

THE RAVEN WITCH

Written by

Luke Anthony Walker

Address: luke.ewoods@gmail.com
Phone Number: +447553814849

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT - 1691

A comet streaks across the starry night sky, above the moonlit treetops of a mysterious forest.

A MOB of enraged villagers storms through the woods, their fire torches lighting up the darkness as they march along a narrow path.

Leading the charge is HENRY, 30s, a burly farmer with a bushy, unkempt beard, and a visage as fierce as thunder.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The mob converges upon a grim thatched cottage nestled in a serene glade. Henry strides purposefully to the front door and delivers a mighty kick, breaking it down with a resounding SMASH.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The mob surges into the gloomy and rustic abode, scattering throughout the premises. Some hasten up a rickety staircase, scouring the upper level, while others ransack the lower floor, leaving chaos in their wake.

Torches flicker, illuminating every shadowy nook and cranny. The dwelling appears devoid of any occupants.

Henry comes upon a workbench and inquisitively shines his light upon it. The surface is adorned with scattered wood shavings and rudimentary carving tools.

Suddenly, a distant, chilling CRY of a child pierces the air. Henry bolts back outside, his urgency palpable.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Henry bursts out the front door, the rest of the villagers following close behind.

The piercing screams fade into silence. A hushed stillness falls over the villagers as they intently listen.

The distant CRY of a child echoes once more.

Without a moment's hesitation, Henry charges towards the origin of the sound, the rest of the mob hot on his heels.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Henry deftly navigates through the dense undergrowth, drawing nearer to the unrelenting SCREAMS of a child.

EXT. FARMLAND - NIGHT

The mob emerges from the dense woodland, stepping onto a vast ploughed field. The unsettling screams have ceased.

A prolonged silence hangs in the air before a faint CRY, that of a younger child, reaches their ears.

Henry desperately sprints across the muddy terrain. The rest of the villagers struggle to keep pace.

Reaching the far side of the field, Henry abruptly draws up, horror-stricken. Two young boys lie dead beneath an apple tree beside a babbling brook. Their ankles and wrists are bound with rope, and their hands tightly wrapped together with black ribbon.

At the edge of the brook, a cloaked and hooded FIGURE kneels, hands submerged in the water, facing away from Henry.

As the rest of the mob arrives, a solitary raven perched in the tree lets out a sharp SQUAWK, alerting the figure to their presence. With a start, the figure whirls around, their features concealed beneath the hood.

Henry's heart sinks as he realizes the figure is currently drowning a third, younger boy in the water. Desperation drives the figure's actions as they tighten their grip around the child's throat, forcing his head deeper into the water in a bid to hasten his demise.

In a blink of an eye, Henry discards his torch, lunges forward, and ensnares the murderer's neck in a vice-like grip. With determined strength, he forcefully wrenches the figure away from the boy and hurls them towards the waiting mob, who immediately restrain the struggling assailant.

Henry lifts the young boy from the water, his limbs bound by rope and ribbon. He cradles the child's lifeless body in his arms, his heart heavy with despair. Tenderly, he slaps the lad's pale cheeks, desperately hoping to revive him.

Miraculously, the boy's eyes flutter open, and he coughs, expelling water from his lungs. Henry's relief is overwhelming, a surge of exuberance coursing through him.

Drawing a small knife from his belt, Henry quickly severs the rope and ribbon binding the boy's cupped hands.

Resting in the child's palm is a simple wooden carving of a raven. Henry's gaze shifts to a section of the tree trunk where a wedge of wood has been noticeably chopped out.

Suspicion creeps into Henry's mind as he eyes the two dead boys lying nearby. Without hesitation, he slices through their restraints, liberating their bound hands. Both boys are grasping wooden raven carvings in their palms.

Rage contorts Henry's face as he scowls at the restrained cloaked figure. With utter contempt, he hurls all three carvings into the brook, casting them away.

Henry gently consoles the young lad he saved, their eyes mirroring sorrow and grief as they mourn the loss of the two boys.

A villager compassionately collects the boy from Henry's arms, wrapping him tenderly in a thick blanket.

Henry gathers a bundle of cut rope and strides purposefully toward the cloaked figure. He forcefully whips back their hood, revealing a beautiful YOUNG WOMAN with fair skin and flowing jet-black hair.

Their eyes meet, and Henry stares into her unblinking, alluring gaze with vengeance burning in his own.

Defiantly, she spits directly in his face, and cackles with laughter. Her rotted and decayed teeth stand out starkly against her otherwise stunning features.

Henry wipes away the vile phlegm, his disgust palpable. In a swift motion, he delivers a powerful headbutt to the bridge of the woman's nose, eliciting a resounding CRUNCH.

Instantly, she falls silent, her head drooping and her body going limp, held upright only by the restraining villagers.

Henry seizes the woman's long hair and brutally drags her across the ground, her body trailing behind him like a lifeless rag doll.

He hoists her off the ground and slams her mercilessly against the tree trunk. A pained groan escapes her lips, her consciousness fading in and out as blood streams from her mangled nose.

Henry wrenches the woman's arms around the back of the tree, securing her wrists and legs tightly with rope. Meanwhile, the mobilized mob swiftly gathers firewood, assembling it around the base of the tree in a makeshift pyre.

In a final act of disdain, Henry lifts the woman's drooping head and viciously spits in her face. A villager passes him a torch, and he ignites the waiting firewood, flames flickering to life.

Everyone backs away from the tree, their collective gaze locked on the unfolding spectacle, anticipation hanging thick in the air.

The fire rapidly grows in intensity, its voracious flames licking against the woman's smouldering clothes.

As the heat intensifies, she moans in agony, the searing fire awakening her senses, jolting her back to consciousness. In the midst of her suffering, she begins to rhythmically mutter, her voice taking on a chanting quality.

The raven takes flight from its perch, hovering anxiously in the air above her. Its wings beat frantically as it emits distressed SQUAWKS.

The woman's clothes catch ablaze, inflicting unbearable pain upon her. She screams in agonizing torment as the scorching heat chars her once-beautiful face and consumes her hair down to the scalp.

With her head thrown back, she intensifies her chant, locking eyes with the raven's piercing gaze. Her body convulses uncontrollably, her eyes rolling back to reveal the whites.

Flames consume her entirely, enveloping her in a fiery embrace. A final screech of agony rends the air before she falls silent, her lifeless form slumping to one side.

The raven's eyes undergo a transformation, turning from jet-black into a haunting pearly white before it takes off into the night sky.

Held by Henry, the young lad watches the macabre spectacle, the flickering flames reflecting in his smoke-glazed eyes.

INT. HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY - PRESENT

Dozens of colourful kid drawings adorn the walls of the contemporary family home. Toys and dirty laundry are scattered across the floor and stairs, creating an overall sense of disarray. By the front door, a couple of large, bulging rucksacks and a long carry case await.

EWAN, an adorable 5-year-old boy wearing a raincoat and a vibrant red beanie with his long blonde hair peeking out from underneath, stands forlornly at the bottom of the staircase.

BEN (O.S.)
I can't find him anywhere.

BEN, mid-30s, a humble and kind-hearted physics teacher with a bit of a temper problem, appears at the top of the stairs.

BEN (CONT'D)
She's going to be here any minute.
I'm sorry, Ewan, but it looks like
we'll have to leave without him.

Ewan's shoulders droop, and he lets out a whimper. Ben's heart sinks at the sight of the boy's sadness.

BEN (CONT'D)
It's okay, buddy. There's still
time. Maybe we'll find him yet.

Ben furrows his brow, lost in thought.

BEN (CONT'D)
I distinctly remember you having
him this morning. Then we had
breakfast, and after that, we
packed our bags.

He pauses, deep in contemplation.

BEN (CONT'D)
Perhaps he was accidentally packed
into one of the bags by mistake.
Let's check.

Ewan swiftly examines the bags by the front door, unzipping the long carry case.

BEN (CONT'D)
No, not that one.

Ignore him, Ewan proceeds to open the case.

Ben rushes down the stairs, nudges Ewan aside, and zips the case back up.

BEN (CONT'D)
Why do you never listen!?

Ewan appears upset, taken aback by his raised voice. Ben's demeanour softens, and he pulls the boy into a tender and comforting hug.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry for shouting, buddy. I know I promised I'd try not to anymore. But you understand, right? The carry case is delicate. You know you're not meant to open it, remember?

Ewan nods agreeably, acknowledging the rule.

BEN (CONT'D)
Come on then, lets see if we can find him.

Ben opens one of the rucksacks and begins rummaging through.

BEN (CONT'D)
Ah-ha. Here he is.

He pulls a teddy out from the bottom of the bag and hands it to Ewan. The little boy's face instantly lights up as he clutches the teddy close, his eyes fixating on a framed family portrait on the wall, featuring himself, Ben, and a blonde haired woman.

Outside, a car horn HONKS.

BEN (CONT'D)
She's here.

Ben gathers up the carry case and rucksacks, preparing to leave.

BEN (CONT'D)
Okay, lets go.

He opens the front door, and Ewan darts out, brimming with anticipation.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Ewan dashes excitedly toward a parked car with a blonde-haired woman sitting in the driver's seat.

He opens the back door and hops inside the vehicle.

INT. CAR - DAY

Behind the wheel is ALICE, early 20s, a demure and wholesome young lady whose hairstyle and fashion sense reflect those of the woman in the family portrait.

EWAN

Hi, Alice.

He climbs into a booster seat with his teddy and buckles up.

ALICE

Hey, sweetie. You and your dad all ready to go?

EWAN

Yeah, he's coming.

Ben approaches the vehicle, cumberingly carrying all the bags.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Ben opens the boot, revealing a small backpack and a bulky cool-box already inside. He meticulously loads their luggage into the trunk, taking particular care with the carry case.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ben shuts the boot, BANG.

ALICE

(to Ewan)

And how's Mr. Hugglesworth today?
Is he excited about the trip too?

Ewan lifts the teddy to his ear and pretends to listen.

EWAN

He says he was a little worried earlier because we couldn't find him, and he was scared he would be left behind, but then Daddy found him, and now he's all better. Thank you very much.

ALICE

Wow, sounds like quite the morning.
Good job your Daddy found him, huh?

Ben opens the front passenger door.

Alice retrieves a thick drawing pad and a hefty set of colouring pens from the front seat and hands them to Ewan.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Here you go, sweetie. I got you a new set especially for the trip.

Ewan's face beams with joy, and he eagerly opens his new pens. Ben settles into the passenger seat.

BEN
(to Ewan)
What do we say, Ewan?

EWAN
(politely)
Thank you, Alice.

He earnestly begins doodling in the pad.

BEN
(to Alice)
Hey.

ALICE
Hey.

Ben pulls his seatbelt out but hesitates before buckling up.

BEN
Now, are you absolutely sure you don't mind driving? It's quite a long journey, with a fair stretch on the motorway. I honestly don't mind taking us in my car instead, if you prefer.

ALICE
No. I organised this trip so you and Ewan could relax and enjoy yourselves. I've got to brave driving on the motorway someday, and today's that day.

BEN
Alright, if you're sure.

He fastens his seatbelt. Alice starts the engine, shifts the vehicle into gear, and cautiously pulls away.

EXT. MOTORWAY - DAY

Alice's car speeds along the bustling motorway, effortlessly weaving between the fast-flowing traffic.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ewan has drifted off to sleep in his seat with Mr. Hugglesworth on his lap.

Alice is concentrating on driving, her eyes intently focused on the road ahead. Ben gazes out the window, observing all the cars they are steadily overtaking.

BEN

Well, it didn't take you long to get the hang of it. You're driving pretty confidently for a first-timer.

Alice realizes he's right, glancing at the speedometer.

ALICE

Oh, yeah. You know, I completely forgot all about it. I'm just eager to get us there, I guess. Motorway driving isn't as scary as I thought. I don't know what I was so worried about.

Ewan stirs, adjusting his position. His teddy slips from his hand and lands in the footwell. Ben notices and reaches down to pick it up. With care, he delicately places it back on his son's lap.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I assume trying to leave the house without Mr. Hugglesworth didn't go to plan then. What happened?

BEN

I tried, but he got so upset, and I just didn't have the heart to put him through it.

ALICE

Maybe he's not ready yet. You shouldn't push it.

BEN

I know, but it's been six months now, and he still can't go anywhere without it. I was going to pretend to find it in the bag once we got there. I just wanted him to at least leave the house without it for once, for his own sake.

ALICE

It's understandable why he's so attached to it though. It was the last gift she ever gave him. But he'll learn to cope without it in time. You'll see.

Ben sighs wearily, and Alice glances at him with concern.

ALICE (CONT'D)

How've the two of you been holding up anyway? Things any better?

BEN

We have our good days and our bad days, but things are improving... slowly. He's been really content when doing his drawings, and he's talking a lot more of late too, and not just through Mr. Hugglesworth. But he still just doesn't listen to me sometimes. He just flat out ignores me. I try not to get annoyed, but it's just been so hard without her, you know? Between my teaching and not having family around us to help, it's challenging, for the both of us.

He looks at Alice with the upmost gratitude.

BEN (CONT'D)

I genuinely don't know how I would've coped these past few months without your help. I can't thank you enough for all the meals you've prepared for us, and all the babysitting Ewan you've done. Especially when you took care of him when Mary was near the end. I'm so thankful he didn't have to see his mother suffer the way she did.

He gently touches her shoulder with appreciation, and Alice responds with a warm, adoring smile. Ben's hand lingers for a moment before he abruptly withdraws it.

ALICE

I made a promise to always look out for you both, and I intend to keep that promise. We may have only been friends for a few years, but Mary was very special to me. I loved her. We were like the sister neither of us ever had. She was family to me. You all were, and still are.

Ben warmly smiles.

BEN

I'm just glad we've got you in our lives, Alice. Ewan needs a female influence in his life, now more than ever, and I'm so grateful you're providing that for him. Your like his loving Aunty Alice, and always will be.

Alice smiles, masking a trace of disappointment beneath the surface.

ALICE

Whenever you need me, I'll be there
- for the both of you.

She spots an 'End Of Motorway' road sign up ahead.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Looks like we've reached the end of the road. Shame. I was sort of starting to enjoy it.

EXT. MOTORWAY - DAY

The vehicle leaves the motorway, transitioning onto a slower-paced adjoining road.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Alice's car travels along a picturesque country road, breezing past a sign that reads 'Welcome to Cornwall.'

INT. CAR - DAY

Ewan remains peacefully asleep in his seat. Alice and Ben gaze out the windows at their surroundings, puzzlement etched on their faces. The area is uninhabited with dense woodland flanking both sides of the road.

ALICE

Were the heck is it? We couldn't have past it already, could we?

She glances at the navigation system, which displays 'You have reached your destination.'

BEN

I don't see how.

Ben's keen eyes suddenly catch sight of a narrow dirt driveway and a thatched rooftop barely visible behind a towering wall of bushes.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hang on. I think we might have just past it.

He gestures out the back window.

ALICE

Really?

Alice brings the car to a gradual stop. Glancing in the rear-view mirror, she spots the elusive rooftop.

BEN

It looked like there was a driveway back there.

ALICE

Good job you saw it. I would've kept on driving.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

The car reverses back along the road. The indicator light blinks, and the vehicle smoothly takes the turn down the driveway.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

The car parks in front of the 17th-century cottage, once ransacked by villagers. Though renovated and modernized, it appears neglected and in dire need of attention.

Ben and Alice exit the vehicle. The dismay on Alice's face reveals her disapproval with the sight before her.

ALICE

This better not be it. It looked much nicer on the website. Maybe this isn't the right place after all.

She retrieves her phone and begins scrolling through her emails.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Where was that email? It had pictures.

Ben spots a plaque on the building, mostly concealed by overgrown vegetation. He moves closer to investigate.

BEN

Did the property have a name?

ALICE

Yeah. Something cottage. It was a name of a bird, I think.

(scrolling on phone)

It's all here somewhere.

Ben removes the obstructing vegetation, unveiling the property's name - Raven's Cottage.

BEN

Was it Raven's Cottage by any chance?

ALICE

Yes. That was...

She spots the plaque, her disappointment evident.

With purpose, Alice strides over to the front door, lifts the doormat, and retrieves an old iron key from beneath it.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Yep. This is definitely the place.

Her mortification is palpable.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry about this, Ben. This is a serious case of 'not as advertised'. The pictures they posted must have been taken years ago. We really don't have to stay here. I'm sure we'll be able to find a bed and breakfast or something in the nearest town.

BEN

What, and leave this perfect location? No chance. Besides, it's not so bad, and it might be a lot nicer on the inside. Don't judge a book by its cover and all that.

Ben encourages her to unlock the door. Alice inserts the key into the slot and turns it with a emphatic CLUNK.

The front door CREAKS open, revealing a gloomy, sparsely furnished livingroom that does little to enhance Alice's initial impression.

BEN (CONT'D)
Okay, I admit it's not the best of openings, but let's at least give it the first ten pages.

A soft SNAP of a twig nearby suddenly grabs their attention.

Ben and Alice turn toward a thicket of dense bushes beside the building. RUSTLING noises emanate from the undergrowth.

ALICE
What is that?

BEN
I don't know.

He cautiously takes measured steps toward the bush.

BEN (CONT'D)
But if this place has got rats, then that's a deal breaker for me.

At a safe distance, he stoops down to take a closer look.

A black cat abruptly bursts out of the bush, startling Ben, causing him to fall backwards. The cat darts towards Alice, who adeptly steps aside, letting the animal zoom past her.

Ben gets to his feet, dusting off his hands.

BEN (CONT'D)
Don't suppose the website said anything about there being a cat, did it?

ALICE
No. It did not.

She eyes the cat with suspicion as it disappears into the surrounding woodland.

BEN
Probably belongs to some distant neighbour somewhere around here. At least that should mean there aren't any rats.

They both peer into the open doorway.

BEN (CONT'D)
Come on then, lets check it out.

Alice hesitates, casting a quick glance back at the car.

ALICE
What about Ewan?

BEN
He'll be fine. Let him sleep a
little longer. Enjoy the piece and
quiet while you still can.

He motions for Alice to enter the cottage first.

BEN (CONT'D)
Ladies first.

Alice steps inside.

BEN (CONT'D)
The next surprise can jump out on
you this time.

She smirks.

ALICE
How gallant of you.

Ben follows closely behind.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice draws back the heavy curtains, flooding the room with sunlight. It's a homely and tidy space, with minimal rustic décor, and a faint layer of dust covering every surface.

BEN
You see. It is nice...er on the
inside.

She's still not impressed, running her finger along a dusty coffee table.

ALICE
If you say so.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben and Alice enter the small, worn-down kitchen, furnished with a microwave and kettle resting on the counter, accompanied by a shabby old oven and a modest dining table.

Alice opens a few cabinets, surveying their contents, finding only a sparse collection of kitchenware. She tests the oven, turning various knobs to no avail.

ALICE

Well, it's a good job I brought plenty of pre-prepared meals for us all, because we're not going to be doing much cooking in this kitchen.

She tries the sink tap, twisting the faucet. The pipes briefly RATTLE before water spurts out, settling into a gentle, clear flow.

ALICE (CONT'D)

At least there's clean water.

Ben tests the light switch, and a single hanging bulb overhead casts a soft glow.

BEN

And we've got electricity. As long as the toilet works, then I'd say we're all set. Besides, it's only for two nights.

ALICE

I guess.

She sniffs the air, detecting a musty scent.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Though it could definitely use a little airing out.

She attempts to open a window, but it refuses to budge. Ben tries next, but it remains stubbornly closed. Alice decides to unlock and open the back door instead.

EXT. BEDROOM - DAY

Alice stands by the window of the dinky bedroom, peering out at the back gardens grassy lawn extending to the dense woodland beyond.

The sound of a toilet FLUSHING.

BEN (O.S.)

It's all good.

Ben appears in the doorway.

BEN (CONT'D)

The toilet passed the flush test
with flying colours. We're staying.

ALICE

Alright. If you're certain

Alice turns away from the window.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Well, I suppose this is my room
then.

She gestures toward the single mattress bed.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You okay sharing the double bed
with Ewan in the other room?

BEN

Yeah, I suppose I'll have to. What
other choice is there?

A suspenseful silence ensues as they briefly lock eyes, both
contemplating the alternative sleeping arrangements. Alice
breaks the tension.

ALICE

I'm going to go wake Ewan up, and
then maybe we have some lunch?

Ben nods in agreement. Alice smiles and gracefully passes him
in the doorway.

He steps up to the window, contentedly gazing toward the
clear, blue sky.

BEN

(to himself)
Perfect.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Alice exits the cottage and heads toward her car.

She opens the back door and finds Ewan still asleep in his
seat. Suddenly, Alice jumps in fright as she spots an elderly
lady peering through the car window on the opposite side.

Alice hurriedly unbuckles Ewan and lifts him out of his seat,
cradling him protectively, as the lady begins to make her way
around the vehicle.

MOON, mid-60s, a cordial, harmless-looking bohemian woman with knotted long grey hair and grubby bare feet, steps into view. She exudes an aura of spiritual tranquillity as she addresses Alice.

MOON

My apologies. I did not intend to startle you, my dear. I was merely admiring the little one sleeping so peacefully. So precious. Is he yours?

Ewan stirs, opening his eyes. Alice holds him even closer.

ALICE

Yes. Yes, he is.

Ben emerges from the cottage.

BEN

Hello. I thought I heard voices.

MOON

Greetings. I am Moon. Who might you be?

BEN

Ben. Ben Harris.

He shakes Moon's hand, which is not her usual custom.

BEN (CONT'D)

And this is Alice and Ewan.

Alice shares a wry smile with Moon as Ben affectionately ruffles Ewan's hair.

BEN (CONT'D)

(to Ewan)

You going to say hello to the lady, buddy?

Moon moves in closer to greet Ewan, but he shyly tucks his face into Alice's shoulder, clutching his teddy tightly.

BEN (CONT'D)

(to Moon)

Sorry, he's just woken up.

MOON

No need to apologize. He's just a little shy.

She reaches out and playfully wiggles Ewan's hand.

MOON (CONT'D)
 (to Ewan)
 Hello there.

Ewan peeks up at her.

MOON (CONT'D)
 (to Ben)
 Lovely, isn't he?

She continues to gaze intently at Ewan. Feeling somewhat uneasy, Alice subtly shifts the boy away from Moon.

ALICE
 So, is that Mrs. Moon or...?

MOON
 No. Just Moon.

ALICE
 Oh.

An uncomfortable silence hangs in the air.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Well, can we help you with something?

MOON
 No, thank you. I reside across the glen there--
 (gestures in a direction)
 --and simply came by to greet you. Though your presence here is rather unexpected. I believed nobody lived in this cottage anymore.

BEN
 We don't live here. We've just rented the place for a couple of nights for a stargazing weekend away. There's actually going to be a comet visible tomorrow night which only passes by the Earth every three hundred and...

Moon interjects.

MOON
 Thirty-three years. Yes, I am quite aware of its imminent return.

Ben is mildly impressed. Moon looks skyward.

MOON (CONT'D)
It shall be a truly magical evening.

Her gaze lingers on the sky. Alice and Ben exchange curious glances.

MOON (CONT'D)
Anyhow.
(shifts focus back to them)
I bid you a fond farewell and wish you the most joyous of weekends. It was wonderful to meet you all.

With a warm smile, she turns and walks away.

MOON (CONT'D)
Until we meet again.

BEN
Bye.

Moon enters the woodland.

MOON
(calls out)
Oh, and while you're here, you really ought to take a stroll through the woods. They're truly enchanting this time of year. Just be sure to stay out of the cornfields. The local farmer does not appreciate trespassers.

BEN
(calls out)
Okay. Thanks.

Moon soon disappears from view among the trees and foliage.

BEN (CONT'D)
(to Alice)
Well, she was an odd one.

Ben heads to the rear of the car and opens the boot. Alice glares in Moon's direction with suspicion.

ALICE
Yes. Very peculiar.

Ben retrieves the large cool-box from the vehicle.

EWAN

I'm hungry.

ALICE

Okay, sweetie. Let's have lunch.

She kisses his forehead, locks the car with the key fob, and they all make their way back inside the cottage.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben stands at the sink, washing dishes, while Alice clears up after lunch.

BEN

That was absolutely delicious, Alice, seriously. Mary used to rave on about your home cooking all the time. I always thought she was just exaggerating, but after all the meals you've made us these last few months, I can see she wasn't. You have a gift.

Alice bashfully grins as she wipes down the table.

ALICE

Thanks. But if you thought that was nice, just you wait until you try what else I've got in here.

She playfully pats the lid of the cool-box.

BEN

I literally can't wait. You could be a professional chef, you know? You could even open your own restaurant or something.

Alice scoffs.

ALICE

I don't know about all that. Sounds far too stressful for my liking. I enjoy cooking for those I care about, but other than that.

BEN

Where did you learn to get so good anyway?

ALICE

My grandfather taught me when I was a kid. He was a chef in the army in his prime, and a darn good one too. Whenever I visited him during the holidays, we'd spend hours together in his kitchen, cooking up all sorts of traditional recipes he'd picked up along his travels.

She gazes out the window, lost in reminiscence.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Some of the happiest memories of my childhood.

Ben is about to inquire further, but Alice quickly changes the subject.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Would you like to go for walk in a minute?

BEN

Umm, yeah. Why not.

He calls out to Ewan in the other room.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hey, buddy. You want to go for a walk in the woods?

No reply.

BEN (CONT'D)

(calls out)
Ewan?

Still, there's silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

(to Alice)
You see. Completely ignores me.

ALICE

I'll go get him ready.

She exits the kitchen. Ben finishes up with his dishwashing. He glances out the window and notices the black cat sitting in the middle of the lawn, attentively watching him.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice enters from the kitchen.

ALICE
Hey, sweetie. We...

She is surprised to find Ewan not in the room.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Ewan?

She stands at the bottom of the staircase and calls up.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Ewan? You up there?

No response.

Alice ascends the CREAKY steps.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Ben steps out the back door, approaching the cat with cautious steps and a non-threatening demeanour, not wanting to spook the animal.

BEN
Hey there, kitty.

He halts in front of the staring cat, which is as still as a statue, and crouches down.

BEN (CONT'D)
Where do you live then? Is this
your home? Hey?

Ben tentatively reaches out to smooth the animal, but just before his hand makes contact, the cat lets out a HISS and swipes at him. Ben quickly retracts his arm, narrowly avoiding the creature's sharp claws.

BEN (CONT'D)
Oh, you little bugger.

Standing up, he tries to shoo the cat away, but it refuses to budge.

BEN (CONT'D)
Go on. Get out of it.

He flails his arms, attempting to appear intimidating. The creature HISSES again and darts off into the woods.

Ben heads back indoors, cursing the cat under his breath.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Alice reaches the top of stairs.

ALICE

Ewan?

No response.

She opens the door to her bedroom and peeks inside, but he's not there.

A CREAKY floorboard emits from the adjacent room.

She opens the other door and enters.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Alice finds Ewan seated on the floor surrounded by his new pens, completely engrossed in a picture he is drawing. His teddy rests on the edge of the double bed, a silent observer to his creativity.

ALICE

Hey, sweetie. Didn't you hear me calling?

Ewan remains fixated on his artwork, seemingly oblivious to Alice's presence.

She crouches beside him and gently touches his shoulder.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Ewan?

He stops drawing, lifting his gaze to meet Alice's, finally acknowledging her.

EWAN

Sorry. I was just finishing my drawing.

She affectionately strokes his hair.

ALICE

That's okay. Let's take a look.

Adjusting her position, Alice leans in closer to admire Ewan's vibrant creation.

The drawing depicts a child holding hands with a man and a woman, while a blonde-haired lady rests in a bed beneath a prominent hospital red cross.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Wow. Is this us?

EWAN
Yes. That's me.
(points to the child)
And that's you and Daddy.

He gestures toward the figures of the man and woman.

ALICE
And is that your Mummy?

She points to the lady in the bed.

EWAN
Yes, when she was poorly.

ALICE
You must miss her, yeah?

Ewan's head nods solemnly in agreement.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Me too, sweetie. Me too.

She enfolds Ewan in a comforting embrace.

ALICE (CONT'D)
But, you know people are never truly gone after they die. Just because a person's spirit leaves their body, it doesn't mean they're not still here with us. Their life force lives on, just in a different way.

Filled with affection, Alice gazes deeply into the boys doleful eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Your Mummy loves you very much, Ewan, and no matter where you are, she will always be with you. Okay?

She looks for affirmation. Ewan offers a soft smile.

EWAN
Okay.

Alice plants a tender kiss on his forehead.

ALICE

Right, you want to go for a walk in the woods with me and your Dad?

EWAN

In the enchanting woods?

She smirks.

ALICE

Yes. In the enchanting woods.

Ewan collects his teddy and holds it close to his ear, pretending to listen.

EWAN

Mr. Hugglesworth said he'd like that very much too. Thank you.

ALICE

Come on then, get your coat on.

EWAN

Woohoo!

With infectious enthusiasm, he excitedly dashes out of the room. Alice follows closely behind.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Ewan bursts out the back door, clad in coat and wellies. His exuberance propels him toward the woodland at the bottom of the garden, teddy in tow, his thick blonde hair bouncing with every step.

Ben, also sporting wellies, exits the cottage, followed closely by Alice.

ALICE

(calls out to Ewan)
Hey, wait for us, sweetie.

Ewan forges ahead without a pause, disappearing into the woods. Alice hastily shuts the back door, leaving it unlocked in her rush to catch up.

Once Ben and Alice venture into the woodland, and are clear out of sight, Moon cautiously emerges from her hiding spot behind a tree. Ensuring the coast is clear first, she enters the garden, and makes her way towards the back door.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

Ewan ambles through the serene woods, humming to himself with playful delight. Ben and Alice follow, captivated by the natural beauty surrounding them.

Feeling a chill in the air, Alice zips up her jacket.

ALICE

We probably should've brought his hat; it's a bit chilly.

Alice, in her regular shoes, struggles to traverse the muddy terrain.

BEN

He's fine without it. But you probably should've considered bringing a pair of wellies with you though.

ALICE

It didn't even cross my mind. I'm not sure I even own a pair. I'm not much of the outdoorsy type.

Alice suddenly slips on a muddy patch, but Ben swiftly catches her around the waist, preventing her fall. They share smiles and longing glances in a close embrace before Ben abruptly releases his hold, his thoughts betraying him.

BEN

You okay?

ALICE

Yes, thank you.

Ewan has wandered ahead, leaving Ben and Alice trailing behind, a subtle unease lingering between them.

BEN

Thanks again for organising all this. You were right. A little time away is exactly what Ewan and I needed. I haven't seen him this cheerful since... well, since before Mary fell ill.

He lowers his head solemnly, the weight of the past evident.

ALICE

You're more than welcome. But I mainly organised this trip for you.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

I know how much you've been looking forward to seeing this comet, and simply viewing it in your back garden with all the light pollution would've been a shame. It's literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I'm actually pretty excited about it myself.

Ben smirks, reflecting.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

BEN

It's just nice to talk to someone who has a little appreciation for astronomy again. I've missed that since Mary died. I've tried getting Ewan interested, but he's still too young, and don't even get me started on my students. Whenever I try to teach them about astronomy, all I see is these bored teen faces, more interested in what's trending online than learning about the wonders of the universe.

Ewan picks up a stick and starts playfully swiping it through the air while walking.

BEN (CONT'D)

I had this one student recently who didn't even know the difference between astronomy and astrology. I explained that one is a legitimate branch of science dealing with celestial objects, space, and the physical universe as a whole, while the other is a pseudoscience believing celestial bodies' positions and movements emit mystical energies influencing people's lives here on Earth – which I likened to the absurd notion of ghosts or the healing power of crystals. Naturally, the conversation in class then shifted to ghosts and who did or didn't believe in them. The percentage was alarmingly high unfortunately.

They notice Ewan has come to a halt up ahead, fixated on the ground, poking at something with his stick.

BEN (CONT'D)
What have you found there, buddy?

Approaching, they realize he is standing over a carcass of a raven, its body torn open, entrails spilling onto the ground.

ALICE
Get away from it, Ewan.

She guides him aside, and they scrutinize the gruesome dead bird.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What do you suppose happened to it?

BEN
Don't know. Probably some animal, I guess.

He encourage them to move on.

BEN (CONT'D)
Come on, lets just keep going.

Alice takes Ewan's hand, and they continue onward.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Ben, Alice, and Ewan reach the edge of the woodland, facing a towering, dense cornfield.

BEN
Wow, you can see why it's called Cornwall, can't you?

ALICE
Which way now?

BEN
Well, we're certainly not going in there.

He gestures toward the imposing cornfield. They scan the surroundings, considering their next move.

ALICE
Maybe we should just head back to the cottage.

BEN

Hang on--
 (whips out mobile phone)
 --lets check the map.

He activates a map app on his device, and they both lean in to peer at the screen.

Ewan catches the sound of CHILDISH GIGGLES emanating from the cornfield. Ben and Alice remain oblivious to the noise - they can't hear it. Letting go of Alice's hand, Ewan fixates on the dense corn, a smile playing on his lips.

Ben busily swipes his finger across the screen, engrossed in the map.

BEN (CONT'D)

If we head that way, we can walk parallel to the cornfield and then loop back around to the cottage.

ALICE

Sounds good. Hopefully it's not too muddy.

Ben stows his phone in his pocket, while Alice glances around for Ewan.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Where's Ewan?

They both scan the area, but he's nowhere in sight.

ALICE (CONT'D)

He was right here.
 (calls out)
 Ewan?

Silence.

BEN

(calls out)
 Where are you, buddy? Now's not the time to ignore us.

No reply.

Ben spots something on the ground just within the cornfield. With urgency, he steps in and picks it up - it's Mr. Hugglesworth. Panic sets in.

BEN (CONT'D)

(calls out)
 Ewan, where are you?

ALICE
 (calls out)
 Ewan.

Still no response.

BEN
 We have to find him.

ALICE
 We should split up. You go that
 way--
 (gestures in one
 direction)
 --I'll go this way.

They dash off in separate directions through the rustling
 corn, both vociferously calling out for Ewan.

SOON AFTER.

Alice bustles through the imposing cornfield alone.

BEN (O.S.)
 (from a distance)
 Ewan.

ALICE
 (calls out)
 Ewan, can you hear me?

She faintly hears Ewan's INDISTINCT CHATTER somewhere nearby.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Ewan?

With quickened steps, she moves toward the sound.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Alice steps into a muddy semi-circular clearing nestled
 within the edge of the cornfield. The barren ground encircles
 a blackened dead tree next to a babbling brook.

Ewan stands by the tree, his back to Alice, fixated on the
 water, murmuring to himself.

ALICE
 There you are.

He doesn't react to her voice.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 (calling out to Ben)
 I found him.

Relieved, Alice trudges through the thick, SQUELCHY dark mud to reach him, caking her shoes in earth. She crouches beside Ewan, turning him towards her.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 What are you doing, sweetie? You can't just run off like that. Your Dad and I were really worried.

EWAN
 I'm sorry. I was just playing with the boys.

ALICE
 The boys?

Ewan nods at his reflection in the water. A bird SQUAWKS nearby. Alice looks up into the tree. A single raven is perched on a branch, observing them, its eyes a haunting pearly white. The creature CAWS.

Alice notices Ewan is grasping something in each of his clenched fists.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 What've you got there?

She gently unfolds both his hands, unveiling two of the 17th-century carvings of ravens. The wood exhibits significant signs of aging, dampness, and darkened hue.

EWAN
 I think they want me to take them, but I can't hear them very well.

Several regular, black eyed ravens swoop into the clearing and perch in the tree, joining White-eye.

ALICE
 (to Ewan)
 Let's just put these back where you found them, shall we?

She casts the carvings into the brook.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Come on, your Dad will be worried.

Taking his hand firmly, Alice trudges back through the mud, unaware of the barefoot child footprints at the water's edge.

More ravens descend, settling in the tree. The piercing SQUAWKS of White-eye reverberate through the air, joined by the cacophony of the others. Alice scoops up Ewan, her clothes smudged by his muddy wellies, and quickens her pace.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Alice hastens through the corn, clutching Ewan tightly, the echoing SQUAWKS creating a sense of pursuit.

Abruptly, she comes to a stop, startled, finding herself face to face with a double-barrel shotgun held by a mysterious figure.

The squawking abruptly ceases.

FRANK, 50s, a stocky farmer with a thick, untamed beard and a face as fierce as thunder, stands before them, his gun aimed squarely at Alice's head.

FRANK
Bugger me blind.

He lowers his weapon, relieved he didn't pull the trigger.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I bloody nearly just blew your
sodden head off.

Ewan, frightened, buries his face into Alice's shoulder.

Frank eyes her suspiciously.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Do I know you?

ALICE
No. I don't see how.

FRANK
Then what you doing on my bloody
land?

A lone raven glides overhead. Frank aims his weapon, tracking the bird's flight.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(to Alice)
Cover your ears if I was you.

Alice turns her back, shielding Ewan's ears with her hands. Frank pulls the trigger - BOOM!

MEANWHILE.

Disoriented amidst the corn, Ben comes to an abrupt stop, his senses jolted by the distant gunshot. A moment of indecision crosses his face before he rushes toward the sound, clutching Ewan's teddy, his expression marked with worry.

MEANWHILE.

A lifeless raven plummets from the sky, landing directly in front of Alice and Ewan, its entrails spilling out. Frank unhooks a spiked metal rod from his belt and steps over to the dead bird.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Sodding pests, always eating up my
corn every year they are.

He thrusts the rod through the animal, skewering its carcass. Disgusted, Alice takes a step back, clutching Ewan to her.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Worse than ever this past week.
Killed dozens of the buggers, I
have, but more and more keep
showing up every day.

He attaches the rod back onto his belt.

FRANK (CONT'D)
At least the wife makes nice juicy
pies out of them. As long as you
don't mind a few crunchy bones.
About all the old crone's good for,
truth be told.

Noticing the dark mud on Alice and Ewan's footwear, Frank's expression turns deadly serious.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You've been there, haven't you? The
place with the petrified tree.

Alice nods, and Frank takes a step closer, a stern look on his face.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You'd do well to stay clear of it.
I certainly do. Gives me the heebie-
jeebies that tree does.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

My family's worked this land for over two hundred years, and nothing has ever grown from the wretched earth in that place. Many folk have tried to remove that tree over the years, but all have failed. I've tried myself a couple of times, but its bark's as hard as stone, and its wood tougher to crack than steel. It's cursed, I tell you.

He leans in, emphasizing the gravity of his words.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Did you see it? The white-eyed raven, I mean. Was it there?

ALICE

Yes.

FRANK

No ordinary bird that. Legend in my family says it's dwelled here for as long as we have, if not longer, and it never dies. Always thought it was a load of old codswallop myself, but it's been here for as long as I remember, ever since I were a young lad, and yet it still lives. I must have shot it a hundred times over the years, but the sodden thing always survives. It can't be killed.

A RUSTLING in the cornfield interrupts them. Frank swivels, levelling his weapon.

Ben emerges, freezing as he's confronted by the barrels of Frank's shotgun.

FRANK (CONT'D)

And here's another one asking to have their bloody head blown off.

Ben raises his hands in surrender, holding Mr. Hugglesworth. He positions himself protectively in front of Alice and Ewan.

BEN

Don't hurt us, okay. Please, just let them go, and you can keep me.

A tense moment ensues before Frank eventually lowers his gun.

FRANK

Put your sodden hands down, man. I ain't going to hurt no one. Worse than the bloody wife you are. Always with the hysterics she is.

Ben complies, dropping his arms.

BEN

What was that gunshot I then?

FRANK

Pest control.

He shows Ben the impaled raven on his rod.

FRANK (CONT'D)

But more to the point. What you lot think you're doing running around my corn? You ain't here with that hippy, are you? 'Cause I already warned her to stay away from that place, and to keep off my land.

BEN

Place?

ALICE

(to Frank)

No. We're not here with anyone else. We're just staying at a nearby cottage for the weekend. We're sorry for trespassing.

FRANK

Nearby cottage? You talking about Raven's Cottage?

BEN

Yes.

FRANK

Thought that place been abandoned. Haven't been no one living there since old man Miller popped his clogs a few years back. Heard some relative inherited the property, but its stayed empty, until now.

BEN

I guess the owner must have decided to start renting it out as a holiday home or whatever.

Concerned for Ewan's well-being, Ben checks on him, gently ruffling his hair.

BEN (CONT'D)
You doing okay, buddy?

Ewan timidly peeks up from Alice's shoulder. Ben hands him his teddy, comforting the boy.

ALICE
(to Frank)
This hippy you mentioned. Is it the grey-haired lady who lives on the other side of the glen? Goes by the name Moon.

FRANK
Called herself something ridiculous like that, yeah. But she don't live there. She's camping. Showed up about a week or so ago. Strange one she is, always wandering the woods picking flowers with her bloody cat, if you can believe it. I told her, I don't care what she gets up to, each to there own and all that, just as long as it ain't on my land.

BEN
This cat. Was it black?

FRANK
Yeah. Seen it have you?

BEN
Couple of times.

Frank's attention is caught by a distant CAW.

BEN (CONT'D)
Okay, we'll be on our way now then, leave you to your...work. We apologize for trespassing, I promise it wont happen again. Now, if you could just point us in the right direction, that would be a great help.

Frank gestures with his shotgun.

FRANK
That way to Raven's Cottage.

Ben guides Alice and Ewan in that direction.

BEN
(to Frank)
Thanks.

Frank watches them disappear among the dense corn.

FRANK
(to himself)
Bloody city folk.

Another distant CAW. Frank turns towards the sound, and stealthily moves through the corn with his shotgun raised.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Alice stands patiently by the WHIRRING microwave, reheating one of her pre-cooked meals.

Ben and Ewan are seated at the set table. Ben is engrossed in checking the weather report on his mobile device while Ewan joyfully draws colourful artwork.

EWAN
Do you like my picture, Daddy?

Without looking up from his phone, Ben responds.

BEN
Yeah, it's another good one, buddy.

Disappointed by his father's lack of interest, the young boy shows his creation to his teddy instead.

Alice's gaze casually wanders out the window. At the bottom of the garden, she can just about make out a single raven perched in a tree, watching the cottage.

The microwave PINGS.

ALICE
Okay. Clear the table boys--

Using a tea cloth, she removes the hot dish from the microwave.

ALICE (CONT'D)
--It's ready.

Ben and Ewan promptly tidy away the pens and paper. Ewan is about to dispose of some scrap paper into the bin.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Not in the bin, sweetie. Just leave it on the side for now. We can recycle it when we get back.

Ewan complies, placing the paper on the counter. While his son is not looking, Ben discreetly tries to set Mr. Hugglesworth aside, but Ewan quickly realizes and retrieves the teddy, sitting with him on his lap.

Alice places the steaming dish on the table, takes a seat, and starts dishing-up.

BEN

Smells scrummy. What is it?
(sniffs)
Fish pie?

ALICE

Yes, but not just any fish pie.
It's actually called Stargazy pie.

Ben is chuffed by the name.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I thought it quite fitting, seeing as we're here star-gazing. Although, in the traditional recipe, the fish heads are left on, and they poke out through the crust, so they appear to be gazing to the stars.

EWAN

Eww.

Ben pulls a comical, disgusted expression for Ewan's benefit.

ALICE

(to Ewan)
Yucky, huh?

She serves him a portion.

ALICE (CONT'D)

But I promise it's truly delicious. As it happens, it was one of your mummy's favourites. I use to make it for her almost every time she came around for dinner.
(pause)
This is actually the first time I've made it since...

Alice's voice trails off as she becomes emotional, unable to finish her sentence. Ben reaches out, placing an empathic hand on her shoulder.

EWAN
Since my Mummy died?

Alice composes herself, taking a deep breath.

ALICE
Yes. Since she died.

She wipes her tears away.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What you both waiting for? Tuck in.

They all begin to eat. Ben and Alice share an understanding smile, silently acknowledging the weight of their shared grief.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ewan is snugly tucked-up in the double bed, dressed in pyjamas, clutching his teddy. Ben, also clad in pyjamas, lounges above the sheets beside his son, immersed in reading a bedtime story.

BEN
(reading)
We have calcium in our bones. Iron
in our veins. Carbon in our souls.
And nitrogen in our brains.
(yawns)
Ninety three percent stardust with
souls made of flames. We are all
just stars that have people names.

Alice pops her head around the door.

ALICE
Hey, boys. Just wanted to say
goodnight before I take a shower.

EWAN
Night, night, Alice.

ALICE
Goodnight, sweetie. Goodnight, Mr.
Hugglesworth.

Ewan holds his teddy to his ear, pretending to listen.

EWAN

He says - pleasant dreams.

Alice warmly smiles and then shifts her attention to Ben.

ALICE

Could I possibly talk to you about something before you turn in?

BEN

Yeah, sure. What about?

ALICE

Oh, nothing really. Just something I've been thinking about. We'll talk about it after my shower.

BEN

Okay.

She leaves, and Ben continues reading to Ewan.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alice concludes her steamy shower in the poky bathroom. She turns off the faucet and wraps herself in a towel.

Wiping away the condensation from the misted mirror, she scrutinizes her reflection, examining the brunette roots peeking through her dyed blonde hair.

Alice runs a brush through her hair and adjusts the position of her towel until she's satisfied with her appearance.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

Alice exits the bathroom, flicking the light off as she leaves. She notices two sets of watery child footprints trailing from the bathroom up to Ben and Ewan's closed bedroom door then continuing on down the staircase.

Curiosity piqued, Alice steps up to the closed door, quietly opens it, and peeks inside.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ben is reclined on the bed, fast asleep, the open book resting on his lap. Ewan is nowhere to be seen, his teddy still lying on the bed.

Alice hears Ewan's GIGGLES coming from downstairs.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

Alice stands at the top of the staircase, peering into the darkness below. A profound silence envelops the space.

ALICE

Ewan?

No response.

She descends the steps slowly, each one CREAKING beneath her feet.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Alice turns the light on, discovering Ewan absent from the room. GIGGLES emanate from the dark, shadowy kitchen.

ALICE

Ewan?

She warily moves toward the sound, following the trail of wet footprints. The RUSTLE of paper and the CLATTER of a couple of pens being dropped breaks the silence.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alice flips the light switch, illuminating the room. Ewan is seated at the table, his eyes closed in concentration as he happily doodles a vibrant, scribbly picture.

The trail of footprints leads to two pulled-out chairs, where two pieces of paper rest on the table, each with a black pen placed on top.

ALICE

Ewan?

His eyes snap open, halting his scribbling.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What are you doing down here in the dark? You should be in bed, sweetie.

EWAN

Sorry. We were playing a game. Drawing without looking. It's fun.

He smirks, gazing at his creation.

EWAN (CONT'D)
 Mine isn't very good, though. I
 couldn't see what I was doing.

He resumes drawing.

ALICE
 When you say 'we', do you mean you
 and Mr. Hugglesworth?

EWAN
 No. The boys. They were trying to
 tell me something, but I still
 can't hear them properly. So, I
 told them to write it down instead.
 But I don't think they know how to
 spell, so I told them to draw it.

They both glance at the two turned-over pieces of paper.

EWAN (CONT'D)
 I haven't seen their pictures yet.

Slightly apprehensive, Alice collects the two pieces of paper
 and flips them over to take a look without Ewan seeing what's
 on the other side. Her expression shifts to trepidation when
 she sees what is depicted - rudimentary drawings of a
 menacing, scraggy woman, with a bird on her shoulder sketched
 all in black.

EWAN (CONT'D)
 Can I look?

Alice abruptly crumples up the drawings and tosses them into
 the bin. Ewan is disappointedly annoyed.

EWAN (CONT'D)
 Hey, I didn't get to see.

ALICE
 Come on, enough of this. Big day
 tomorrow. Time for bed.

She ushers Ewan out of the kitchen and switches off the
 light.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

The sun rises above the horizon, casting its golden glow upon
 the expansive, weathered property.

The front door opens, and Frank emerges, geared up to embark
 on another bustling day tending to his farm.

From within the house, an indistinct woman's voice RANTS.
Frank rolls his eyes.

FRANK
(to himself)
What's she blathering on about now.

He hesitates, then steps back inside.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(calls out)
You what?

More unintelligible RANTING.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(calls out)
Alright, alright. Don't get your
knickers in a twist.
(to himself)
You nagging, old badger's arse.

He exits, SLAMMING the door behind him.

Far-off CAWS grab Frank's attention. He spots several ravens circling above his cornfields in the distance.

His expression darkens, and he purposefully strides toward an aged wooden barn.

EXT. BARN - DAWN

Frank swings open the barn door and swiftly disappears inside.

Moments later, he reappears, armed with his shotgun and spiking rod. With determination etched on his face, he heads toward the cornfields, loading his weapon as he goes.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Alice steps out of her room, freshly awakened. The watery footprints have naturally evaporated. She approaches Ben's bedroom door and gives a gentle knock.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Ewan is alone in the room, seated cross-legged on the floor with his teddy, his undivided attention fixed on something in the corner.

EWAN

(hushed)

I still can't hear what your saying, you know. You need to speak louder.

The door opens, and Alice pops her head inside.

ALICE

Good morning, sweetie. Where's your dad?

Ewan offers a nonchalant shrug.

EWAN

He wasn't here when I woke up.

ALICE

Oh.

(pause)

You okay? What you up to?

EWAN

Playing.

He playfully wiggles Mr. Hugglesworth.

ALICE

You coming down for breakfast?

She extends her hand.

EWAN

Umm, not yet.

ALICE

Okay. I'll call you when it's ready.

She leaves and heads downstairs. Ewan turns back to the corner, his gaze fixed.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - DAY

Ben stands at the sink, water running, dressed in his daytime attire. He diligently scrubs mud off Alice's and Ewan's footwear, the dark earth swirling down the drain.

He glances out the window and notices the black cat in the middle of the garden, staring back at him.

Alice enters.

ALICE
Good morning.

BEN
Morning.

She realizes what he is up to.

ALICE
Awww, thanks. You didn't have to do that.

BEN
It's no trouble. It's the least I could do for you for finding Ewan yesterday.

She flicks on the kettle.

ALICE
Coffee?

BEN
Please.

Alice prepares the mugs. Meanwhile, Ben continues scrubbing, stealing a glance out the window. The cat is nowhere in sight.

BEN (CONT'D)
This mud on your shoes is so thick and dark; it's practically black. What were you two walking through?

ALICE
Oh, It was just this little muddy area beside a stream at the edge of the cornfield.

Alice opens the cool-box.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You ready for breakfast?

BEN
Double please.

She starts prepping breakfast for all of them.

BEN (CONT'D)
Sorry about last night by the way. I must have fallen asleep while you were still in the shower.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

You said there was something you wanted to talk to me about?

ALICE

Oh, it can wait.

There's a KNOCK, KNOCK at the front door. They exchange uncertain glances, both unsure of who it could be, before Alice leaves to answer it.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice opens the front door. Moon stands on the doorstep, holding a wicker basket brimming with juicy red apples.

MOON

Greetings, my dear. A welcoming gift for you and your family.

She hands the basket over.

ALICE

Oh, thank you?

MOON

I wove the basket myself.

ALICE

Really?

(admires craftsmanship)

It's very good. Would you like it back?

MOON

You keep it. Consider it part of the gift.

An uncomfortable silence lingers.

ALICE

Um, well, we were just about to sit down for breakfast, so...

MOON

Not for me, thank you dear. I have already eaten. But a nice cup of tea would be most welcome.

She invites herself in, gracefully stepping past a confounded Alice.

ALICE

Uh, okay. Please come in...I guess.

Alice closes the door behind them.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Moon settles into a seat, her demeanour composed and expectant.

MOON
I shall await my tea here.

She gets comfortable, scrutinizing her surroundings.

MOON (CONT'D)
Charming little cottage, isn't it?

Alice offers a polite smile and carries the basket into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Alice enters, intending to inform Ben of the situation, but he is already aware, having discreetly listened in.

BEN
(whisper)
I heard.

Alice sets the basket down and starts readying a tea cup. Ben subtly leans to one side, glancing towards the doorway to ensure Moon remains out of earshot.

BEN (CONT'D)
(whisper)
Just put plenty of cold water in her mug. It'll get her out of here quicker.

The kettle, previously put on, reaches a rolling boil. Alice gathers the milk and sugar, pondering Moon's tea preferences.

ALICE
(to herself)
How does she take it?

With a pensive look, she heads back to the livingroom.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice enters from the kitchen.

ALICE
 (to Moon)
 Sorry, I forgot to ask you how...

Moon is nowhere to be seen. A sudden CREAKING of a floorboard resonates from above, causing Alice to instinctively gaze up to the ceiling. Concern etches across her face, propelling her to swiftly ascend the staircase.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Moon sits cross-legged on the floor beside Ewan, tenderly holding his teddy as they engage in a hushed conversation. The tranquillity shatters as Alice bursts into the room.

ALICE
 (to Moon)
 What do you think you're doing?

Alice gathers Ewan protectively into her arms.

MOON
 My apologies. I meant no harm.

Moon rises from the floor, using the bed frame for support.

MOON (CONT'D)
 I was just on my way to use the bathroom when I overheard this little one playing.
 (adoringly gazes at Ewan)
 So very precious.

She offers Mr. Hugglesworth back to the boy, but Alice intercepts the teddy first, snatching it away.

An uneasy silence settles in the room.

MOON (CONT'D)
 You know, I'm afraid I shall have to pass on that cup of tea, my dear. Lots to do today. I really ought to be on my way.

Moon gracefully manoeuvres past her, exiting the room. Alice follows closely behind.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

The front door swings open, and Moon exits the cottage. Alice stands in the doorway, holding Ewan, her expression tinged with suspicion.

MOON

I wish you all the most pleasant of evenings.

She gaze up at the sky.

MOON (CONT'D)

Though I do hope the changing weather doesn't spoil your family's experience.

Alice follows Moon's gaze, observing the clouds drifting overhead. Moon raises her hand and waves with a single flowing motion.

MOON (CONT'D)

Farewell.

She turns and strolls off into the woodland. Ewan waves goodbye, and Alice closes the door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben, having overheard the disturbance, patiently awaits Alice's arrival. She enters, carrying Ewan.

BEN

What happened?

ALICE

She just went upstairs on her own. Said she needed the bathroom, but I found her in your room with Ewan.

Alice gently places Ewan on the table.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(to Ewan)

What was she saying to you, sweetie?

EWAN

She asked if me and Mr. Hugglesworth liked it here, and if we were excited about the comet tonight. She was nice.

Alice's concern persists, evident in her expression.

ALICE

Did she say or do anything else?

Ewan shakes his head. Ben steps in to reassure Alice.

BEN
 Don't worry. He's alright.
 (to Ewan)
 Aren't you, buddy?

He playfully ruffles his son's hair.

BEN (CONT'D)
 She's just a strange old lady with
 some serious boundary issues. She's
 harmless, and she was nice enough
 to give us these.
 (gestures at apples)
 They look pretty good.

Ben selects an apple from the basket, gives it a quick rinse,
 and indulges in a hearty bite.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Mmm, they taste pretty good too.

He takes an even larger bite, munching away for a moment.
 Suddenly, he starts choking. Alice's eyes widen in fear, but
 before she can react, Ben forcefully coughs up a chunk of
 apple.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Excuse me. Went down the wrong way.

He clears his throat and takes another bite.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (mouthful)
 Lets just forget about it, yeah? I
 don't want anything to spoil this
 day for us. Least of all some batty
 old hippy.

Alice forces a agreeable smile, concealing her lingering
 doubts.

INT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Frank prowls through the towering cornstalks, shotgun at the
 ready. The spiking rod, hooked onto his belt, showcases a
 grisly collection of impaled ravens.

A nearby SQUAWK grabs his attention. He spies a raven on the
 ground, preoccupied in tearing through a corn husk, oblivious
 to his presence.

Taking aim, Frank fires his shotgun with a resounding BOOM.

DISTANT CAWS echo as other startled ravens take flight, disturbed by the blast.

Approaching the fallen bird, Frank detaches his spiking rod. The animal suddenly twitches and lets out a SHRIEK, still clinging to life.

Frank regards the suffering creature with disdain. He places his boot firmly on the raven's head, applying pressure until its skull CRUNCHES beneath him. Its black eyes bulge out of their sockets as silence falls.

With an air of satisfaction, Frank impales the carcass on his rod and resumes his stealthy advance through the cornstalks, shotgun raised.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Under the muted sunlight, Alice reclines on a blanket, engrossed in a book, while Ben, standing in the middle of the lawn, consults the weather forecast on his mobile phone. His brow furrows as he studies the overcast sky.

Pocketing his phone, Ben joins Alice on the blanket, his gaze scanning the clouds with a hint of worry.

BEN

The weather report suggests we won't have clear skies until tomorrow morning. There's a few breaks in the clouds right now, but if it gets any worse, we won't be able to see a thing tonight.

Alice remains absorbed in her reading, seemingly unperturbed. Ben's attention then falls upon the cardigan draped over her shoulders.

BEN (CONT'D)

That cardigan you're wearing. Was it Mary's?

Finally acknowledging him, Alice looks up from her book and scrutinizes the garment.

ALICE

You know, I think it is. Mary and I used to swap clothes all the time. I guess I never got the chance to return this one. I can take it off if you'd prefer.

She prepares to remove the cardigan.

BEN

No, it's okay. Keep it on. It suits you.

She smiles warmly, returning to her book. Ben's longing gaze lingers on Alice as she reads. Sensing his stare, she glances over at him. Ben quickly adverts his gaze to the sky.

Suddenly, Ewan bursts out of the open back door, teddy in tow, exuding playful energy.

EWAN

Can we set up the telescope now?

BEN

It's a bit early for that, buddy. The comet won't be visible for a few hours yet.

EWAN

But we want to use it to look out my bedroom window at something.

BEN

Out the window? At what?

EWAN

You'll see.

Ben hesitates, expressing reluctance.

EWAN (CONT'D)

(to Alice)

Can we, Alice? Please.

ALICE

It's not up to me, sweetie. It's your Dad's telescope.

Her focus shifts back to her book.

EWAN

(to Ben)

Please, Dad. Can we?

BEN

I don't know, buddy. It's safe where it is right now. Remember, it was a birthday gift from Mummy, and I don't want anything to happen to it, especially before tonight. We'll get it out later, okay?

Undeterred, Ewan launches into a relentless plea.

EWAN

Please, please, please, please,
please, please, please, please...

Ben, worn down by the persistent pestering, finally caves.

BEN

Okay, okay. Just please stop. I'll
set it up in the bedroom, and carry
it back down to the garden later.

EWAN

Woohoo.

Ewan joyfully dashes back inside the cottage, exclaiming:

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

He said yes!

BEN

(calls out to Ewan)
But we must remember to act
responsibly around it, Ewan. Okay?

No reply.

Weary, Ben rises to his feet and turns to Alice, her head
buried in her book.

BEN (CONT'D)

Looks like I'm setting up the
telescope then. Where are the car
keys?

ALICE

They're by the front door.

Ben heads inside the cottage.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Have fun.

Alice continues reading, briefly glancing up from her book to
scan the tree line at the bottom of the garden, finding no
sign of any ravens.

INT. BARN - DAY

The door swings open, and Frank strides into the dimly lit
barn, his spiking rod laden with raven carcasses.

Leaning his shotgun against a wooden beam, Frank flips a switch, illuminating the space with the glow of a solitary hanging bulb. Its light reveals a macabre scene: a makeshift raven butchering station.

Frank unclasps the rod, placing it on a blood-stained workbench adorned with an array of knives and a sturdy meat cleaver. Feathery remnants from previous butchering sessions litter the floor, alongside various worn buckets and a sizable basket.

Shrugging off his jacket, Frank dons a stained apron and rolls up his sleeves. With methodical precision, he slides the lifeless birds from the rod, tossing them one at a time into the basket containing the rest of the day's haul.

Frank extracts the final carcass, and sets the rod aside. With a malevolent glint in his eye, he proceeds to vigorously pluck its black feathers, each motion resonating with a twisted sense of satisfaction.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Ben finishes assembling his sophisticated telescope, securing it onto a sturdy tripod stand. He gazes fondly at his cherished possession, lost in a moment of nostalgic reflection.

Ewan bursts into the room, laughter bubbling as he clutches his teddy.

BEN

It's ready, buddy. So, what was it you wanted to see outside the window then?

Paying no attention, Ewan joyfully circles the telescope as if engaged in a playful game of chase.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ewan, could you please stop? Responsible behaviour around the telescope, remember?

Undeterred, Ewan continues his merry circuits, inching closer to the telescope with each pass.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ewan, be careful. Can you hear me? I said stop.

Ben reaches out to intervene, but just as he does, Ewan trips over one of the tripod legs and tumbles to the ground.

The telescope wobbles, teetering on the brink of imbalance. Ben desperately scrambles to catch it, but it's too late. With a crash, the telescope topples over, slamming onto the unforgiving floor.

The lens cap pops off on impact and rolls beneath the bed.

Ewan freezes, sprawled on the floor, his eyes wide with fear as he looks up at his father. Ben, aghast at the fallen telescope, shifts his glare to his son and erupts.

BEN (CONT'D)
You clumsy little boy!

With urgency and caution, Ben rights the telescope as Ewan gingerly gets to his feet.

BEN (CONT'D)
Why don't you ever listen?!

Ewan wells up, hanging his head in shame while Ben assesses the damage to the telescope.

In the doorway, Alice appears.

ALICE
What's all this shouting about?

Ewan rushes to Alice, wrapping his arms around her waist.

EWAN
Mummy.

Alice comforts the distressed child, surprised by being addressed as "Mummy."

Ben, equally surprised by the term of endearment, tears his gaze away from the telescope, his heart breaking at the sight of his frightened son.

ALICE
(to Ben)
What happened?

BEN
He accidentally tripped over the telescope stand, and it fell over.

ALICE
Oh, dear. Is it broken?

BEN
I'm not sure yet.

Ben adjusts the telescope, pointing it out the window towards the horizon. He peers through the viewfinder, and fine-tunes the focus.

Alice notices a small scrape on Ewan's hand.

ALICE

Aw, did you hurt your hand when you tripped over?

Ewan nods despondently, and Alice gently blows on the wound to soothe him.

BEN

It's okay--

He looks up from the viewfinder, relief on his face.

BEN (CONT'D)

--It's not damaged.

Ben kneels in front of Ewan, seeking forgiveness.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for shouting at you, Ewan. That wasn't fair of me. Are you okay? That was quite a tumble you took there.

Ewan glumly presents his scrape. Ben takes his hand and inspects the injury.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well, it doesn't look too bad. I think you'll live.

He playfully ruffles his son's hair.

EWAN

But that's what you thought about Mummy too. You said she'd live, you promised she would, but she didn't. She died.

Ben is at a loss for words, overcome with gut-wrenching heartache.

ALICE

(to Ewan)

Come on, sweetie. Lets go put a plaster on that baddy of yours.

Alice lifts Ewan, offering Ben a compassionate smile.

EWAN
Sorry, Daddy.

Ben stands up, tears welling in his eyes.

BEN
I'm sorry too, buddy.

Alice leaves the room and descends the staircase with the boy.

Ben composes himself, wiping away his tears. Suddenly, his attention is drawn to something outside the window – a distant plume of smoke rising from a far-off field.

He adjusts the telescope's position accordingly and peers through the viewfinder, fine-tuning the focus.

THROUGH TELESCOPE - A roaring bonfire beside a small yurt and parked campervan comes into focus. Moon steps out of the yurt, carrying a wicker basket. She closes her eyes and moves rhythmically around the flames, silently mouthing words. With each step, she tosses dry leaves from the basket into the fire, causing the flames to flicker and spark as they combust.

A gentle CREAKING floorboard emanating from within the bedroom grabs Ben's attention. He looks up, scanning the room, but finds it empty. He dismisses it with a shrug and returns to the telescope.

THROUGH TELESCOPE - Moon has ceased her pacing, now standing motionless like a statue, staring directly at Ben.

Ben quickly looks up, a puzzled expression on his face. He inquisitively peers at the distant campsite, trying to gauge its distance. It seems implausible for her to have been able to see him from that far away.

With hesitation, Ben dares to look back through the viewfinder.

THROUGH TELESCOPE - Moon is nowhere in sight, and the roaring bonfire's intensity has died down.

Ben gazes out the window, curiously contemplating what just occurred.

BEN (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Weird.

Attempting to replace the lens cap, Ben realizes it's missing. He scans the floor but it's nowhere in sight.

Getting down on his hands and knees, he spots it under the bed.

While retrieving the cap, Ben spots an object farther back beneath the bed, hidden in the shadows. Attempting to reach it, he finds his arm not quite long enough.

Ben lays flat on his stomach and inches his way under the bed, extending his arm toward the object. Suddenly, the black cat springs out of the darkness and viciously scratches his hand. With a yelp of pain, Ben recoils, accidentally banging his head as he shimmies back to inspect the wound.

He grimaces at the sight of his bleeding hand, blood trickling from each of the deep claw marks. Manoeuvring to a safer distance, he cautiously peers under the bed. The cat HISSES menacingly as it guards the object.

BEN (CONT'D)
You little shit.

Ben rises to his feet, mindful not to let blood drip on the floor. He lifts the telescope with his good hand, and gently places it safely in the corner. He backs out of the room, clutching his injured hand, keeping a wary eye on the bed.

Upon stepping onto the landing, Ben shuts the door behind him, trapping the cat inside.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ewan sits on the counter beside the sink while Alice tends to his grazed hand, applying a plaster from a small first-aid kit.

Ben strides in, and Alice notices he is nursing his hand.

ALICE
Not you as well.

Turning on the sink tap, Ben washes his bloody wound. Alice winces, observing the severity of the injury.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Ouch. How on earth did you manage
to do that?

BEN
That--

He restrains himself, mindful of his language with Ewan present.

BEN (CONT'D)
 --darn cat just scratched me.

ALICE
 What? Just now upstairs?

BEN
 Yeah. Little bugger was hiding
 under the bed. It's still in there
 now. I've trapped it inside.

Ben turns off the faucet and delicately dries his hand.

ALICE
 Let me see to that.

She gently takes his hand and tends to the wound.

EWAN
 Can I see the cat?

BEN
 No, it's vicious.

EWAN
 Does it live here?

BEN
 No, it doesn't. It belongs to that
 lady Moon, and it's time for it to
 go home to her--

Alice finishes bandaging Ben's hand.

BEN (CONT'D)
 --right now.

Ben scans the room, on the lookout for something. He clocks a traditional wooden broom, seizes it, and makes his way out of the kitchen.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Keep this door shut. I'm going to
 try to make it to go out the front
 door, and I don't want it running
 in here with you two guys.

EWAN
 Be careful, Daddy?

Ben smiles at his son, closing the kitchen door behind him.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Ben thrusts the front door wide open, then ascends the staircase, brandishing the broom like a weapon.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

All is silent and still. The door partially opens, and Ben cautiously pokes his head inside. He surveys the room, but the cat is nowhere in sight.

Ben's attention zeroes in on the bed. He fully opens the door and creeps inside, broom poised for action. He squats at a safe distance and peers under the bed.

The cat is still standing guard over the mysterious object.

BEN

Time for you to leave, my furry
little friend.

The cat HISSES in response.

BEN (CONT'D)

Likewise.

He carefully manoeuvres the broom's bristles beneath the bed, attempting to coax the animal out.

BEN (CONT'D)

Come on, out you go.

The feline resolutely stands firm, emitting a low, menacing GROWL.

BEN (CONT'D)

Alright, you asked for it.

He withdraws the broom and thrusts it straight into the cat's face. The creature goes into a wild frenzy, YOWLING and grappling with the thick bristles. In a panic, Ben hastily yanks the broom out, but the cat clings onto the end with its sharp claws.

The feral animal lunges at him with lethal intent. Instinctively, he drops his weapon and swiftly manoeuvres his body, narrowly dodging the attack. The cat lands on the floor and scurries back beneath the bed.

Ben, infuriated, reaches his breaking point. He seizes the broom, positions himself as close as he dares to the bed, and peers underneath. In the shadows, only the cat's furious glaring eyes are visible.

BEN (CONT'D)
Just fuck off back to your owner,
you little shit.

He swings the broom forcefully under the bed, connecting with the animal with a resounding WHACK. The cat YOWLS in pain and swiftly flees the room.

Abandoning his weapon beneath the bed, Ben springs to his feet and gives chase.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

The cat scampers down the staircase, closely pursued by Ben, and bolts out the front door.

BEN
And don't come back!

He forcefully SLAMS the door, exhaling a sigh of relief.

BEN (CONT'D)
(calls out)
It's gone. You can open the door
now.

He swiftly returns upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Ben retrieves the broom and is about to head back downstairs when he suddenly stops, remembering something. He drops to all fours and peers under the bed. The mysterious object remains shrouded in the shadows.

Guiding the broom behind the object, he propels it out from beneath the bed with one swift motion. Now bathed in daylight, Ben's face twists with disgust as he gazes upon the object.

A lifeless raven fledgling, with thistle leaves entangled in its feathers, lies at his feet.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ewan remains perched on the counter, clutching his teddy tightly. Alice stands beside him, offering comfort to the anxious child.

Ben strides in with a stern expression, placing the broom back in its spot while holding a wrapped-up carrier bag.

ALICE

That sounded like quite a commotion. Are you alright? We were both worried.

BEN

I'm fine.

She spots the bag.

ALICE

What's that?

BEN

A dead bird that...blasted cat was either eating or playing with under the bed. Explains why it was so stubborn to leave.

ALICE

A bird? Can I see it?

BEN

If you like.

He opens the bag, revealing its contents to Alice. She appears disturbed by the sight of the lifeless fledgling. Ben hastily wraps it back up and strides out of the kitchen. Shortly after, he returns, standing in the doorway.

BEN (CONT'D)

Where are the car keys?

ALICE

Why? What are you going to do?

BEN

I saw where that Moon woman is camped through the telescope. So I'm going to go over there to show her this--

(holds up bag)

--and this--

(holds up bandaged hand)

--and tell her to keep her damn cat away from this cottage before it hurts Ewan or you as well.

A sense of unease crosses Alice's face.

ALICE

I don't think you should go. Just toss it into the bushes outside and forget about it.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

The cat's gone now anyway, and where only here for one more night. It's not worth the trouble, and I thought you said you didn't want anything to spoil this evening. Especially because of her.

Ben gazes at her for a beat.

BEN

Are you going to tell me where the keys are or not?

ALICE

Not. I mean, you're not even insured to drive it or anything.

BEN

Fine, I could do with a walk anyway. If you do see that cat, make sure to keep Ewan away from it. Trust me. It's dangerous.

He exits the kitchen.

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

I'll be back soon.

The sound of the DOOR SHUTTING behind him. Alice wears a troubled expression, lost in thought.

EWAN

I'm hungry.

She snaps out of it.

ALICE

Okay, sweetie. I'll make a start on dinner. Your Daddy can have his when he gets back.

She opens the cool box and rummages through.

INT. BARN - DAY

Frank stands hunched over the workbench, its surface marred by blood and scattered feathers. Numerous ravens, headless and plucked, dangle by their feet along a makeshift line.

With weary hands, Frank plucks the feathers from the final raven in the basket. Setting the bird flat on the bench, he wields the cleaver with precision, separating the creature's head from its body with one swift motion.

He tosses the detached head into a bucket filled with dozens of others, and exhales a sigh of relief, his task complete.

Suddenly, the distant CAWS of ravens pierce the air, causing Frank to freeze in his tracks. His face twists with pure hatred, the intensity of his visceral emotion palpable.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The door swings open with force as Frank bursts outside, fixing a fierce gaze into the distance. A cacophony of CAWING ravens circles ominously over the cornfield.

Returning to the barn, Frank sheds his apron with resolve. Moments later, he emerges, clad in his jacket and armed with his shotgun and spiking rod. He strides purposefully toward the cornfield, loading his weapon, muttering bitterly under his breath.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DUSK

Alice sits cross-legged beside the coffee table, lost in thought, her attention drifting away from the game of Happy Families she's playing with Ewan. Mr. Hugglesworth holds his own hand of cards. Suspiciously, Alice's gaze shifts towards the staircase.

EWAN

It's your go, Alice.

She remains unresponsive, her focus fixed on the stairs.

EWAN (CONT'D)

Alice. Your turn.

Snapping out of her reverie, Alice lays down her cards.

ALICE

Sorry, sweetie. I just need to use the toilet real quick.

She heads up the steps, calling back over her shoulder.

ALICE (CONT'D)

And don't let Mr. Hugglesworth peek at my cards again.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

The room is bathed in a dim light. The sound of a FLUSH emanates from an adjacent room. Alice pushes the door ajar and flicks on the light switch.

With her mobile phone in hand, she activates the torch function and lowers herself to the floor. The beam illuminates the space beneath the bed, revealing nothing but empty darkness.

Alice rises, deactivating the torch. She approaches the window, attempting to peer outside, but the reflecting ceiling light obstructs her view.

She switches off the light, and gazes out at the treeline at the bottom of the garden. Straining to see in the fading light, she detects no sign of any ravens.

With a sigh, Alice draws the curtains closed and exits the room.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DUSK

Ben strides toward Moon's weathered campervan and yurt, clutching the wrapped carrier bag. Only a few smouldering embers of the dying bonfire remain.

BEN

Hello? Moon? Are you here?

There's no response. He peers through the campervan window, revealing a well-used interior, decorated with a new-age aesthetic. In the back, a series of shelves securely hold an array of books while scattered boxes contain mysterious glass jars, their contents difficult to discern.

Approaching the yurt, Ben calls out again.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hello. It's Ben Harris from Raven's Cottage. You in there?

There's only silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

Anyone home?

He foolheartedly tries knocking on the yurt canvas, but quickly realizes the futility of his action.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm coming in.

INT. YURT - DUSK

Ben cautiously parts the entrance and peeks inside, but Moon is nowhere in sight.

The interior features several thick blankets and plump pillows arranged into a makeshift bed. A bundle of wicker sticks and an unfinished woven basket lie nearby, while a low camping table dominates the space, cluttered with books, jars, and partially burnt black candles.

As Ben prepares to leave, something catches his eye. Without hesitation, he enters the yurt and lifts one of the nondescript books on the table, uncovering Ewan's red beanie hat beneath it. A frown of uncertainty creases Ben's face as he scrutinizes the other items on the table. One jar stands out, containing several thistle leaves.

Ben unravels the dead raven in the bag and compares the foliage. A perfect match.

Only then does he notice the fine strands of blonde hair used to secure the thistles to the bird's corpse. His gaze shifts to the title of the book he lifted: 'Demonic and Spiritual Possession.'

Another book on the table, with a protruding bookmark, draws his attention - 'A History of 11th-Century Art.' Intrigued, he flips it open to the saved page.

CLOSE ON: A replicated image of an ancient oil painting depicting a comet streaking across a starry night sky, hovering above a demonic entity emerging from a shadowy pool. The creature's obsidian form blends the features of a raven and a man. Two young boys, their hands bound with black ribbon, lie lifeless on the ground before the beast. A third boy stands between them, locking eyes with the creature's fiery red gaze.

A caption beneath the picture reads: "King Malphas, Pure Kindred Sacrifice, 1025 AD, Macedonia."

Ben appears disquieted. He carefully returns everything to its original place, including Ewan's beanie, and swiftly exits.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DUSK

Ben hastens away from Moon's camp. Suddenly, he stops, a realization dawning upon him. Striding over to a nearby bush, he opens the contents of the carrier bag, dumping the dead raven into the foliage.

Swiftly, he stashes the empty bag into his jacket pocket and briskly vacates the area, quickening his pace.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DUSK

Frank stealthily weaves his way through the cornstalks, closing in on the CAWS with his shotgun held at the ready.

Suddenly, he stops, a fearful realization dawning upon him. After a moment's hesitation, he gathers his resolve and forges ahead.

EXT. CLEARING - DUSK

Frank emerges from the corn, entering the muddy clearing. The dead tree is teeming with CAWING ravens. White-eye is perched amongst them, drawing Frank's attention.

With steely determination, he steadily raises his shotgun, taking aim. The air grows still as all the birds abruptly fall silent, fixating their collective gaze on him.

Frank lowers his weapon, feeling the weight of their intense stare. In response, White-eye emits a sharp SQUAWK, triggering a synchronized flight of all the ravens. They converge toward Frank with an eerie harmony.

Reacting swiftly, he instinctively ducks as the flock, led by White-eye, swoops over his head, soaring away toward the woodland. Frank reacts, firing off a couple of shots, but his erratic aim misses its mark.

Undeterred, he pursues the departing unkindness of ravens, deftly reloading his weapon, muttering under his breath in frustration.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DUSK

Alice and Ewan wrap up another round of Happy Families.

ALICE

Looks like Mr. Hugglesworth wins again.

EWAN

Woohoo.

The front door swings open, and Ben enters.

EWAN (CONT'D)

Daddy.

Ben removes his jacket and hangs it up.

ALICE

You were gone a while. What happened? What did she say?

BEN

She wasn't there.

He shuts the door and locks it, turning the key with a emphatic CLUNK.

ALICE

So, what did you do with the dead bird then?

BEN

I just chucked it into the bushes, like you said. You were right; I shouldn't let anything spoil this evening for us.

He resolutely strides toward the staircase.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm going to bring the telescope down and set it up in the garden. Won't be long now until the comet's visible in the sky.

ALICE

Okay. There's dinner in the kitchen for you, by the way.

BEN

Thanks.

He ascends the stairs but pauses on the first step.

BEN (CONT'D)

Oh, and I was thinking. There's probably no point in hanging around here in the morning. We should just head back first thing. Beat the traffic.

ALICE

Yeah, okay. I was thinking the same.

He continues up the steps.

EWAN

Come on Alice. Mr. Hugglesworth
wants to play again.

Alice continues playing cards, dealing out new hands.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DUSK

Frank arrives at the edge of the cornfield, having followed the flock into the woods. Despite hearing the occasional CAW among the trees, spotting the ravens proves elusive. Frustration mounts within Frank as he grumbles to himself, reluctantly conceding to head home.

Suddenly, a raven unleashes a piercing SQUAWK. Intrigued, Frank turns back toward the woodland. White-eye is perched on a low branch, SQUAWKING directly at him.

Frank scowls, shooting a death glare at the taunting bird. He raises his shotgun, but White-eye swiftly retreats deeper into the trees. Determination flares within Frank as he marches into the woodland, driven by an unwavering resolve to hunt down his prey.

INT. WOODLAND - DUSK

Frank treads through the woods, meticulously tracking White-eye as the bird flits from one tree to another. In a brief moment of distraction, Frank stumbles, temporarily losing sight of the elusive creature. He regains his footing, scanning the trees, but White-eye is nowhere to be seen. A hush descends.

Suddenly, a PIERCING SQUAWK shatters the quietude. Frank whirls around. White-eye is perched on a nearby branch. Without hesitation, he raises his shotgun and takes aim.

FRANK

(to himself)

I've got you this time.

A WHIRLING sound descends upon Frank, prompting him to snap his head towards the approaching noise. In an instant, he is struck by a dense flock of speeding ravens, forcefully knocking him off his feet.

Amidst the chaos, Frank unintentionally discharges a shot as he is propelled to the ground. Falling backward, he awkwardly lands on his spine on the uneven, rocky ground with a resounding SNAP.

The rushing flock disappears into the darkening woodland. Frank remains sprawled on the ground, unmoving and groaning, blood oozing from the back of his head.

White-eye descends, landing at his feet. Startled, Frank attempts to rise, but his body refuses to obey; he can barely even shift his head. Panic grips him as he realizes he's paralyzed. White-eye hops onto his stomach, fixing a piercing gaze upon him.

Frank stares at the shotgun still in his grip, desperately willing his arm to respond. His eyes widen in terror as White-eye inches closer, looming right up to his face, and emits a chilling SHRIEK that echoes like the word DIE.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Ben, Alice, and Ewan, huddled close for warmth, are standing by the telescope in the centre of the garden.

The surroundings have plunged into total darkness, the overcast sky obscuring any trace of moonlight. Dim illumination emanates from the light shining through the kitchen windows.

Ben peers through the viewfinder, eager to catch a glimpse of the comet. Alice and Ewan, feeling the chill, appear a tad bored; they've been at this for a while. Ewan yawns and cosies up to Alice with his teddy.

EWAN
(to Alice)
I'm tired.

ALICE
I know, sweetie.
(to Ben)
It's getting late, Ben. Maybe we should just call it a night. I hate to say it, but it doesn't seem like we're going to see the comet tonight after all.

Ben lifts his gaze from the viewfinder.

BEN
We just have to be patient. There are still the occasional breaks in the clouds.

Surveying the sky, he gestures toward a fleeting gap in the passing clouds, revealing a glimpse of the starry night sky concealed above.

BEN (CONT'D)

You see? We just need to wait for one to pass by in the right place. It could literally happen any minute.

ALICE

I know, but that's what you said over an hour ago.

Alice glances at Ewan, resting his sleepy head against her leg, shivering slightly.

ALICE (CONT'D)

At least let me put Ewan to bed; it's way past his bedtime already.

BEN

But he'll miss the comet, and so might you if you go now.

ALICE

But he's tired, and it's getting colder, plus I can't find his hat anywhere.

Ben checks the time and reconsiders.

BEN

Okay, you're probably right.

He crouches in front of his son.

BEN (CONT'D)

Night, buddy. Alice will tuck you in tonight, that okay?

Ewan nods in agreement. Ben ruffles the boy's hair, stands, and peers back through the viewfinder.

EWAN

Night, night, Daddy.

Alice takes his hand, and they make their way towards the cottage.

ALICE

(to Ewan)

How about we give you a nice warm bath first? Get you all warmed up. We don't want you catching a chill now, do we?

She opens the backdoor and leads Ewan into the kitchen.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Moon approaches her yurt, holding an antiquated oil lantern to illuminate her path in one hand, and a wicker basket teeming with an assortment of plant life in the other.

Suddenly, she freezes, a sense of unease washing over her. Suspicion etches across her face as she scans the darkness intently, but the shadows reveal nothing.

Though not entirely reassured, Moon proceeds, disappearing into the shelter of her yurt.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ewan is lying in bed, clad in pyjamas, cuddling his teddy. Alice, seated beside him, closes a book after concluding a bedtime story. She lovingly tucks him in, planting a gentle kiss on his forehead.

ALICE
Goodnight, sweetie.

As she moves to leave, Ewan calls out.

EWAN
Alice.

ALICE
Yes?

EWAN
Are you going to be my new mummy?

Alice returns to his side, attentive.

ALICE
Is that something you'd like?

Ewan earnestly nods, then holds his teddy to his ear as if listening.

EWAN
Mr. Hugglesworth said he'd like
that very much too.

Alice beams with warmth.

ALICE
Me three.

She affectionately strokes his hair.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I think me, you, and your Daddy,
are all going to be one happy
little family together, you'll see.

She playfully bops the end of his nose.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Now get some rest.

Ewan turns on his side and closes his eyes.

EWAN

Night, night, Alice.

Alice exits, turning off the light and gently shutting the door behind her.

INT. YURT - NIGHT

A small pot of liquid bubbles atop a camping stove placed on the low table, surrounded by a cluster of flickering black candles. Moon kneels beside the table, diligently grinding organic matter in a mortar, then adding the contents to the pot and giving it a stir.

The black cat limps through the entrance, nursing an injured leg and carrying something in its mouth. The animal nudges against Moon's leg, grabbing her attention. She stares at the feline in profound surprise.

MOON

What are you doing? You're not
supposed to be here.

The cat drops the object at her feet – the dead raven fledgling adorned with thistle leaves. Moon is deeply alarmed. She springs to her feet, snatching up the bird, and hastily exits the yurt.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Moon swiftly opens the SQUEAKY driver's door of her aged campervan and hops inside. She initiates the CLATTERING old engine, CRANKS the vehicle into gear, and accelerates away, full beams blazing.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Ben, disheartened, gazes up at the cloud-covered night sky.

BEN
 (mutters to himself)
 Damn it.

Alice returns to his side.

ALICE
 He's all tucked in.

BEN
 Good-oh.

Alice glances at the trees at the bottom of the garden before looking up to the sky.

ALICE
 Any luck?

BEN
 No. And now I can't see any breaks
 in the clouds, anywhere.

He despondently scans the blanket of darkness overhead. Alice places a comforting hand on his shoulder.

ALICE
 Why don't you take a break for a
 bit? Come inside and warm yourself
 up.

Ben hesitates, reluctant to risk missing the comet.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Come on. I've even got a little
 surprise for you.

BEN
 A surprise?

His curiosity is piqued.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Alright, as long as we keep an eye
 on the sky from the window.

He picks up the telescope, and they make their way toward the cottage. Alice casts a fleeting glance back at the treeline before stepping inside and closing the door behind them.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben delicately places the telescope in the corner, stealing a glance at the sky through the window.

BEN

So, what's this surprise?

Alice opens the cool-box, digs to the bottom, and triumphantly reveals a bottle of wine.

ALICE

Ta-da.

She presents it to Ben.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It's your favourite, right?

Ben takes the bottle, scrutinizing the label.

BEN

Mary told you that, I assume?

ALICE

Yeah. She said you only ever drink it on special occasions.

She collects two glasses from the cupboard.

ALICE (CONT'D)

And tonight is one of those occasions, whether we see the comet or not.

Ben settles at the table, still fixated on the label. Suddenly, he breaks down and weeps. Alice comes to his side.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Is it something I said?

Ben composes himself, holding back the tears.

BEN

No, I'm sorry, it's not you. It's the wine.

He sets the bottle on the table.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's the brand I ordered on my first date with Mary. I told her it was my favourite because it was the most expensive on the menu. I was trying to impress her, you see, but in truth, I'd never even tried it before.

He gazes at the bottle, a bittersweet smile flashing across his face.

BEN (CONT'D)

She bought me a bottle every year for my birthday ever since. I just never had the heart to tell her that I didn't really like it. But now I'd give anything to...

Overwhelmed with emotion, Ben breaks down.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I just miss her, so much, you know?

Alice envelops him in a compassionate hug.

BEN (CONT'D)

We were so happy together, the three of us. Her perfect little family she called us. It was all either of us ever really wanted out of life. A family of our own. Then, out of nowhere, life just hits you for six. One minute you're in your kitchen discussing dinner plans with your wife, the next, she's collapsed on the floor in front of you, then dies in hospital two weeks later. Just like that, gone, forever. And no one could even tell me why.

Alice holds him tight as he sobs on her shoulder.

BEN (CONT'D)

And now I have to raise a five-year-old boy all by myself, while trying to cope with both our grief. I'm doing my best, but it's just so hard without her. I fear when Ewan grows up, he's just going to remember me as this angry, bitter parent who was always shouting at him.

Alice reaches out, her hand tenderly touching Ben's cheek as she meets his teary gaze.

ALICE

Of course it's hard, Ben. After what you two have been through, it would be for anybody. But you don't need to raise Ewan alone. You have me, and I can be so much more than just an aunty to him. I want to be more, to the both of you.

She gently caresses his cheek, their eyes locked in a charged silence. Alice leans in, pressing a soft kiss to his lips before drawing back, anticipating his response.

Ben intensely stares at her briefly, then reciprocates, his lips meeting Alice's in a surge of passion. She confidently straddles his lap, their shared desire igniting into a fervent embrace.

Abruptly, Ben breaks away, halting their heated encounter.

BEN

I'm sorry. I don't think I'm ready.

ALICE

I know. It's okay. I understand.

Alice runs her fingers through his hair, offering comfort.

ALICE (CONT'D)

But there's no need to feel guilty. You deserve to be happy. We all do.

She leans in for another kiss, which Ben hesitantly returns before pulling back again.

BEN

I can't, I'm sorry.

ALICE

You can. Don't deny your desires. I know you want this as much as I do; I've seen the way you look at me. It's the same way you use to look at Mary.

Undeterred, Alice persists, determined to rekindle the passion.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Relax. Have some wine.

Despite her efforts, Ben remains reluctant. Alice whispers seductively in his ear.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You can imagine that I'm her, if
you like.

She nibbles his earlobe, attempting to entice him further,
but Ben resists the temptation.

BEN
Alice, stop, please.

Ignoring his plea, she proceeds to kiss his neck.

BEN (CONT'D)
I said stop!

In an abrupt move, he stands, shoving her off his lap. Alice
tumbles to the floor as Ben inadvertently knocks the bottle
off the table, causing it to hit the ground with a loud
SMASH.

BEN (CONT'D)
I can't do this. I'm sorry. I just
can't.

Alice sits up, remorsefully staring at the shattered glass
and the spilled red wine pooling beside her.

ALICE
I'm sorry too.

From upstairs, Ewan's muffled SHOUTS echo down. Alerted by
his son's cries, Ben rushes out the kitchen.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ben bursts into the room, flicking on the light switch. Ewan,
already out of bed, clings to his teddy, intensely fixated on
the corner of the room.

EWAN
No she's not. She's nice!

Ben consoles the aggravated boy, concern etched on his face.

BEN
Ewan, what's happening? What's
wrong?

EWAN
It's the boys. I can hear them now,
and they're saying very bad things.

Ewan glares back into the corner, his expression darkening.

BEN

Boys?

(glances to corner)

There are no boys here, Ewan. I think you were just having a bad dream, buddy.

EWAN

No, I'm not. They say she's coming to take me away. They say she's going to hurt me.

BEN

Who's going to hurt you?

EWAN

The witch.

Trepidation creeps onto Ben's face. Suddenly, a THUD on the window startles them both. Ben instinctively positions himself protectively in front of Ewan and peers outside, finding only darkness.

BANG! A lone raven flies directly at the glass and disappears from sight. Ben anxiously backs away. Alice appears in the doorway.

All hell breaks loose as a ceaseless bombardment of ravens pummels the window, repeatedly striking the glass. Alice swiftly moves to Ewan, gathering him into her arms. The window begins to CRACK from the relentless onslaught. Ben urgently ushers them out of the room.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

The trio hastily exits the bedroom just as the window shatters, unleashing a cacophony of SQUAWKING ravens into the room. Ben promptly SLAMS the door shut, and the ravens ferociously POUND against the other side.

BEN

(to Alice)

Go!

They quickly descend the staircase.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Ben swiftly unlocks the front door in preparation. Ewan, visibly scared, buries his face into Alice's shoulder.

ALICE

I don't understand. What's happening?

BEN

We're getting the hell out of here, that's what's happening.

He extends his hand.

BEN (CONT'D)

Car keys?

Retrieving the keys from her pocket, she hands them over. The POUNDING from upstairs intensifies.

BEN (CONT'D)

Head straight for the car, and stay close to me.

He opens the door slightly and takes a quick peek outside, checking the coast is clear.

BEN (CONT'D)

(hushed to Alice)

Quickly.

Ben swings the door wider, urging Alice and Ewan outside.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The trio quickly exit the cottage, Ben guiding them toward the car while vigilantly surveying their surroundings. The disarrayed CAWING of ravens echoes from inside the shattered bedroom window.

With a press of the key fob, Ben unlocks the vehicle. He swiftly opens the passenger door, ensuring Alice and Ewan are safely inside, before circling the car to reach the driver's door.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ewan whimpers fearfully in Alice's arms. She gently strokes the child's hair, attempting to soothe him.

ALICE

It's okay, sweetie. It'll all be over soon.

Ben settles into the driver's seat, closing his door and inserting the key into the ignition.

THUMP - White-eye lands on the car bonnet.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(to Ben)
Go.

Ben turns the key, but there's no response.

BEN
What?

ALICE
Try again.

He tries multiple times, but the engine refuses to turn over.

BEN
Why isn't it fucking starting?

Suspicion creeps across Alice's face

ALICE
Moon. She tampered with it.

Suddenly, White-eye emits a piercing SHRIEK.

The horde of SQUAWKING ravens inside the cottage bursts forth from the shattered bedroom window, descending upon the car.

The vehicle is engulfed by a frenzied swarm of flapping black wings as the ravens aggressively peck and claw at every window.

Ewan's fear escalates, clutching Mr. Hugglesworth tightly. The glass begins to fracture, sharp breaks punctuating small holes.

BEN
We have to move.

Ben scrambles into the backseat, positioning himself by the door.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'll draw them off. Once it's clear, you run straight for the bathroom with Ewan, and don't look back.

EWAN
No, Daddy.

BEN
It's okay buddy, I'll be right
behind you.

He grips the door handle.

BEN (CONT'D)
(to Alice)
Ready?

She nods anxiously, securing her grip on Ewan.

Ben opens the door just wide enough to slide out quickly and sprints away, slamming the door shut behind him.

The entire flock of ravens immediately pursues him, clearing the car windows. White-eye remains perched on the bonnet, staring at Ewan.

Alice briefly locks eyes with the haunting creature before she flings her door open, hoists herself out of the seat, and bolts towards the cottage.

White-eye takes to the air.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Alice races into the kitchen. Pausing at the threshold, she steals a quick glance behind her.

Ben hurtles through the open front door, the angry horde hot on his heels. He makes a futile attempt to slam the door shut in passing, but the ravens forcefully push it back open before it can fully close.

BEN
(to Alice)
Go!

She steps into the kitchen and starts to shut the door. Ben surges forward, only just squeezing inside through the narrowing gap.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben strains to shut the door, but several SHRIEKING raven heads and twitching wings are pinned against the doorframe, thwarting his efforts to latch the handle.

BEN
(to Alice)
I told you to go to the bathroom.

ALICE
I panicked, I'm sorry.

Alice retreats with Ewan as Ben pushes against the door with all his might. Bird bones CRUNCH, and a couple of ravens fall lifeless, but the relentless POUNDING from the other side proves too powerful for Ben to withstand. The door inches open, allowing more birds to start wedging through.

BEN
(to Alice)
Take Ewan and run!

Alice dashes towards the back door, grabbing a small torch hanging nearby. She hesitates, torn between fleeing and her concern for Ben.

ALICE
What about you?

The POUNDING intensifies; Ben can't hold them off for much longer.

BEN
Just run!

She flicks on the torch and flings the door open.

BEN (CONT'D)
And close it behind you.

Alice escapes into the night with Ewan, slamming the door shut behind her.

The kitchen door is on the verge of being breached, with an increasing number of ravens squeezing through the widening gap.

In a desperate bid, Ben leaps away, seizing a chair for defence. A thunderous CRASH echoes as the door bursts open, unleashing the cacophonous horde of squawking ravens into the room.

Half of the flock converges on Ben, launching a vicious assault with relentless pecks and clawing attacks all over his body. Simultaneously, the other half focuses on the back window, desperately attempting to break through the glass.

Ben yelps in agony, using the chair as a makeshift shield to fend off the unrelenting onslaught, protecting his head from the sharp beaks and talons.

The back window finally shatters, freeing the second half of the ravenous pack into the night sky.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Alice flees through the dark woods with Ewan, the feeble torch barely illuminating their path. Ominous SQUAWKS and FLAPPING WINGS echo from the trees above.

Suddenly, Alice stumbles over an unseen obstacle, crashing to the ground with a resounding thud. A haunting silence descends. Grimacing and groaning, Alice anxiously checks on Ewan, relieved to find him unscathed from the fall.

Retrieving the dropped torch, Alice directs its weak beam toward the source of her stumble. Ewan lets out a horrified SCREAM at the grisly sight. It's Frank's horribly mutilated corpse, his face torn to shreds, and his eyes gruesomely pecked clean.

A nearby CAW grabs their attention. Alice shifts the torchlight into the tree above, revealing White-eye perched on a low branch. The creature intensively fixes its gaze upon them, locking eyes with Alice.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben is succumbing to the unabating assault of ravens. Kneeling on the floor, he defensively clutches the chair directly over his head. His jacket is in tatters, and multiple bleeding scratches mar his body.

One of the crazed birds skilfully bypasses his defences, launching a savage pecking attack on his cheek. Ben screams in agony. A primal instinct takes hold, and he unleashes his fury, viciously biting down on the animal's head, CRUNCHING its skull between his gnarling teeth.

Adrenaline pumping through his veins, Ben rises, tossing the chair aside. He lunges across the room, seizing his telescope and wielding it like a baseball bat.

With manic rage in his eyes, Ben embarks on a frenzied raven-killing spree. Swinging the telescope wildly at anything that moves, slaying bird after bird.

The ravens' numbers dwindle, but their ferocity remains unwavering, as does Ben's. He dispatches the last few birds with brutal severity, batting the final one straight out the broken window.

The room falls silent. Ben stands amidst the aftermath of the massacre, chest heaving, blood and sweat dripping from his face. Exhausted but triumphant, he surveys the scene of his hard-fought battle.

A sudden SQUAWK startles Ben into action. He spins around, ready to strike. A lone raven on the ground clings to life, frantically trying to flap its broken wings.

Ben looms over the distressed animal, locking eyes with its black gaze. The raven viciously SCREECHES at him. Ben raises the telescope above his head and brings it down with all his might, striking again and again until the telescope SNAPS, reducing the creature to a bloody, pummelled mess of guts and feathers.

Victoriously, Ben tosses the broken telescope aside. He opens the back door, grabs a broom for a weapon, and dashes into the garden.

BEN
(calls out)
Ewan! Alice!

He disappears into the darkness.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Ben trudges wearily through the shadowy woods. Occasional breaks in the thinning clouds allow moonlight to beam through the canopy, intermittently illuminating his path.

He pauses, leaning against a tree to catch his breath. His eyes dart around, uncertain of which direction to take.

BEN
(calls out)
Alice! Ewan! Where are you?!

Silence answers him. Ben hesitates before resolutely pressing forward.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Ben arrives at the edge of the woodland, facing the towering, dense cornfield. A sense of desperation washes over him.

BEN
(yells)
Ewan!

No response. Panic sets in, but then, a faint voice breaks through the stillness.

EWAN (O.S.)
(distant)
Daddy.

Ben tightens his grip on the broom in his hands and plunges into the corn. He pushes through the rustling leaves and stalks, following the sound of his son's fearful voice, which suddenly falls silent.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Ben skids to a halt, emerging abruptly into the muddy clearing. A blanket of darkness shrouds the hushed setting, the moonlight currently obscured by dense clouds.

Something catches Ben's eye at his feet. He stoops down and retrieves it - Mr. Hugglesworth.

A massive rift in the clouds traverses overhead, unveiling the comet streaking across the starry night sky, and liberating the moonlight that bathes the clearing in a ethereal glow.

Ben's attention is drawn to the dead tree, adorned with a dozen or so perched ravens, serenely observing a figure kneeling beside the brook, hands submerged in the flowing water.

BEN

Alice?

He hastens through the thick mud, quickly confirming it is indeed Alice. A single raven spots him and emits a sharp CAW of alarm, triggering a chorus of SQUAWKS from the others.

Without turning around to acknowledge his approach, Alice determinedly plunges her arms deeper into the brook. As Ben draws closer, he is struck by the horrifying realization that Alice is drowning Ewan, pinning his head beneath the water's surface.

BEN (CONT'D)

No!

Ben surges forward, brandishing the broom. The SQUAWKING ravens take flight simultaneously, swooping towards him, but it's too late. Acting on instinct, Ben forcefully strikes Alice across the back with the broom, SNAPPING the handle.

Alice tumbles headfirst into the brook, losing her grip on Ewan just as the rushing flock of birds knocks Ben off his feet.

The ravens swarm around Ben on the ground, mercilessly pecking and tearing at his flesh. Desperate to reach his son, Ben crawls towards Ewan and pulls his lifeless body out of the water, his hands bound together with black ribbon.

The birds instantly cease their frenetic assault, unwilling to risk harming the boy.

Cradling the child's limp form on his lap, Ben gently taps the boy's cheeks, a mixture of sorrow and hope etched on his face, praying for revival.

BEN (CONT'D)
Come on, buddy. Don't you leave me too.

Laying Ewan flat on the ground, Ben readies himself to administer CPR when the child suddenly coughs, expelling water from his tiny lungs. The boy's eyes flutter open, staring blankly at his dad. Relief floods over Ben as he gathers his son into his arms, both of them caked in dark mud.

BEN (CONT'D)
I thought I lost you.

Ewan remains in a state of shock, unresponsive to his father's emotions.

Alice rises from the water, her drenched hair obscuring her face. Watchful ravens circle overhead as Ben grabs the broken handle, and gets to his feet, holding Ewan.

BEN (CONT'D)
(to Alice)
Why were you doing that to him!?
What the fuck's wrong with you!?

She slowly advances, her face still concealed. Ben retreats, backing away.

BEN (CONT'D)
Stay back. I'm warning you.

He brandishes the stubby, broken handle, attempting to warn her off, but she remains unfazed.

BEN (CONT'D)
I said stop. I don't want to hurt you, Alice, but I will if I have to.

Ignoring his warning, she persists in her approach. Ben's mounting confusion is evident as he backs away further.

BEN (CONT'D)
Alice, please, I don't understand.
What the fuck's going on? Why are you doing this?

She pays no heed to his plea, closing the gap between them.

BEN (CONT'D)
Answer me!?

Suddenly, the cornfield stirs with the gentle RUSTLING of leaves, something draws near. Alice halts, prompting everyone to shift their focus to the swaying corn. Moon emerges, stepping into the clearing.

Tension fills the air as Moon surveys the scene, her gaze drawn to the circling ravens now emitting ominous CAWS.

Moon casually advances, navigating through the SQUELCHING terrain. Ben eyes her with apprehension, attempting to gauge her intentions. Ewan calmly stares at her, unblinking, his face expressionless.

BEN (CONT'D)
(to Moon)
This is your doing, isn't it?
You're behind all of this.

Hearing Ben's accusation, Moon stops and locks eyes with him. She reaches into her pocket and retrieves the dead raven fledgling.

BEN (CONT'D)
What the hell is that thing? What
have you done to Alice?

MOON
This talisman was for your family's
protection. It should not have been
removed from the cottage.

Cradling the bird in her cupped hands, Moon shifts her gaze to Alice, who cautiously backs away toward the dead tree.

MOON (CONT'D)
I am Moon, White Witch of the Ros
An Bucca. Entrusted with the duty
of safeguarding this accursed site
from malevolent forces on this most
magical of occasions, and I command
you to release this woman's body
and return to your own wretched
form.

Alice cackles with laughter.

ALICE
Mine is not the body here fated to
be possessed this night--

Reaching behind the tree trunk, Alice retrieves Frank's shotgun and aims it at Moon.

ALICE (CONT'D)

--and you have no power here, white witch.

She pulls the trigger, a deafening BOOM resonating through the air. The shot strikes Moon's shoulder, sending her spiralling face-first into the mud. She rolls onto her back, groaning in agony and clutching her bloody shoulder.

Alice redirects her aim toward the father and son. Ben, submitting to the situation, drops the broken handle. He sets Ewan down and assumes a defensive stance in front of the passive boy, shielding him from harm.

BEN

Alice, please. You're not yourself.

She sweeps the concealing wet hair away from her seemingly normal face.

ALICE

Oh, but I am. More so than I have been for quite some time.

Approaching Moon, Alice keeps her aim fixed on Ben. She callously steps on the fallen fledgling, sinking it deep beneath the mud.

MOON

(to Alice)

The conjuring you're attempting will not succeed. Three pure kin are required to summon him. Sacrificing this one innocent boy achieves nothing, you fool.

She moans in pain, gripping her shoulder tighter. Alice smirks, revelling in Moon's suffering.

ALICE

That would be true, if I were casting for myself, but I'm not--

White-eye swoops in, landing gracefully on Alice's shoulder.

ALICE (CONT'D)

--I'm completing my master's spell.

The raven emits a harsh SQUAWK. Ben shoots Alice a dagger-filled glare. Ewan calmly peers out from behind his father, locking eyes with White-eye.

Moon winces, struggling to sit up.

MOON

I should have known a family with a young boy showing up was no mere coincidence.

She rises to her feet, still nursing her wound.

MOON (CONT'D)

(to Ben)

I ought to have done more to protect you both. I'm sorry, but I thought I was only dealing with one dark witch, not two.

Moon glares at Alice with disdain.

MOON (CONT'D)

(to Alice)

But your conjuring still won't succeed. For the boy is not kin to those sacrificed before. Your master's plan to fulfil her evil spell has failed.

Alice steps closer, a wicked smile spreading across her face.

ALICE

Oh, but he is their kin.

White-eye lets out a horrifying SCREECH that sounds like the word "DIE" and violently attacks Moon. All ravens overhead descend, joining the assault. They mercilessly peck and claw at Moon's body as she collapses to the ground, curling up in a protective ball, wailing in agony.

Alice turns to Ben and Ewan, a sinister glint in her eye.

BEN

This was your plan the whole time? You organized this trip so you could bring Ewan to this place, and sacrifice him in some kind of ludicrous satanic ritual?

ALICE

In a nutshell.

BEN

Why? Are you fucking insane? We trusted you, you conniving bitch!

ALICE

I'd say conniving 'witch' is a more fitting description, wouldn't you?

She grins menacingly and advances, shotgun aimed. Ben instinctively backs away, shielding Ewan behind him, his defensive stance unwavering.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I've been waiting a long time for this day to come. Ever since I was first led to this place by the ghosts of two murdered brothers, when I was just a little girl visiting her beloved Grandfather at Raven's Cottage. The boys brought me here in the hope I'd help set them free from their eternal damnation, but instead, I met my master, right where you're standing now. It was she who showed me the true power of black magic, teaching me it's dark secrets, and revealing the grand reward that shall be bestowed upon us both, once I succeed in completing her summoning.

Ewan comes to an abrupt stop behind his retreating father. Unaware, Ben accidentally stumbles backward over the boy, and they both land in a heap on the ground.

Alice stands before them, weapon aimed with intent, asserting control. Ben quickly scrambles to sit up, desperately shielding Ewan behind his back.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I searched in vain for so many years to track down any living descendant of the required bloodline. I'd hoped to find an adult male, enabling me to conceive the child myself, but for so long, I discovered no one. I had nearly lost all hope of ever unearthing anybody.

Moon falls silent, succumbing to the relentless onslaught of CAWING ravens.

ALICE (CONT'D)

But then, one day, I finally did. Mary Harris, formerly Mary Williams, the last living descendant of Henry Williams, father of the two kin already sacrificed by my master. And, as fate would have it, she was a mother with an innocent toddler son, and her newlywed husband was an astronomy enthusiast, of all things. It was as if it were written in the stars.

She glances up in admiration at the comet travelling through the starry night sky.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It was so easy getting close to her, to all of you. I simply orchestrated a chance meeting, and assumed a persona mirroring her own, all demure, timid and meek, and quite frankly, unbelievably gullible. She was amazed by how much we had in common, and we quickly became the best of friends, like the sister neither of us ever had. But in truth, I absolutely detested the cunt. I've loathed every minute I've had to spend acting like that pathetic wife of yours. I can't tell you how glad I was when the time came to finally kill her.

Ben's eyes flare with fury at the revelation, his seething anger palpable.

ALICE (CONT'D)

A little untraceable poison in her favourite meal quickly took care of that. Well, not that quickly. I could have dosed her with enough poison to snuff her out in minutes, but I decided it would be more fun to put in just enough to watch her suffer a slow and agonizing death.

Alice sneers. Unable to contain his rage, Ben springs to his feet, lunging at her. She deftly steps back, delivering an uppercut to his chin with the shotgun butt, CRUNCH. Ben's feet lift off the ground, and he crashes hard into the mud. Alice swiftly readjusts the weapon, aiming it at him again.

Ewan stares blankly at his father, now sprawled on the ground, disoriented and bloodied.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It's a shame. Life would have been much simpler with Ewan's real father in the picture. Because if I wasn't to be the chosen child's biological mother, then stepmother was the next best thing. But you had to ruin all that, didn't you?

Ben gingerly sits up, dazed and spitting blood.

ALICE (CONT'D)

If only you'd just drunk a sip of the wine I'd especially prepared for you, then you would have simply fallen into a peaceful slumber and woken in the morning feeling refreshed, and none the wiser. But you left me no other choice but to involve my master.

Ben attempts to rise, vengeful anger still coursing through him, but he falters, weakly falling to his knees.

ALICE (CONT'D)

We would have been such a happy little family, the four of us together, all helping to raise our special son into becoming the dark overlord he's destined to be. Oh well, it seems I'll have to embrace the whole single mother thing after all.

She presses the shotgun barrel against Ben's forehead.

ALICE (CONT'D)

At least this means I don't have to act like that dead bitch anymore.

Beaten and resigned to his fate, Ben looks to his watching son.

BEN

Look away, buddy.

Ewan doesn't react, his unblinking eyes locked on his father.

ALICE

Say hello to Mary for me. Tell her we're going to take real good care of the vessel that was once your son.

Ben shuts his eyes, and she pulls the trigger - CLICK. The chamber is empty. Annoyance creeps across Alice's face.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You've got to be shitting me.

Bens eyes snap open, a renewed resolve burning within.

Suddenly, the black cat springs forth from the cornfield to defend its ailing master. The feline leaps into the feral flock, viciously clawing and biting at any SCREECHING raven that dares come near Moon.

Alice shrieks, hoisting the shotgun high above her head. She forcefully brings the butt down toward Ben's skull, but he deftly dodges the strike and swiftly tackles her to the ground. A fierce struggle ensues as they grapple over the weapon. Ewan watches on, frozen to the spot.

The raven's numbers are diminishing fast, several now lay dead on the ground. The remaining birds, including White-eye, are now all occupied by the cat's relentless rampage, finally giving Moon respite from their ferocious onslaught. She lays motionless on the ground, her body and clothes all scratched up and bloody.

Realizing Alice is in peril, White-eye attempts to come to her aid, launching itself at Ben. But Moon abruptly grabs hold of the raven's leg with an iron grip and refuses to let go of the wildly flapping bird.

Ben overpowers Alice, getting on top of her and wrestling the weapon out of her grasp.

White-eye desperately tries to break free of Moon's grasp, pecking her hand with manic intensity. The creature lets out a despairing SHRIEK, commanding the last three ravens to redirect their assault towards Ben instead.

The moment the birds withdraw, the cat pounces on White-eye, engaging in a ferocious tussle, Moon refusing to relinquish her firm hold of the creatures leg.

In a frenzied effort to defend himself from the attacking ravens, Ben wildly swings the shotgun around his head. Alice seizes the opportunity and delivers a swift knee to Ben's bollocks. He gasps in pain and collapses beside her in a heap, the bird's assault continuing unabated.

Alice makes a move for Ewan, scrambling to her feet with determination, but Ben swiftly uses the shotgun to trip her up, sending her crashing face-first into the dark earth.

Ben rises to his feet, fending off the persistent ravens. With a powerful swing of his weapon, he swats one out of the sky, killing it instantly.

Meanwhile, Alice inches towards Ewan, crawling through the mud. Ben spots her and seizes her ankle, forcefully pulling her away from his son as far as he can manage before reluctantly letting go to confront the relentless birds.

Snatching a raven by its wing, Ben repeatedly strikes the animal against the dead tree, mercilessly pummeling it to death. He delivers a swift kick to Alice's abdomen as she lies prone on the ground, then backs away toward Ewan, all while engaged in battle with the final raven.

Moon and her cat continue to sustain further injury, still entangled in their fierce struggle with the seemingly unkillable White-eye.

Winded and sprawled on the ground, Alice gathers her resolve, grabbing a rock from the brook, hell-bent on achieving her goal.

With lethal precision, Ben plucks the last raven out of the air by its throat, terminating its life with a decisive twist of its neck in his vice like grip.

Alice, caked in mud, slowly rises, clutching the rock, her focus locked on Ewan with unwavering intensity.

Sensing the threat, Ben positions himself defensively in front of his son, his eyes wary of Alice's advance.

BEN

Stay back, or I swear to God I'll
fucking kill you.

Alice shifts her attention to Ben, her eyes alight with wild fervour. Seized by a surge of primal fury, she hoists the rock and charges straight toward Ben, her scream resounding with raw ferocity.

As she bears down on him, Ben counters with calculated aggression, smashing the bridge of her nose with the butt of the shotgun - CRUNCH. Alice recoils, the rock slipping from her grasp as blood cascades down her face. She staggers backwards, dazed, culminating in her falling into the brook with a heavy SPLASH.

Amidst the unabating chaotic clash between cat and bird, Moon urgently calls to Ben.

MOON

You must drown her. Hurry.

Ben rushes toward Alice, a flicker of hesitation crossing his face as he comprehends the gravity of Moon's words.

MOON (CONT'D)

Do it.

Reluctant, Ben casts his gaze down at Alice, sprawled out on her back in the flowing water, defenceless and unthreatening.

MOON (CONT'D)

Now!

Ben's face contorts with conflicting emotions. He wishes her dead, but he simply cannot bring himself to commit the act. It goes against his very nature; he is not a murderer.

Weakly, Alice emits a mocking laugh, blood bubbling in her throat.

ALICE

(to Ben)

You can't do it, can you?

She sluggishly raises her head, disoriented, her face severely swollen.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Because you're a feeble, excuse of a man, husband, and father--and the boy shall be ours.

As she attempts to sit up, two pairs of unearthly child-like hands impossibly emerge from the shallow brook. Their fingers intertwine over Alice's face, stifling her astonishment as they forcefully submerge her head beneath the murky water. Only the tip of her nose remains visible above the surface.

She fights against the spectral grip, trying to pry the pale fingers from her face. Ben reacts swiftly, discarding the shotgun and climbing on top of Alice to seize her arms. Maintaining a firm hold, Ben restrains her limbs while the ghost boys keep her head submerged, rendering her utterly powerless.

Not wanting to witness the chilling spectacle, Ben adverts his gaze to Ewan standing nearby, passively observing.

White-eye intensifies its effort to reach Alice, SCREECHING the word "NO," but Moon and her cat valiantly impede the feral creature.

Alice gradually ceases struggling until her body finally goes limp. She is dead. The spectral hands relinquish their grip and slowly descend beneath the surface of the water.

Moon releases White-Eye, setting the bird free. The raven emits a PIERCING SHRIEK and flees into the night sky.

Releasing his hold on Alice's lifeless body, Ben steps back in disbelief, fixated on her corpse. In the midst of his shock, he accidentally steps on something. Wincing, he bends down, retrieving Ewan's muddy teddy.

Ben kneels before his son with a heavy heart, handing him his beloved Mr. Hugglesworth and enveloping his boy in a tight, loving embrace.

Moon lies on the ground, triumphant but too weak to sit up. Her battle-scarred cat rests beside her, nursing its many wounds.

Ben's gaze shifts to Moon, his eyes filled with profound gratitude. He acknowledges her support with a solemn nod, which she respectfully reciprocates.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAWN

Several emergency vehicles have descended on the property, the area bustling with emergency service personnel.

Paramedics wheel Moon out of the cottage on a gurney, her shoulder bandaged, and the black cat nestled on her lap. Ben follows closely behind, holding Ewan and his teddy, his hands now liberated from the black ribbon restraints.

A police officer briefly attempts to coax the exhausted feline from the gurney, but the animal vehemently HISSES and swats, refusing to leave its master's side.

Ben and Moon prepare to bid farewell, being taken to separate ambulances.

BEN
 (to Moon)
 Thank you. For everything.

She manages a weary yet warm smile.

MOON
 You are most welcome, my dear.

They part ways. Ewan stares back at Moon over his father's shoulder, his face expressionless, still grappling with the shock of the night's events. Moon weakly lifts her hand, waving goodbye to the boy as she's loaded into the ambulance on the gurney.

Unnoticed by Ben, Ewan drops Mr. Hugglesworth. Moon is about to call out when she spots what the boy is holding - an aged wooden carving of a raven. The child sinisterly grins at her, his eyes briefly flashing a brilliant fiery red.

A wave of fear grips Moon as she locks eyes with Ewan, horror-stricken. A police officer shuts the doors to her ambulance, and BANGS on the back, giving the all-clear signal. The engine roars to life, and the vehicle pulls away, lights flashing.

Ben and Ewan climb aboard a second ambulance, which departs the scene soon after.

CAW. White-Eye is perched atop a tall tree, observing.

The Raven Witch takes flight, covertly tailing the traveling vehicles from a safe distance high above - SQUAWK!

THE END