FADE IN:

OVER BLACK is the sound of laughing.

After a moment, we start to glimpse a faint view of a hand.
In the hands possession, a knife points directly at us.

It comes near, then above, out of view.

    JOSH (O.S.)
    There, I think I’m finished. Call me Picasso, because this is a masterpiece.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOSH, APRIL, and DWAYNE, all fifteen, are spread across the floor, carving pumpkins. Each with their own specific patterns.

They look to Josh’s Jack-o’-lantern, examining.

    APRIL
    I don’t think so, I’m not too sure
    About this one.

    JOSH
    (agitated)
    Yeah? Well... I’m not too sure about
    your face.

    APRIL
    I’m just not getting the scary goose
    bumpy feeling they’re supposed to give.
    It kind of looks like a cartoon.

    DWAYNE
    And slightly sad.

    APRIL
    Aww, a sad cartoon.

    JOSH
    Shut up.

    APRIL
    And those are weird looking eyebrows
    your pumpkin has too.
Josh grows frustrated.

   JOSH
What eyebrows?

   APRIL
...Those aren’t eyebrows? Never mind.

   DWAYNE
Oh those, no, they look like worms. Like worms have infested itself into Its head and they’re coming to get in yours too.

   JOSH
Guys stop! You’re totally raping my ideas. They’re strands of hair. It’s going across her face.

   APRIL
Oh. It’s a she?

   JOSH
Yeah.

   DWAYNE
How can you tell?

   JOSH
Well, what’s yours?

   DWAYNE
Mine’s an angry black woman. See the way she scowls. I named her Ebony.

   JOSH
Well, what do you think Chris?

CHRIS lies on a nearby bed, his hand feeling inside a bowl full of pumpkin pulp. He looks pensive.

   CHRIS
I don’t know.

They look at the un-carved pumpkin beside him, a lantern with no face.
JOSH
What a freak.

APRIL
Josh!

JOSH
Not Chris!...his pumpkin. It must feel so lonely, with no face. It’s a reject in its own society.

DWAYNE
Or a rebel.

A moment passes.

CHRIS
Anybody else think about what it’s like to be a pumpkin? I mean, you’re born in a wide spread open field where the sun just bathes over you. Enjoying yourself, with all your other pumpkin friends ya know. Everything’s cool, when somebody just rips you apart from all your fellow pumpkins, your family.

(with more intensity)
And then, as if that wasn’t bad enough, they cut a whole into you, ripping your guts out.

Chris takes a handful of pulp from the bowl.

CHRIS(CONT’D)
Its heart is in my hands.

The others share a look.

CHRIS(CONT’D)
I guess I’m the only one then.

There’s a sudden KNOCK at the door. Six year old ALEX walks into the room, rubs sleep out of his eyes.

JOSH
Hey Alex, why aren’t you in bed?
APRIL
We keeping you awake?

ALEX
Mommy didn’t read me a bedtime story.

DWAYNE
You can hang with us big guys then.

APRIL
Maybe Josh can read you a bed time story.

Alex shrugs, then slowly begins to cry.

APRIL
Oh my god, Alex what’s wrong?

ALEX
(in tears)
Have you ever heard Josh tell a bedtime story?

JOSH
What?! The others break into laughter.

JOSH
My stories are frikkin amazing okay.

APRIL
Stay here with us, we’ll tell you a story about our lanterns.

CHRIS
We will?

APRIL
Yes.

ALEX
Okay.

April leads Alex onto the bed.
ALEX (CONT’D)
I hope it has a happy ending.

CHRIS
Kid, there are a lot of things I wish had happy endings.

APRIL
Shut up... Now, I’ll go first. Then we’ll switch, leaving where each other left off. Here we go.

INT. CABIN – DAY

The curtains are closed, and the room is dark. Through the halls of the wooden cabin, comes a sinister looking lantern. Its hairpiece resembles that of an extreme bead head.

The lantern walks through the cabin.

APRIL(V.O.)
Once upon a time, in a place where lanterns could talk, and had lives of their own, there was a wicked, very cranky lantern who called herself... Auntie Ebony.

DWAYNE(V.O.)
What?!

APRIL(V.O.)
Shut up and let me tell the story.

DWAYNE(V.O.)
Fine.

APRIL(V.O.)
Anyway, there was also a sweet very young lantern by the name of Jackie, who lived with Auntie Ebony, the meanest of the lanterns.

AUNTIE EBONY
Jackie Lantern! Get in here!
Entering through the front door with a smile is JACKIE, bathed in the exterior sunlight. Birds trail her inside, vibrant multi-colored flowers grow along the walls.

JACKIE
Yes my dearest step mother.

AUNTIE EBONY
Where have you been!? I’ve been calling for you all morning!

JACKIE
Well, I saved a village from poverty and cooked a poor homeless man some food so he wouldn’t starve.

AUNTIE EBONY
Oh so you’ve been lollygagging again?

JACKIE
Whatever you say step mother dearest.

DWAYNE (V.O.)
(irritated)
Jesus Christ.

APRIL (V.O.)
Shut up. Anyway, Jackie was graciously helping Aunty Ebony prepare for the prince’s ball.

AUNTIE EBONY
Bitch, get over here and sole my dress! I need to look good for the prince.

Ebony attempts at a smile, revealing an absent tooth among many grimy ones.

JACKIE
Did you perhaps change your mind as to whether or not I could go along step mother?

AUNTIE EBONY
No!
JACKIE
You know mother, I think your anger conceals the real misery you hold inside. Please, let go of your anger and relish the pleasures nature can offer. I think you’d find you’ll be quite surprised.

APRIL (V.O.)
But Auntie Ebony wasn’t having any of it.

AUNTIE EBONY
You can suck on my stem and kiss my naturally black plump!

JOSH (V.O.)
That’s it, you’ve got to be kidding me.

INT. BEDROOM – NIGHT
Back to reality, Josh opposes April’s story.

APRIL
What?

JOSH
Besides the retarded name, that is a story for little girls, and Ebony is not a villain. She’s ghetto fabulous.

APRIL
Can any of you tell a better story?

DWAYNE
(butting in)
As a matter of fact, I can.

ALEX
So does the evil wicked step mother let her go to the ball?

DWAYNE
No, Alex, just forget about that story.

ALEX
But I want to know if Jackie Lantern
goes to the ball.

DWAYNE
Fine, I’ll just pick up where that awful story left off.

INT. CABIN – DAY

Where we last left our lanterns.

DWAYNE (V.O.)
Now, as Ebony, the mama lantern was about to reject Jackie’s invitation to the ball. Things in the house had begun to shake.

A minor quake begins to form below the house.

DWAYNE (V.O.)
Mirrors fell off counter tops, books off the bookshelves, and medicine out the medicine cabinets. The two lanterns soon realized-

AUNTIE EBONY
It’s an earthquake!

EXT. CABIN – DAY

Jackie and Auntie Ebony urgently exit the cabin.

DWAYNE (V.O.)
And as the lanterns began hopping out of the house. A high pitched shriek began to echo in the woods.

Jackie and Ebony wince in pain, as the noise trails around them from every corner.

DWAYNE (V.O.)
This noise was so loud, so piercing, that the birds inside had begun to explode one by one.

Blood splatters all over the walls.

JOSH (V.O.)
Oh my god.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Back in real life.

JOSH
Is that really an appropriate thing
to be telling my brother?

DWANE
Gotta grow up sometime.

JOSH
Shut up, let me tell now.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Jackie and Ebony are outside.

JOSH (V.O.)
Now, yes they heard the shrieking,
and yes they felt an earthquake, but
what they didn’t realize, was that it
was coming from the upstairs of
their own house.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The two lanterns hop along through the halls of the cabin.

JOSH (V.O.)
They searched and searched and
searched, until they finally realized
which room it was coming from.

Ebony opens one of the hallway doors room to find:

SEEDY PETE

In bed, smoking on a smoke pipe. He blows out a swell of
smoke.

SEEDY PETE
The deed is done my ladies. Now
it’s time to let my boys breathe...
Two feminine lanterns rise up from below the sheets, gasping heavily, in bliss.

ALEX (V.O.)
How do you know Seedy Pete is a boy pumpkin?

JOSH (V.O.)
Well according to his bedtime friends.

FEMALE LANTERN #1
Let’s just say...

FEMALE LANTERN #2
He has a nice succulent stem.

They licks their lips, seductively, both closing with a wink.

ALEX (V.O.)
Okay.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex sits in the bed, curious.

ALEX
But what were all those other pumpkins doing in Seedy Pete’s bed?

CHRIS
Well, they were... teaching Seedy Pete some new things.

ALEX
What kinda things?

CHRIS
Exercise things. He wanted to keep in shape.

JOSH
(interrupting)
Also Seedy Pete was going to be showing Ebony these things. Because Ebony, whose long time dream was to be famous, was getting
ready to go onto a reality show, called ‘America’s Next Top Lantern’.

APRIL
How did Ebony become the main character of the story, what happened to Jackie Lantern?

JOSH
She was too boring.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Ebony cleans the debris from Seedy Pete’s room.

JOSH (V.O.)
So as Ebony cleaned the mess from Seedy Pete’s wild activities, she was visited from her very own fairy god mother.

The FAIRY GOD MOTHER, with a pink silk dress flowing around her, stands before Ebony.

EBONY
Who the hell are you?

JOSH (V.O.)
The fairy God mother had promised to lead Ebony all the way to the finals, where the top two lanterns would stomp it out to become America’s next top lantern.

MONTAGE OF:

1. Ebony hopping intensely down a long lighted cat walk.
2. Ebony posing seductively for a photo shoot.
3. Ebony in a cat fight with another competitor, repeatedly yelling out “I ain’t scared a no po po. Call da po po hoe! Call da po po hoe!”

JOSH (CONT’D)
But the fairy god mother warned, she could only help so much, and that the last challenge would be up to Ebony alone.
Ebony and her last competitor stand before A JUDGE. The judge’s talking is overlapped with Josh’s voice over.

JOSH (V.O.)
Both stood there, excited, eager for the results. Myrtle considered what she would do with her new fame. Ebony, just wanted the judge stop talking.

Ebony rolls her eyes, hiding in a yawn.

JUDGE
And with that... America’s next top lantern is - Fertile Myrtle.

Myrtle breaks into hysteria, balling out in tears.

JOSH (V.O.)
Myrtle was so happy, a dream had come true for her. But for Ebony however... She took things into her own hands.

Ebony TACKLES Myrtle to the ground.

EBONY
Bitch! It wasn’t meant to be!
Jackie! Come help me!

JACKIE
(entering, throwing herself in)
That bitch is squash!

JOSH (V.O.)
So, not only did Ebony win the crown, Sort of. Her and her step daughter came together in this very activity, a catfight forming a bond that would last them a lifetime. The end.

APRIL (V.O.)
(after a long silence)
... You do tell bad stories.

FADE OUT.