

PARANORMAN

Screenplay by Christopher Butler

An attractive FEMALE SCIENTIST in a gore-spattered lab coat moves fearfully along a wall, passing benches strewn with broken lab equipment. Her ample bosom heaves as she PANTS nervously, mascara-rimmed eyes darting to and fro.

Glass SMASHES on the floor nearby and MELODRAMATIC MUSIC swells. The woman backs into a shadow, not noticing a pair of dead eyes catching the moonlight behind her.

The music climbs to a frenzy as something GROANS horribly into the woman's ear. She spins around on her stiletto heels as a rotted face looms out of the darkness, drooling through broken teeth, and lunges at her neck.

ZOMBIE

Brains!

CLOSE ON the woman as she raises her hands and SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

Eleven year-old NORMAN BABCOCK sits on the floor watching TV. He has large piercing eyes and a messy shock of hair. The movie scene we just witnessed continues off-screen with the sound of bloodcurdling SCREAMS.

Behind him sitting upon a sofa is GRANDMA BABCOCK, a plump old lady squinting through thick glasses.

GRANDMA BABCOCK

What's happening now?

NORMAN

The zombie is eating her head, Grandma.

GRANDMA BABCOCK

That's not very nice. What's he doing that for?

NORMAN

Because he's a zombie. That's what they do.

GRANDMA BABCOCK

Well he's going to ruin his dinner. I'm sure if they just bothered to sit down and talk it through it'd be a different story.

Norman CHUCKLES, as if the idea is absurd, then winces as he hears his father shout from the kitchen.

2 CONTINUED:

2

PERRY BABCOCK (O.S.)
Norman! Didn't I tell you to take
 out the garbage?

NORMAN
 Coming, Dad!

GRANDMA BABCOCK
 Tell him to turn up the thermostat
 too, will ya? My feet are like
 ice.

Norman nods to her and shuffles over to the kitchen door.

3 INT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

3

Norman's mother, SANDRA BABCOCK, is emptying the dishwasher. She is in her late thirties, and wears 'mom' clothes that do no favors for her figure. His father, PERRY BABCOCK, is older, with a neatly-trimmed beard trying hard to delineate chin from neck. He stands on a chair, decked out in tool belt and safety goggles, even though he's only changing a light bulb in a ceiling fixture.

Sandra smiles at her son as he makes his way silently to an overstuffed trash can as tall as he is.

SANDRA BABCOCK
 Hi. Whatcha watching in there?

NORMAN
 Sex and violence.

SANDRA BABCOCK
 Oh. That's nice.

Perry glares over as Norman wrestles with the garbage.

PERRY BABCOCK
 Can't you be like other kids your
 age and pitch a tent in the yard,
 or have a healthy interest in
 carpentry?

SANDRA BABCOCK
 Perry...

NORMAN
 I thought you said kids my age
 were too busy shoplifting and
 joyriding?

SANDRA BABCOCK
 Norman!

He hefts the bag onto the floor and ties it in a knot.

Breezing into the kitchen through the back door while CHATTING inanely on her cell phone, Norman's older sister COURTNEY is fifteen years-old and is the bleached-blonde cheerleader archetype of every schoolboy's sordid dreams.

COURTNEY

Oh yeah, he's r-i-double p-e-d.
Like, a seven pack at least.
(to Norman)
Ew! Watch it!

She pushes her brother out of the way as he drags the garbage outside.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Courtney, be nice.

COURTNEY

Yeah, she totally doesn't deserve him. I mean, she's nice and I really like her, but she's a complete *loser*. Yeah, I know.

Courtney slumps into a chair at the table, twisting a strand of gum out of her mouth with a finger.

Norman returns inside and shuts the door, pausing a moment as if thinking something over.

NORMAN

Dad? Grandma says, "Can you turn up the heating?" Her feet are cold.

The bubble Courtney is blowing POPS against her face, Perry rolls his eyes and GROANS, and Sandra pales.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Now, Perry...

PERRY BABCOCK

How many times do we have to go *through* this, Son? Your grandmother is *dead*!

NORMAN

I *know*!

PERRY BABCOCK

Then why do you keep on talking to her?

NORMAN

Because she talks *back*!

COURTNEY

O-M-G, you are such a liar!

NORMAN

I'm not making this up! I swear!
She talks to me all the time!

COURTNEY

Oh yeah? Prove it!

Norman levels her a look that says "you asked for this".

NORMAN

She said it's not very ladylike to
hide photos of the High School
quarterback with his shirt off in
your underwear drawer.

Sandra and Perry raise their eyebrows.

COURTNEY

I knew it! You've been sneaking
around in my personal stuff!

NORMAN

No I haven't! Grandma told me!

COURTNEY

You are the worst!

Courtney, brimming with outrage, storms out of the
kitchen, her ponytail wagging furiously behind her.

Sandra kneels down beside Norman with a wearily
sympathetic smile.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Norman, I know you and Grandma
were very close, but we all have
to move on. Grandma's in a better
place now.

NORMAN

No she's not, she's in the living
room.

Perry throws his arms in the air, swaying on the chair.

PERRY BABCOCK

Your grandmother was old and sick,
and she died. That's all there is
to it!

SANDRA BABCOCK

Perry, this is just part of the
mourning process.

3 CONTINUED: (3)

3

PERRY BABCOCK
 Stop indulging him! I'm nothing if
 I'm not liberal, but that limp-
 wristed, hippie garbage needs to
 be nipped in the bud!

Norman SIGHS and steps between his parents as they argue.
 He mutely heads out of the room.

4 EXT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

4

The argument in the kitchen continues, slightly muted.

PERRY BABCOCK (O.S.)
 This behavior might be okay with
 your side of the family, but I'm
 not putting up with it anymore!
 Not me!

SANDRA BABCOCK (O.S.)
 Oh, not this again!

PAN UP to find a light go on in Norman's bedroom window.

5 INT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, NORMAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

5

Norman sits on his bed, using a couple of zombie action
 figures to act out his parents' ongoing "discussion"
 which carries upstairs.

Norman gets up off the bed and approaches the door.

PERRY BABCOCK
 This isn't the West Coast, Sandra;
 people *talk*! They do!

SANDRA BABCOCK (O.S.)
 He's just sensitive, Perry.

PERRY BABCOCK (O.S.)
 Oh please, "sensitive" is writing
 poetry and being lousy at team
 sports... not *this*! I won't have
 him turn out like that *uncle* of
 yours! If that crazy old tramp has
 been around here putting ideas in
 Norman's head...

SANDRA BABCOCK (O.S.)
 Perry, no one's had anything to do
 with Uncle Prenderghast in years!
 I bet he doesn't even know what
 Norman looks like!

Norman quietly closes the door, and the room goes black.

6 INT. MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT 6

CLOSE ON a faded photograph of Norman, held in the grimy hand of MR PRENDERGHAST. He stands over a dusty desk scattered with pictures of Norman, Sandra and older family members. He is in a dark study; a wall-to-wall trove of curious miscellanea and dumpster-dived junk.

MR PRENDERGHAST

Not much time, not much time...

He pulls an old leather-bound book out from the mess, and traces a finger over a woodcut illustration on its cover; an ethereal woman lying beneath a cluster of stars.

Wincing with pain, the man drops the book and clutches at his chest, COUGHING and GASPING horribly.

CAMERA PANS to a wall covered in countless photographs, newspaper clippings and scrawled occult markings. It is a shrine of sorts; a madman's recondite genealogy project, and at its center is a photograph of Norman, posing with his family on vacation.

ZOOM IN to the photograph, hurtling past the Babcocks and through dense trees further and further into a dark forest.

TITLE: *PARANORMAN*

7 INT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, NORMAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING 7

Norman opens bleary eyes, turns off his zombie hand alarm clock, and slides out of bed.

8 INT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING 8

Dressed for school, Norman pauses at the front door and turns to look at the sofa in the living room. He waves happily, and Grandma smiles back.

Courtney passes him as she comes down the stairs in the opposite direction. She also stops to look at the sofa, but to her eyes it is empty. She sneers contemptuously.

9 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING 9

Norman ambles past houses and lawns spotted with small-town America detritus; cheap plastic lawn furniture, peeling-paint fences and cookie-cutter topiary. Here the quaint colonial buildings are mostly in disrepair, their picket fences rotten or daubed in graffiti.

Norman is watched dubiously by the occasional passer-by as he shouts amiable greetings to people who simply aren't there.

NORMAN

Good morning! Hey Bruce! How's it goin'? Not much. I'm kind of late for school. I need to go. Hi, nice to see you guys. Good morning. Sorry I gotta run. Excuse me. Pardon me. See ya.

At one street corner, Norman bends over a gutter. He is watched curiously by a man retrieving his morning paper across the other side of the street.

MAN'S POV - Norman crouches over the flattened remains of raccoon road kill.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Hey there little buddy! C'mere!

He realizes he is being stared at and slowly turns to face the onlooker, then hurries away.

Though no one else sees them, to Norman's eyes, a whole host of ghosts are meandering through the streets.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, good to see you! How you doin'? Hi Mrs Hardman. You look nice today. I like what you've done with your hair.

HAIRDRYER GHOST

Does anyone smell burning?

HIPPY GHOST

Hey, peace, man.

NORMAN

Totally.

CIVIL WAR GHOST

As you were, soldier.

NORMAN

Sir, yes sir!

GREASER GHOST

Yo Norman, you playin' hookie?

NORMAN

No no, I'm just late for school. Sorry, I gotta go.

(to Mobster Ghost)

How you doin'?

9 CONTINUED: (2)

9

MOBSTER GHOST

Hey, how you doin'?

A little further along Norman nods pleasantly to the ghost of a parachutist impaled in the branches of a roadside tree.

NORMAN

Hi! How's it hanging?

PARACHUTIST GHOST

Ho ho! Haven't heard that one before. Well, it's a nice day.

11 EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

11

Its industrial days now rusted behind it, Blithe Hollow has become a run-down tourist town, celebrating its heritage with lame fetes and crass knick-knacks. A massive billboard beside the main square reads "BLITHE HOLLOW - A GREAT PLACE TO HANG!" illustrated by a group of waving Puritans beside an equally cheerful witch hanging from a gallows. Across the street a huge banner suggests this year is particularly important for the town; "BLITHE HOLLOW - 300 BEWITCHIN' YEARS!"

The town center is lacking in charm; its historical buildings subsumed into a vulgar modern thoroughfare with gaudy witch-themed shop fronts and cracked sidewalks.

Everywhere Norman walks, the witch theme is prevalent. Cars have bumper stickers that extol such witticisms as "MY OTHER CAR IS A BROOM". There's a dingy bar, the BAR GENTO, and a greeting card store called BEST WITCHES.

Norman hurries past SHERIFF HOOPER, a heavyset black woman, and DEPUTY DWAYNE, lanky and awkward and looking like he'd rather be elsewhere.

SHERIFF HOOPER

Watch and learn. "Parking violation" is my middle name.

DEPUTY DWAYNE

Really? I thought it was Rhona.

They glance up disdainfully as Norman passes by. Clearly in this town Norman has something of a bad reputation.

12 EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - MORNING

12

Norman walks up a tree lined path that leads to a squat school building. Out front, the name "BLITHE HOLLOW MIDDLE SCHOOL" is carved into an ugly hunk of granite.

SCHOOL KIDS line the path in front of Norman; a gauntlet of jeering, merciless, pre-pubescent horror. Norman takes a deep breath as he begins his daily walk of ridicule. Most of the kids give him a wide berth, but others sneer and WHISPER as he passes.

A bell RINGS the start of the school day, and everyone makes a bee-line for the building.

Someone barges Norman with their shoulder, knocking his backpack to the ground. Other kids SNICKER as they step over him.

As the last of them head through the lobby doors, Norman is left alone on the path.

Norman bends down to retrieve his spilled possessions, and a dark shape beyond the gate catches his eye.

NORMAN'S POV - Mr Prenderghast, barely visible as he stands within the shadow of a tree, stares back at him.

Norman frowns and squints his eyes, but now sees only trees and shadows, so he continues up the steps.

An expanse of unevenly lacquered floor, scuffed by scores of dragged heels. Rows of dented lockers line the walls. Norman stands before his locker, across which someone has daubed the word "FREAK" in marker. Clearly something of a daily ritual, he reaches inside, takes out a bottle of surface cleaner and a rag and proceeds to wipe it off.

Across the hallway, another kid is removing graffiti from his locker. NEIL is overweight with frizzy red hair, and is busily rubbing a handkerchief over the word "FATTY". He watches Norman with interest.

A voice behind his shoulder gives Norman a start.

ALVIN

Hey, ghost jerk! You know what?

Norman turns to find textbook bully ALVIN, the only 6th grader in his class who shaves, looming over him. He is flanked by a couple of leering sycophants, one of whom wears a T-shirt emblazoned with "TEAM ALVIN".

Norman SIGHS.

NORMAN

What do you want, Alvin?

ALVIN

Why don't you see some more
ghosts, goober?

The kids LAUGH uproariously, encouraging Alvin to show off some more.

ALVIN (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey! Norman!

Alvin points to a fly that has landed on the locker beside him. He swats it flat with his hand.

ALVIN (CONT'D)
Talk to that.

The kids around Alvin burst into LAUGHTER.

ALVIN (CONT'D)
That is so Alvin!

The bullies strut away, content in the psychological damage they've managed to inflict.

PUG
Loser!

ALVIN
That was good, right guys?

Norman mutters as they leave, but not loud enough so as anyone might hear.

NORMAN
Flies don't talk.

Across the hall, Neil continues to watch with sympathy, but he is already being hurried along by his friend SALMA, a nerdy Indian kid with braces.

SALMA
Neil, come on. Let's go.

Amidst stacked bleachers, foam mats and stray dodge balls, a crudely constructed stage fills one end of the gymnasium. Mediocre art class scenery represents a colonial town, complete with plywood hills, chapel and crescent moon dangling perilously from a basketball hoop.

In a director's chair far too small for the job is MRS HENSCHER, an imposing woman with spectacles and beret who looks like she smells of too-much perfume.

At the front of the stage wearing a pilgrim hat and carrying a large scroll, is NORMAN. He is surrounded by kids whose attempts at home made period costume leave a lot to be desired.

MRS HENSCHER

You stink of illiteracy!

(a beat)

Pilgrims? The Mayflower? Don't any
of you know anything about the
history of this town?

Mrs Henscher tries her best to remain unfazed.

MRS HENSCHER (CONT'D)

Puritans were *strict* and *devout*
settlers, who came here to build a
home, a place without sin. What is
it now Salma?

Salma is holding her hand up. She looks like the Wicked
Witch of the West. Even beneath green makeup and plastic
warty nose, it is clear she is not best pleased.

SALMA

Why is the witch always a hideous
old crone with a pointy hat and a
broomstick? I don't believe it's
historically accurate, Mrs
Henscher!

Mrs Henscher's knuckles clench white around her script.
She attempts an understanding smile, in the same way a
shark might.

MRS HENSCHER

It's not supposed to be. It's
supposed to sell postcards and key
chains.

(claps hands)

So let's try it again. Top of page
six, Norman.

Norman skips ahead on his scroll.

NORMAN

The founding fathers of Blithe
Hollow discovered an *evil witch*
amongst them...

MRS HENSCHER

No no, Norman, with *gusto!* Like
this!

Waving her arms theatrically, she bellows Norman's lines,
milking every syllable for effect.

MRS HENSCHER (CONT'D)

They put her on trial and *hanged*
her!

(MORE)

MRS HENSCHER (CONT'D)

But the vengeful witch *curled* her accusers, seven of them in all, to die a *horrible and gruesome death*, and rise from their graves as the *living dead*; their souls doomed to an *eternity of damnation!*

(a beat)

Now I want you to try that again, but with conviction! My reputation is at stake here, and I won't have this turn out like that wretched Kabuki debacle of oh-nine!

As she launches into her lecture, Norman notices a change in the room. The lights dim, the wind outside picks up, and indistinct shapes flicker at the corners of his eyes.

Norman glances around at the other kids on the stage, to see if they are seeing what he is seeing. For a split second the children are replaced with faded figures in real Puritan dress. Seven solemn figures.

As he turns around nervously, Norman sees the suggestion of *another place* fizzing in and out of the shadows...

MRS HENSCHER (CONT'D)

Norman! Are you listening to me, boy?

Norman is brought back to the real world with a start, and nods timidly from behind his scroll.

NORMAN

Sorry, Mrs Henscher.

MRS HENSCHER

So am I. Now, unless there's any other issues, let us resume... They put her on trial and *hanged* her!

Neil turns excitedly to Norman.

NEIL

Ooh! This is my moment!

He shuffles toward Salma and swings his branch around, not realizing Alvin has slung the hangman's noose around Norman's neck.

Norman is yanked off balance and staggers into Neil who keels over, rigid branch arms unable to stop his fall. He lands on top of Salma, her kicking legs sticking out from under him as though Dorothy's house had just landed on stage.

The kids break into uncontrollable LAUGHTER.

14 CONTINUED: (3)

14

ALVIN
Boom, baby!

NEIL
Sorry!

Mrs Henscher flings her script into the air, her face beet red.

MRS HENSCHER
Oh, you useless bunch of...

The school bell RINGS drowning out her howling voice.

15 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY, LOCKERS - LATER

15

As kids hotfoot it out of the building as quickly as possible, Norman stands pitifully in front of his locker. Fresh graffiti reads "SEE YOU TOMORROW, FREAK".

Norman heads for the door, and pretends not to hear when Neil shouts out behind him.

NEIL
Norman, wait up!

16 EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER

16

Norman keeps going, but Neil quickly catches up, beaming intently at the side of his head.

NORMAN
I keep telling you, Neil. I like to be alone.

NEIL
So do I. Let's do it together! You shouldn't let them get you down. They always do stuff like that to me.

NORMAN
Why?

NEIL
Because I'm fat. And my allergies make my eyes leak. And I sweat when I walk too fast. And I have a lunchbox with a kitten on it. And I have Irritable Bowel Syndrome. I guess there's a whole bunch of stuff.

NORMAN
Doesn't it bother you?

NEIL

Nah. You can't stop bullying, it's part of human nature. If you were bigger and more stupid, you'd probably be a bully too. It's called "survival of the thickest".

17 EXT. URBAN STREET - DAY

17

Norman and Neil walk away from the school along a tree lined street at the end of which stands a huge commemorative statue. It is a grotesque effigy of the evil witch from the local legend.

MR PRENDERGHAST (O.S.)

Psssst!

The boys stop. It seems to be coming from the witch.

NEIL

That statue just "*pissst*" at us!

Wild-eyed Mr Prenderghast suddenly leaps in front of them, startling them as he staggers closer.

MR PRENDERGHAST

You know who I am?

NEIL

The weird stinky old bum who lives up the hill?

MR PRENDERGHAST

(points to Norman)

I was asking him.

NORMAN

Yes. I know. I was told not to talk to you. Sorry.

Mr Prenderghast steps in front of Neil, leaning closer to Norman and whispering conspiratorially.

MR PRENDERGHAST

And you know *why* you're not supposed to talk to me?

Norman tries to back away.

MR PRENDERGHAST (CONT'D)

I can see ghosts too! And I know that's not all you've been seeing lately, is it? Bad omens? Things you can't quite explain? Strange faces peering through the veil?

Norman's eyes widen further.

MR PRENDERGHAST (CONT'D)

And I'll bet no one told you about
the witch's curse, did they?

NORMAN

Actually, we're learning about it
in school..?

NEIL

(beaming proudly)
I'm a tree!

Mr Prenderghast impatiently turns his back on Neil and
leans close to Norman.

MR PRENDERGHAST

There's something you really need
to know! This is the most
important thing you will ever
hear! The fate of *everyone* depends
on it! Now listen close... The
witch's curse is real, and you're
the one who has to stop it!

Mr Prenderghast grabs Norman's arm and leans closer.

MR PRENDERGHAST (CONT'D)

You've gotta use your gift of
talking to the dead!

He breaks into a HACKING COUGH, face turning beet red and
bloodshot eyes bulging.

MR PRENDERGHAST (CONT'D)

Because if you don't the witch's
ghost...

(COUGHING)

And this is the most important
thing of all... You have to go up
to the old graveyard and...

NEIL (O.S.)

Leave him alone!

An apple bounces off Mr Prenderghast's head. He turns to
find Neil standing behind them on the path, lunchbox open
in his hand providing leftover low-carb ammunition.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Don't make me throw this hummus!
It's spicy!

Mr Prenderghast thinks better of it and turns to flee the
scene. He HISSES out of the side of his mouth at Norman.

MR PRENDERGHAST

This ain't done with! You'll see
it soon enough! Watch for the
sign!

As he hobbles away, Neil peers down the street after the
old man.

NEIL

Jeez, what a dirty old creep!

NORMAN

He's my uncle.

NEIL

So is it true?

NORMAN

What?

Norman just stares at him.

NEIL

Can you see ghosts? Like,
everywhere? All the time?

NORMAN

Uh, yeah?

NEIL

Awesome! Do you think you can see
my dog Bub? He was run over by an
animal rescue van. Tragic and
ironic. We buried him in the yard.
Could you see him?

Norman frowns disbelievingly, completely taken aback.

NORMAN

Maybe.

NEIL

Sweet! Come on!

Neil forcibly drags Norman up the front driveway of a
pastel-painted house. A pair of legs spotted in oil stick
out from beneath a pimped-up camper van.

Neil's brother MITCH calls out from under the van.

MITCH

Neil? That you?

NEIL

Hey Mitch! We're gonna go play
with the dead dog in the garden
and we're not even gonna have to
dig him up first!

Mitch sits up. He's a strapping six-foot jock with
tattooed biceps. The kind of guy who wears year-round
flip-flops.

MITCH

What'd you say?

Mitch pulls his brother aside so as to exclude Norman,
who stands awkwardly a little way away, surrounded by
cheery lawn ornaments and ineptly manicured topiary.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Neil, isn't he that weird kid?
Y'know, "*Look at me, I talk to
ghosts so people will pay
attention to me.*"

Mitch makes a goofy face and twitches farcically.

NEIL

Can you stop doing that? It's
kinda stupid.

MITCH

Now listen to me, you don't need
to be hanging out with weird
people. That's a tip.

Neil scowls at his brother.

NEIL

Don't blow this for me, Mitch.
This one's not weird. He talks to
dead people.

Neil has had enough and defiantly walks away from his
brother.

Neil rummages around in the bushes of his back yard,
surrounded by a gloriously tasteless menagerie of lawn
ornaments. Norman stands slightly to one side surveying
the rows of plastic gnomes and wondering if he should
have gone straight home after all.

NEIL

He's around here somewhere...
(a beat)
So does everyone come back as a
ghost?

Norman hesitates. This level of interest is new to him.

NORMAN

No. My grandma told me it's usually people who still have stuff to figure out. Or sometimes it's the ones who died suddenly, or in a bad way.

A BARK, and Norman turns to see a translucent puppy wagging its tail cheerfully, despite being chopped neatly into two halves.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Bub?

NEIL

Is he there? How's he look?

Bub BARKS, then his front half notices his tail and runs behind to sniff his own backside.

NORMAN

Uh... good.

Bub bounds over to Neil, runs clean through his chubby calves, then doubles back for another try.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

He's happy to see you.

NEIL

("doggy" voice)
Who's a good boy, huh? Good boy!
(to Norman)
Can he feel it if I pet him?

NORMAN

Yeah, I guess.

Neil bends over and kisses the air by his ankles, making a "coochy-coo" face.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Uh... that's not his chin.

Neil stops mid-smooch, and quickly stands up.

Norman watches as Neil picks up a stick and waves it in front of Bub's nose, even though he can't see him.

NEIL

Go get it!

NORMAN

He can't fetch it, y'know.

NEIL

Yeah well, it's still fun. Good boy! Bring it back! Go get it, Bub! Good boy!

CLOSE ON Norman as he watches Neil toss the stick back and forth across the garden. The stick lands near his feet and he bends down to pick it up.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Why don't you try?

NORMAN

'Cos I don't really, uh... You can go.

NEIL

No, no, it's fun! Try it!

NORMAN

No I don't want to.

NEIL

You throw it. It's really easy.

NORMAN

No it's okay. You can throw it.

NEIL

No, c'mon, it's really fun.

NORMAN

Here. You go first.

NEIL

No, you try it. I already went like fifty times.

NORMAN

Okay, what do I do?

NEIL

You get the stick, you pull it back, and you throw it!

Norman throws it and accidentally hits Neil in the head, knocking him over.

NORMAN

Neil? Sorry!

As Norman runs over to him, Neil lies on his back GIGGLING, the stick held between his teeth.

NEIL

I fetched it!

21 CONTINUED: (3)

21

CLOSE ON NORMAN, as a smile creeps across his face and he starts to LAUGH.

NORMAN

Are you okay?

CUT WIDE as the two kids enjoy their play, the sun above them breaking through the clouds in a bright blue sky.

28 INT. MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

28

PANTING and WHEEZING, Mr Prenderghast staggers into his study, SLAMS the door behind him and heads for his desk.

MR PRENDERGHAST

I'll show him, and that scary little fat kid...

He shakily rummages around the collected papers and trinkets, and pulls out the leather bound book, all the time GRUMBLING crazily.

MR PRENDERGHAST (CONT'D)

Doesn't he realize we're running out of t...

With a strangled CROAK he clutches dizzily at his chest, then keels over backwards, stiffly hitting the floor with a THUMP.

Silence, then, a stream of spectral orbs sputter out of him, sculpting his shape in the air.

With a GASP, Mr Prenderghast's corpse sucks the spirit back in, and he staggers back to his feet.

MR PRENDERGHAST (CONT'D)

No! Not yet! Not yet!

He CROAKS again, this time for real, CRASHING back down onto the ground.

The ghostly shape re-emerges from the body.

He blinks his eyes, looking around as if he's just been woken from a deep sleep, then down at the defunct body lying at his feet.

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

Aw, nuts.

29 EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

29

Lit by spotlights, a large banner over the entrance reads, "THE WITCH'S CURSE - presented by BLITHE HOLLOW MIDDLE SCHOOL DRAMA SOCIETY - written, produced and directed for the stage by Margot Henscher".

A notice beneath it reads "SPELLING BEE - NEXT WENSDAY".

A chorus of kids' voices can be heard SINGING from inside, belting out an operatic rendition of Donovan's "Season of the Witch".

30 INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - SAME

30

Rows of plastic chairs in front of the spotlight stage are occupied by expectant families. Among the sea of faintly buzzing video cameras, and a ripple of APPLAUSE, Sandra politely smiles at the acting talents of other peoples' children. Next to her, Perry struggles to fit a battery into his camera.

PERRY BABCOCK

Great, now we'll never get to remember this moment.

ANGLE ON STAGE as Salma, in full witch get-up, waves her hands theatrically at the other children.

SALMA

I curse you accusers to die a horrible and gruesome death and rise from your graves as the living dead; your souls doomed to an eternity of damnation!

The Pilgrims who aren't dying and rising from the dead begin to menace Salma with their farming implements, and begin a slow ominous chant.

KIDS

Kill the witch! Kill the witch!

Sandra nudges her husband and cheerily points toward the stage.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Gosh, aren't they adorable?

Norman hears a HOOTING sound from above. An owl with big glowing eyes wheels down over the audience from the beams of the gymnasium.

Norman glances around, wondering why no one else seems to notice as it glides low and alights in the papier mache branches on Neil's head. It turns to Norman and HOOTS.

He looks down from it and catches Neil's eye. Neil makes a puzzled expression.

NEIL

What?

KIDS

Kill the witch! Kill the witch!

The chanting seems to deepen and slur and the air grows dark and thick. The shapes of the audience and the kids beside him swim around, blurring like a finger pulled through oil paint. The ceiling disintegrates into clouds, which CRACKLE with lightning.

NORMAN

(under his breath)

Oh no! Not again!

All around trees have sprouted out of nowhere, and through the darkness in the distance are occasional lights of small houses. This might be how this very spot looked three centuries ago.

As Norman turns on the spot GASPING, he hears a RUSTLE in the bushes behind him and spots several dark and ominous figures in Pilgrim clothing scouring the undergrowth.

PURITAN

Witch! We know you're out there!

Norman stands on a twig which, naturally, CRACKS loudly, and the figure turns around and points at him.

PURITAN (CONT'D)

There!

NORMAN

No!

PURITAN

Witch.

More figures emerge from out of the darkness, wielding hayforks. They SHOUT threateningly and, as one man, surge toward him. Norman turns and runs.

The trees around him are shifting, but there's no wind blowing the branches. Limbs GROAN as they twist, bearing down on him like ragged talons trying to stop his escape.

Soon he can run no further, the way ahead tangled up into a wall of thorny fingers.

31 CONTINUED:

31

Norman finds himself pushed up against the trunk of a huge tree, and a knothole grimaces at him, wood splitting open into a hag-like mouth. It furrows a mossy brow and speaks in a low rumbling voice.

TREE
The dead are coming!

Norman GASPS and tries to push himself away, but the pursuing figures are drawing closer, and there's no escape.

A familiar voice whispers out of nowhere.

NEIL (O.S.)
Hey buddy! Are you okay?

Norman turns around to find the knothole is now Neil's face, bulging out of the side of the tree with a look of concern. This is the last straw, and Norman SCREAMS.

32 INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

32

Norman stands next to Neil on stage, eyes closed and WAILING. Everyone around him stares in stunned silence as, still SCREAMING, he runs into the spotlight.

NORMAN
THE DEAD ARE COMING!

He continues running directly off the edge of the stage and lands on the floor with a THUMP.

For a moment no one knows quite how to react. Mrs Henscher quizzically checks her script.

Norman's eyes focus and he sees everyone standing around him, staring. Sandra pushes through the crowd.

SANDRA BABCOCK
Norman!

MITCH
Did he say the *dead* are coming?

PERRY BABCOCK
(nervous laughing)
No, no, no!

NORMAN
YES!

Everyone jumps as Norman abruptly sits up, eyes wild.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
The *tree* told me!

32 CONTINUED:

32

Perry's face drains of color while the other parents MURMUR and MUTTER, crowd speak for "what a weirdo".

Norman sees their expressions of disgust and suspicion.

Worst of all, peering around parents' legs with a look of shock and fear is Neil. Norman catches his eye a moment, and Neil looks down at the ground.

33 INT. STATION WAGON - LATER

33

Barely keeping his fury in check, Perry drives home, Norman sitting despondently in the back seat.

PERRY BABCOCK

This is where it stops! It's one thing being a mental case in front of your family, but not the whole freaking town! There's not gonna be any more talking to ghosts, or grandmas, or, or... what is it now?

SANDRA BABCOCK

I think it's trees.

PERRY BABCOCK

You're *grounded*! You hear me?

Perry pulls the car up in the Babcock's drive and gruffly climbs out of the car.

NORMAN

This is ridiculous. I wish everyone could see what I see! I didn't *ask* to be born this way!

Perry mutters as he slams his door shut.

PERRY BABCOCK

Funny, neither did we.

Norman catches the remark and feels it hard in his gut. His mother hears it too, and leans over her seat with a look of sympathy.

A beat as she sees the pain in her son's face.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Y'know, sometimes people say things that seem mean, but they do it because they're afraid.

NORMAN

He's my dad. He shouldn't be afraid of me.

- 33 CONTINUED: 33
- Sandra's eyes are filled with sorrow.
- SANDRA BABCOCK
He's not afraid of you. He's
afraid for you.
- Sadly, Norman climbs out of the car.
- 35 EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON 35
- Ominous clouds roll long shadows over the school building.
- Norman stands at the bottom of the school steps, trying to prepare himself for what he knows is going to be a bad day. He steels himself, and SIGHS.
- 35A INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING 35A
- Norman walks the familiar gauntlet of school kids, only this time the abuse is tenfold.
- KID #1
Look! It's AbNorman!
- KID #2
What'd the tree tell you today,
Norman?
- KID #3
Are the dead coming soon, Norman?
- 36 INT. SCHOOL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 36
- An overhead bulb casts a dim light over chipped wall tiles and yellowed ceramic sinks with leaky faucets.
- The door opens and Norman hurries inside, a number of voices still SHOUTING behind him. He shuts the door, cutting them off, and leans against it, taking a breath.
- He heads over to the first stall. The door is locked, so he takes the next one.
- CLOSE ON Alvin, sitting on the toilet in the next stall scribbling obscenities on the wall to pass the time. He pauses as he hears the lid drop next door, then resumes his vandalism.
- Norman sits on the lid of the toilet, pulling his knees up under his chin feeling sorry for himself.

ANGLE ON toilet paper in an industrial-sized roll. It jitters on its mount and begins to turn slowly on its own, unspooling sheet by sheet toward the floor. Norman frowns and watches as it stops unravelling and a draught of wind blows out of nowhere, ruffling his hair.

The toilet roll suddenly spins violently, flinging the paper into the air in reams. The screws holding the dispenser to the wall RATTLE fiercely.

The toilet underneath Norman begins to shake and shudder, spilling water over the floor. Norman WAILS loudly as he jumps onto the back of the cistern.

Alvin is frozen in place in his stall, hearing the noises and really not sure how to react to them. He glances down and sees toilet water leaking across the tiles.

He quickly pulls up his pants to cover his dignity, and jumps up off the toilet with a SQUEAL.

In Norman's stall everything stops dead and the lid of the toilet slowly CREAKS open.

Norman GASPS as Mr Prenderghast's face stares up at him out of the toilet bowl. With some effort the old man's ghost shimmies out of the toilet, eventually POPPING out like a cork from a bottle, hovering in the air in front of Norman's face.

NORMAN

You *died*?!

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

Yeah, but I got unfinished business here!

NORMAN

Ew! Couldn't you use *another* stall?

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

My ghost isn't going anywhere until I pass on my duty to another! And that would be *you*!

NORMAN

Me? No, you must have it wrong!

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

Oh it's you all right! I've been holding back the witch's curse for years, but now I'm dead. It has to be you!

NORMAN

But I... I don't know what any of it means!

Before Norman's eyes the bathroom stall and everything beyond it is ripped away, revealing thick undergrowth and tall trees. Norman is suddenly sat on the toilet in the middle of a forest.

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

It means the past is coming back to haunt you! Time is running out! The anniversary of the witch's death is *tonight*. Her ghost is going to wake up, and when she does she'll raise the dead! You gotta keep her in her grave!

The toilet paper on the ground twists up beneath Norman's feet, sculpting skull faces and clutching hands that reach for him as he shrinks back.

NORMAN

But I'm just a kid! How am I supposed to stop it?

In an instant the air and trees around him are eaten away, the school bathroom reappearing through the holes.

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

Read from the book at the spot the witch was buried!

NORMAN

What book?

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

The one in my hands!

Norman looks at the ghost's wispy hands.

PRENDERGHAST GHOST (CONT'D)

Not *these* hands, my *other* hands! The me that's at home in my study starting to smell a little funny!

Norman looks sick and overwhelmed, but the ghost doesn't let up, swirling right up to his face.

PRENDERGHAST GHOST (CONT'D)

Get the book and read from it! *Before the sun sets tonight!*

NORMAN

But this is crazy!

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

Do I look crazy to you?

Norman pauses a beat. Mr Prenderghast is floating upside down, various bits of bathroom detritus orbiting around him. A piece of toilet paper dangles off his nose.

PRENDERGHAST GHOST (CONT'D)

Tell me you'll do this!

NORMAN

I... I...

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

Swear!

NORMAN

Y-you mean like the "f" word?

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

I mean *promise!*

NORMAN

Okay, okay, I promise...

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

That'll do!

Mr Prenderghast's ghost begins to disappear, bubbling and melting at the edges like a burning photograph.

NORMAN

No! Mr Prenderghast, wait!

Alvin, hearing only Norman's voice, gingerly peeks around the corner of his stall.

PRENDERGHAST GHOST

Sorry kid, I'm done here! I'm free! I'm finally free!

NORMAN

Wait! No, you can't leave now!
Please! I don't understand.

Mr Prenderghast hangs in the air a moment, face scrunched up as he awaits his release, CACKLING crazily.

The ghost explodes into a million particles of light, blowing open the stall door and catapulting Alvin backwards across the room. The mirrors behind him crack and the light bulb shatters.

From the floor, Alvin groggily looks up and sees Norman framed in the stall with the door hanging off its hinges. He reaches over and flushes the toilet.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Uh... yeah. You might want to give that a few minutes.

He grabs his bag and runs out of the room.

40

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY, LOCKERS - CONTINUOUS

40

Norman sprints madly for the main doors, passing Neil and Salma who glance up from their lockers as he stumbles by.

NEIL

Norman?

Alvin tears around the corner in pursuit, but Neil stands in his way, waving his arms indignantly.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Hey! What's the big deal?

ALVIN

Don't get your bra in a twist, fat boy, this has nothing to do with you! Keep out of my way!

NEIL

Or what?

ALVIN

Or I'll punch you in the boobs!

NEIL

I don't have boobs. These are *pectorals!*

Alvin jabs him in the chest.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Ow! My boobs!

Neil swiftly steps aside.

Alvin reaches the door to see Norman disappearing along the path as fast as he can. Alvin YELLS after him.

ALVIN

You're *dead*, freakshow! Do you hear me? D-E-D! DEAD! You're gonna be so dead you're gonna have to talk to *yourself* when you're dead!

41

INT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

41

Wearing her fanciest dress, Sandra bustles out of the kitchen to the front door.

PERRY BABCOCK

I really don't think we should be leaving him.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Perry, you promised me a meal that someone *else* microwaved.

41 CONTINUED:

41

PERRY BABCOCK

He's probably up there right now
fiddling with his ouija, or his
orbs, or whatever it is he's got
up there. This is not good.

42 INT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, NORMAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

42

Norman paces his room looking pale and anxious as he
hears the front door shut downstairs. Everywhere he turns
he finds himself face to face with some zombie related
novelty, from his lurid horror posters to his shelves of
ghoulish action figures, and it's not doing anything for
his nerves.

His cell phone BEEPS from his pocket, giving him a start.

He takes it out and reads a text; "COME TO THE WINDOW".

Norman cautiously walks over and peers around the edge of
the window frame.

A figure stands motionless in the yard below, sheets of
laundry billowing off the clothes line beside it. It
stares up at Norman through the blank eye holes of a
hockey mask.

Norman GASPS and jumps back.

With a frown, he re-emerges and opens the window.

The figure lifts the mask, and Neil beams out from
underneath, waving excitedly.

NEIL

You wanna play some hockey?

Norman SIGHS.

NORMAN

I've kinda got other things on my
mind right now.

Neil looks a little uncomfortable.

NEIL

Is it all that walking dead stuff
again?

NORMAN

Mr Prenderghast appeared to me in
the bathroom!

NEIL

Ew.

NORMAN

No, his *spirit*! He says the witch's curse is real and I have to go up to the old graveyard to stop it! Before the sun sets *tonight*!

Neil shifts uneasily as he processes.

NEIL

So you wanna come play a bit later?

NORMAN

Didn't you hear what I just said?!

NEIL

Yeah, but I thought my idea was less likely to get us eaten.

Norman knows he's on his own in this.

NORMAN

Just go home, Neil. I'm better off on my own anyway.

NEIL

But...

NORMAN

Go home!

Norman reaches up and closes the window. Neil's shoulders sag and he turns away.

Across the room, his Grandma materializes, and squints her eyes through the window as Neil awkwardly pulls himself over the garden fence.

GRANDMA BABCOCK

Jeez, who rattled your chains?

NORMAN

No one.

Norman isn't in the mood for any more discussion.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Dad says I'm not supposed to talk to you any more, Grandma.

GRANDMA BABCOCK

Jackass. If I were a poltergeist I'd throw something at his head. Y'know, by rights I'm *supposed* to be frolicking in paradise with your grandfather, but I'm not.

Norman looks up as she drifts closer to the bed.

NORMAN

So why *did* you stay?

GRANDMA BABCOCK

I was never one for frolicking.
I'll bet there's no cable or
canasta up there either. Besides,
I promised I'd always look out for
you.

She smiles, floating in a sitting position at the end of Norman's bed. She bobs gently, like a balloon. For a second, this seems to comfort Norman, but then another thought crosses his mind.

NORMAN

So it's your... *duty*?

GRANDMA BABCOCK

In a manner of speaking...

NORMAN

And you'd do it no matter what?

GRANDMA BABCOCK

Of course.

NORMAN

Even if it was something really
scary...

Grandma eyes him curiously.

GRANDMA BABCOCK

There's nothing wrong with being
scared Norman, so long as you
don't let it change who you are.

Norman thinks this over, then smiles up at her again. She goes to rub his head affectionately, but her ghost hand just passes right through his spiky hair.

She gives him a wink, and drifts away through the wall.

He is still scared, but now determined too. He steels himself and grabs his jacket from his bed.

The tiny room is crammed full of posters, pom-poms, plush toys and plastic trophies. Pretty much everything is pink. Courtney sits talking on her phone, cotton buds between her toes as her painted nails dry.

43 CONTINUED:

43

COURTNEY

So I said to her, "*Girl*, come back
and talk to me when *your* basket
toss gets twelve thousand hits on
YouTube!" Yeah, no, I said that.

(listens and nods)

Yeah, I'm stuck on lame patrol.
Tonight's gonna be a total yawn.

*

From downstairs, a door SLAMS. Courtney frowns, puts her
hand over the phone and shouts out.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

Norman?!

44 EXT. BABCOCK'S HOUSE, FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

44

Beneath a florid evening sky, the Babcock's drive is in
darkness. Pedalling furiously, Norman rides his bike out
of the shadows into the light of the street.

COURTNEY (O.S.)

You better not be sneaking out you
little weirdo!

45 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

45

On a street corner two teenage girls approach Alvin and
Pug, who have laid out a breakdancing mat and a beatbox
and are doing their best to impress. Alvin imagines he is
wowing the girls with his krumping, his ham-like limbs
flying around and Pug hollering support, but in truth
they watch in morbid fascination.

A faint CLATTERING sound down the road grows louder.

Norman suddenly THUNDERS past them on his bike, spinning
Alvin on the spot and knocking him onto his butt.

Show over, Alvin blunders to his feet, his eyes following
Norman's trajectory up the dark road, and GROWLS.

46 EXT. WOODED LANE, MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

46

Tall conifers rise up high on either side of the road,
now little more than a dirt track. Norman pedals up the
hill and swerves, skidding to a stop in the gravel.

He climbs off the bike, eyes fixed on a ramshackle house
partially hidden in the foliage, its porch door swinging
and CREAKING eerily in the breeze.

He cautiously advances past a crooked mailbox on which is
written "PRENDERGHAST", and steps onto the wooden porch.

47 INT. MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 47

The fading light of day spills across the floorboards and faded wallpaper of a long passage.

NORMAN

Hello? Mr Prenderghast?

Motes of dust float around Norman as he moves slowly toward a door, slightly ajar, muttering to himself.

He quietly makes his way past all manner of objects that epitomize the state of Mr Prenderghast's mind; a mannequin in a shopping cart, a pile of broken typewriters, a suspended bag of spoons, a closet full of identically soiled hobo suits, a Nordic track...

48 INT. PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, STUDY - CONTINUOUS 48

The study is filled with teetering piles of junk and old furniture draped over in dust sheets. A crucifix hangs over a metal cot with rumpled bedding. This is evidently where the old man lived his whole life. Starlight from a window picks out a macabre halo on a shape on the floor: Mr Prenderghast, dead where he fell, tightly clutching a leather-bound book.

CLOSE ON Norman's face as he swallows nervously and steps closer to the body. He gingerly takes hold of the book and gives a gentle tug. It holds fast in the rigor mortis grasp. He tugs harder, shaking the book repeatedly, the corpse shaking with it.

NORMAN

Let go!

Norman spends several strenuous moments dragging the body across the floorboards, Mr Prenderghast's head glancing off table legs and smacking repeatedly against the floorboards, as Norman tries to wrestle the book free.

With a final yank the book pulls loose and, GASPING, Norman grips the book to his chest and runs to the door.

49 EXT. WOODED LANE, MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE - SAME 49

Norman careens through the door, leaps off the porch and sprints along the wooded lane up the hill, watched by Alvin, concealed behind some bushes.

50 EXT. WOODED HILLTOP, OLD CHAPEL GRAVEYARD - LATER 50

Norman emerges from the woods, his long shadow preceding him as the sun begins its descent behind the tall trees.

He pauses and stares out across weathered tombstones poking out amidst tangles of thorns.

Clutching the book tight, Norman wrenches open the heavy gate, its rusted padlock crumbling apart.

Eventually the track runs up to a stone slab surrounded on either side by thick bramble. Norman brushes aside vines and reads an epitaph engraved into the stone;

"HERE LIES BURIED THE SEVEN VICTIMS OF THE BLITHE HOLLOW CURSE. MAY YOUR SOULS FIND EVENTUAL AND EVERLASTING SALVATION. 1712."

Norman pushes through the thick bushes into a secluded plot of land behind the slab with seven gravestones sticking out from the undergrowth.

NORMAN

This is it!

The sun continues its descent, casting an ever lengthening shadow of treetops across the graveyard.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Read from the book, stop the curse, go home and pretend this never happened.

Norman steels himself, opens the book and starts to read.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

"Once upon a time, in a far-off land there lived a king and queen in a magnificent castle..."

He pauses, confused by what he's reading.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

What? A fairy... tale...?

A hand reaches over his shoulder from nowhere, whipping the book out of his grasp. He spins around to find Alvin standing behind him.

ALVIN

What ya got there, Geekula?

Norman launches himself at the book, but Alvin holds him back at arm's length.

NORMAN

Give it back!

ALVIN

Can't wait to see everybody's faces when they hear about *this* one!

NORMAN

No, don't! Alvin!

ALVIN

Hey! Nobody makes me miss out on a possible date with a girl that almost had some interest in talking to me. Yeah? Thought so! You got nothin' to say!

NORMAN

Uh-oh.

ALVIN

Dang straight "uh-oh". That's what happens when Alvin gets around here. Uh-oh is that Alvin? Uh-oh Alvin's gonna make me run home to mommy.

As Norman twists and wrestles against the bully the turbulent clouds in the sky above them twist and coalesce into the vague semblance of a huge grinning face. The face of a witch.

There is an enormous RUMBLE and a flash of lightning silhouettes the boys.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

Uh-oh. What is *that*?

The wind has picked up, HOWLING through the gravestones.

Norman looks at the face leering out of the clouds.

NORMAN

It's her!

Another violent CRACK of thunder and flash of light, and the wind instantly cuts out. The boys stand stock still.

Reaching down like a colossal arm, a great plume of cloud spirals over the cemetery, enveloping the tumbledown chapel and seeping around the gravestones. Fingers of murky fog slither across the ground, occasionally pausing and hanging in the air as though sniffing it. There is something eerily playful in the movement of the tendrils.

The boys are jolted as an awful high pitched SCREAM blows through the graveyard like a shockwave, pulsing through the fog like a heartbeat.

Norman and Alvin cover their ears and cower as the fog suddenly rears up like a claw and fiercely gouges into the earth in front of the boys.

Silence, then the ground begins to RUMBLE beneath their feet and ripples beneath the tombstones. Stone slabs GRIND and shift. One CRACKS right through the center.

ALVIN
What's that sound?

Norman watches, horrified, as the wet earth atop one of the graves splits *and a skeletal hand bursts through!*

Norman watches as more graves bulge and break open and mud-encrusted shapes begin to emerge through the earth. The air is filled with anguished MOANING, the glowing fog dancing and whirling about the hatching figures.

The two boys are rooted to the spot, mouths hanging open.

CLOSE ON one of the figures crawling out of the ground into a patch of moonlight. Ragged and rotten it wears the mud-encrusted clothes of a colonial Puritan. It stares down at its hands, almost in disbelief, then lifts its face up to the sky and lets out a HOWL.

Thunder that sounds like deep and abysmal LAUGHTER echoes through the turbulent clouds.

The boys find themselves backed up against another headstone, this one engraved with the name "JUDGE HOPKINS". They leap aside as the ground swells beneath their feet, and the DEAD JUDGE punches through the dirt, bolt upright. His face wears a rictus grin and he looms over the boys like the Grim Reaper in a powdered wig.

He tilts his head curiously when he sees the book in Alvin's hand, and HISSES through yellowed teeth.

Norman makes a last ditch attempt at reading the book as the Dead Judge approaches, the other zombies gathering behind him.

NORMAN
Once upon a time in a far-off...
Once upon a... In a...

ALVIN
Make it stop right now, please!

NORMAN
It's not working!

The Dead Judge gives a hideous GROWL, but Norman frowns, confused, because he can hear words.

DEAD JUDGE
STOP!... YOU... MUST... STOP!

50 CONTINUED: (4)

50

ALVIN

Norman? What are you doing? I think I peed my pants!

Survival instincts finally kick in and Alvin makes a run for it, scrambling through the graves toward the gate.

NORMAN

Wait!

Norman follows, leapfrogging over headstones.

52 INT. NEIL'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

52

Neil sits on the floor in front of a huge TV, remote control in hand, as the doorbell RINGS loudly from the hall.

MITCH (O.S.)

Neil! Will you get the door?

NEIL

I'm *busy*!

MITCH (O.S.)

Are you freeze-framing Mom's aerobics DVD again?

ANGLE ON TV, with a still image of a Lycra-clad instructor bending over. Neil quickly turns it off.

NEIL

No!

The doorbell RINGS again.

MITCH (O.S.)

Neil! Would it kill you to get off your butt and answer the door?

53 I/E. NEIL'S DRIVEWAY, FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

53

COURTNEY

I'm gonna *kill* them.

She impatiently leans down to push open the mail slot.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

I know you're in there! Slumber party's over, dorks!

The door opens and she finds herself face to navel with Mitch, out of the shower with a towel around his waist.

MITCH

Um, can I help you?

COURTNEY

(under her breath)

Hell yeah.

Courtney catches herself and quickly affects a LAUGH.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

Sorry to bug you so late, but
does, erm...

(checks page in hand)

...Neil live here?

MITCH

Yeah, he's my brother.

COURTNEY

Oh wow! That's great! Your brother
and my brother are like best
friends! I'm Courtney.

She tries to regain her composure as Mitch turns away.

MITCH

Hey Neil! You come here a minute?
There's a *girl* asking for you.

Neil's face emerges dubiously from a room down the hall.

Courtney flashes her widest fake grin and puts on a high
pitched sing-song voice.

COURTNEY

Hey there! How ya doin'... little
guy...

NEIL

Neil?

COURTNEY

Yeah, Neil. Do you know where
Norman is? He kinda disappeared.

NEIL

Oh no...

(catches himself)

...idea! I have no idea where he
is. Sorry. Bye!

Neil goes to turn around but his brother stops him short.

MITCH

Whoa, Neil! Better start talking,
buddy.

NEIL

I didn't really think he was serious about going up to the old graveyard on his own!

COURTNEY

So Norman!

MITCH

Oh, man. That place is bad news! Total slasher movie vibe! Why'd he go up there?

NEIL

I don't know. Maybe we should go look for him.

MITCH

I told you he was trouble.
(to Courtney)
Sorry. But I did.

COURTNEY

No, it's fine. He sucks. But I really gotta make sure he doesn't die or anything tonight. Will you help me? Please?

Mitch gets an eyeful of her best damsel in distress act, then SIGHS.

MITCH

Okay... I guess I should go get some clothes on.

Courtney gives a disappointed WHINE as he heads off down the hall, shoving Neil's head as he goes.

NEIL

Uh, is Norman in trouble?

The front door is kicked open and Norman and a near hysterical Alvin rush inside, slamming and locking the door behind them.

ALVIN

Are they gonna try to eat our brains?!

NORMAN

I think you'll be safe.

ALVIN

Oh, thank God!

54 CONTINUED:

54

He manages to think this through, and frowns.

Alvin watches curiously as Norman turns his attention to the book, frowning as he runs his hand over the embossed leather cover.

NORMAN

I don't get it! Why didn't it work?

He opens the book and leafs through page after page of ornate calligraphy and woodcut illustrations.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

"The Story of Sleeping Beauty".
This doesn't make any sense!

His mind racing, Norman heads off along the hallway.

ALVIN

Wait! Where are you going?

56 INT. MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, STUDY - CONTINUOUS

56

The room remains as before, with Mr Prenderghast's corpse lying on the floor. Norman enters with purpose and approaches it, leaving Alvin horrified in the doorway.

Norman crouches low over the body, holding the book out in front of Mr Prenderghast's blank eyes.

NORMAN

Mr Prenderghast, I don't understand! Tell me what to do!

ALVIN

Dude, what are you *doing*?

NORMAN

(points to corpse)
He told me to read from the book to stop the curse! I thought it was a spell or something, but...

Norman narrows his eyes as he sees Mr Prenderghast's desk, still strewn with pictures and newspaper clippings.

He hurries over and begins rummaging through the mess, scattering papers across the floor.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Come on! There has to be *something*...

ALVIN

I really need to get home! I've got like a seriously early curfew.

(MORE)

ALVIN (CONT'D)

My mom gets really upset when I'm not...

Something CLUNKS loudly from down the hall, sending Alvin into a desperate babbling panic.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

We gotta defend ourselves! We gotta shoot them in the head with like silver stakes or something! I'm way too awesome to get eaten! Norman, are you listening to me? You really have to do something!

Norman uncovers a couple of faded photographs of the old graveyard. One is of the seven tombstones, the other is of the stone marker, which reads "HERE LIES BURIED THE SEVEN VICTIMS OF THE WITCH'S CURSE..."

Beside the photos is a torn page from an old book. An engraving illustrates the seven members of the witch's trial, solemnly seated at a bench within the courthouse.

NORMAN

Seven victims...

Frowning, Norman glances up and sees a page from an old book tacked to the wall. It is an illustration of a hideous old crone, cackling evilly.

Another THUMP from down the hall.

Norman looks again from the photographs in his hand to the image of the old witch. There's something he's not seeing... He looks at the pictures in front of him. Graves. Jurors. Witch.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Seven graves.
(eyes widen)
The witch's grave! It wasn't there!

He turns to Alvin.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

I was reading the book in the wrong place!

Down the hallway, another loud THUMP.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Hide!

57 INT. MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 57

CLOSE ON the door knob RATTLING furiously, then a CRACK as a mottled hand punches it right through the wood.

A figure limps slowly into the hallway, dragging one crippled foot behind the other. It stops halfway along and tilts its head, as if listening, and emits a dire MOAN. More shapes appear behind it in the doorway and fan out along the hallway.

58 INT. MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, STUDY - CONTINUOUS 58

The boys tremble in their hiding places trying not to make a sound; Alvin crouched behind a stack of books and Norman lying underneath the bed. The footsteps grow louder as the zombies shuffle into the room.

NORMAN'S POV - rotten legs step up to Mr Prenderghast's body, lying where he fell on the floorboards. Two withered feet suddenly step right up to the bed.

Something drops onto the floor inches in front of Norman's face with an unpleasant SLAP. Norman's eyes bug out as he realizes it is a zombie's dislodged ear. A weltered arm reaches down to grope around for the body part, until Norman pushes the ear, as carefully as he can manage, back into the zombie's fingers. The hand retreats back out from under the bed.

There is a loud SCREAM as Alvin, unable to contain himself any longer, jumps out from his hiding place and makes for the door. The corpses look up as he disappears down the hall, then stagger after him.

Norman takes this chance to follow, but the Dead Judge blocks his exit. They both stand quite still, staring into each others' eyes. The corpse tilts its head, almost quizzically, and its eyes widen as it notices the book under his arm.

Norman steps sideways to run past it, but the corpse does too. Both it and Norman step one way, then the other, and back again. Norman feigns one direction and quickly bolts in the other, past the corpse and out the door.

59 INT. MR PRENDERGHAST'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 59

Alvin reaches the front door and throws it open. Directly in front of him is another zombie on the doorstep, opening a mouth full of jagged teeth.

Alvin SCREAMS like a little girl, smacks it ineffectually with his spatula, and the door is abruptly SLAMMED in the zombie's face, a surprised and muffled GROAN coming from the other side.

59

CONTINUED:

59

Alvin, still screaming, looks down to see Norman beside him, leaning against the door.

The Dead Judge leads the advance of zombies down the hall toward them. Norman hears his MOAN.

Norman swings the door back open, the zombie on the other side moving with it, teeth firmly embedded in the wood. As it attempts to pry itself free, Norman grabs Alvin by the arm and they both dart onto the porch behind its back, headed for the road.

NORMAN

Come on!

60

INT. MITCH'S VAN - SAME

60

Mitch drives along dark roads. Neil sits behind him looking bemused while Courtney, in the front passenger seat, extols her life history.

COURTNEY

And she said I could totally consider a career in formation swimming. But I was like, "I wanna do something that helps people less fortunate than me", thank you very much, y'know, like the poor or people who are like dying or ugly or something, 'cuz I really think that ecology and world peace are like totally important today. Do you use free weights? Your deltoids are *huge*.

MITCH

I've never used deltoids in my life, I swear. You can test me.

Neil lies back in his seat, eyes rolling.

NEIL

Kill me now.

COURTNEY

Thank you for doing this Mitch. He means an awful lot to me. I love him like he was a brother.

NEIL

He *is* your brother.

Courtney counters the backseat barbs by smiling demurely, but Mitch's attention has been drawn by something else.

MITCH

Whoa! Look at that sky!

60 CONTINUED:

60

The wooded hill rises steeply a few miles in front of them, and at its top is the old chapel. Pressing down upon it, huge seething thunderclouds shift into otherworldly shapes. Mitch and Courtney are mesmerized.

Neil suddenly points past Mitch's face.

NEIL

Look out!

Mitch slams on the breaks, twisting the wheel.

MITCH

Oh no!

61 I/E. MITCH'S VAN ON WOODED ROAD - CONTINUOUS

61

Running down the middle of the road, blinded by the glare of the van's headlights, are Alvin and Norman. The van swerves around them and grazes the trees, the side mirror flying off as it hits a branch.

Mitch fights to control the van as Courtney SCREAMS.

NEIL

That was Norman!

Shaken, Mitch realizes another figure is looming out of the darkness in front of them. He slams on the brakes again, but too late. The tall dirty-looking figure stands stock still as the van plows straight into him.

Dust flies up from the wheels of the van as it skids to an eventual stop in the center of the road.

62 INT. MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS

62

Mitch turns to everyone as he pulls off his seat belt.

MITCH

Is everyone okay?

Courtney and Neil answer in unison, both of them upside down in their seats with their legs sticking up in the air.

COURTNEY

No!

NEIL

No!

Mitch, trying to stay calm, looks in his rear-view mirror and sees a prone shape on the ground some yards back.

63

EXT. WOODED ROAD - CONTINUOUS

63

Mitch climbs out of the van and sees the figure lying still on the moonlit road. He nervously jogs over to it.

As he gets closer, Mitch can see the man more clearly. He is wrapped in filthy tattered clothing of a bygone era and is covered in dirt. Flies BUZZ around him.

MITCH

Er... hello, sir?

He hunkers down and is immediately hit by the stench. A mud-encrusted face stares up at him.

ANGLE ON the van, as Courtney leans her head out.

COURTNEY

Is he dead or what?

MITCH

I... I don't know! He's not moving!

The figure's head lets out a faint GASP.

MITCH (CONT'D)

He's still breathing!

Mitch reaches out to gently lift the figure's head but as he does, there is a CRUNCH and it comes off in his hands.

COURTNEY

So he's okay?

MITCH

Uh... not exactly.

COURTNEY

What? What did you just say?

Mitch looks from the head back to the van, then at the head again. He licks his lips nervously as he thinks.

MITCH

Does anyone know CPR?

Further down the road, Norman runs back toward the van, Alvin still in tow. He sees Mitch ahead of him, getting dizzily to his feet, still holding the head.

NORMAN

Run!

The head in Mitch's hands suddenly GASPS again, opening its mouth. Mitch SHRIEKS as the headless figure on the road sits up and reaches out its arms. Mitch drop kicks it like a football. It flies, WAILING, into the bushes.

63 CONTINUED:

63

As if struck by the same blow, the rest of the corpse staggers backwards.

Alvin and Norman run past him toward the van, bustling past Courtney and clambering inside.

More corpses are emerging from the trees on either side of the road. She SCREAMS and leaps back into the van, as Mitch leaps into the driver's seat beside her.

64 INT. MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS

64

MITCH

Did you see that?

COURTNEY

That was *insane!*

MITCH

I know, right? I kicked that like a hundred yards!

COURTNEY

Norman, what just happened?!

ALVIN

Zombies! I swear, okay? We saw them burst out of their graves!
For real!

He realizes Mitch and Courtney are staring at him, and tries to disguise his raw panic with nonchalance.

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

(to Courtney)

Just so you know, I totally saved his life, and I could *totally* save yours.

COURTNEY (O.S.)

Sorry, *who* are you?

ALVIN (O.S.)

I'm Alvin. I'm in his class.

Norman, not so easily distracted from the problem at hand as the others, glances uneasily through the window.

NORMAN'S POV - The zombies lurch arthritically toward the van, GROANING and GURGLING.

NORMAN

Uh, guys... maybe we should actually drive away now.

MITCH

Oh, right.

64 CONTINUED: 64

Mitch starts the engine with a YELL, just as the nearest zombie leers in through the window.

65 EXT. WOODED ROAD - CONTINUOUS 65

CLOSE ON the front wheel, spinning and SQUEALING. The van spits out a cloud of exhaust fumes as it accelerates away.

A beat as the smoke clears. The soot-covered zombies SPLUTTER as they cough up what's left of their lungs.

They turn from one to the other, awaiting direction from their leader. But the Dead Judge is nowhere to be seen.

A zombie points down the winding road where the woods eventually thin out into leafy suburban drives. The ragged shape of the Judge is clinging to the back of the van, thrashing around and WAILING as it picks up speed.

The zombies quietly watch until the van moves out of sight behind the trees, then turn their attention to the lights of the town center below them. They weigh up their options and, MOANING, shuffle toward civilization.

69 EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT 69

Further down the hill, Sheriff Hooper is taking a break from ticketing borderline traffic violations by drinking a giant malt shake in a plastic cup. She leans against her parked motorcycle, squinting up at the unnatural clouds.

SHERIFF HOOPER

Pesky kids with their cell phones
burning up the *oh-zone*, that's
what this is!

She finishes her shake and throws the non-recyclable cup into the bushes.

Mitch's van shoots past at high speed in a cloud of dust.

SHERIFF HOOPER (CONT'D)

What the..?

Hooper watches the van tear away, the dark shape of the Dead Judge visibly clinging to the back doors, his voluminous cape flapping out behind him like a windsock.

70 EXT. WOODED ROAD, MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS 70

Unseen by the kids, the Dead Judge claws his way up the rear doors of the van by his ragged fingernails.

71 INT. MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS

71

Courtney lets out an infuriated GROWL.

COURTNEY
I just *knew* something like this
was going to happen tonight!

MITCH
You did? Wow, 'cos that zombie bit
really *threw* me.

Courtney turns in her seat and glares at her brother.

COURTNEY
Why d'you have to go and get
everyone involved in all your
weird stuff?!

NORMAN
Well, you weren't supposed to
follow me, were you?

NEIL
Sorry. My fault. When I'm nervous
I get mouth diarrhoea.

ALVIN
Ha ha! Diarrhoea!

COURTNEY
Oh my gosh, I think I'm having an
aneurism! This is so *typical* of
you!

NORMAN
You don't understand! I'm the only
one who can stop this, Courtney!

COURTNEY
Oh, I understand! I understand
that this is all getting
completely out of...

The van's sunroof is suddenly ripped open, and the Dead Judge's arm reaches down into the vehicle, clawing inches above Courtney's head.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)
...*HAND!*

The Dead Judge leans further into the van, *MOANING* horribly. He seems to have his sights set on Norman, and reaches one arm down toward Norman and the book peeking out of his shoulder bag.

Norman shrinks back as the zombie *GROANS* horribly.

Alvin disappears behind the back seat with a WHIMPER, but Neil valiantly leaps into the fray, wrestling the clawing fingers away from his friend.

NEIL

Whaddawedo? Whaddawedo? Mitch?!

MITCH

I don't know! I don't know!

NEIL

You're the oldest!

MITCH

Not *mentally*!

Mitch hears a SIREN wail out behind him, and looks in his mirror to see the flashing light of Hooper's bike.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Oh great. The cops.

Hooper pulls level with the passenger seat window, waving angrily.

SHERIFF HOOPER

Pull over the vehicle!

The Dead Judge leans further into the van, Neil hanging off him like a pendulum.

COURTNEY

Norman! How do we stop them?!

Norman looks again at the book in his hands.

NORMAN

I'm supposed to read from the book at the witch's grave!

NEIL

We've got to go back to the *graveyard*?

NORMAN

She wasn't buried with the others. I don't know where else to look...

COURTNEY

Well you better think of something quick!

Norman wracks his brain.

NEIL

I have an idea!

75 INT. SALMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

75

Salma sits at her computer in an immaculately tidy bedroom. Even her collection of dolls are flawlessly groomed and sit on a shelf looking like they're waiting to be called in for an interview.

Salma talks into her cell phone with an expression of withering disdain.

SALMA

So Norman, let me get this straight; you guys all go on this big supernatural adventure and you're calling me in the middle of the night because you need someone to help you do your homework?

INTERCUT KIDS IN THE VAN/SALMA

Norman talks into his cell phone, occasionally ducking as Neil's flailing limbs are shaken from side to side by the GROWLING upside down zombie hanging above their heads.

NORMAN

Uh... yeah.

76 EXT. WOODED ROAD - CONTINUOUS

76

Hooper steers her bike closer and swings her backside into the side of the van in an attempt to ram it off the road.

The van lurches, flipping the Judge up and over the front of the vehicle, planting his face with a SQUELCH against the windscreen.

77 INT. MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS

77

Neil drops back down onto his seat. The Dead Judge's arm, torn off at the shoulder, is still clutched in his hands. He stares down at it, wide-eyed, as it wriggles like an animal in his grasp.

The Dead Judge slides slowly down the windscreen of the van with a dull SQUEAK.

COURTNEY

Mitch, do something!

Mitch flicks on the windscreen wipers, which wipe the zombie's rotten flesh from side to side across the glass.

Mitch and Courtney's eyes follow the Judge's movements from side to side.

Behind them, Neil SQUEALS as the dismembered arm crawls all over him, fingers scuttling like a spider's legs.

The arm frees itself from Neil and turns on Norman, leaping at him like a viper.

Norman holds the book up as a shield, and manages to swat the zombie arm away, flipping it across the front seat, where it lands on the back of Mitch's neck.

Mitch SCREAMS as the rotten hand clamps down onto the top of his head, and madly tries to shake it off. It hangs onto him grimly, bony fingers hooked around his nostrils.

With Mitch no longer steering, the van swerves crazily across the road, shaking the Dead Judge off the windscreen. He disappears under the front of the vehicle, his one remaining arm clinging onto the underside.

INTERCUT KIDS IN THE VAN/SALMA

Norman shouts pleadingly into the phone as he and Neil are flung violently from side to side across the back seat.

NORMAN

Salma! We need to find out where the witch is buried! I went to the old graveyard but her grave wasn't there!

SALMA

Well, duh. People found guilty of witchcraft weren't considered people anymore. Norman, your witch was buried someplace else... in an *unmarked grave!*

(reproachfully)

If you cared to pay attention some of the time, you would know that we covered this in fifth grade history class.

NORMAN

Salma! Please! Hurry! *Y'know, I would Google this myself if there wasn't a 300 year old dead guy trying to rip my face off!*

With a SIGH, Salma types at her computer.

SALMA

Okay. It says here she was tried in the old Town Hall on Main Street. There may be a record of her execution and burial in their archives.

- 77 CONTINUED: (2) 77
- Norman listens intently then shouts over to Mitch, still struggling with the zombie hand gripping his face.
- NORMAN
Quick! She said go to the Town Hall!
- 79 EXT. WOODED ROAD - CONTINUOUS 79
- Mitch hangs a sharp right and accelerates off the road and into thick undergrowth, sending up showers of twigs and thorns.
- Close on his heels, Hooper swerves her bike around in pursuit.
- 80 EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT 80
- The six zombies inexorably continue their march, breaking cover from outlying woodland into the suburban streets of the town proper.
- At the bottom of a long driveway, spotlighted by a street lamp, Mrs Henscher is taking out the trash in her bathrobe.
- She looks up from her garbage as the zombies approach. Her face is caked in a terrifying green avocado face mask. Barely a few feet in front of her, a similarly green face stares back, only this one has been dead for three hundred years.
- Henscher SCREAMS, bolting down the street like a runaway locomotive.
- 81 EXT. WOODS, MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS 81
- The van ploughs through bracken and bushes at breakneck speed.
- A little way behind, Hooper careens precariously in the van's wake.
- 82 INT. MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS 82
- Mitch finally manages to pry the Dead Judge's arm off his head. He throws it, thrashing around violently, over his shoulder.
- Alvin lifts his face tentatively over the edge of the back seat to see what's going on. The zombie arm plants him in the eye, sending both sprawling against the floor. Alvin SQUEALS as the arm snakes around his neck into a bizarre approximation of a wrestling hold.

83 EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS 83

Mitch swerves his van down the hill toward the more affluent suburbs of the town. Hooper's police bike bounces along behind them, red light flashing and SIREN wailing.

84 INT. STATION WAGON, NEARBY ROAD - CONTINUOUS 84

Perry and Sandra Babcock are driving home from their evening out. Neither look especially happy.

SANDRA BABCOCK
I really think it might help if
you tried to see things from his
point of view.

PERRY BABCOCK
I don't want to.

85 INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS 85

The Babcocks' discussion continues as they drive.

SANDRA BABCOCK
Perry, not believing in the
Afterlife is like not believing in
Astrology.

PERRY BABCOCK
I have no idea what you're talking
about. Seriously, where did you
learn that?

SANDRA BABCOCK
Calm down.

Perry rolls his eyes and GROANS.

86 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS 86

Mitch's van explodes out of the thinning woods and back on to the winding hill road. Hooper careens through the trees behind it, but fails to make the turn and smashes through a fence across the other side of the road into a suburban back yard, splinters of fence showering down in her wake.

Scattering lawn ornaments, plastic garden toys and deck furniture, Hooper rides directly up a kids' slide, shooting high up into the air like a rocket.

87 EXT. SUBURBAN INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS 87

Preceded by an ear-splittingly guttural WAIL, Mrs Henscher runs through the streets, waving her arms about hysterically.

Moments later, the Babcocks' station wagon pulls around the corner.

88 EXT. SUBURBAN INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS 88

Mitch's van SCREECHES through the intersection, swerving in front of the Babcock's station wagon, which veers wildly as Perry brakes hard.

He leaps out of the car as the van drives away.

PERRY BABCOCK
Delinquent drivers! Where are the
police when you need them?

Hooper's bike hurtles through the air and bounces off the hood of the station wagon with a CRUNCH. Before Perry can react he is buried under the mass of Sheriff Hooper, dropping like a meteorite onto his head.

89 INT. MITCH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS 89

The kids, hanging on for dear life, hear a loud CRUNCH from the back of the van.

They all turn to see the van's rear doors ripped open. Silhouetted in the space is the one-armed Dead Judge, cape muddied and torn from his crawling back out from the vehicle's undercarriage.

The zombie lunges toward the startled kids, and MOANS.

Mitch turns his attention back to the road ahead, but too late, and he YELLS as green-faced Mrs Henscher runs SQUEALING into the van's headlights.

Mitch throws all his weight onto the wheel, tires SCREAMING as the van misses Henscher by inches. The violence of the turn flings the Dead Judge backwards like a slingshot, disappearing out of the doors and shattering into a dozen pieces as he SMASHES into the hard road.

90 EXT. SUBURBAN BACK YARDS - CONTINUOUS 90

Having completely lost control, Mitch's van ploughs through cookie-cutter back yards.

90 CONTINUED:

90

It bounces down the hill, flipping over and over, the kids inside tossed around like rag dolls.

Somewhat the worse for wear, it eventually comes to a stop in a parking lot, neatly crashing into an empty space.

91 EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

91

The kids clamber out of the far side of the van.

MITCH

Oh my gosh! I'm gonna be sick!

COURTNEY

Oh, I broke a nail!

As Alvin climbs out, he gingerly holds up the Judge's arm, as if it were a dead animal, and dangles it limply in front of his face.

ALVIN

Yeah! Alvin the zombie slayer! I got you...

The hand suddenly bends back on itself, slaps him on the face, and as he SQUEALS it drops to the ground and skitters away into the shadows.

Mitch sizes up what's left of his van, and bids a tearful farewell.

MITCH

(whispers)

Baby, I'm so sorry. You'll be alright. We're gonna get through this together.

Courtney pouts moodily when she realizes the tender words aren't for her.

Norman looks up at the sky. A thick bank of cloud looms over the town, and in its center is the unmistakable otherworldly face, ebbing in and out of visibility, and grinning horribly.

NORMAN

Uh oh. C'mon!

NEIL

Oh yeah!

Neil HUMS his very own action movie score as he runs to follow Norman out of the parking lot.

91 CONTINUED:

91

COURTNEY

Perfect. Now the geeks are in charge.

The kids make toward the parking lot exit.

93 EXT. MAIN STREET ALLEYWAY - SOME TIME LATER

93

The town center retains even less charm when the sun goes down, and its remaining denizens are now drunk, high or looking for trouble. Provided one requires alcohol, junk food or pharmaceuticals, it's the place to be.

A ruddy-faced drunk, SLOB GUY, inserts a few coins in a vending machine at the end of an alley, and waits as the metal coil inside curls a candy bar toward the front of the machine. The man notices the approaching figures further down the back street and frowns.

He turns back to the machine, waiting. The zombies draw closer, GROANING, and the man fidgets uncomfortably.

The man begins WHIMPERING. The candy bar slowly shifts forward. The zombies are close enough to touch.

The man YELLS and runs away, leaving the candy bar to drop to the machine's trough with a CLANG.

A beat then, still SCREAMING, the man runs back to the machine, grabs his candy, then runs away again.

The Undead emerge onto Main Street, and slow down as they take in their surroundings.

VARIOUS ANGLES ON the garish town center nightlife intercut with CLOSE-UPS of the wide-eyed zombies.

-Two teenage girls in mini-skirts walk along the curb. A pickup truck crawls by, driven by red necks who wolf-whistle and gesture rudely. The girls GIGGLE.

-In the nearby "GOBBLER'S" parking lot, a huge woman sits in her vehicle cramming a burger into her mouth. As she bites down ketchup spatters across the inside of the windshield like arterial spray.

-A corpse stands agog before a billboard. The poster is for a line of "Lady Luck" lingerie and features a buxom woman in her underwear draped over a roulette wheel. The tagline is "FANCY YOUR CHANCES?" The corpse's one eye pops out of its socket and dangles by its optic nerve.

-Outside the Bar Gento, LOUD MUSIC and raucous revelry blare out into the street.

-A group of loitering teens cluster in a group, some sitting upon a stolen shopping cart, others kicking a tin can from one to the other. One daubs misspelled naughty words on the wall beside them. Another is attempting to use his bare hands to rip open a parking meter.

-Another corpse stands in the light of a store window, a bank of TVs showing all kinds of programs. Racing car explosions; scantily-clad singers gyrating in music videos; talking animals and Viagra commercials.

QUICK CUTS OF ZOMBIE CLOSE-UPS as they all raise rotten fingers to their mouths and SCREAM.

Slob Guy suddenly bursts out of the door of the Bar Gento, dragging a group of dubious drinkers.

SLOB GUY

See! I told you! *Zombies!* It's the witch's curse!

Everyone in the street freezes in place, wide-eyed. Someone GASPS.

SWEET GIRL

Mama?

RAPPER GUY

What?

A couple of the zombies exchange glances, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

GUCCI LADY

What should we do?

Barely skipping a beat, the townsfolk shift seamlessly from shock and awe to bullish aggression.

Crystal pulls a pump-action shotgun from somewhere about her person and scowls menacingly.

CRYSTAL

Kill them in the head!

Within seconds, the seedy-looking townsfolk have armed themselves with pool cues, mops, toilet plungers and any other household implements that can be waved threateningly, and the mob advances on the group of quivering zombies.

The disembodied Judge's arm skitters along a secluded street, eventually coming upon the rest of the Dead Judge, sitting in the gutter trying to arrange and re-attach his body parts in the right places.

94 CONTINUED:

94

Having SNAPPED his head back onto his neck, the Judge scoops up his remaining arm and gets unsteadily to his feet.

103 EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

103

NORMAN

Hurry! This way!

Norman leads the way, but stops dead as they run headlong into a scene of zombie invasion mayhem.

Townfolk fill the streets, SHOUTING and acting generally mob-like. One or two of them have even got hold of burning torches from somewhere. It's apocalyptic chaos.

The fat woman from the Drive-Thru runs past SCREAMING, her face and T-shirt covered in blood-red ketchup.

COURTNEY

Oh, this is awful! The zombies are, like, eating everyone!

Norman points beyond the bedlam to the dark shape of the Old Town Hall in the plaza.

NORMAN

C'mon!

They skirt around the edge of Main Street, avoiding flying bottles and limbs as best they can.

Following the noise, the Judge staggers along some way behind. He surveys the scene as he emerges, his featureless face doing a nevertheless effective job of expressing horrified shock.

After a moment, he comes to his senses, and spies the kids in the distance. A look of resolve crosses his face, turning quickly to surprise as a SHOT rings out nearby.

The Judge looks down to a large hole blown through his midriff. Framed within it is Crystal, several feet away, rifle smoking. He looks up again, weighs up his chances, then lets out a ROAR of retreat to his beleaguered companions before running off into the shadows.

Those zombies who haven't already tried to run for cover manage to extricate themselves from the frenzy and follow the Judge's CRY, some of them breaking into a sprint.

106 EXT. TOWN HALL PLAZA - NIGHT

106

Formerly the district courthouse, the Town Hall has now been relegated to storing the local archives.

It is an old timber building, surrounded by graceless modern office blocks around the cobbled square.

The kids race across the plaza, pausing to catch their breath at the ugly witch statue in front of the Town Hall. They GASP as they slow their pace.

NORMAN

Is everyone alright? Nobody got bitten?

Neil flops down heavily against the statue, panting and holding his mouth.

NEIL

(muffled)

I bid dy tongue! Dud dat count?

Norman moves toward the steps leading up to the Town Hall's doors, the rest of the gang falling into line behind him.

Another flash of lightning paints the kids' shadows across the width of the square. Norman nervously watches the clouds above them.

NORMAN

Does anyone know how to pick a lock?

Everyone immediately looks at Alvin.

ALVIN

Sure. Picking locks is my thing.

Alvin walks over to a notice board beside the door, upon which is a poster for a "CRIME PREVENTION SEMINAR". He yanks it out of the ground, hefts it through the window, then reaches through to unfasten the door latch.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

Boom.

The kids hurry through the door.

The lobby is dark, but moonlight glistens off polished wood through a lofty circular window.

Norman shouts out from the other side of the lobby, where he stands beside a door labelled "HALL OF RECORDS"..

NORMAN

This is it!

107 CONTINUED:

107

NEIL

This is?

NORMAN

Now we can find out where the
witch was buried!

Norman pushes his shoulder against the door and steps inside.

108 INT. TOWN HALL ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

108

The door swings open and reveals a labyrinth of shelves and glass cabinets stretching out into the shadows in front of him. Row after row of dusty cardboard file boxes and ledgers stacked one on top of another.

Norman stops in his tracks, color draining from his face.

NORMAN

Uh-oh.

Courtney follows, faking enthusiasm.

COURTNEY

Great! I'm super psyched! This is
turning into the most fun night
ever!

The overhead light clicks on as Alvin steps into the room behind her and GROANS.

ALVIN

Man. Zombies take over the world
and we lock ourselves in a
library. Are you kidding me?
There's an adult video store just
across the street!

Neil is more optimistic, and brightly makes his way over to a shelf, and pulls down a slim ledger.

NEIL

This'll be a piece of cake, you'll
see.

He pauses, and frowns, squinting up his eyes as he reads aloud, very slowly.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Page... One... Okay, page one.

Mitch hefts a particularly heavy box file off a shelf. He seems to read the filing notes written across its front, then ignores them and begins curling it like a dumbbell.

108 CONTINUED:

108

MITCH

I really hate these places.

Norman sizes up the masses of documents all around them, face panicked. It would take days to go through them all.

NORMAN

Come on! No, that's not it. Time is running out!

110 EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

110

Sheriff Hooper looks around and sees an awful lot of armed people beginning to bay for blood, and she sees trouble on her hands.

SLOB GUY

Ain't room for no more zombies in this town!

Standing behind him, Teddy agrees with a slack-jawed MOAN.

TEDDY

Yeah.

104 INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

104

Perry drives into town in silence, his nose bloodied and stuffed with tissues. Sandra sits beside him and Sheriff Hooper is in the back seat, scouring the streets.

SHERIFF HOOPER

Would've been a quiet night too, if it hadn't been for those meddling kids. Huh!

As Perry and Sandra exchange uneasy glances, Hooper suddenly points through the windshield to the riot in progress on Main Street.

SHERIFF HOOPER (CONT'D)

Sweet baby jinkies!

105 EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

105

Perry brakes hard just a few feet in front of the advancing mob, moving menacingly en masse in pursuit of the fleeing Undead. Hooper bustles out of the car, making a beeline for Deputy Dwayne.

Crystal turns and fires into the street, taking out a lightbulb over a store sign. A dog somewhere in the shadows YELPS and runs away.

105 CONTINUED:

105

Sheriff Hooper is outraged, and snatches the gun out of Crystal's hand.

SHERIFF HOOPER

What do you think you're doing,
firing at civilians? That is for
the police to do!

DEPUTY DWAYNE

It's okay Sheriff, we've only been
shooting at the dead ones! It's
the living dead, come to take us
all to Hell! We gotta stop them
before they get away!

109 EXT. TOWN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

109

In the alley down the side of the old Town Hall, the zombies tiptoe through the shadows. They look slightly the worse for wear; some have lost limbs, others have large holes in them. One has a toilet plunger stuck on her head.

The Dead Judge looks up at the sky. The turgid supernatural storm RUMBLES closer, pressing down upon the nearby rooftops.

The Judge motions to the other zombies to hurry, and grabs hold of the Town Hall's side door. He rips it open, and furtively motions the zombies to file inside.

110 EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

110

SHERIFF HOOPER

Move along now people, there isn't
anything to see here!

The townsfolk around her refuse to be allayed by this.

Perry and Sandra have emerged dubiously out of their car and watch from the periphery, utterly bewildered.

Mrs Henscher, newly arrived and wearing her avocado face mask like war paint, shakes her shotgun and points down the street.

MRS HENSCHER

I saw them! I saw them! The
zombies are in the *Town Hall*!

The information sweeps across the crowd like wildfire.

Several faces turn to Henscher, who is pleased to have an engaged audience and hams it up shamelessly, coming on like Braveheart in curlers.

MRS HENSCHER (CONT'D)
 Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs
 of war!

The faces around her don't react; waiting patiently for a clearer translation.

MRS HENSCHER (CONT'D)
Let's rip 'em apart!

Mrs Henscher points the crowd toward the Town Hall.

Despite Hooper's protests, the townsfolk are on lynch mob auto pilot and surge like a force of nature along the Main Street toward the Town Hall plaza.

Dozens of books and cardboard boxes lie scattered across the floor. The glass cabinets around the room have been ransacked as the kids drag documents off shelves and rummage through binders.

Norman sits on the floor flipping through sheet after sheet of records. Courtney wades through documents toward him, holding up a fist full of old rolled-up papers.

COURTNEY
 We're not going to find it in here, Norman! This is useless!

ALVIN
 Yeah, I know, and it's also *really* boring.

MITCH
 I thought I was driving the van. No one told me I was gonna have to do this *other* dumb stuff.

NORMAN
 If I'd known there was so much reading involved, I would have brought a completely different group of people who hate me.

Neil suddenly YELLS out victoriously. Everyone turns to him, hardly believing he might have found the answer. He waves a book triumphantly above his head and grins at everyone.

NEIL
 Yes! Book number one! Finished! That is right, twenty six pages, oh yeah!

Everyone GROANS and turns back to their bickering.

111 CONTINUED:

111

COURTNEY

I can't believe *this* is your plan!
I'm gonna get bitten and start
eating peoples' brains! I'm
supposed to be Vegan!

Mitch suddenly SHOUTS out from the doorway.

MITCH

Guys! There's something moving out
there! I think it's the zombies!

ALVIN

(hysterical)
Hide!

MITCH

Oh, no it's not. It's just grown-
ups.

ALVIN

(more hysterical)
Hide!

112 EXT. TOWN HALL - SAME

112

The square outside is awash with threatening townsfolk,
led by Mrs Henscher and Deputy Dwayne. Some charge up the
Town Hall steps, JEERING and WHISTLING.

113 INT. TOWN HALL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

113

Blurry silhouettes move across the outside of the window,
occasionally SMACKING against them with their fists.

A brick SMASHES through a window and CLATTERS across the
floor between Courtney's feet.

114 INT. TOWN HALL ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

114

The kids start to hurry toward the lobby, leaving Norman
sitting amongst the spilled documents.

MITCH

That sound. Y'know what that is?
That's not awesome... things...

NORMAN

Guys, come on!

ALVIN

Just give it *up*, weiner!

NORMAN

We have to keep trying!

COURTNEY

We tried and look what happened!
 (sighs)
 I'm scared, Norman, and I can't
 listen to this any more.

Norman looks at the faces in front of him. The kids are scared and confused and angry. Even Neil has nothing encouraging to offer.

Norman's brow furrows.

NORMAN

You never listen! No one ever
 listens! I'm scared too, but I've
 still gotta do this.

COURTNEY

I do too listen! And whatever it
 was you just said, it's not
 working! You think you're going to
 go out there and do your *talking*
to the dead thing and this is all
 going to be okay? What are you
 going to do, *ask* the zombies not
 to eat you?

NORMAN

I should've known you wouldn't
 understand! No one ever does!

COURTNEY

Norman, you need to stop all this
 weird stuff and start living in
 the real world!

NORMAN

Everyone in the *real world* thinks
 I'm a freak! *And you know what,*
maybe they're right, *maybe* I am a
 freak! *But* I never asked for your
 help... just go! Get out!

Courtney, Mitch and Alvin back off a half step as Norman advances on them.

MITCH

Jeez, that was dramatic.

Courtney shoots him a look as if she's about to fight back, then shakes her head and shoves her way through the door.

She turns to go, snapping at the other kids behind her.

COURTNEY

C'mon!

114 CONTINUED: (2)

114

One by one, the kids turn and file out, but Neil still insists on remaining, folding his arms defiantly.

NEIL

I'm not going anywhere. You can't make me.

Mitch shrugs and picks his brother up, scooping him under one arm and carrying him out the door.

MITCH

Dude, you're really heavy.

NEIL

I'm not speaking to you. You can't make me.

Norman watches the doors shut behind them, and his anger begins to ebb. Alone in the archive room, he slumps to his knees feeling useless and frustrated.

115 INT. TOWN HALL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

115

In the lobby, no one can hear him over the sounds of the mob. The kids have nervously approached the barricade at the front door, hoping to appeal to the figures outside.

COURTNEY

Um, excuse me? Hello?

Unmistakably *living* hands and arms suddenly SMASH through the barricade, clawing into the Town Hall. The kids recoil from the windows, SCREAMING as they bat ineffectually at the grasping hands.

116 EXT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

116

Slob Guy reaches in through a gap in the broken woodwork, managing to grab a hold of something.

SLOB GUY

They're in there alright! I can feel its clammy flesh!

117 INT. TOWN HALL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

117

Neil SCREAMS as Slob Guy gropes at his chubby arm.

117A INT. TOWN HALL ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

117A

Norman notices his backpack on the floor in front of him, the book of fairy tales poking out. He picks it up and runs his hand absently over the embossed leather cover.

117A CONTINUED:

117A

Something CLATTERS behind him, and Norman hears someone approaching.

NORMAN

Hello?

He turns around to face his friend and finds himself staring up at a zombie, moving toward him along the dark aisle, pale moonlight shining off its exposed bones.

Norman GASPS.

He realizes zombies are converging on him from all directions, barring his way out through the door. The Dead Judge GROANS as he approaches.

Norman backs away, clutching the book to his chest.

Out of the corner of his eye Norman spots another doorway in the shadows of the wall behind him and moves toward it, calling out desperately.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Help! Somebody help me!

118 INT. TOWN HALL STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

118

Norman runs up a tight stairwell leading to the roof of the building, the zombies just a few steps beneath him.

119 EXT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

119

MRS HENSCHER

Let's burn 'em out!

Obligingly, a couple of townsfolk hurl Molotov cocktails at the windows.

120 INT. TOWN HALL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

120

The kids manage to pull back just as a burning bottle flies over their heads, SHATTERING glass. It lands in the middle of the room and a puddle of burning alcohol spreads across the floorboards.

Tendrils of black smoke are also beginning to creep under the edge of the front door.

The kids stand in a group, terror-stricken as the smoke thickens and flames begin to lick along the floor.

Courtney is quick to lose what remains of her composure.

120 CONTINUED:

120

COURTNEY

We're all gonna *DIE!*

121 EXT. TOWN HALL, ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

121

Norman heaves himself through a tiny hatchway onto a flat roof at the highest point of the building. He shuts the hatch, inching away as the zombies beneath beat on it with their hands.

Norman finds himself backed up against a flimsy wooden rail, which *CREAKS* warningly. He leans over and sees the square beneath, filled with angry people. He has nowhere left to run.

Above him the red sky *RUMBLES*, clouds churning into a ghastly grinning mouth.

122 EXT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

122

Far below, the gathered townsfolk grow increasingly erratic. A pair of visiting tourists happily take in their surroundings with their cell phones and cameras.

Sandra tugs at her husband's arm as they are buffeted by the increasingly erratic townsfolk.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Oh my gosh, do you think this has got anything to do with Norman?

Perry waves her hand away irritably.

PERRY BABCOCK

Of course not!

He is interrupted by a *SHOUT* as someone sees Norman's tiny figure silhouetted against the raging sky on the roof of the building.

LIBRARIAN

Everyone look!

Perry and Sandra see their son begin gesticulating wildly at the clouds.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Perry, do something!

He cups his hands around his mouth and *YELLS* at Norman.

PERRY BABCOCK

Norman! Get down from there this instant! You're supposed to be *grounded!*

123 EXT. TOWN HALL, ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS 123

Distraught, Norman bellows into the sky, waving the book angrily above his head.

NORMAN
*You horrible old witch! Is this
 what you want?*

The roiling face above him seems to CACKLE mercilessly.

124 EXT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS 124

The mob begins to lurch to all new stupid conclusions as Norman waves his arms at the clouds.

MRS HENSCHER
Necromancer!

FEMALE TOURIST
 This is all *his* doing!

SANDRA BABCOCK
 Norman!

Perry feels the shift in the crowd. They're not just baying for blood. They're about to start baying for his *son's* blood.

125 EXT. TOWN HALL, ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS 125

Norman continues YELLING at the sky, waving the book.

He madly flicks through the pages, attempting to read aloud over the ROARING wind.

NORMAN
 Once upon a time in a far-off land
 there lived a king and queen... in
 a magnificent castle...

The horrible cloud face above him CACKLES monstrously, drowning out the story.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
*Why won't you listen to me? Why
 are you doing this?!*

The face in the clouds turns inside out as a tongue of lightning spits out. It SMACKS into the book held in front of Norman's chest, lifts him up off his feet and throws him back onto the old timbers of the roof.

The air is knocked out of Norman as, trailing smoke, he SMASHES through the wood into the fiery chasm of the building beneath.

125 CONTINUED:

125

CAMERA follows him as he plummets, SCREAMING, and is enveloped in thick black smoke.

There is a loud THUD, and silence.

126 INT. TOWN HALL, OLD COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

126

Norman lies on the floor, shifting painfully. With some effort he sits up, rubbing his head.

The book in his hand is now a blackened cinder with a large smoldering hole gouged through the middle.

Norman realizes he is no longer inside the burning building. Around him indistinct shapes begin to pool into clarity. He is in the courthouse, but three hundred years ago, and a trial is about to begin.

A crowd of onlookers gather around a platform at the head of the room where officious-looking gentlemen in austere Puritan clothing stand around a table. Two dour men in black skull caps are seated, an empty chair between them.

Norman moves unnoticed through the crowd toward the platform. The hubbub of the townsfolk dies down.

The imposing figure of Judge Hopkins, tall and august, marches out of a side chamber, steps up onto the wooden dais and seats himself silently between his solemn peers.

He glares down at Norman with cold, humorless eyes.

JUDGE HOPKINS
Agatha Prenderghast of his
Majesty's Province of
Massachusetts...

As the Judge's voice continues, Norman sees played out against it a MONTAGE of the preceding court case.

The notary stands up, waving a wad of testimonies.

JUDGE HOPKINS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...on this day you have been
arraigned for the horrible crime
of *witchcraft*...

A pale woman fiddles nervously with the ribbon on her bonnet as she is questioned by the Judge.

JUDGE HOPKINS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...witnessed by those whose
testimonies have been heard.

A wiry woman with a pinched face gestures fearfully with her arms as she recounts her evidence.

JUDGE HOPKINS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You have, by this court, been
 found *guilty*...

NORMAN
 No!

A young farmhand bows his head shamefully, as he adds further ammunition to the prosecution.

JUDGE HOPKINS (V.O.)
 ...and it is passed on you,
 according to your grievous
 crimes...

Another village woman SOBS into a handkerchief as she tells her story.

QUICK CUTS of the accusers, one after the other, as the Judge finishes his verdict. The notary, the preacher, the townsfolk. *All point at Norman.*

JUDGE HOPKINS (CONT'D)
 ...*execution.*

Camera swings slowly around Norman to reveal AGGIE PRENDERGHAST, standing in chains right behind him.

AGGIE
 No!

Norman reacts with horror. *The "witch" cowering next to him is no more than eleven years-old.* Her long hair is unkempt and dirt on her face is streaked with tears from her eyes. Her manacles have been specially made to fit her tiny wrists, and weigh her to the floor. She SNIFFS, scared and confused.

JUDGE HOPKINS
 Do you have anything to say for
 yourself?

AGGIE
 I was only playing!

JUDGE HOPKINS
 Aye, with *fire!* You were speaking
 with the *dead!*

The crowd GASPS and MURMURS fearfully.

JUDGE HOPKINS (CONT'D)
 I'll not risk damnation on these
 good people.

The town Sheriff grabs Aggie by the shoulder.

JUDGE HOPKINS (CONT'D)

You are to be taken to the place
of execution where you will be
hanged by the neck until you be
dead...

Norman shouts out but no one can hear or see him.

NORMAN

Wait! No! You can't do this!

The grim-faced Sheriff moves toward Norman and Aggie. She
backs away, tears flowing down her face.

AGGIE

I didn't do anything wrong!

A terrible panic comes over her face.

AGGIE (CONT'D)

Stop! Leave me alone or I'll make
you sorry! I'll make all of you
sorry!

Norman feels unsteady on his feet, the room seeming to
spin around him. The faces of the townsfolk, pale and
skull-like, swirl around and around, blurring together.
In the center of it all, glowing like a bonfire, Aggie
SCREAMS.

The world turns black and Norman collapses in a faint.

127 INT. TOWN HALL ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

127

NORMAN'S P.O.V. - the high timbers of the hall roof swim
into focus, and then faces peering down at him. Skeletal,
rotting faces. The dead Puritans are standing around him
in a half-circle. He sits up terrified, and looks around,
shuffling back across the floorboards on his bottom. The
dead villagers stand where they are, staring intently.

Norman sits a moment, heart pounding, WHISPERING SHAKILY.

NORMAN

How *could* you?! She was just a
little kid! She was no different
than *me!*

The Dead Judge takes a step forward.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Keep away from me!

The Dead Judge stops, then opens his horrible mouth and
speaks in a guttural voice.

DEAD JUDGE

You... must... stop... the...
curse.

A beat. Norman is stunned.

NORMAN

What? You don't want to kill me?

The Judge shakes his head and points down at the book beside Norman's feet.

DEAD JUDGE

You can speak to the dead. To us.
To her. We need you to read from
the book to send us all back to
the grave.

NORMAN

But it didn't work! It's a fairy
tale! Just a bedtime... story...

He narrows his eyes at the Judge.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

That's it, isn't it? A bedtime
story to keep a little girl asleep
for another year. And now you need
my help because I'm the only one
who can read it to her!

He bends down to pick it up. His eyes flash angrily at the zombies and he hurls the burnt book at the Judge. It hits him in the chest and falls to his feet with a THUD.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

*Here's your book! Try reading it
yourself!*

The zombies stare down at the blackened lump of charred paper, and several of them GASP. The Dead Judge's eyes are filled with fear and desperation.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Why did you do it?

DEAD JUDGE

We were scared.

NORMAN

Of what?

DEAD JUDGE

Of her.

(gestures behind)

I believed we were doing what was
right. I was wrong. Now this is
our punishment.

(MORE)

127 CONTINUED: (2)

127

DEAD JUDGE (CONT'D)
 We thought we knew our way in life
 but in death we are lost.

Norman knows they're telling the truth.

DEAD JUDGE (CONT'D)
 Please help us.

Norman looks at the book of fairy tales, lying at his feet. Its pages are curled and blackened, embers still glowing around the hole blown right through it.

NORMAN
 Every year someone reads the story
 at her grave. Before me it was Mr
 Prenderghast, and before him there
 were others, but the curse doesn't
 ever go away. Nothing gets better.
 It's not enough.

Norman looks at it a moment, thinking. He knows what he has to do.

DEAD JUDGE
 What will you do?

NORMAN
 Something nobody ever did before.
 I've gotta go talk to her.

128 INT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

128

Smearred with soot and COUGHING, the kids are trapped in the lobby. They cower together as burning wood CREAKS and CRACKS all around them. The air is grey and caustic and filled with flakes of charcoal and burning ash.

A burning timber GROANS as it splits from the ceiling and tumbles toward the children. They SCREAM and scatter as it hits the floorboards in a shower of glowing sparks.

Mitch shouts out from beside a heavy wooden counter top.

MITCH
 Guys! Guys! Under here! Under
 here!

The kids scramble beneath the shelter of the counter as more glowing embers rain down around them.

Courtney grabs Mitch by the bicep and whispers weakly.

COURTNEY
 Mitch, if we die tonight, this
 might be the last chance I get to
 tell you how I feel.

MITCH

Uh, well, no. Unless we get brought back as zombies, and then technically you'll have longer.

Courtney opens her mouth to continue, but her love train is thoroughly derailed by the nearby CRASH of breaking wood, and the archive door beside them CLATTERS to the ground.

The cowering kids all watch in silent horror as several dark figures limp and shamble out of the smoke and make their way past them across the room. It's the zombies, and they're being led by Norman.

COURTNEY

Norman?

NORMAN

Come on! This way!

COURTNEY

You've gotta be kidding me...

Norman, his mouth shielded by his sleeve, heads purposefully toward the front doors.

131 EXT. TOWN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

131

A loud THUD from within the Town Hall causes the gathered crowd outside to GASP, and those closest to the doors to take a few steps back.

The crowd GASPS again as the charred front door of the Town Hall is wrenched off its hinges by a huge piece of timber and CRASHES down the steps in a shower of flaming splinters.

A ripple of shock runs through the crowd as a number of skeletal figures emerge, SPLUTTERING and WHEEZING through the smoke, shielding their faces from the heat.

The gathered crowd are even more aghast when they realize a *child* is being guided out of the flames by the zombies.

Unseen by the crowd, Courtney and the other kids crawl to the splintered opening of the front door, blinking and COUGHING for air.

Hooper pulls out her gun and marches toward the zombies.

SHERIFF HOOPER

You stay right where you are! You may be dead already, but I will still shoot you!

The zombies stop on the steps, burning building behind them and the hostile townsfolk in front of them. Norman pushes through and stands firmly in the way of Hooper's gun, arms spread defensively.

NORMAN

Wait!

Courtney and the other kids GASP as they watch from within the doorway.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Oh my gosh!

Far above, the clouds THUNDER like demonic laughter.

Perry steps forward, face red.

PERRY BABCOCK

Son! Step away from the zombies!

NORMAN

No! I *won't*!

Sandra comes up behind her husband and holds his arm.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Perry, calm down! You're going to have a heart attack and then what are you going to do?

PERRY BABCOCK

I'll come back and haunt Norman! Maybe *then* he'll start listening to me!

NORMAN

No! You don't understand what's happening here! I *spoke* to them and it's not what you think!

Courtney edges forward out of the doorway, shocked but transfixed.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

The curse isn't about the zombies hurting you! It's about you hurting them! I figured it out, and I know a way to stop this!

MRS HENSCHER

He's in league with them!

A few members of the crowd try to push past Perry toward the steps.

DEPUTY DWAYNE

Let's hang him!

GUCCI LADY

No! We can't hang him, stupid!
It's the 21st Century!

DEPUTY DWAYNE

Then let's *burn* him!

Sandra turns despairingly to the crowd behind her.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Can you *stop* being a mob for just
one minute?!

NORMAN

Listen to me!

CRYSTAL

Get them before they eat us!

Punctuating every shout, the roiling clouds continue to
RUMBLE their horrible laughter.

COURTNEY

Leave him alone!

Courtney suddenly emerges, standing right in front of
Norman. Following her lead in true "I'm Spartacus!"
fashion, Neil, Mitch and Alvin step forward too, creating
a barrier all around him, all joining hands in
solidarity.

CLOSE ON Courtney's face as she hisses sidelong to Alvin.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

Hand, Alvin! My *hand*!

A ripple of confusion seems to run through the crowd.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

Everybody, listen up! You all need
to stop trying to kill my brother!
You're adults! Stop it! I know
that this seems crazy, believe me
I'm with you on that, but I think
he does actually know what he's
talking about!

NEIL

All night he's been trying to save
you from the witch's curse!

MITCH

Yeah, and all you want to do is
burn and murder stuff, burn and
murder stuff! Just burning and
murdering!

ALVIN

Shame on every single one of you!
How dare you all!

Amongst the crowd, doubt is beginning to show. Even the rumbling clouds have gone quiet.

CRYSTAL

So they're *not* going to hurt us?

NORMAN

No, does it look like any of them are trying to hurt you? They're just people. At least they used to be. *Just* stupid people who should have known better.

Norman looks at the line of Puritans. They look quite sad and pathetic really. Hardly monstrous at all.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

They did something unforgivable because they were scared, and they were *cursed* for it. Now it's happening all over again. Don't you get it? They were just like you. But now it has to stop. For good.

Across the crowd, weapons are being lowered and faces are starting to look a little guilty.

There is silence as the modern townsfolk stare at the line of three hundred year-old townsfolk. Throughout the crowd various weapons CLATTER as they hit the ground.

A small girl tiptoes up the steps and silently offers one of the zombies his arm back.

The quiet is shattered by a deafening SCREAM. It blows out of the storm clouds and whips through the plaza on a hellish wind. The street lamps around the square shatter in bursts of sparks, raining down on the amassed people.

The sky above is blood red, clouds twisting and contorting into a vast unnatural vortex.

The Town Hall erupts in a fireball, tongues of white fire ROARING out of the embers as the ground shakes and the crowd scatters in terror.

Neil turns to Norman as they duck for cover behind a parked car, and SHOUTS over the noise of the wind.

NEIL

Jeez, what is her problem?

Norman takes in the chaos around them...

-An arc of white lightning hits the base of the witch's statue with a CRACK. With a terrible GROAN, the statue is lifted up into the air by the supernatural wind. It CRASHES down at the foot of the Town Hall steps, shattering into a hundred pieces of rubble.

-Windows blow out of tacky tourist stores, their cheap front displays ripped apart by the wind.

-A bolt of lightning tears through the huge billboard in the plaza, ripping apart the idealized image of the town's history in a spiral of splintered wood.

Norman struggles over to where a group of townsfolk and zombies cower from the destruction. Sandra runs over to her son and hugs him.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Oh, Norman!

NEIL

So what do we do now?

NORMAN

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

COURTNEY

Yes you do, Norman! You've got to get to that witch's grave!

NORMAN

But...

COURTNEY

But nothing! You listen to me, buster, we didn't turn away when Daleridge High was slaughtering our volleyball team, did we?

NORMAN

I thought we did.

COURTNEY

No we didn't. I've cheered the uncheerable, Norman, and I'm not letting you give up now!

Norman turns to Perry, his eyes all business.

NORMAN

Dad, could I borrow the car?

PERRY BABCOCK

Excuse me?

131 CONTINUED: (5) 131

Norman looks squarely at his dad, and the Dead Judge beside him. They exchange uneasy glances.

CUT TO:

132 INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS 132

The Dead Judge sits rigidly between Norman and Courtney in the back of Perry's station wagon, Perry and Sandra in the front.

Perry drives in silent discomfort following the Judge's instructions through town, glancing in his rear-view mirror at the passengers in the back seat.

Sandra takes a small perfume spritzer from her purse as surreptitiously as she can and sprays the air around her.

135 EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - CONTINUOUS 135

The car turns a corner into the path of an overturned truck, caught by the spectral wind. It cartwheels down the middle of the street, tearing up the asphalt.

I/E. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Perry swerves out of its path of destruction.

Inside, Sandra cranes her neck around to watch the truck CRASH down the road behind them. She faces front again.

SANDRA BABCOCK
Boy, the *traffic* tonight!

COURTNEY
Norman! He's on my side of the seat!

NORMAN
She wants you to move over.

The Judge MUMBLES.

COURTNEY
I heard that! Mom! Tell the zombie to stop saying stuff about me!

NORMAN
Can you quit using the "z" word?

PERRY BABCOCK
So help me I will stop this car right now if all three of you don't quit it this instant!

CONTINUED:

After a moment, the Judge lets out a sepulchral MOAN.

NORMAN

He says "take a left here".

Perry gives a distasteful look, but turns the steering wheel. He peers out through the raging storm, windshield wiper batting ineffectively at the onslaught of debris.

PERRY BABCOCK

We've already been this way. We're going around in circles!

SANDRA BABCOCK

Maybe we should pull over and ask someone?

PERRY BABCOCK

Oh, right, you think maybe we should stop at a graveyard and dig up some other eighteenth-century corpses?

SANDRA BABCOCK

It's not a bad idea.

PERRY BABCOCK

I wish I understood you.

136 I/E. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

136

From the back seat, the Judge turns to Norman and GROANS.

PERRY BABCOCK

Please don't tell me he needs to use the bathroom.

Norman listens as the Judge continues GRUMBLING, then leans forward over his father's seat, pointing.

NORMAN

Turn down there!

137 EXT. OLD FOREST TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

137

The car turns tightly off a secluded road onto a dirt path running into the thick of the surrounding woodland.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Oh my, do you think that's it?

139

EXT. OLD FOREST TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

139

The headlights of the car illuminate a huge fallen trunk ahead along the path, and Perry pulls the car to a stop, wheels CRUNCHING on dirt and roots.

Everyone gets out of the car. The trees around them are thick and dense. Aggie's furious storm WHISTLES through the branches far above them.

Norman turns to the Dead Judge. The Judge nods solemnly, pointing ahead.

Norman steels himself and begins to march forward through the thick brambles, the others following behind.

PERRY BABCOCK

So, why are we here?

NORMAN

Someone's gotta talk to her, Dad.

PERRY BABCOCK

Yeah, um, why's that person you, exactly?

As they continue, the surrounding trees press in on them, just like in Norman's vision. Branches and thorns lash at their faces while thick roots entangle their feet.

Norman's family are falling behind and realize too late that the encroaching trees are about to crush Norman.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Oh my goodness, look out!

NORMAN

Mom!

SANDRA BABCOCK

Perry! Do something!

Perry is finding it difficult to move; a tree bears down on him, its roots snagging his thrashing limbs.

PERRY BABCOCK

I'm trying!

SANDRA BABCOCK

Kick it in the knothole!

Norman hops nimbly between two huge trunks as they SMASH together, blocking off the way ahead with gnarled wood.

Sandra struggles free and shouts over the branches.

SANDRA BABCOCK (CONT'D)

Norman?!

NORMAN (O.S.)

I'm okay Mom! Wait for me here!
Don't worry!

SANDRA BABCOCK

Be careful!

Now separated from the others, Norman turns to go ahead on his own. Ahead of him a phosphorescent glow shines off the trees, and he knows he is very close.

Exhausted but determined, Norman finds the source of the supernatural storm; a clearing sculpted out of the forest by Aggie's fury.

In the center of it all is the tree, bleached white as bone and grotesquely twisted. The trees around it CREAK and GROAN as though they'd like to uproot and plant themselves someplace else.

Beneath this tree lie Aggie's remains, buried three hundred years ago. Now a mess of roots and rocks open out like an ugly wound, and within them a tiny childlike figure is barely visible through a spitting furnace of spectral energy. Ectoplasm rages up around the tree's finger-like branches like a mushroom cloud of negative energy. It's a child's tantrum turned atomic.

NORMAN

Hello?

Words echo around him in response.

AGGIE

You're not welcome here. Go away.

Norman shivers as the voice RUMBLES coldly.

The raging wind intensifies as Norman turns back around.

NORMAN

Uh... I really need to speak with you.

AGGIE

Who are you?

NORMAN

I'm Norman. Norman Babcock. You don't actually know me, but I know you. We're actually kind of the same, you and I.

Norman takes another step closer, ducking as petrified branches and rocks fly over his head on the wind.

AGGIE

You're not *dead*.

NORMAN

Well, no, apart from that.

AGGIE

And you're a *boy*.

NORMAN

Well, yes, that too.

AGGIE

You're not like me at all.

Norman hesitates, knowing he's on dangerous ground.

NORMAN

Well, I know how you feel?

AGGIE

No you don't. You don't know anything about me.

NORMAN

I know your name is Agatha Prenderghast.

The ghostly voice wavers for the first time.

AGGIE

What?

NORMAN

And I know you're probably tired. Right? *Because*, I mean, it's really late and it's been a long night and we're, like, only eleven years-old, and...

The voice snaps back like a clap of thunder.

AGGIE

I don't want to go to sleep, and you can't make me! I burnt the book into dust, and now I don't have to listen to that stupid story any more! Leave me alone!

Norman is terrified, but advances on the tree, the rocks under his feet churning.

NORMAN

No. I'm not leaving. Just listen to me.

(takes a breath)

Uh... once upon a time... long ago... there was a little girl...

AGGIE

What?

NORMAN

A little girl who was different
from the other people in her
village.

The voice chants petulantly over him as if putting its
demonic fingers in its ears.

AGGIE

I'm not listening! LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-
LAAA!

NORMAN

She could see and do things that
no one could understand, and that
made them scared of her.

AGGIE

I don't like this story!

NORMAN

She turned away from everyone, and
became sad and lonely, and had no
one to turn to.

AGGIE

Stop it!

If Aggie weren't floating three feet above the ground,
she'd be stamping her feet. Her voice blows bits of bark
off the surrounding trees.

NORMAN

But the more she turned away from
people, the more scared they were
of her, and they did something
terrible!

Arcs of white energy CRACKLE through the air. Where they
hit the ground, they send up white flames.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

They became so scared that they
took her away and *killed* her!

AGGIE

No!

NORMAN

But even though she was dead
something in her came back.

AGGIE

Stop!

NORMAN

And this part of her wouldn't go away, not for three hundred years...

AGGIE

Shut up!

NORMAN

And the longer it stayed, the less there was of the little girl!

AGGIE

I'll make you *suffer*!

NORMAN

Why?

Aggie goes to shout, but stops, unsure of her answer.

AGGIE

Because... because...

NORMAN

Because you want everyone to hurt just as much as you are! So whenever you wake up you play this mean game, but you don't play fair!

AGGIE

They *hurt* me!

NORMAN

So you hurt them back?

AGGIE

I wanted everyone to see how rotten they were!

NORMAN

You're just like them, Agatha.

AGGIE

No I'm not!

NORMAN

You're a *bully*.

AGGIE

No I'm not!

Norman has almost reached the eye of the storm. The world behind him is a whirling torrent of burning white chaos.

NORMAN

They did something awful, but that doesn't mean you should too!

(MORE)

NORMAN (CONT'D)

All that's left of you now is mean
and horrible!

He sees her clearly now. True, she is floating above the ground, and her hair is writhing madly about her, and plumes of spectral fire are pouring off her body, but she's still just a little girl underneath.

AGGIE

That's not true!

Norman climbs up a tree root, Aggie's flames searing his skin and clothes as he gets close enough to touch her.

NORMAN

Then *stop*. This is wrong and you know it! You've spent so long remembering the bad people that you've forgotten the good ones. There must have been someone who loved you and cared for you. You don't remember them?

AGGIE

Leave me alone!

NORMAN

But you're *not* alone! You have to remember!

AGGIE

Keep away from me!

Norman reaches the end of the root and jumps. His outstretched fingers shake madly as they approach Aggie's tiny hand, as though the air is fighting against him.

NORMAN

Remember!

There is a flash of white, and silence.

FADE TO:

Dappled sunlight falls through shimmering leaves and blossoms. Norman and Aggie are standing in thick grass, replete with wild flowers, the dead white tree now quite alive and blossoming behind them.

Aggie is no longer an indistinct specter, but flesh and blood and as real as Norman. She stares down at her hand as Norman holds it gently by the end of her finger.

AGGIE

Aggie. My name was Aggie.

A brightly-colored butterfly flutters between them. Aggie starts to remember as she follows its flight.

AGGIE (CONT'D)

I... I remember my mommy brought me here once. We sat under the tree and she told me stories. They all had happy endings.

(brow furrows)

And then those horrible men came and took me away and I never saw her again!

She scowls angrily at the butterfly flitting past her face. It instantly crumples up into ashes. Surprised, she GASPS and watches the blackened dust fall to the ground.

There's anger in Aggie, but there is confusion, sadness and regret there too. She isn't quite so scary anymore.

NORMAN

Sometimes when people get scared they say and do terrible things. I think you got so scared, that you forgot who you are. But I don't think you're a witch. Not really.

Aggie looks into his eyes.

AGGIE

You don't?

NORMAN

I think you're just a little kid with a really special gift who only ever wanted people to understand her.

He smiles softly.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

So we're not all that different at all.

AGGIE

But what about the people who hurt you? Don't you ever want to make them suffer?

Norman thinks this over, and shrugs.

NORMAN

Well, yeah, but what good would that do? You think just because there's bad people out there that there's no good ones either? I thought the same thing.

(MORE)

141 CONTINUED: (2)

141

NORMAN (CONT'D)

For a while. But there's always
someone out there for you.
Somewhere.

Aggie frowns, looking lost.

AGGIE

I just want my mommy...

NORMAN

I'm sorry, Aggie. She's gone.

AGGIE

That story you were telling. How
does it end?

NORMAN

I think that's up to you.

Aggie blinks through tears at the grass beneath her feet.

AGGIE

Is this where they buried me?

NORMAN

It's a pretty good place to sleep.
Then you can be with your mom
again.

Aggie holds Norman's gaze, then looks down to the ground,
her tiny frame heaving with a last SOB. She sits down on
the grass and curls up, resting her head on her hands.

Norman kneels down next to her as she closes her eyes.
Her breathing grows deeper and more peaceful; her tiny
frame shifting softly under her long hair.

The air around them grows blurry and indistinct. Aggie
softens as though out of focus, and the whole world
becomes a swirling dance of glowing orbs. Norman closes
his eyes as a blizzard of light engulfs him, spiraling up
into the clouds high above his head.

Lightning flashes white far above and thunder RUMBLES
softly through the sky, as if moving away.

143 EXT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

143

The zombies form a group in the center of the square, all
of them looking up into the clouds. The people around
them stop and stare, awestruck as a breeze buffets their
clothes and the air around them begins to shimmer.

As the modern townsfolk watch on, some of the zombies
take each others' arms for support. Those with eyelids
close them. One by one their bodies dissolve away,
leaving ethereal figures in their place.

143 CONTINUED:

143

For a moment they float where they stood, ghostly apparitions of the people they once were before the curse. They stare sadly out at their flesh and blood descendents, and in an instant become just specks of light that are caught by the breeze and carried out of sight.

142 EXT. OLD FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

142

Norman blinks open his eyes, taking a moment to survey the scene around him.

He sits upon the upturned root of the tree, the earth around broken and twisted, a testament to what has happened. He looks up into the sky and gives a sad smile.

NORMAN

Sleep tight.

He clambers down through the roots back toward the path.

144 EXT. OLD FOREST TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

144

Norman wearily walks through the splintered roots to find his family. Sandra shouts out when she sees him.

SANDRA BABCOCK

Norman? Norman!

Sandra runs over to him and scoops him up in her arms, hugging him tightly.

SANDRA BABCOCK (CONT'D)

My brave little man! I thought I was going to lose you!

NORMAN

Mom, you're embarrassing me.

SANDRA BABCOCK

That's my job.

COURTNEY

Good job, Norman.

Perry takes a deep breath and looks at his son. There is relief and a hint of admiration in his eyes.

PERRY BABCOCK

Well done, Son. You did it.

The Judge, stood some way behind them, lets out a GROAN, and the Babcocks turn to look at him.

144 CONTINUED:

144

They watch in awe as the Judge begins to turn to dust, his ragged clothes and decayed body dissolving in the rain. For barely a moment a shimmering ghostly figure is left behind, an image of the man that once was. The spirit blinks sorrowful eyes, then becomes nothing more than a million glowing fragments dissipating on the breeze.

146B EXT. NEW TOWN HALL - LATER

146B

The sky has lost its lurid pall, and the clouds are now lighter and less menacing.

In the Town Square, clusters of townsfolk are trying to come to terms with the night's events.

Norman weaves through the crowd away from the Babcock's station wagon, searching for Neil. He hears small snippets of conversation as he goes.

Dwayne waves his notebook under Hooper's nose.

DEPUTY DWAYNE

So, uh, are we gonna need statements?

She slaps it out of his hand.

DEPUTY DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Ow! That was my finger nail.

Slob Guy, Crystal and Mrs Henscher are convincing each other of their excuses.

MRS HENSCHER

You know what it's like. You join a mob and you say things. I was merely inhabiting the role.

SLOB GUY

Yeah, it was the others. They pushed me into it.

Norman smiles as he passes Alvin, regaling a bunch of teenagers.

ALVIN

Yeah, me and Norman are in a lot of the same classes. Pretty much inseparable. Best buds. And we do a lot of psychic investigations together. We have a blog actually, you should check it out.

Nearby, Courtney wastes no time cozying up to Mitch.

COURTNEY

So I was thinking, maybe we could catch a movie sometime? Nothing scary.

MITCH

That sounds great, Kathy! Y'know, you're gonna love my boyfriend! He's like a total chick-flick nut!

Courtney stares at him, at a loss for words, then successfully reads between the lines and turns away MUTTERING.

Norman eventually finds Neil sat upon the witch statue's broken plinth, attempting to piece it back together pebble by pebble.

NORMAN

Hey Neil.

He climbs up beside his friend, who beams at him gleefully.

NEIL

You did it! You stopped the witch's curse and made the zombies go away and saved pretty much everything!

NORMAN

I guess. I just wanted to say thanks. You stood by me. All the time.

NEIL

Yeah, of course. Don't get weird or anything. So you think now everything's gonna turn back to normal?

Norman looks across the square. The smoldering buildings, the fallen signposts, the warped trees, the rubble...

NORMAN

As normal as it could be.

Norman sits on the floor in front of the TV. A news report shows the wrecked Main Street with the headline "TOURIST TOWN HIT BY MYSTERY TORNADO".

Perry enters the room, and Norman quickly changes the channel on the TV to a noisy monster movie.

PERRY BABCOCK

Son.

NORMAN

Hi Dad.

PERRY BABCOCK

What're you watching?

NORMAN

A scary movie.

PERRY BABCOCK

Your, uh, your grandma here is she?

Norman looks around and sees his father and grandmother sitting side by side on the sofa. He nods.

PERRY BABCOCK (CONT'D)

Right. Of course she is.

Perry tries his best to maintain his composure, and wriggles a little in his seat.

PERRY BABCOCK (CONT'D)

Is she... Is she sitting next to me?

Norman nods. Perry "hem-hems" and turns awkwardly to face her, nose to ear. She doesn't seem to notice.

PERRY BABCOCK (CONT'D)

Hi Mom.

Perry tries to downplay his discomfort and turns back to concentrate on the movie his son is watching.

Sandra and Courtney enter from the kitchen carrying snacks. Sandra takes a seat on an armchair and Courtney lies down on the floor beside her brother, munching popcorn. They all settle in to watch the movie.

A beat, then Perry and Grandma speak at the same time.

PERRY BABCOCK (CONT'D)

So what's happening now?

GRANDMA BABCOCK

So what's happening now?

Norman sits as he is, facing the TV, and grins.

THE END.