

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.