

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

by

?

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN, HOUSE - DAY

In disarray: empty TV dinner boxes, crushed beer cans, stacks of bills, bug spray, a dirty sock, a stack of dirty dishes.

MAX (10) stands at the sink and washes a dish. He's a wide-eyed kid, thinly built, with a dark mop of hair.

FATHER

Forget about trick or
treatin'. 'Less you wanna get
yourself murdered.

Max's FATHER sits at the table, nurses a can of Budweiser and a cigarette. Early 40s, he's a barrel-chested brute, with a bald pate, wearing a stained undershirt and pants.

He blows smoke, then grinds his cigarette into a toast.

FATHER

Dumb asses put all kinds of
shit in Halloween candy. Razor
blades, narcotics, rat poison,
dog biscuits. I know, cuz
that's what I did.

(loud belch)

You want candy, write it down.
Might get lucky this year.

With his back to his father, Max checks his watch.

FATHER

You're a regular whiz kid at
writing down lists. Not a bit
like your brother, Toby, God
rest his soul. He was good at
baseballin', running,
catching, batting. Made me
proud. You're good at lists?
Hoo-boy, what a fuckin' gift
you are.

Max glances back at his dad. His father nods.

FATHER

Just messin' with you. Keep on
washing them dishes.

Father coughs up phlegm. Max turns and writes in his pad.

NOTE PAD: Dum ass. Dum ass. Dum ass. Dum ass.

EXT. BUS BENCH, DOWNTOWN - DAY

The sun is low in the sky. Max sits alone on the bench, reading a comic book.

The bus comes, the bus leaves. Max sits unmoved on the bench.

COMIC BOOK PAGE

Illustrations of a foggy night. A boy stares into the mist.

Something emerges out of mist.

A dark, menacing figure. A cadaver reanimated. More zombies stagger out of the mist.

Under the comic book images, the printed words: 'And young Thomas came to realize that with the wave of his hand, All Hallow's Eve would be a night of unrelenting terror.'

MAX'S INDEX FINGER

follows along: 'For Thomas would open a portal to the Other World. And let pass into his existence an army of souls. Dead men brought to life, at his command. From Oct. 31 at dusk, to dawn the following morning, an open gash between dimensions.'

EXT. RETAIL STREET, DOWNTOWN - DAY

Rows of shops, their windows reflecting late afternoon sun.

Max walks home with his tattered backpack slung over a shoulder. He checks his watch.

He passes a Halloween curio shop. Stops and stares wide-eyed at the shop's window display.

PUMPKIN MAN

a human-sized mannequin wearing a pumpkin mask and dark suit. In pumpkin man's gloved hands is a severed styro-foam head.

Max stares at the hulking figure, which seems to stare back. The boy backs away, into the curio shop door.

He turns to see a sign: DO YOU BELIEVE IN HALLOWEEN, MAGIC, MYSTICS, MONSTERS? STEP INSIDE, IF YOU DARE.

INT. CURIO SHOP - DAY

A dark, cluttered place. Max steps through the shop door. Cautious but curious.

At the front of the shop he sees rubber monster heads, vampire glow teeth, a fairy princess tiara, a clown outfit, rows of cheap, plastic masks.

He steps deeper into the shop. Sees black scarves and capes, a witch's cauldron, potions in dusty bottles, incense, pentagrams, charts, ancient daggers and medieval artifacts.

Max studies the offerings with fascination. Approaches a counter. Something behind the glass case moves. Max jerks. An

OLD WOMAN

(70s) sits on a stool. She could pass for a witch with her stringy hair, sunken eyes, beak-like nose and dark mole on her cheek. She's draped in a bland, gray shawl.

Not a word from her parched lips.

She smiles. Her missing teeth gives her an even more hideous presence. The old woman stares at the boy, then leans forward and reaches into the case.

Max watches intently as if hypnotized.

His eyes lock on to the sight of her long, gnarly fingers, talon-like finger nails and weathered skin. The old woman pulls a thin, withered branch from the case.

The branch is placed on the counter in front of Max.

He stares at the reed-like whip of wood. Attached to one end of the branch is an yellowed slip of paper.

Confused, Max looks at thin branch, then at the old woman.

She nods and extends an open palm, a gesture that Max responds to by removing his wallet from his pocket.

He opens the battered billfold of brown leather. A single \$1 bill protrudes - all that he has.

And all that she desires.

The old woman plucks the bill. She pushes the thin, dry branch toward him. He snatches it and backs away.

EXT. FRONT OF CURIOS SHOP - SAME

Max unfolds the slip of yellowed paper attached to the branch.

PAPER: 'This Wicca Stick empowers its user with 3 wishes. It cannot be used to create more wishes. The last 2 wishes must be made within 24 hours of the first wish. Be forewarned, each wish comes with its own special consequence.'

BACK TO MAX

who studies the stick in his hand. He looks it up and down. Waves it. Nothing happens. He shrugs.

Continues to stroll down the street.

Passes a store front. Sees a sign: Halloween Candy on sale.

He slows to a stop. Looks at the sign, then at the wicca stick. He closes his eyes and waves the stick.

Opens his eyes and looks around. He waits. Nothing, the world is unchanged. He checks his watch and hurries home.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max sits at his desk, doing homework. Next to him is an open history book. The doorbell rings.

Max walks downstairs and opens the front door. Sees nobody. He looks down and notices a

BROWN BAG

Max looks puzzled. Nobody in sight. He picks up the bag and peeks inside. His eyes widen, followed by a generous smile.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - SAME

Max pours the contents of the bag onto his bed. Candy galore.

He wastes no time in ripping through wrappers, devouring sticks of chocolate, M&Ms, gumdrops, taffy. He does a jig around the room.

As Max works on a mouthful of candy, he hears a PLOP from then other side of his bedroom. He looks up.

His hamster lies twitching at the bottom of its cage. Then it goes still – dies. Next to the cage is the wicca stick.

EXT. BACKYARD, MAX'S HOME - DAY

The hamster rests on a bed of cotton. Inside of a small box. Max places the lid on the box. He closes his eyes, mouths a silent prayer.

He buries the box in a small hole in the ground.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Semi-dark. Lit only by his flashlight, which falls on a comic book that Max reads. The same comic from the bus stop.

From the bedroom across the hall, he hears his father and a woman having sex. Moans, groans and long sighs.

Max ignores the noise. Read his comic book.

An argument erupts. The crescendo of their voices rise.

FATHER (O.S.)

I should have left you in the gutter, where I found you!

They argue loud. SLAP, the sound of a hand hitting flesh. The woman SCREAMS. More verbal fighting. Another slap.

Max puts down the comic and cups his ears.

A physical tussle. Then, it's over. Silence.

LATER

SWOOSH – BAM. Max's bedroom door flies open. A sleeping Max jumps, his flashlight tumbles to the floor and rolls.

His comic book flutters and crashes next to the flashlight.

At the doorway, an ominous figure in silhouette. His father is backlit from behind by the faint light.

The old man flexes and snaps a belt in his hands. Max cowers against the wall. Shakes his head. Trembles.

FATHER

You deaf and dumb? I was calling you.

(MORE)

FATHER (CONT'D)
 Is that a comic book? How many
 times did I say 'no comic
 books for you?'

He dangles the belt in one hand. Raises it over his head.

FATHER
 Lucky thing you can't talk.
 Cuz I'd bust out your teeth.

A sick, cackle of laughter heard from

FATHER'S ROOM

TV light pulsates.

FATHER (O.S.)
 Why? God damn you!

The screen flashes a torture porn video.

FATHER (O.S.)
 Why did you have to live that
 night? You pathetic rat. Why
 you? Why not Toby? I sinned,
 I'm a drunk. But I sure as
 hell didn't deserve this.

The TV victim, a young boy SCREAMS. His tormentor cackling.
 TV syncing with the OS WHACKS of a belt cracking down on Max.

WHACK, (TV) SCREAM and CACKLING.

INT. MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dark, quiet.

Max lies in a fetal ball on the floor. Unmoving. His
 flashlight beam lies next to him, bouncing light off a white
 wall. It throws a faint glow in the boy's face.

His eyes are vacant orbs, his mouth a twist of despair. A
 single tear trails down his face and splashes on the floor.

Max remains in a crumpled ball. Flicks off his flashlight.

EXT. BACKYARD, MAX'S HOME - DAY

Max lifts the lid to a trash can. He grimaces as he pushes
 old food away and retrieves his comic book.

He wipes the comic book with a tissue, then places the lid back on the trash can.

EXT. FRONT OF THE HOUSE - DUSK

A small residential street lined with lower middle-class homes. Blighted lawns and ram-shackled front porches.

Max stands in the middle of the street. The sun having set. Bathed now in the glow of warmly-lit sky.

The wicca stick in one hand. The comic book in the other hand. Max closes his eyes and makes his second wish.

A gust whips, followed by a pouring mist. A mist that grows denser by the second. Max squints and sees a dark figure.

Trudging toward him. A being dressed in a dark suit, with a skull-like face of decomposed skin. Hollow eye sockets.

The zombie stops in front of Max. It slips a pumpkin mask over its face. Pulls a scythe from its suit jacket.

Max sees the weapon and shakes his head. He waves his hands. He points to the weapon. Tries to get the zombie to discard the scythe.

The zombie pushes Max aside. Trudges toward his front yard.

Max runs ahead of the zombie, into his house.

INT. MAX'S HOME - SAME

Max drops the wicca stick. Then locks the front door.

He races through the house. Behind him, at the front door, he hears intense pounding.

And then hears the door knocked off its hinges.

HALLWAY

Max sprints to a door. Opens it.

GARAGE

He sees his father, working on a pickup truck. Grease marks on his dad's face. Max points to the house.

FATHER

What the hell'dyu do now?

Max mimicks the zombie.

FATHER
You gone nuts?

And then, the zombie in the pumpkin mask yanks open the door. Max dives in fear. Father stares at the intruder.

FATHER
What the – a Halloween
burglar? Are you kiddin' me?
(to Max)
Boy, go to your room and don't
you move till I get there.

The zombie steps into the garage. Father smirks, like this encounter is going to make his day.

Zombie raises the scythe overhead, poised to strike.

Max darts out of the garage.

Sprints to the living room. He can hear the ruckus in the garage. The revving of a motor. He bounds up the stairs, three steps at a time.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - LATER

Max cowers in a corner. He waits and listens. Hears heavy footsteps on the stair steps.

BAM - his bedroom door swings open. In the doorway is a blood-splattered figure: FATHER. Wielding a chainsaw.

FATHER
Did you let that pumpkin-faced
bitch in? FYI, he's sitting in
an pan of motor oil, ready for
the oven. Just like pumpkin
pie.

Max shakes.

FATHER
I'm going to take a nice
shower. Then we are having a
little talk. It's going to be
a real bad night for you.

Father turns and leaves. He walks to the bathroom. Sings a little song. Max hears the shower blast on.

Max hurries to his closet and pulls a small suitcase.

He packs the suitcase with clothes, a few books, other necessities. Wipes tears from his eyes.

Stumbles downstairs with his suitcase. Goes to the living room, pauses at his father's recliner.

Writes a message on his note pad. Tears the paper and folds it. Places the note on the recliner.

Max walks toward the front door. Spies the wicca stick on the floor and picks it up. Packs it in his suitcase.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The mist surrounds the block. Max walks into the mist.

Zombies trudging past trick or treaters. Just dead men walking aimlessly. Kids laughing. No monsters gone wild here.

Max is swallowed by the fog. Slowly fades away.

INT. FATHER'S ROOM, MAX'S HOME - NIGHT

Father goes to his closet. He whistles a happy tune. Pulls a thick, rubber paddle from the top shelf.

He whacks his hand with a mean slap.

The old man marches through the house to Max's bedroom. Doesn't see Max. He storms into another room. Still no Max.

FATHER

Oh, Maaaxx...

Father stops at the top of the stairway. Slaps the paddle against his free hand again.

FATHER

Night ain't over yet.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Father slumps back in his recliner. Watches TV and drinks beer. Gobbles peanuts. He reaches for more nuts and brushes the note Max left. Old man reluctantly reads

THE NOTE:

Dear Father, I'm sorry for the pumpkin monster. I only meant him to scare you. I tried to stop him. sorry i wasnt a good son to you. Please don't drink and drive again. I used 2 wishes and gave you the last wish.' - Max

The door bell rings. Father gets up. Schleppts to the door.

In the doorway a small figure. Standing in the semi-dark.

FATHER

Max?

Father stops and stares. Looks down at the small figure. He turns on the porch light.

A zombie kid in a baseball outfit. His hands behind his back.

FATHER

Toby... ?

The zombie kid grins. The old man steps toward the boy and kneels. A look of joy on the his face.

FATHER

How can --

He extends his arms in welcome.

FATHER

Toby!

His eyes well with tears.

FATHER

I knew you'd forgive me...

Toby smiles, his teeth a row of rotten fangs. He reveals what's behind his back.

A BASEBALL BAT

which he cocks back.

Father's smile drops. His eyes widen -- SWOOSH!

FADE OUT.

OS - the loud CRACK of a skull.

THE END