

B E A C O N S T A T I O N

FADE IN:

EXT. 125TH STREET STATION, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A group of passengers file into a waiting train on the elevated platform above the mortar and brick of Harlem.

A Renoir blonde, LARA MAGNUSSON, worries a scrap of paper she holds. She looks down at the words: "Erik, 845-555-0126, 285 Hampton" as she steps toward the train.

The young woman almost collides with a pinched-faced SERIOUS MAN. He glares at her and checks the integrity of the large pumpkin he carries.

He protectively shifts the pumpkin under his other arm and boards the train. Lara follows.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Sitting with her hands on her knees, Lara leans out to better see up and down the train car aisle. Almost every passenger has a pumpkin.

She laughs and receives a few icy stares in return.

The train jolts into motion. She faces forward.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

The train finds its way out of the city and to the Hudson Valley where an Indian Summer has left trees gold and orange.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Lara lowers the magazine she reads as the Serious Man across the aisle from her polishes his pumpkin with a chamee.

LARA

It's a very nice pumpkin.

SERIOUS MAN

I bought it in Brooklyn.

He does not bother to make eye contact.

LARA

There are many pumpkins on the train.

SERIOUS MAN

You don't have one.

LARA

Should I? I'm from Iceland and sometimes I just don't know.

SERIOUS MAN

We're all going to Beacon to try to get Dante Magri to carve for us.

LARA

He's going to have a very busy afternoon.

SERIOUS MAN

He only chooses certain ones. Pumpkins or people. No one's quite sure which.

He starts rocking slowly back and forth with his pumpkin.

LARA

Oh.

EXT. BEACON STATION - DAY

The train glides to a stop at the Beacon Station. Sixty miles from New York City it could just as easily be a million with the enclosing mountains and clean flowing Hudson River.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Lara watches as the pumpkin people leave the train and disappear from her range of vision down the platform.

She glances down at the now ragged address in her hand, grabs her bag and rushes after them.

EXT. STREET, BEACON STATION - DAY

Lara trails the crowd from the station and down a narrow side street.

The town residents linger in doorways and windows staring at the parade of pumpkins.

EXT. STREET, ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Lara rounds a corner and stops short. There are at least a hundred people, all with pumpkins, standing outside a single storefront that bears the sign "Magri's Antiques and Used Books".

The shop door swings open as a disappointed patron with an untouched pumpkin exits.

Lara navigates the length of the line and passes this man at the midway point.

LARA

I'm sorry.

He grunts in response.

She continues down the line. No one speaks. No one looks at her. The Serious Man at the end of the queue turns his back on her to better guard his pumpkin.

Unsure of what to do now that she is in Beacon, Lara decides on the coffee shop across the street.

INT. ESTER'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Lara walks into the seemingly empty coffee shop which is all white clapboard and 1950's Formica. She sits on a stool at the counter that dominates the room.

LARA

Hello?

The door to the kitchen swings opens and SUE, a woman who has spent forty years trying to find the perfect shade of auburn, comes out and appraises the stranger.

SUE

Can I help you?

LARA

May I have a coffee? And do you know when the next north bound train comes?

SUE

Not until 9:00 tonight.

LARA

Oh.

SUE
Weekend schedule and they're doing
repairs. You get off at the wrong stop?

LARA
I followed the pumpkins.

SUE
That started three years ago. Dante made
the New York Times with this pumpkin with
a moth cut into it. Now every year they
show up.

LARA
Why?

SUE
They're New Yorkers and he offers the
Rolls Royce of jack-o'-lanterns. And, he
plays hard to get.

LARA
It's just a pumpkin with holes cut in it?

SUE
Is that a question?

LARA
I think so.

SUE
Hold on.

Sue ducks back into the kitchen and returns with a carved
jack-o'-lantern.

The design is beyond intricate with a a thready web of a
thousand separate cuts and a flexing spider.

LARA
Oh.

SUE
Don't dare tell anyone I have it. Last
year it took a state trooper and Mr. Lee,
the butcher, to get a guy out of here.

LARA
I won't tell.

Lara rotates the pumpkin; Sue scoops it out of her hands.

SUE
It's a siren's song.

She carries the pumpkin into the back room. A telephone begins to RING.

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

I've gotta get this. Help yourself to the coffee. Just don't let on to the health department.

Lara eases behind the counter and pours a cup of coffee.

The door slams opens and DANTE MAGRI enters. A lean young man who could have stumbled out of a Beardsley illustration locks the door behind him.

He stares at her for a long moment.

DANTE

You're new.

LARA

I got off at the wrong train stop. Why did you lock the door?

Dante moves aside the drawn blind covering the glass panels of the door. About a dozen people peer inside.

He drops the blind and takes the coffee that Lara holds out toward him.

DANTE

Thank you.

LARA

Are you the one that carves pumpkins?

DANTE

Do you want one?

LARA

No. I'm not sure what I'd do with it. And they might hurt me.

DANTE

Imagine how I feel.

He settles at the counter and motions over his shoulder to the crowd of pumpkin carriers. They now stand in front of the windows of the shop.

LARA

I saw the pumpkin you did for the lady who works here. She took it in back. She must have thought I was weakening.

Dante stirs sugar into his coffee and watches her hands as she talks.

LARA (CONT'D)

The pumpkin was very nice. I thought jack-o'-lanterns were just faces.

DANTE

A jack-o'-lantern can be anything you want. You've never done one?

LARA

No. From Iceland. How do you choose which one to carve out of all of them?

DANTE

Michelangelo said that "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." Sometimes. In pumpkin form. Sometimes I have clarity.

Dante gulps his coffee, puts down the cup and rushes from the diner.

Lara moves to the doorway and marvels as the crowd parts to let him back to his shop.

EXT. STREET, ESTER'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A STOCKY MAN with a small cart bearing pumpkins wheels past the door and Lara. She smiles and he shrugs.

STOCKY MAN

Just wait.

LARA

How much are they?

STOCKY MAN

What are your intentions?

LARA

I'd like to try to carve one myself. I feel like I'm missing something.

STOCKY MAN

Three dollars for this one.

He hands her a mottled one.

STOCKY MAN (CONT'D)

You'll end up ruining it anyway.

She fumbles out the money from her bag and swaps the dollar bills for the pumpkin.

LARA

How do you carve one exactly?

He opens his mouth to speak but there is an interrupting plop and smush and the sound of crying.

Across the street, one of the line pumpkins has met the sidewalk.

STOCKY MAN

Excuse me.

He rattles toward the scene of the accident as Lara closes the shop door.

INT. ESTER'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Sue waits behind the counter and studies Lara as she turns from the doorway.

SUE

You really want to carve one?

Lara nods and Sue gathers items. She presents the young woman with a tray, a knife and a ladle.

SUE (CONT'D)

You cut out an opening in the top, scoop out all the innards and then carve the shell. Save me the seeds and the pulp.

LARA

Thank you.

Lara sits at a table with a view of the street.

SUE

My sister is hanging new drapes and she wants my help. If anyone comes in tell them I'll be back in an hour.

Sue is off into the pumpkin crowd as Lara begins to cut.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

With dark paneling and an Edwardian desk, the antique shop seems more like Dr. Jekyll's study than a business.

Dante slices an intricate pattern into a pumpkin as a red-faced man studies the process. The man starts to speak but Dante lifts his hands off the pumpkin.

The man nods and Dante continues.

Dante sneaks a look out the window and can see Lara working on her own pumpkin. Laughing and gouging, she is having a much better time than he is with the process.

INT. ESTER'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Lara sets aside the tin tray full of seeds and flesh and considers her first artistic cut.

There are a few raised voices from the street and she notices the red-faced man exiting Dante's store with a jack-o'-lantern.

People thrust out money and pursue the man. He ignores them and continues down the street and out of sight.

The line starts to become linear again. There is some territorial shouting as the people and their pumpkins struggle for position.

EXT. STREET, ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Shoving. A few swung fists. Pumpkins explode on the pavement. People slide and slip and fight for their spot in a now non-existent line.

The door to the antique shop swings open and Dante strides out into the street.

The crowd goes still as Dante passes.

A persistent little bell sounds as the Stocky Man carts up his pumpkins. With money drawn, the crowd descends.

INT. ESTER'S COFFEE SHOP

Dante enters the shop, heads over to Lara and gives her a #2 pencil and small saw-bladed knife.

DANTE

Be careful. The knife is sharp.

He lowers his head and leaves before she can thank him.

Watching him retreat toward his shop, Lara rolls the pencil back and forth on the table.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTER'S COFFEE SHOP - EVENING

Still in the coffee shop at the window seat, Lara finishes her slice of pumpkin pie and studies the carved jack-o'-lantern that sits on the table in front of her.

The street outside is dark and the old fluorescents overhead pulse. A few stray diners enjoy the blue plate special at the tables adjacent to Lara.

She leans toward the window and can make out the line of people that still stretches down the street. The Serious Man has finally reached the front.

The door sign of the antique shop is flipped from OPEN to CLOSED, PLEASE COME AGAIN.

The weary pumpkin pilgrims disperse without a word. The Serious Man drops his pumpkin and stalks away.

After a moment the door opens and Dante emerges.

He waves to Lara and motions her to come.

EXT. STREET, ANTIQUE SHOP - EVENING

Burdened with the pumpkin, her bag and the carving knife, Lara wobbles across the street.

Dante leans in the doorway of the shop rubbing his neck. Noticing her balancing issues, he takes the knife from her.

LARA

Thank you for the things.

DANTE

How did it turn out?

She rotates the pumpkin to show a sort of gashed cutout that has some semblance of a shape.

LARA

It's a bird. I don't know why. I just thought I should do a bird.

DANTE

All right.

LARA

It's awful.

DANTE

It could look like a ghost if we put a candle in it. Come in.

He steps aside and then follows her into the shop.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - EVENING

Dante takes the pumpkin from Lara as he passes her in the doorway. He tosses the knife on the desk and finds a candle which he lights and positions inside the pumpkin.

Lara notices a small box on the desk near where the knife landed. She shifts her attention to her burning pumpkin as Dante places it on the windowsill.

LARA

It doesn't look like a ghost.

DANTE

No, it doesn't.

They stand side by side letting the candle burn.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Uhm, no it doesn't look like that either.

LARA

If anyone asks you can say a child did it.
(checking her wristwatch.)
And I should leave for the station soon.
The train comes at nine. Thank you.

DANTE

Where are you going?

LARA

To Poughkeepsie. To meet my future husband.

DANTE

You said "meet".

LARA

It's, I work in a hotel in the city and my work permit expires soon. I have to go back to Iceland, and twenty hours of night, unless I get a husband.

DANTE

How did you find this particular husband?

LARA

One of the girls in the kitchen at the hotel. He's her brother. He's gay and wants to live in the city but can't afford it. I have a place to live so...

DANTE

You should marry me instead.

LARA

What? I don't know you.

DANTE

You don't know this gay man from Poughkeepsie either.

LARA

But why would you want to marry me?

DANTE

My grandfather used to tell me that when he saw my grandmother for the first time -- she was on a red bicycle being chased by a dog -- that he couldn't breathe and didn't care. I can't breathe and I don't care how much of an idiot I make of myself. I usually do.

LARA

You don't know anything about me. I might be a serial killer.

DANTE

You'd be better with a knife.

LARA

But...

DANTE

If you want you can live in the spare room in back. I have a house. I won't touch you. I'm from Beacon I can wait.

LARA

I have to go.

More unsure than frightened, she backs away.

DANTE

Take this. Please.

He hands her the box on the desk as she retreats. The door slams behind her and he listens to her fading footsteps.

EXT. BEACON STATION - NIGHT

Gasping for breath, Lara jogs up the stairs to the wooden platform of the train station. She peers down the tracks and sees an approaching light.

She shifts nervously and then considers the box in her hands. She opens the lid.

The train rattles up and stops.

A few people straggle out onto the platform.

The train waits.

Lara stares into the box at the jack-o'-lantern. The carved design is that of a dove. It mirrors the crude version she had done on her own pumpkin.

She closes the box.

LARA

Oh.

She turns from the train and hurries off the platform.

EXT. STREET, ANTIQUE SHOP - NIGHT

She races up the dark street toward the antique shop. The lights go out just as she reaches the door.

Dante almost collides with her as he steps outside.

DANTE

Hi.

LARA

My name is Lara.

The train whistles far away.

DANTE

You missed your train, Lara.

He takes the jack-o'-lantern from her and offers her his arm. She takes it without hesitation.

The two walk off down the dark and pumpkin-stained street.

FADE OUT:

THE END