scott?

MR. SCOTT

Exactly, sir.

EUGENE
Oh, and Mr. Scott?

MR. SCOTT
Yes, sir?

EUGENE
Remind me to take a look at your
access panel tomorrow.

He blows out the candle, leaves the kitchen.

INT. THE STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

As he navigates up the stairs, the lights turn off behind him.

INT. BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Eugene, back in his spotted pyjamas, carefully hangs his date clothes back in the closet.

EUGENE
Set my alarm for seven, Mr. Scott.

A beat. Nothing.

He crosses the room, toward the bed.

EUGENE (CONT'D)
Mr. Scott?

MR. SCOTT
Yes, sir?

EUGENE (CONT'D)
You'll remember my date tomorrow, I
hope?

A long beat.

MR. SCOTT
I believe there is something I need
to tell you, sir. About Ms. Donna.

EUGENE

Oh?

Another long beat.

For the briefest of moments, worry flutters over Eugene's face.

MR. SCOTT

It can wait until tomorrow, sir.

The worry vanishes, and Eugene slips under the covers.

EUGENE

Good night, Mr. Scott. And you're sure you'll remember my date?

MR. SCOTT

(beat)

I guarantee, sir.

This seems to stir something in the recess of Eugene's memory. He looks troubled for a second, like there's something there, but he can't quite place his finger on it.

He doesn't find it. He rolls over.

EUGENE

Good night, Mr. Scott.

MR. SCOTT

Good night, sir.

We drift sideways, and linger by the window.

Outside, the street light blinks on and off, on and off, on and off.