

THE RAVEN WITCH

Written by

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EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT - 1691

A comet streaks across the starry sky, casting an eerie glow over the dense treetops.

An ANGRY MOB of villagers march through the trees, torches blazing, led by HENRY, a rugged farmer in his 30s with an unkept bushy beard.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The mob converges upon a grim thatched cottage nestled in a serene glade. Henry charges forward, delivering a powerful kick that shatters the door with a loud CRASH.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The villagers surge into the dimly lit abode, scattering throughout. Some rush upstairs while others scour through the lower level, creating havoc.

Torches cast flickering light, illuminating the interior. The dwelling appears devoid of any occupants. Henry investigates a workbench covered in wood shavings and rudimentary tools.

A chilling CRY echoes from afar. Henry bolts outside, his concern evident.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Henry leads the villagers out, the distant screams fading. They listen intently. Another CRY breaks the silence.

Without hesitation, Henry charges toward the sound, the mob following closely.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

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

EXT. FARMLAND - NIGHT

The mob exits the woods onto a vast ploughed field. The unsettling screams have stopped.

A faint CRY, that of a younger child, breaks the silence. Henry dashes across the muddy terrain, the villagers trailing behind.

On the far side of the field, Henry freezes in horror. Two boys lay dead under an apple tree by a brook, their hands bound with black ribbon. A CLOAKED FIGURE kneels beside the water, back turned.

As the mob arrives, a raven in the tree SQUAWKS, alerting the figure who whirls around, its face hidden by the hood.

Henry's heart sinks as he sees the figure drowning a third boy. In an instant, he discards his torch, grabs the murderer by the neck, and hurls them to the mob, who swiftly restrain the assailant.

He lifts the bound boy from the water, cradling his lifeless body. Tenderly, he tries to revive him, gently slapping the lad's pale cheeks.

The boy's eyes flutter open miraculously, coughing water from his lungs.

Using a small knife from his belt, Henry swiftly severs the ribbon binding the boy's cupped hands, revealing a wooden raven carving in his palms.

Without hesitation, Henry frees the bound hands of the two dead boys nearby, finding raven carvings in their palms too.

Rage twists Henry's expression as he glares at the cloaked figure before he tosses all three carvings into the brook.

Henry consoles the lad he saved, their sorrow mirroring each other's as they mourn the loss of the other two boys.

A villager compassionately takes the boy from Henry, wrapping the lad in a blanket.

Henry gathers a bundle of cut ribbon and approaches the cloaked figure. He yanks off the hood, revealing a beautiful YOUNG WOMAN with flowing jet-black hair.

Their eyes lock, Henry's filled with vengeance.

Defiantly, she spits in his face, cackling with rotting teeth.

Henry wipes away the vile phlegm, his disgust palpable. In a swift motion, he headbutts her nose with a resounding CRUNCH.

She falls semi-conscious, limp, held up by the villagers.

Henry violently drags the woman by her hair, slamming her mercilessly against the tree. A pained groan escapes her lips as he wrenches her arms around the trunk, tightly bounding them with ribbon.

Meanwhile, the mob gathers firewood for a makeshift pyre around the tree.

In a final act of disdain, Henry lifts the woman's drooping head, and spits in her face. He ignites the firewood, and everyone watches on in anticipation.

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

She moans with pain, the searing fire jolting her back to consciousness. In the midst of her suffering, she begins chanting rhythmically.

The raven SQUAWKS anxiously above her, wings beating frantically. As flames engulf her, she screams in agony, her once-beautiful face charred.

Her chanting grows more intense as she locks eyes with the raven, convulsing uncontrollably.

She falls silent as the fire consumes her, her lifeless form slumping to one side.

The raven's eyes undergo a transformation, turning a pearly white before it flies 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

Colourful kid drawings cover the walls of the modern family home, amidst scattered toys and laundry. By the front door, rucksacks and a long carry case sit.

EWAN, a 5-year-old in a red beanie with blonde hair peeking out, stands sadly at the bottom of the stairs.

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, appears at the top of the stairs.

BEN (CONT'D)

She'll be here any minute. Sorry,
Ewan, but it looks like we'll have
to go without him.

Ewan's shoulders sag, whimpering. Ben feels his heart sink at the sight.

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

Ben furrows his brow.

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

He pauses, thinking.

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

Ewan quickly checks the bags by the door, unzipping the case.

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

Ignore him, Ewan opens it.

Ben rushes down, nudges Ewan aside, and zips it shut again.

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

Ewan looks upset by the raised voice. Ben's demeanour
softens, and he pulls the boy into a comforting hug.

BEN (CONT'D)
Sorry for shouting, buddy. I know I
promised I'd try not to anymore.
But you know, the carry case is
delicate. You're not supposed to
open it, remember?

Ewan nods agreeably, acknowledging the rule.

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

Ben opens a rucksack and starts rummaging.

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

He retrieves a teddy from the bag's depths and hands it to
Ewan. The boy's face lights up, holding the teddy close. His
gaze shifts to a family portrait on the wall—himself, Ben,
and a blonde woman in her thirties.

Outside, a car horn HONKS.

BEN (CONT'D)
She's here.

Ben gathers the case and rucksacks, ready to leave.

BEN (CONT'D)
Okay, lets go.

He opens the front door, and Ewan eagerly dashes out.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Ewan excitedly rushes to a parked car with a blonde woman in the driver's seat. He opens the back door and jumps in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Behind the wheel is ALICE, early 20s, a demure and wholesome young lady whose overall style mirrors 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, struggling with all the bags.

EXT. CAR - DAY

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

INT. CAR - DAY

Ben shuts the boot, BANG.

ALICE

(to Ewan)

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 worried earlier 'cause we couldn't find him, and was scared he would be left behind, but Daddy found him, so now he's all better. Thank you very much.

ALICE

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

Ben opens the front passenger door. Alice hands Ewan a thick drawing pad and a set of colouring pens.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Here you go, sweetie. A new set especially for the trip.

Ewan's face beams with joy as he eagerly opens the pens. Ben settles into the passenger seat.

BEN

(to Ewan)

What do we say, Ewan?

EWAN

(politely)

Thank you, Alice.

He earnestly doodles in the pad.

BEN

(to Alice)

Hey.

ALICE

Hey.

Ben pulls his seatbelt out but pauses 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.

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 the day.

BEN

Alright, if you're sure.

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

EXT. MOTORWAY - DAY

Alice's car speeds along the tarmac, smoothly weaving between the fast-flowing traffic.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ewan sleeps with Mr. Hugglesworth in his lap. Alice focuses on driving, eyes fixed ahead. Ben observes all the cars they're 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 glances at the speedometer, realizing he's right.

ALICE

You know, I completely forgot 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 teddy slips, landing in the footwell. Ben notices, retrieves it, and gently puts 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. I was going to pretend to find it in the bag once we got there. I just wanted him to leave the house without it, for his own sake

ALICE

It's understandable. 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 and bad days, but things are improving, slowly. He's happy when his drawings, and he's been talking more, and not just to Mr. Hugglesworth. But he still doesn't listen sometimes. He just flat out ignores me. I try not to get annoyed, but it's just so hard without her, you know? Between my teaching and not having any 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 without your help these past few months. I can't thank you enough for all the meals you've prepared us, and all the babysitting you've done. Especially when Mary was near the end. I'm so thankful he didn't witness her suffer the way she did.

He touches her shoulder with gratitude, and Alice smiles at him adorningly. Ben's hand lingers briefly before he withdraws it abruptly.

ALICE

I promised to 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 are.

Ben warmly smiles.

BEN

I'm just glad we have you in our lives, Alice. Ewan needs a female influence, especially now, and I'm so grateful you're here for him. You're like his loving Auntie Alice, and always will be.

Alice grins, masking a hint of disappointment.

ALICE

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

She spots an 'End Of Motorway' sign ahead.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Looks like we've reached the end.
Shame. I was 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 cruises along a picturesque country road, passing a sign: 'Welcome to Cornwall.'

INT. CAR - DAY

Ewan sleeps soundly. Alice and Ben look out the windows, puzzled. Dense woodland flanks both sides of the uninhabited road they're driving along.

ALICE

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

She checks the navigation system, which reads 'You have reached your destination.'

BEN
I don't see how.

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

BEN (CONT'D)
Hang on. I think we just past it.

He gazes 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
Looks like there's a driveway back there.

ALICE
Good thing you saw it. I would've driven straight past it.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

The car reverses and smoothly turns down the driveway, signalling with its indicator.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

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

Ben and Alice step out, and Alice's dismay is evident as she takes in the sight.

ALICE
This can't be it. It looked much nicer on the website. Maybe this isn't the place after all.

She retrieves her phone and scrolls through her emails.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Where's that email with the pictures?

Ben notices a plaque on the building, partly hidden by overgrown vegetation, and moves closer to investigate.

BEN

Did the property have a name?

ALICE

Yeah, something bird-related, I think.

(scrolling on phone)

It's all here somewhere.

Ben clears the vegetation, revealing the name: Raven's Cottage.

BEN

Was it Raven's Cottage by any chance?

ALICE

Yes, that was...

She spots the plaque, disappointment evident.

With purpose, Alice strides to the front door, lifting the doormat to retrieve an old iron key.

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 I saw must have been taken years ago. We really don't have to stay here. We can find a bed and breakfast in the nearest town or something.

BEN

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

Ben urges her to unlock the door. Alice inserts the key, turning it with a emphatic CLUNK. The door CREAKS open, revealing a gloomy, sparsely furnished living room, enhancing Alice's initial impression.

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

A twig SNAP nearby grabs their attention. They turn toward a
thicket of dense bushes beside the building, hearing RUSTLING
noises.

ALICE
What is that?

BEN
I don't know.

He cautiously approaches the bush.

BEN (CONT'D)
If this place has rats, then that's
a deal breaker.

Stooping down at a safe distance, he examines closer.

Suddenly, a black cat bursts out, startling Ben and causing
him to fall backwards. The cat darts towards Alice, who
adeptly steps aside, letting it zoom pass.

Ben stands up, dusting off his hands.

BEN (CONT'D)
Don't suppose that email mentioned
anything about a cat, did it?

ALICE
No, it didn't.

She eyes the cat suspiciously as it disappears into the
surrounding woodland.

BEN
Probably belongs to a neighbour
somewhere. Should mean there aren't
any rats at least.

They both peer into the open doorway.

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

Alice hesitates, glancing back at the car.

ALICE
What about Ewan?

BEN

He'll be fine. Let him sleep a while longer.

He motions for Alice to enter first.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ladies first.

ALICE

How gallant.

Alice steps inside, followed closely by Ben.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice pulls back the curtains, letting sunlight flood the room. It's homely and tidy, with minimal rustic décor.

BEN

See. It's nice...er on the inside.

She's unimpressed, running her finger along a dusty coffee table.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben and Alice step into the small, worn-down kitchen. A microwave and kettle sit on the counter, alongside a shabby oven and a modest dining table.

Alice checks the cabinets, finding little inside. She tries the oven's knobs, but it doesn't respond.

ALICE

Doesn't look like I'll be doing much cooking in here. Good job I brought plenty of pre-prepared meals for us all.

She tries the sink tap, and water spurts out, settling into a gentle flow.

ALICE (CONT'D)

At least there's clean water.

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

BEN

And we've got electricity. As long as the toilet works, 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)

Needs airing out though.

She tries to open a window, but it refuses to budge. Ben tries next, to no avail. Alice unlocks and opens the back door instead.

EXT. BEDROOM - DAY

Alice looks out the window at the grassy lawn extending to the woodland beyond.

The sound of a toilet FLUSHING.

BEN (O.S.)

The toilet passed the flush test with flying colours.

Ben appears in the doorway.

BEN (CONT'D)

We're staying.

ALICE

Alright. If you're sure.

She gestures to the single mattress bed.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Guess this is my room.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I assume you're sharing the double bed in the other room with Ewan?

BEN

Yeah, I guess. I mean what's the alternative?

A silence ensues as they briefly lock eyes, contemplating the alternative, until Alice breaks the tension.

ALICE

We should probably eat lunch. I'll
wake Ewan.

Ben nods without meeting her eyes as Alice leaves. He steps
to the window, contentedly gazing up at the clear sky.

BEN

(to himself)
Perfect.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Alice exits the cottage, heading to her car. She finds Ewan
still asleep in his seat. Suddenly, she startles as she spots
an elderly lady peering through the car window on the
opposite side.

Hurriedly, Alice unbuckles Ewan and lifts him out, cradling
him protectively.

MOON, mid-60s, a cordial bohemian woman with long grey hair
and bare feet, steps around the vehicle. She exudes 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 close.

ALICE

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 apologize needed. 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 at Ewan intently. Feeling 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)
 So, can we help you with something?

MOON
 No, thank you. I reside across the
 glen there--
 (gestures)
 --and simply came by to greet you.
 (MORE)

MOON (CONT'D)

Though your presence here is rather unexpected. I didn't believe anyone lived here anymore.

BEN

We don't live here, we've just rented the place 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 to them)

I bid you a fond farewell and wish you the most joyous of weekends. It was truly wonderful to meet you.

With a warm smile, she 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.

Moon disappears from view among the trees and foliage.

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

Alice glares in Moon's direction with suspicion.

ALICE
Yes. Very peculiar.

Ben opens the car's boot, and retrieves the large cool-box.

EWAN
I'm hungry.

ALICE
Me too.

She kisses Ewan's forehead, locks the car with the key fob, and they all head inside the cottage.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben washes dishes at the sink as Alice clears up after lunch.

BEN
Alice, that was absolutely
delicious, seriously. Mary always
raved about your home cooking. I
just thought she was exaggerating,
but after all the meals you've made
us these last few months, I can see
she was right. You have a gift.

Alice bashfully grins while wiping down the table.

ALICE
If you thought that was nice, just
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. Where did
you learn cook so well, anyway?
I've never asked.

ALICE

My grandfather taught me when I was a kid. He use to be a chef in the army, 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 on 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 topic.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Shall we go for walk in a minute? Take a look around.

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 silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

(to Alice)
You see. Completely ignores me.

ALICE

I'll get him ready.

She leaves the kitchen. Ben finishes washing dishes and glimpses out the window, spotting the black cat in the middle of the lawn, watching him attentively.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice enters from the kitchen.

ALICE
Hey, sweetie. We...

She is surprised to see Ewan missing from the room.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Ewan?

She calls up the staircase.

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

No response.

Alice ascends the CREAKY steps.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Ben cautiously approaches the cat with gentle steps and a calm demeanour, not wanting to startle it.

BEN
Hey, kitty.

He stops in front of the staring animal, crouching down.

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

Ben tentatively reaches out to smooth it, but before he makes contact, the cat HISSES and swipes at his hand. Ben pulls back quickly, narrowly avoiding its sharp claws.

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

Standing, he tries to SHOO the animal, but it refuses to budge.

BEN (CONT'D)
Go on. Scat.

He waves his arms, trying to scare it off. The cat HISSES and dashes into the woods.

Ben returns inside, cursing under his breath.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Alice reaches the top of the stairs.

ALICE

Ewan?

No response.

She checks her bedroom, then hears a CREAKY floorboard from the adjacent room. Alice opens the door and enters.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Alice discovers Ewan sitting on the floor, deeply absorbed in drawing with his new pens. His teddy rests on the double bed, a silent observer to his creativity.

ALICE

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

Ewan continues drawing, seemingly oblivious of Alice's presence. She crouches beside him and lightly touches his shoulder.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Ewan?

He pauses, meeting Alice's gaze, finally acknowledging her.

EWAN

Sorry. I was finishing my drawing.

She affectionately strokes his hair.

ALICE

That's okay. Let's see.

Adjusting position, Alice leans in to admire Ewan's vibrant creation. The drawing depicts a child holding hands with a man and a woman, with a blonde-haired lady lying in a bed under a hospital red cross.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Wow. Is this us?

EWAN

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

He motions to 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?

Ewan's nods solemnly.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Me too, sweetie. Me too.

She enfolds Ewan in a comforting embrace.

ALICE (CONT'D)

But you know, people never really leave us after they die. Even though their body may be gone, their lifeforce lives on, just in a different way.

Alice looks deeply into the boy's doleful eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Your Mummy loves you very much, Ewan, and she'll always be with you. Okay?

She seeks confirmation. Ewan smiles softly.

EWAN

Okay.

Alice tenderly kisses his forehead.

ALICE

Right, you ready for a walk in the woods?

EWAN

In the enchanting woods?

She chuckles.

ALICE

Yes, in the enchanting woods.

Ewan grabs his teddy, holding it close to his ear as if listening

EWAN

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

ALICE

Come on then, get your coat on.

EWAN

Yay!

With infectious excitement, he rushes out of the room. Alice follows behind.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Ewan bursts out the back door in his coat and wellies, his exuberance propelling him toward the woodland at the garden's edge, teddy in hand, his blond hair bouncing.

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

ALICE

(calls out to Ewan)
Wait for us, sweetie.

He pays no heed.

BEN

Ewan, wait.

Ewan forges ahead without a pause, disappearing into the woods. Alice quickly closes the back door, leaving it unlocked in her haste to catch up.

Once they're out of sight, Moon cautiously emerges from behind a tree. Ensuring the coast is clear, she heads into the garden and approaches the back door.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

Ewan strolls through the tranquil woods, humming with playful delight. Ben and Alice trail behind, captivated by the scenery.

Feeling a chill, Alice zips up her jacket.

ALICE

We should've brought Ewan's 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 brought wellies with you though.

ALICE

Didn't even cross my mind. I'm not really the outdoorsy type.

Alice slips on mud, but Ben catches her before she falls. They share a fleeting, longing glance in a close embrace before Ben releases her, his thoughts betraying him.

BEN

You okay?

ALICE

Yeah, thanks.

Ewan has wandered ahead, leaving them trailing further behind, a subtle unease lingering.

BEN

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

He lowers his head, memories weighing on him.

ALICE

You're welcome, but I planned this trip mainly for you. Mary mentioned a while ago how excited you both were about seeing this comet, and I thought simply viewing it from your garden, with all the light pollution, would've been a real shame. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I'm actually pretty excited about it myself.

Ben smirks, lost in thought.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

BEN

It's just nice to chat about astronomy with someone.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I've missed that since Mary passed. I've tried getting Ewan interested, but he's still too young. The other teachers at school just humour me, and as for my students... well, let's just say they're more interested in what's trending online than learning about the wonders of the universe.

Ewan grabs a stick and playfully swipes it through the air.

BEN (CONT'D)

I had this one student recently who didn't know the difference between astronomy and astrology. I explained 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 that believes celestial bodies' positions and movements emit mystical energies that influence people's lives here on Earth – which I likened to the absurd notion of ghosts or the healing power of crystals. Of course, the conversation in the classroom then shifted to ghosts, and those who believed in them and those who didn't. An alarming amount did.

They notice Ewan has stopped ahead, fixated on something on the ground, prodding it with his stick.

BEN (CONT'D)

What've you found there, buddy?

As they approach, they see he's standing over a raven carcass, its body torn open, entrails spilling out.

ALICE

Step away, Ewan.

She ushers him aside while Ben inspects the dead bird.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What do you think happened to it?

BEN

Not sure. Probably an animal, maybe a fox.

He encourages them to move on.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Lets just keep moving.

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

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Ben, Alice, and Ewan arrive at the woodland's edge, facing a towering, dense cornfield.

BEN
 Wow, you can see where the name
 Cornwall came from.

ALICE
 Which way now?

Ben gestures toward the imposing cornfield.

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

They survey the area, contemplating their next step.

ALICE
 Maybe we should just head back to
 the cottage.

BEN
 Hang on--
 (takes out his phone)
 --let's check the map.

He opens a map app, and they both peer at the screen.

Ewan hears CHILDISH GIGGLES emanating from the cornfield. He lets go of Alice's hand, smiling into the dense corn.

Ben and Alice, engrossed in the map, remain oblivious to the giggles. Only Ewan hears them.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (pointing at map)
 If we head along that way, we can
 walk parallel to this cornfield and
 loop back to the cottage.

ALICE
 Okay. Hopefully it's not too muddy.

Ben pockets his phone. Alice glances around.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Where's Ewan?

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

ALICE (CONT'D)
He was just 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 in the cornfield. He steps in and picks up 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--
(points 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 afar)
Ewan.

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

She hears Ewan's faint, INDISTINCT CHATTER nearby.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Ewan?

She quickens her pace toward the sound.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Alice enters a muddy clearing at the cornfield's edge, next to a babbling brook. A blackened dead tree sits in the centre of the barren ground.

Ewan, his back to Alice, is fixated on the water, murmuring to himself.

ALICE
 There you are.

He doesn't react.

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

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

ALICE (CONT'D)
 You can't just run off like,
 sweetie. Your Dad and I were really
 worried.

EWAN
 Sorry. I was just playing with the
 boys.

ALICE
 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 at her.

Alice notices Ewan clutching something in each clenched fist.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What do you have there?

She gently opens both his hands, revealing two of the 17th-century raven carvings. The wood shows signs of aging, dampness, and darkened hue.

EWAN

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

Several ravens with regular black eyes 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 land, settling in the tree. White-eye's piercing SQUAWKS echo, joined by the cacophony of the others.

Alice picks up Ewan, her clothes smeared by his muddy wellies, and quickens the pace.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

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

She suddenly stops, startled, facing a double-barrel shotgun held by a mysterious figure.

The squawking stops abruptly.

FRANK, a stocky farmer in his 50s, with a thick, untamed beard and a stern expression, stands before them. His gun aimed squarely at Alice's head.

FRANK

Bugger me blind.

He lowers his weapon, relieved he didn't shoot.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I almost blew your sodden head off.

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

Frank eyes her suspiciously.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Do I know you?

ALICE
No. I don't see how.

FRANK
What you doing on my bloody land
then?

A lone raven flies overhead. Frank aims his weapon, tracking its flight.

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

Alice turns away, shielding Ewan's ears with her hands. Frank fires the gun - BOOM!

MEANWHILE.

Disoriented amidst the corn, Ben halts, startled by the distant gunshot. After a moment's indecision, he rushes toward the sound, clutching Ewan's teddy, his face etched with concern.

MEANWHILE.

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

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

He impales the carcass with the rod. Disgusted, Alice steps back, holding Ewan close.

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

He reattaches the rod to his belt.

FRANK (CONT'D)

At least the wife makes nice juicy pies out of them. 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, his expression turns deadly serious.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You've just been there, haven't you? The clearing with the petrified tree.

Alice nods. Frank steps closer, a stern look on his face.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You'd do well to stay clear of that place. I certainly do. Gives me the heebie-jeebies that tree does. My family's worked this land for over two hundred years, and nothing has ever grown from the earth that surrounds it. Many have tried to remove it 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 never dies. Growing up, I always thought it was a load of old codswallop, but it's been here ever since I was a young lad, and yet it still lives. I've shot it myself countless times over the years, but the sodden thing always survives. It's not natural, I tell you.

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

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

FRANK (CONT'D)

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

Please, don't hurt them. Just let them go, and you can keep me.

A tense moment ensues before Frank 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 about then?

FRANK

Pest control.

He shows Ben the skewered raven on his rod.

FRANK (CONT'D)

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

BEN

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

FRANK

Nearby cottage? You talking about Raven's Cottage?

BEN

Yeah.

FRANK

Thought that place been abandoned.
No one been living there since old
man Miller popped his clogs a few
years back. Heard some relative
inherited the place, but its been
empty ever since, until now.

BEN

I guess the owner decided to start
renting it out as a holiday home.

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

BEN (CONT'D)

You doing okay, buddy?

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

ALICE

(to Frank)

The hippy you mentioned. Are you
talking about 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 ago. Strange one she
is, always wandering the woods
picking flowers with a bloody cat,
if you can believe it. I told her,
I don't care what she gets up to,
each to their 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 then, we'll leave you to
your...work. If you could just
point us in the right direction
we'll be on our way

Frank gestures with his shotgun.

FRANK
That way to Raven's Cottage.

BEN
Thanks.

Ben leads Alice and Ewan in that direction. Frank watches them disappear among the dense corn.

FRANK
(to himself)
Bloody city folk.

Another distant CAW. Frank pivots toward the sound and stealthily navigates through the corn, shotgun raised.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

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

Seated at the table, Ben checks the weather report on his phone while Ewan happily 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.
Well done.

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

As Alice waits, her gaze casually wanders out the window. At the bottom of the garden, she spots 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)
Just leave it on the side for now, sweetie. We can recycle it when we get back.

Ewan complies, placing the paper on the counter. Meanwhile, Ben discreetly tries to set Mr. Hugglesworth aside, but Ewan quickly 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?
Fish pie?

ALICE
But not just any fish pie. This is actually called 'Stargazy pie'. I thought it quite fitting.

Ben is chuffed by the name.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Although, traditionally, the fish heads were left on, poking out through the crust, so they appeared to be gazing up at the stars.

EWAN
Eww.

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

ALICE
(to Ewan)
Yucky, huh? But I promise it's delicious.

She serves him a portion.

ALICE (CONT'D)
As it happens, it was one of your mummy's favorites.
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

I used to make it for her almost every time she came around for dinner.

(pause)

This was actually the first time I've made it since...

Alice's voice trails off, 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 breath.

ALICE

Yes. Since she died.

She wipes her tears away.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What you both waiting for? Dig in.

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

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ewan, in pyjamas, snuggles his teddy while tucked-up in the double bed. Beside him, Ben, also in pyjamas, lounges atop the sheets, 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 taking 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 smiles and then shifts her attention to Ben.

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

BEN
Sure, what about?

ALICE
Just something that's been on my
mind. We'll talk about it after my
shower.

BEN
Okay.

She leaves, and Ben resumes reading to Ewan.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alice finishes her shower and wraps herself in a towel. She wipes the misted mirror and scrutinizes her reflection, examining her brunette roots.

After brushing her hair and adjusting her towel to reveal a bit cleavage, she seems satisfied with her appearance.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

Alice exits the bathroom, flicking off the light. She notices two sets of watery child footprints leading from the bathroom to Ben and Ewan's closed bedroom door and down the stairs.

Curious, she quietly opens their bedroom door and peeks inside.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ben is asleep on the bed, an open book on his lap. Ewan is missing, his teddy still on the bed. Alice hears Ewan GIGGLING downstairs.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

Alice stands at the top of the stairs, peering into the darkness. A profound silence reigns.

ALICE

Ewan?

No response.

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

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Alice flicks the light switch, finding Ewan absent. GIGGLES emanate from the dark kitchen.

ALICE

Ewan?

She approaches the sound, following the trail of wet footprints. The RUSTLE of paper and CLATTER of pens break the silence.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alice turns on the light. Ewan is seated at the table, eyes closed, happily scribbling a vibrant picture.

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

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.

EWAN

Sorry. I was playing a game.
Drawing blind. It's fun.

He smirks, admiring his creation, before he resumes drawing.

ALICE

What are these?

She gestures to the pieces of paper with a pen on top.

EWAN

They're the boy's pictures. They want to tell me something, but I still can't hear them properly. So, I told them to write it down. But I'm not sure they know how to read and write, so I told them to draw it instead.

He pauses, looking at the turned-over pictures.

EWAN (CONT'D)

I haven't seen them yet.

Apprehensive, Alice picks up the two pieces of paper to examine them discreetly, ensuring Ewan doesn't see what's on the other side.

Her expression shifts to trepidation when she sees what's depicted: two rudimentary drawings of a menacing, scraggy woman with a bird on her shoulder, sketched all in black.

EWAN (CONT'D)

Can I see?

Alice abruptly crumples up the drawings and tosses them in the bin. Ewan looks disappointed.

EWAN (CONT'D)

Hey, I didn't get to look.

ALICE

Come on, enough of this. Big day tomorrow. Bedtime.

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

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

The sun casts a golden glow over the weathered property. Frank steps out, ready for another day of farm work.

An indistinct woman's voice RANTS from inside the house. Frank rolls his eyes.

FRANK

(to himself)

What's she blathering on about now.

He reluctantly steps back inside.

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

More unintelligible RANTING.

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

He exits, SLAMMING the door.

Distant caws grab Frank's attention. He spots ravens circling his cornfields. His expression darkens, and he strides toward an old wooden barn.

EXT. BARN - DAWN

Frank swings open the barn door and disappears inside.

Moments later, he reappears with his shotgun and spiking rod, loading the weapon as he purposefully heads toward the cornfields.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Alice, freshly awakened, steps out of her room. The watery footprints have naturally evaporated. She gently knocks on Ben's bedroom door.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Ewan is alone, sitting cross-legged on the floor with his teddy, focused on something in the corner.

EWAN
(hushed)
I still can't hear you. Speak
louder.

The door opens, and Alice peeks in.

ALICE
Good morning, sweetie.

Ewan turns to her.

EWAN

Morning.

ALICE

Where's your dad?

Ewan offers a shrug.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You had breakfast?

He shakes his head. She extends her hand.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Coming?

EWAN

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 for the day. He scrubs mud off Alice's and Ewan's footwear, the dark earth swirling down the drain.

Glancing out the window, he spots the black cat in the garden, watching him.

Alice enters.

ALICE

Good morning.

BEN

Morning.

She notices him cleaning her shoes.

ALICE

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

BEN

It's the least I could do for you finding Ewan yesterday.

She flicks on the kettle.

ALICE
Coffee?

BEN
Please.

Alice prepares mugs while Ben continues scrubbing, glancing out the window. The cat is gone.

BEN (CONT'D)
This mud is so thick and dark.
Where did you find him?

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

Alice opens the cool-box.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Had any breakfast?

BEN
Not yet.

She starts prepping breakfast for them all.

BEN (CONT'D)
Sorry about last night. I must have
fallen asleep while you were in the
shower. You said wanted to talk
about something?

Alice hesitates to answer. There's a sudden KNOCK at the front door. They exchange uncertain glances before Alice leaves to answer it.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice opens the door to find Moon holding a small wicker basket of red apples.

MOON
Greetings, my dear. A 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. You must want it
back?

MOON
No, keep it. Consider it part of
the gift.

ALICE
Thanks.

An awkward silence lingers.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Um, we were just about to sit down
for breakfast, so...

MOON
Not for me, thank you, my dear. But
a nice cup of tea would be most
welcome.

She invites herself in, stepping past a bewildered Alice.

ALICE
Uh, okay. Come in. I guess.

Alice closes the door behind them.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Moon settles into a seat, composed and expectant.

MOON
I shall await my tea here.

She scrutinizes her surroundings.

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

Alice smiles politely and carries the basket to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Alice enters. Ben is already aware of the situation.

Alice sets the basket down and prepares a teacup. Ben glances toward the doorway to ensure Moon is out of earshot.

BEN
 (whisper)
 Be sure to add plenty of cold
 water. It'll get her out quicker.

The kettle reaches a rolling boil. Alice gathers milk and sugar, then pauses.

ALICE
 (to herself)
 How does she take it?

With a sigh, she heads back to the living room.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice enters from the kitchen.

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

Moon is gone. A floorboard CREAKS upstairs. Concern grows on Alice's face as she swiftly ascends the staircase.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Moon is sitting on the floor beside Ewan, softly speaking to him while holding his teddy.

The tranquillity shatters as Alice bursts in.

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

Alice protectively gathers Ewan into her arms.

MOON
 My apologies. I meant no harm.

Moon stands, using the bed frame for support.

MOON (CONT'D)
 I was on my way to use your
 bathroom when I overheard this
 little one playing.
 (adoringly gazes at Ewan)
 He's so very precious.

She offers Mr. Hugglesworth back to Ewan, but Alice snatches it from her first. An uneasy silence follows.

MOON (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I shall have to pass on that tea, my dear. Lots to do today. I really ought to be on my way.

Moon gracefully manoeuvres past her and exits the room. Alice follows closely behind.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Moon exits the cottage as Alice, holding Ewan, stands in the doorway, her expression tinged with suspicion.

MOON

I wish you all the most pleasant of evenings.

(gazes up to sky)

Though I do hope the changing weather doesn't mar your experience.

Alice follows Moon's gaze, observing the clouds drifting overhead.

Moon waves her hand with a single, arching motion.

MOON (CONT'D)

Farewell.

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

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben awaits Alice's arrival. She enters with Ewan.

BEN

What just happened?

ALICE

She went upstairs to use the bathroom, apparently, but I found her in your room talking to Ewan.

Alice sets Ewan on the table.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(to Ewan)
What did she say to you, sweetie?

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

Alice's concern persists.

ALICE
Did she say or do anything else?

Ewan shakes his head.

BEN
(to Alice)
Don't worry about it. He's fine.
(to Ewan)
Aren't you, buddy?

He ruffles his son's hair.

BEN (CONT'D)
She's just a strange old lady with
some boundary issues. She's
harmless, and she did give us
these.
(gestures at apples)
They do look good.

Ben selects an apple, rinses it quickly, and takes a hearty bite.

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

He happily munches away, but suddenly pauses, grimacing as his breath catches. He is choking.

Alice looks alarmed, 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)

Lets just forget about it, yeah? I don't want to let anything spoil this evening for us. Least of all some batty old hippy.

Alice forces an agreeable smile, concealing her doubts.

INT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Frank prowls through the cornstalks, shotgun at the ready. The spiking rod on his belt, displays a grisly collection of impaled ravens.

A nearby SQUAWK catches his ear. He spies a lone raven tearing at a corn husk, oblivious to his presence.

Frank takes aim and fires. BOOM.

Distant CAWS echo as other startled ravens take flight

Approaching the fallen bird, Frank detaches his spiking rod. The wounded creature twitches and SHRIEKS, clinging to life.

With disdain, Frank presses his boot on its head, CRUNCHING its skull. Silence falls as its black eyes pop out.

Satisfied, he impales the carcass on his rod and continues stealthily through the cornstalks, shotgun raised.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Alice lounges on a blanket, engrossed in a book, as Ben checks a weather app on his phone, frowning as he studies the overcast sky.

He joins Alice on the blanket, his gaze lingering on the clouds with concern.

BEN

Clear skies aren't expected until morning. Right now, there are a few breaks in the clouds, but if it worsens, we might not be able to see the comet tonight.

Alice remains immersed in her reading, seemingly unperturbed. Ben notices the cardigan draped over her shoulders.

BEN (CONT'D)

That cardigan--was it Mary's?

Alice looks up from her book, scrutinizing the garment.

ALICE

You know, I think you're right. We used to borrow each other's clothes on occasion. I guess I never returned this one. I can take it off if you prefer.

She prepares to remove the cardigan.

BEN

No, keep it on. It suits you.

She smiles and returns to her book. Ben's gaze lingers on her. Sensing his stare, she looks at him, and he quickly adverts his gaze to the sky.

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

EWAN

Can we set up the telescope now?

BEN

It's too early. The comet won't be visible for a few hours.

EWAN

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

BEN

At what?

EWAN

You'll see.

Ben expresses reluctance.

EWAN (CONT'D)

(to Alice)

Can we, Alice? Please.

ALICE

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

She returns to her book.

EWAN

(to Ben)

Please, Dad. Can we? Please.

BEN

I'm not sure, buddy. You know how much that telescope means to me. It was a 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...

Worn down, Ben caves.

BEN

Okay, okay, just stop. I'll set it up in the bedroom, and carry it out to the garden later.

EWAN

Woohoo!

Ewan joyfully dashes back inside, exclaiming:

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

He said yes!

BEN

(calls out)

But we must remember to act responsibly around it, Ewan. Yes?

No reply. Ben turns to Alice, still reading.

BEN (CONT'D)

Guess I'm setting up the telescope. Where are the car keys?

ALICE

By the front door.

Ben heads inside.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Have fun.

She glances at the tree line at the bottom of the garden. Finding no ravens, she returns to her book.

INT. BARN - DAY

Frank enters the dim barn, his spiking rod laden with raven carcasses.

Leaning his shotgun against a beam, he flips a switch, illuminating a makeshift raven butchering station.

He places the rod on a blood-stained workbench adorned with several knives and a sturdy meat cleaver. Black feathers from previous butchering sessions litter the floor, along with worn buckets and a sizable basket.

Frank shrugs off his jacket, dons a stained apron, and rolls up his sleeves. Methodically, he extracts the birds from the rod, tossing them into the basket containing the rest of the day's haul.

Sliding off the last carcass, he sets the rod aside, and proceeds to vigorously pluck the dead bird's black feathers, each motion resonating with a twisted sense of satisfaction.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Ben assembles his sophisticated telescope, securing it to a tripod. He gazes nostalgically upon his cherished possession.

Ewan bursts in, clutching his teddy, laughing.

BEN

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

Ignoring him, Ewan playfully circles the telescope, as if engaged in a game of chase.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ewan, stop. Be careful. Responsible behaviour, remember?

Undeterred, Ewan continues, inching closer to the telescope.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ewan, can you hear me? I said stop.

Suddenly, Ewan trips over the tripod and falls. The telescope wobbles, teetering on the brink of imbalance. Ben scrambles to catch it, but it's too late. With a crash, it topples over, slamming onto the floor.

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

Ewan, sprawled on the floor, looks up in fear. Ben, aghast, glares at him.

BEN (CONT'D)
You clumsy little boy!

Ben urgently rights the telescope as Ewan gingerly stands.

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

Ewan wells up, head hanging in shame. Ben inspects the damage.

Alice appears in the doorway.

ALICE
What's all the shouting?

Ewan rushes to her, hugging her waist.

EWAN
Mummy.

Alice, surprised to be addressed as "Mummy," comforts him. Ben, equally taken aback, looks at his frightened son, heartbroken.

ALICE
(to Ben)
What happened?

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

ALICE
Oh, dear. Is it broken?

BEN
I don't know yet.

Ben adjusts the telescope, pointing it out the window and fine-tuning the focus.

Ewan shows Alice a small scrape on his hand.

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

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

BEN

It's okay--

He looks up from the telescope viewfinder, relieved.

BEN (CONT'D)

--It's not damaged.

Ben kneels before Ewan.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for shouting, buddy. Are you okay? That was quite a tumble you took.

Ewan glumly presents his scrape. Ben gently inspects it.

BEN (CONT'D)

It doesn't look too bad. I think you'll live.

He playfully ruffles his son's hair.

EWAN

But that's what you said about Mummy. You thought she'd live, you promised she would, but she died.

Ben is speechless, overcome with gut-wrenching heartache.

ALICE

(to Ewan)

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

Alice lifts Ewan, offering Ben a compassionate smile.

EWAN

Sorry, Daddy.

Ben stands, welling up.

BEN

I'm sorry too, buddy.

Alice carries Ewan downstairs.

Ben composes himself, wiping away tears. His attention is drawn to something outside - a distant plume of smoke rising from a field.

He adjusts the telescope 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 emerges from the yurt with a wicker basket. She closes her eyes, moving rhythmically around the flames, silently mouthing words. With each step, she tosses dry leaves from the basket into the fire, causing sparks to fly as they combust.

A gentle CREAKING floorboard emanates from within the bedroom.

Ben looks up, scanning the room, but finds it empty. He dismisses it with a shrug and returns to the viewfinder.

THROUGH TELESCOPE - Moon stands motionless beside the bonfire, glaring directly at him.

Ben quickly looks up, puzzled, peering at the distant campsite. It is impossible she could see him from that far.

With hesitation, he dares to look through the viewfinder.

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

Ben gazes out the window, 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 and spots it under the bed.

While retrieving the cap, he notices another object farther back in the shadows. He stretches for it but can't reach.

Lying flat, he inches under the bed, reaching for the object. Suddenly, the black cat springs out and scratches his hand. Yelping, Ben recoils, bangs his head, and shimmies out.

He grimaces at his bleeding hand, blood trickling from deep claw marks. Cautiously, he peers under the bed. The cat HISSES menacingly, guarding the object.

BEN (CONT'D)
You little shit.

Ben stands, mindful not to let blood drip on the floor. He lifts the telescope with his good hand, placing it safely in the corner. Backing out of the room, clutching his injured hand, he keeps a wary eye on the bed.

On the landing, Ben shuts the door, trapping the cat inside.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ewan sits on the table as Alice tends to his grazed hand, applying a plaster from a small first-aid kit.

Ben strides in, nursing his hand.

ALICE

Not you as well. What happened?

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

ALICE (CONT'D)

How on earth did you manage to do that?

BEN

That--

He glances at Ewan, mindful of using bad language in his presence.

BEN (CONT'D)

--darn cat scratched me.

ALICE

What? Just now upstairs?

BEN

Yeah. Little bugger was hiding under the bed. It's still in there now.

He turns off the faucet and delicately dries his hand.

ALICE

Let me see to that.

She tends to his wound.

EWAN

Can I see the cat?

BEN

No, it's vicious.

Ewan looks disappointed.

EWAN

So, does it live here?

BEN

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

Alice finishes bandaging Ben's hand.

BEN (CONT'D)

--right now.

Ben scans the room and spots an old-fashioned wooden broom. He grabs it and heads out of the kitchen.

BEN (CONT'D)

Keep this door shut. I'm going to try to get it out the front door, and I don't want it running in here with you two.

EWAN

Be careful, Daddy?

Ben smiles at his son and closes the kitchen door behind him.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Ben throws the front door wide open and marches up the stairs, wielding the broom like a weapon.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Silence fills the room. The door partially opens, and Ben cautiously peeks inside, surveying the space.

His focus zeroes in on the bed. He enters, broom poised, and squats to peer beneath it.

The cat still guards the mysterious object.

BEN

Time for you to leave, my furry little friend.

The cat HISSES in response.

Ben carefully manoeuvres the bristle end of the broom under the bed, coaxing the animal out with gentle nudges.

BEN (CONT'D)

Come on, out you go.

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

BEN (CONT'D)
Alright, you asked for it.

He thrusts the broom into the cat's face, and it goes into a wild frenzy, YOWLING and grappling with the bristles. Panicked, Ben hastily yanks the broom out, but the cat clings to it with its sharp claws.

The feral animal lunges with lethal intent, but Ben dodges the attack, and the cat scurries back beneath the bed.

Infuriated, Ben peers under the bed again. Only the cat's furious eyes are visible in the shadows behind the object.

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

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

Abandoning his weapon, Ben 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!

Forcefully SLAMMING the door, he exhales a sigh of relief.

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

He quickly returns upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - DAY

Ben retrieves the broom and peers under the bed. The mysterious object remains shrouded in the shadows.

Guiding the broom behind it, he propels it out with one swift motion. Bathed in daylight, Ben's face twists with disgust as he gazes upon it.

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

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ewan remains perched on the table, clutching his teddy tightly. Alice stands beside him, offering comfort.

Ben enters with a stern expression, placing the broom back while holding a wrapped-up carrier bag.

ALICE

That sounded like quite a commotion. Are you alright? Ewan was worried.

BEN

I'm fine.

Ewan spots the bag.

EWAN

What's in there?

BEN

A dead bird that...blasted cat had with it under the bed. Explains why it didn't want to leave.

ALICE

A bird? Can I see?

BEN

If you like.

He opens the bag, showing them both the lifeless fledgling. Alice looks disturbed.

Ben quickly wraps it up and exits the kitchen. Moments later, he returns, standing in the doorway.

BEN (CONT'D)

Where have the car keys gone?

ALICE

Why? What are you going to do?

BEN

I saw out the window where that Moon is camped. So I'm going to go over there and show her this--
(holds up bag)

--and this--

(holds up bandaged hand)

--and tell her to keep her feral cat away from this cottage before somebody else gets hurt.

Alice's face shows a sense of unease.

ALICE

I don't think you should go. Just toss it into the bushes and forget about it. The cat's gone now, and where only here for one more night. Besides, I thought you said you weren't going to let anything spoil this evening. Especially her.

Ben gazes at her for a beat.

BEN

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

ALICE

Not.

BEN

Fine, I could use a walk anyway. If you do see that cat, keep Ewan away from it. It's dangerous. I'll be back soon.

He exits the kitchen, followed by the sound of the front door SHUTTING. Alice wears a troubled expression, lost in thought.

EWAN

Now what?

She snaps out of it.

ALICE

You want to play some games?

Ewan nods eagerly. Alice lifts him off the table, and they head to the living room.

INT. BARN - DAY

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

With weary hands, he finishes plucking the last raven from the basket. He lays it on the bench and, with a swift cleaver strike, decapitates it. Tossing the head into a bucket filled with others, he hangs the bird on the line.

Frank sighs in relief, his task complete.

Suddenly, distant CAWS pierce the air. Frank freezes, his face twisting with pure hatred.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Frank bursts out, glaring into the distance. A cacophony of CAWING ravens circles over the cornfield. He storms back inside, shedding his apron.

Moments later, he emerges, jacket on, shotgun and spiking rod in hand. Striding toward the cornfield, he loads his weapon, muttering bitterly.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Alice sits by the coffee table, playing Happy Families with Ewan. Mr. Hugglesworth holds his own cards.

Her attention drifts, lost in thought, as she suspiciously gazes up the staircase.

EWAN
It's your turn, Alice.

She remains unresponsive, still focused on the stairs.

EWAN (CONT'D)
Alice. Your go.

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 this time.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The sound of a FLUSH emanates from an adjacent room. Shortly after, Alice enters, activating her phone's torch.

Lowering herself to the floor, she illuminates the space under the bed, revealing nothing but empty darkness.

Deactivating the torch, Alice looks out the window. Detecting no ravens in the trees, she draws the curtains and leaves.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Ben trudges towards Moon's aged campervan and yurt, holding the wrapped bag. A few embers flicker in the dying bonfire.

BEN

Hello? Moon? Are you here?

No response. He peers through the campervan window, revealing its well-used interior with a new-age aesthetic. Shelves hold an array of books, and boxes contain mysterious 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.

Silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

Anyone home?

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

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm coming in.

INT. YURT - DAY

Ben partially parts the entrance and peeks inside; Moon is nowhere in sight.

Thick blankets and pillows form a makeshift bed. A bundle of wicker sticks and an unfinished basket lie on the floor. A low camping table, cluttered with books, jars, and partially burnt black candles, dominates the space.

As Ben turns to leave, something catches his eye. He enters the yurt and lifts a nondescript book from the table, revealing Ewan's red beanie hat.

Puzzled, Ben scrutinizes the other items on the table. A jar stands out, containing several thistle leaves.

Ben unravels the dead fledgling and compares the foliage—a perfect match. Only now does he notice the fine strands of blonde hair securing the thistles to the bird's wings.

His gaze shifts to the title on the spine of the book he lifted: *Demonic and Spiritual Possession*.

Another book on the table catches his eye: A History of 11th-Century Art. Intrigued, he flips it open to a marked page.

CLOSE ON: An aged oil painting depicting a comet streaking across a starry night sky above a demonic entity emerging from a shadowy pool, it's form an amalgamation of raven and man. Two young boys lie lifeless before the beast, their hands bound with black ribbon. A third boy stands between them, locking eyes with the demon'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 leaves.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Ben hastens away from Moon's camp but suddenly stops, remembering the bag in his hand. He strides to a nearby bush and dumps the dead raven into the foliage.

Stashing the empty bag into his jacket pocket, he quickly vacates the area, quickening his pace.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DUSK

Frank weaves through the cornstalks, shotgun ready, closing in on the CAWS. Suddenly, he stops, fear dawning on him. After a moment, he gathers his resolve and forges ahead.

EXT. CLEARING - DUSK

Frank steps into the muddy clearing. The dead tree teems with CAWING ravens. He spots White-eye perched among them. Steely-eyed, he takes aim. The air grows still as the birds abruptly fall silent, all eyes on him.

Frank lowers his weapon, feeling the weight of their collective stare. White-eye emits a sharp SQUAWK, triggering a synchronized flight of the ravens converging toward Frank.

He instinctively ducks as the flock, led by White-eye, swoops over his head and soars out of the clearing. Frank fires two shots, BOOM BOOM, but misses his mark.

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

INT. LIVINGROOM - DUSK

Alice and Ewan finish another game of Happy Families.

ALICE
Looks like Mr. Hugglesworth wins
again.

EWAN
Woohoo!

The front door opens, and Ben enters.

EWAN (CONT'D)
Daddy.

Ben hangs up his jacket.

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

BEN
She wasn't there.

He locks the front door with a decisive CLUNK.

ALICE
So, what did you do with the bird?

BEN
I chucked it into the bushes, like
you said. You were right; I
shouldn't let it spoil the evening.

He heads toward the staircase.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm going to bring the telescope
down and set it up in the garden.

ALICE
Okay.

He starts up the stairs, then pauses.

BEN
Oh, and I was thinking we should
probably head back first thing
tomorrow to beat the traffic. No
point in hanging around.

ALICE
Yeah, I was thinking the same.

He continues up the steps.

EWAN

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

Alice resumes playing, dealing out new hands.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DUSK

Frank reaches the cornfield's edge, tracking the elusive ravens into the woodland. Despite hearing the occasional CAW, they remain hidden among the trees.

Frustrated, Frank grumbles to himself, reluctantly conceding to head home.

Suddenly, a raven's piercing SQUAWK stops him. He spots White-eye on a low branch, SQUAWKING directly at him.

Scowling, Frank aims his shotgun at the taunting bird, only for White-eye to retreat deeper into the woods. Frank follows, determined to hunt down his prey.

INT. WOODLAND - DUSK

Frank treads through the woods, tracking White-eye as it flits between trees. In a brief moment of distraction, Frank stumbles, temporarily losing sight of the bird.

Regaining his footing, he scans the trees, but White-eye proves elusive. A hush descends.

Suddenly, a PIERCING SQUAWK breaks the quietude. Frank whirls around to see White-eye on a nearby branch. He swiftly raises his shotgun, taking aim.

FRANK

(muttering to self)
I got you this time.

A WHIRLING sound startles Frank, and in an instant, a pack of speeding ravens forcefully knocks him off his feet. He fires a shot as he falls, landing awkwardly on his spine onto the rocky ground with a resounding SNAP.

The rushing flock vanishes into the darkening woods. Dazed, Frank lies on the ground, groaning, blood seeping from the back of his head.

White-eye lands at his feet, startling him. He tries to rise, but his body refuses to obey. Panic sets in as Frank realizes he's paralyzed.

Hopping onto his stomach, White-eye fixes a piercing gaze upon Frank. He stares at the shotgun in his grip, desperately willing his arm to move. Terror fills his eyes as the bird inches right up to his face, and emits a chilling SHRIEK that echoes like the word "DIE."

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

The overcast sky blocks any trace of moonlight. Only dim illumination emanates from the kitchen windows. Ben, Alice, and Ewan, huddled close for warmth, stand beside the telescope on the lawn.

Ben eagerly peers through the viewfinder, hoping to catch a glimpse of the comet.

Alice and Ewan, feeling the chill, appear bored; they've been at this for a while. Ewan yawns and cuddles his teddy, cosying up to Alice.

ALICE

It's getting late, Ben. Maybe we should just call it a night. It doesn't look like we're going to be able to see it. I'm sorry.

Ben lifts his gaze from the viewfinder.

BEN

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

Surveying the sky, he points to a gap in the clouds, revealing a glimpse of the starry night above.

BEN (CONT'D)

See? We just need to wait for one to pass by in the right place. It could 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.

BEN

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

ALICE

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

Ben checks the time.

BEN

Didn't realize it was this late.
You're right.

He crouches in front of Ewan.

BEN (CONT'D)

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

Ewan nods. Ben ruffles his son's hair and peers back through
the viewfinder.

EWAN

Night, night, Daddy.

Alice takes Ewan's hand, leading him to the cottage.

ALICE

(to Ewan)

Lets give you a nice warm bath
before bed first. We don't want you
catching a chill now, do we?

She opens the backdoor and takes him inside.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Moon approaches her yurt, holding a lit oil lantern and a
wicker basket full of a variety of plant-life.

Suddenly, she freezes, unease washing over her. Scanning the
darkness with suspicion, she finds nothing. Still wary, she
enters her yurt and disappears inside.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ewan lies in bed with his teddy, wearing pyjamas. Alice concludes reading a bedtime story and tucks him in, kissing his forehead.

ALICE
Goodnight, sweetie.

As she leaves, Ewan calls out.

EWAN
Alice.

ALICE
Yes?

EWAN
Are you going to be my new mummy?

Alice returns to his side.

ALICE
Is that something you'd like?

Ewan earnestly nods, then holds his teddy to his ear.

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

Alice beams.

ALICE
Me three.

She affectionately strokes his hair.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I'm working on it.

She playfully bops his nose.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Now go to sleep.

Ewan turns on his side and closes his eyes.

EWAN
Night, night, Alice.

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

INT. YURT - NIGHT

A pot bubbles on a camping stove, set upon the low table, surrounded by flickering black candles. Moon kneels beside it, grinding organic matter in a mortar and adding them to the pot.

The black cat limps in, nursing an injured leg and carrying something in its mouth. It nudges Moon's leg, catching her attention. She looks at the animal with profound surprise.

MOON

You're not supposed to be here.

The cat drops the dead fledgling adorned with thistle leaves at her feet. Moon is alarmed. She quickly picks up the bird and rushes out of the yurt.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Moon swiftly opens the squeaky driver's door of her aged campervan and hops inside. She turns the key in the ignition, but the engine refuses to start.

Frustrated, she climbs out and hurries off into the darkness on foot, clutching the dead raven.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Ben, disheartened, scans the cloud-covered sky. Alice returns to his side.

ALICE

He's all tucked in.

BEN

Good-oh.

Alice gazes up to the blanket of darkness overhead.

ALICE

Any luck?

BEN

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

He looks despondently at the sky. Alice comforts him with a hand on his shoulder.

ALICE

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

Ben is reluctant.

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, just as long as we keep an eye on the sky from the window.

He collects the telescope, and they head inside the cottage. Alice casts a fleeting glance back at the trees before closing the door behind them.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben delicately places the telescope in the corner.

BEN

So, what's the surprise?

Alice opens the cool-box, digs to the bottom, and pulls out a bottle of champagne.

ALICE

Ta-da! Your favourite, right?

Ben inspects the label.

BEN

Mary told you, I assume?

ALICE

Yeah, she said you only ever drink it on special occasions.

She collects two glasses and starts to open the bottle.

ALICE (CONT'D)

And tonight is special, whether we see the comet or not.

She POPS the cork.

Ben takes the bottle and sits at the table, staring at the label, then suddenly breaks down and weeps.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Did I say something wrong?

Ben composes himself, holding back the tears.

BEN
No, it's not you. It's the champagne.

He sets the bottle on the table.

BEN (CONT'D)
It's what I ordered on mine and Mary's first date. I was trying to impress her, so I ordered the most expensive champagne on the menu. I told her it was my favourite, but I'd never even tried it before.

A bittersweet smile flashes across his face.

BEN (CONT'D)
She bought me a bottle every year for my birthday ever since. I never had the heart to tell her I didn't partially like it. Now I'd give anything to...

Overwhelmed, Ben breaks down.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I just miss her so much.

Alice compassionately hugs him.

BEN (CONT'D)
We were so happy, the three of us. Her perfect little family. Then, just like that, she was gone, forever, and no one could even tell me why.

Alice holds him as he sobs.

BEN (CONT'D)
Now I have to somehow raise a five-year-old kid by myself while coping with both our grief. I'm trying my best, but it's so hard without her.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I fear Ewan is just going to remember me as this angry, bitter parent, who was always shouting at him.

Alice tenderly touches Ben's cheek, meeting his teary gaze.

ALICE

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

She caresses his cheek, their eyes locked in a charged silence. Alice leans in, softly kissing his lips before drawing back, awaiting his response.

Ben hesitates, then passionately reciprocates. Alice confidently straddles his lap, their shared desire igniting into a fervent embrace.

Abruptly, Ben pulls away.

BEN

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

ALICE

I know. It's okay. I understand.

Alice runs her fingers through Ben's hair, comforting him.

ALICE (CONT'D)

But you shouldn't feel guilty. You deserve to be happy. We all do.

She leans in for another kiss, but Ben resists.

BEN

I can't, I'm sorry.

ALICE

Don't deny your desire. I know you want this as much as I do; I've seen the way you look at me. Just like the way you used to look at her.

Alice is determined to rekindle the passion.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Relax. Have some champagne.

She pours him a glass, but Ben remains reluctant. Alice whispers seductively in his ear.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Imagine I'm her, if you like.

She nibbles his earlobe, but Ben fights the temptation.

BEN
Alice, stop, please.

Ignoring his plea, she kisses his neck.

BEN (CONT'D)
I said stop!

Ben abruptly stands, shoving her off his lap. Alice falls, and the bottle and glasses SMASH on the ground.

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

Alice sits up, staring remorsefully at the shattered glass in the pool of bubbly champagne.

ALICE
I'm sorry too.

Ewan's muffled SHOUTS echo from upstairs. Alerted, Ben rushes out of the kitchen.

INT. BEDROOM 2 - NIGHT

Ben bursts in, flicking on the light. Ewan, out of bed, clings to his teddy, intensely staring into the corner.

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

Ben consoles the agitated boy.

BEN
Ewan, what's wrong?

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

Ewan glares back into the corner, his expression darkening.

BEN
Boys?
(glances to corner)
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

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

EWAN

They say she's coming for me. That 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. Ben instinctively positions himself in front of Ewan and peers outside, finding only darkness.

BANG! A lone raven flies into the glass and disappears. Ben anxiously backs away. Alice arrives in the doorway.

ALICE

What's going on?

A barrage of ravens suddenly pummel the window, striking the glass repeatedly. The glass begins to CRACK from the relentless assault. Alice quickly gathers Ewan into her arms, and Ben urgently ushers them out of the room.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

The trio exits the bedroom just as the window shatters, unleashing a swarm of SQUAWKING ravens. Ben SLAMS the door shut and the birds POUND against it.

BEN

(to Alice)

Go!

They hasten down the staircase.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

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

ALICE

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?

Alice hands them over. The POUNDING upstairs intensifies.

BEN (CONT'D)
Stay close and head straight for
the car.

He peeks outside, then swings the door open.

BEN (CONT'D)
Quickly.

He urges Alice and Ewan outside.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Ben leads them to the car, his eyes vigilantly darting around for any sign of danger. Raven CAWING echoes from the shattered bedroom window above.

With a press of the key fob, he unlocks the vehicle, swiftly helping Alice and Ewan inside before hurrying around to the driver's side.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ewan whimpers in Alice's arms as she gently strokes his hair.

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

Ben gets into the driver's seat, shuts the door, and inserts 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 repeatedly, but the engine won't start.

BEN
Why isn't it fucking starting?

Suspicion crosses Alice's face.

ALICE
She tampered with it.

White-eye emits a piercing SHRIEK.

The horde of SQUAWKING ravens bursts from the cottage, aggressively attacking the car, pecking and clawing at every window. The glass begins to fracture, sharp breaks punctuating small holes.

BEN
We have to move.

Ben takes hold of his door handle.

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 prepares himself.

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

She nods, gripping Ewan tightly. Ben slips out the door and sprints away. The ravens give chase, clearing the windows. White-eye remains on the bonnet, staring at Ewan.

Alice locks eyes with the bird, then flings her door open and bolts toward the cottage. White-eye takes to the air.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Alice rushes into the kitchen, pausing in the doorway to steal a glance behind her.

Ben hurtles through the open front door, closely pursued by the angry swarm. He makes a futile attempt to shut the door when passing, but the ravens forcefully push it back open.

BEN
 (to Alice)
 Go!

She steps into the kitchen, beginning to close the door. Ben surges forward, barely squeezing through the narrowing gap.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben tries to shut the door, but several SHRIEKING raven heads and twitching wings block the way, preventing him from latching 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 heaves 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 much for Ben to withstand.

The door inches open, allowing more birds to start squeezing through.

BEN
 (to Alice)
 Take Ewan and run!

Alice dashes to the back door, grabbing a small torch. She hesitates, torn between fleeing and her concern for Ben. The POUNDING intensifies; Ben can't hold them off much longer.

BEN (CONT'D)
 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.

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

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

Half the flock swarms him, attacking viciously with relentless pecks and claws, while the others desperately try to break through the back window.

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

Finally, the back window shatters, freeing half of the ravenous pack into the night sky.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Alice flees through the dark woods with Ewan, the feeble torch light barely illuminating their path. Pursuing SQUAWKS and FLAPPING WINGS pierce the air.

Suddenly, Alice trips, crashing to the ground. A haunting silence descends. Grimacing, she checks on Ewan, relieved he's unharmed. Retrieving the torch, Alice shines it on the source of her stumble.

Ewan screams in horror at the grisly sight of Frank's horribly mutilated corpse, his face torn to shreds and his eye sockets pecked clean.

A nearby CAW alerts them to White-eye perched on a low branch. The creature fixes its haunting, pearly eyes intensely on Alice.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben, succumbing to the unabating assault of ravens, kneels on the floor, defensively clutching the chair over his head. His jacket is shredded to tatters, and his body bears multiple bleeding scratches.

A raven bypasses his defences, launching a savage pecking attack on his face. Ben screams, driven by primal instinct as he bites down on the bird's head, CRUNCHING its skull.

Adrenaline pumping, he rises, discarding the chair. He leaps across the room, seizes his telescope, and wields it like a baseball bat.

With manic rage, Ben goes on a frenzied raven-killing spree, swinging the telescope wildly, 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 brow. Exhausted but triumphant, he surveys the scene of his hard-fought battle.

Suddenly, a squawk startles him into action. He spins around, ready to strike, to find a lone raven on the ground, clinging to life, frantically trying to flap its broken wings.

Ben towers over the distressed animal, locking eyes with its black gaze. The raven SCREECHES at him. With a determined fury, Ben raises the telescope and brings it down repeatedly until it snaps, reducing the creature to a bloody mess of guts and feathers.

Victorious, he tosses the broken telescope aside, grabs the broom for a weapon, and dashes out the back door.

BEN
(calls out)
Ewan! Alice!

He disappears into the darkness.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Ben trudges wearily through the dark woods. Moonlight occasionally breaks through the thinning clouds, intermittently illuminating his path.

He pauses, leaning against a tree to catch his breath, eyes darting uncertainly.

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

Silence. Ben hesitates, then resolutely presses on.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Ben reaches the edge of the woodland, facing the dense cornfield, desperation washing over him.

BEN
 (yells)
 Ewan!

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

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

BEN
 Ewan!

He grips the broom tighter and plunges into the corn, pushing through the rustling stalks, following his son's fearful voice until it abruptly falls silent.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Ben skids to a halt, emerging abruptly into the muddy clearing. Darkness shrouds the hushed scene, the clouds currently obscuring the moonlight.

Spotting something 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 illuminates the clearing.

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

BEN
 Alice?

He hastens through the thick mud toward her. A raven spots Ben and emits a sharp CAW of alarm, triggering a chorus of SQUAWKS from the others.

Without turning to acknowledge his approach, Alice determinedly plunges her arms deeper into the brook.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Where's Ewan?

As Ben draws closer, he realizes with horror that she is drowning Ewan, pinning his head beneath the water's surface.

BEN (CONT'D)
 No!

Ben surges forward with the broom. The SQUAWKING ravens swoop towards him, but they're too late. Ben strikes Alice across the back, SNAPPING the broom handle.

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

The ravens swarm Ben, mercilessly tearing at his flesh. Desperate to reach his son, he crawls to Ewan and pulls his lifeless body from the water, hands bound with black ribbon.

The birds stop their assault, not wanting to harm the boy. Cradling Ewan's limp form, Ben taps his pale cheeks, praying for revival.

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

Laying him flat, Ben is about to administer CPR when Ewan suddenly coughs, expelling water from his 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 mud.

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

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

Alice rises from the water, her drenched hair obscuring her face. Ravens circle overhead as Ben grabs the broken handle and stands, holding Ewan.

Alice rises from the water, her drenched hair obscuring her face. Watchful ravens circle overhead. 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, face still concealed. Ben retreats, backing away.

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

He brandishes the broken handle, but she remains unfazed.

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

Ignoring his warning, she keeps approaching. Ben continues to
 back up.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Alice, please, I don't understand.
 Why are you doing this?

She pays no heed, closing the gap between them.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Answer me!?

Suddenly, the cornfield RUSTLES as something approaches.
 Alice halts, and everyone shifts their focus to the swaying
 corn.

Moon steps out of the cornfield and into the clearing. She
 surveys the scene, her gaze drawn to the circling ravens now
 emitting ominous CAWS.

Casually, she advances through the SQUELCHING terrain. Ben
 eyes her with apprehension, trying to gauge her intentions.
 Ewan stares calmly, unblinking and expressionless.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (to Moon)
 It's you, isn't it?. You're behind
 all of this.

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

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

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

She holds the bird aloft and slowly approaches Alice, who
 cautiously backs up toward the dead tree.

MOON (CONT'D)
 (to Alice)
 I am Moon, White Witch of the Ros
 An Bucca.

(MORE)

MOON (CONT'D)

Entrusted with guarding this accursed site from malevolent forces on this most magical of nights, and I command you to release this woman's body and return to your own wretched form.

Alice cackles.

ALICE

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

Reaching behind the tree, 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 echoes as the shot hits Moon's shoulder, sending her spiralling face-first into the mud. She rolls onto her back, groaning and clutching her bloody shoulder.

Alice aims the shotgun at father and son. Ben submits, dropping the broken handle. He sets Ewan down, and protectively stands in front of him.

BEN

Alice, please. You're not yourself.

She sweeps her wet hair aside, revealing her normal self.

ALICE

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

Approaching Moon, Alice keeps her aim on Ben. She callously steps on the fallen fledgling, burying it in 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.

Moon moans in pain, gripping her shoulder. Alice smirks, revelling in her 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 look of pure hatred. Ewan calmly peers out from behind his father, meeting White-eye's gaze.

Moon winces, struggling to rise.

MOON

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

She stands, still nursing her wound.

MOON (CONT'D)

(to Ben)

I should've done more to protect
you both. I'm sorry, but I thought
I was only facing one dark witch,
not two.

Moon addresses Alice with disdain.

MOON (CONT'D)

(to Alice)

But your conjuring won't work. The
boy is not kin to those sacrificed
before. Your master's scheme to
fulfil her evil spell has failed.

Alice steps closer, a wicked smile appearing.

ALICE

Oh, but he is their kin.

White-eye emits a chilling SCREECH resembling "DIE" before viciously attacking Moon. All ravens overhead descend, joining the onslaught. They mercilessly peck and claw at Moon as she crumples to the ground, curling up, wailing in pain.

Alice turns to Ben and Ewan, her eyes gleaming with malice.

BEN

So this was your plan the whole
time?

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

You brought us here to sacrifice
Ewan in some insane satanic ritual?

ALICE

In a nutshell.

BEN

You're fucking crazy. How could you
do this? We trusted you, you
conniving bitch!

ALICE

I'd say conniving '*witch*' is more
fitting, wouldn't you?

She advances with a menacing grin, shotgun aimed. Ben steps
back, shielding Ewan behind him.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I've waited years for this day to
come. Ever since I was led to this
place by the ghosts of two murdered
brothers, when I was just a little
girl visiting my beloved
Grandfather at Raven's Cottage. The
boys hoped I'd help set them free,
but instead, I met my master. She
showed me the true power of black
magic, and the great rewards that
awaits us both, once her summoning
is fulfilled.

Ewan suddenly halts behind his father, causing Ben to
accidentally trip over him, both landing in a heap on the
ground. Alice, weapon poised, asserts control as Ben quickly
scrambles to sit up, shielding Ewan behind his back.

ALICE (CONT'D)

For years, I searched in vain for
any living descendant of the
necessary bloodline. I hoped to
find an adult male to conceive the
child myself, but my efforts
yielded no one. I had nearly lost
all hope of ever unearthing
anybody.

Moon falls silent, succumbing to the relentless 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 sacrificed by my master. And, as fate would have it, she was a mother with an innocent toddler son, and her husband was an astronomy enthusiast, of all things. It was as if it were written in the stars.

She looks up in admiration at the comet travelling through the starry night sky.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It was easy getting close to her, to all of you. I orchestrated a chance meeting, and just adopted a persona like hers—demure, timid, meek, and unbelievably gullible. She was amazed 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 despised the cunt, and I've detested every minute I've spent acting like that pathetic wife of yours. You can't imagine 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 dash of untraceable poison in her favourite meal quickly took care of that. Well, not that quickly. I could have dosed her with enough to kill her in hours, but instead I opted for just enough to make her suffer a slow and agonizing death.

She sneers. Ben, unable to contain his rage, lunges at her. Deftly stepping back, she delivers an uppercut to his chin with the shotgun butt, CRUNCH. Ben is lifted off his feet and crashes down into the mud.

Alice swiftly readjusts the weapon, aiming at him again. Ewan stares blankly at his disoriented and bloodied father.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Shame. Life would've been simpler with Ewan's real father in the picture. If I wasn't to be the chosen child's biological mother, stepmother was the next best thing. But you've ruined all that, haven't you?

Ben gingerly sits up, dazed and spitting blood.

ALICE (CONT'D)

If you'd just had a sip of the champagne I'd specially prepared for you, you'd have slept peacefully and awoken none the wiser. But you left me no choice but to involve my master.

Ben tries to rise, but falls weakly to his knees.

ALICE (CONT'D)

We could've been such a happy little family, all of us raising our special son together. Oh well, seems I'll have to embrace the whole single mother thing after all.

She presses the shotgun to Ben's forehead. Beaten and resigned to his fate, Ben looks to his watching son.

BEN

Look away, buddy.

Ewan remains frozen, eyes locked on his father.

ALICE

Say hello to that bitch Mary for me. Tell her we'll take real good care of the vessel that was once your son.

Ben shuts his eyes. She pulls the trigger—CLICK. The chamber is empty. Annoyance flashes across Alice's face.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You've got to be kidding me.

Bens eyes snap open, renewed resolve burning within.

Suddenly, the black cat springs forth from the cornfield to defend its ailing master from the feral flock, viciously clawing and biting at any raven that dares come near Moon.

Alice shrieks, raising the shotgun high. She swings at Ben's skull, but he dodges and tackles her to the ground. A fierce struggle ensues as they grapple over the weapon.

The ravens' numbers are dwindling fast, with several dead on the ground. The remaining birds, including White-eye, are now occupied by the cat's rampage, giving Moon a respite. She lies motionless, scratched, and bloody.

Realizing Alice is in peril, White-eye attempts to come to her aid. But Moon suddenly grabs the raven's leg with an iron grip, stopping the wildly flapping bird.

Ben overpowers Alice, wresting the weapon from her grasp.

White-eye, trapped by Moon, pecks at her hand frantically. The despairing creature SHRIEKS, commanding the last three ravens to attack Ben.

As the other birds withdraw, the cat pounces on White-eye, engaging in a ferocious tussle. Moon firmly holds the raven's leg, refusing to relinquish her hold.

Ben swings the shotgun frantically at the attacking ravens. Alice seizes the moment and knees him in the groin, causing him to collapse in pain.

She scrambles to her feet, heading for Ewan, but Ben trips her with the shotgun, sending her face-first into the dirt.

Ben rises, fending off the persistent ravens. With a powerful swing, he swats one out of the sky, killing it instantly.

Alice inches towards Ewan through the mud. Ben spots her, grabs her ankle, and pulls her away from his son as far as he can before he has to resume fighting the birds.

He snatches a raven by its wing, pummeling it to death against the tree. Then, he kicks Alice in the abdomen before backing away towards Ewan, still battling the final raven.

Moon and her cat sustain further injury, locked in a fierce struggle with the seemingly invincible White-eye.

Alice gathers her resolve, grabbing a rock from the brook, hell-bent on achieving her goal.

With lethal precision, Ben snatches the last raven out of the air by its throat and ends its life with a decisive twist.

Alice rises, caked in mud, clutching the rock, her gaze fixed on Ewan with unwavering intensity.

Ben positions himself defensively in front of his son, wary of Alice's advance.

BEN

Stay back, Alice, or I swear I'll
fucking kill you.

Alice shifts her attention to him, her eyes alight with wild fervour. Fuelled by primal fury, she hoists the rock and charges toward Ben, screaming ferociously.

Ben counters with calculated aggression, deftly smashing the bridge of her nose with the shotgun's butt - CRUNCH.

Alice staggers back, blood streaming down her face, culminating in her fall into the brook, SPLASH.

Amidst the unabating clash between the black cat and White-eye, Moon urgently calls to Ben.

MOON

You must drown her. Hurry.

Ben hesitates as he comprehends the gravity of Moon's words.

MOON (CONT'D)

Do it.

He casts his gaze at Alice, lying defenceless and unthreatening in the water.

MOON (CONT'D)

Now!

Ben's face contorts with conflicting emotions. He wishes her dead but can't bring himself to do it; he's no murderer.

Alice emits a mocking laugh, blood bubbling in her throat.

ALICE

(to Ben)

You can't do it, can you?

She raises her head weakly, disoriented and swollen.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Because you're a weak. You're a
feeble excuse of a man, husband,
and father. The boy shall be ours.

As she attempts to sit up, two sets of unearthly child-like hands impossibly emerge from the shallow brook.

They intertwine over Alice's face, stifling her astonishment as they forcefully pull her head beneath the murky water, leaving only the tip of her nose visible above the surface.

She desperately fights against the spectral grip, trying to pry the pale fingers from her face.

Ben swiftly drops the shotgun, mounts Alice, and seizes her arms. Maintaining a firm hold, he restrains her limbs while the ghost boys keep her head submerged.

Not wanting to witness the chilling scene, Ben adverts his gaze to Ewan, who stands nearby passively observing.

White-eye, SCREECHING "NO," intensifies its effort to reach Alice, but Moon and her cat valiantly impede the feral bird.

Alice's struggles gradually cease until her body goes limp. She is dead. The spectral hands release their grip and descend beneath the water's surface.

Moon relinquishes her hold on White-Eye, and the raven emits a PIERCING SHRIEK before fleeing into the night sky.

Ben releases Alice's lifeless body, stepping back in disbelief. In his shock, he steps on something and bends down, retrieving Ewan's muddy teddy.

Kneeling before his traumatized son, Ben hands him Mr. Hugglesworth, and envelops him in a tight embrace.

Moon lies on the ground, triumphant but too weak to sit up. Her battle-scarred cat rests beside her, nursing its wounds.

Ben looks at Moon with profound gratitude. He acknowledges her support with a nod, which she respectfully reciprocates.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAWN

Emergency service vehicles have descended on the property, the area bustling with personnel.

Paramedics wheel Moon out on a gurney, her shoulder bandaged, the black cat on her lap. Ben follows carrying Ewan, liberated from the black ribbon restraints.

A police officer tries to coax the cat off the gurney, but it HISSES and swats, refusing to leave its master's side.

Ben and Moon prepare to bid farewell as they are led to separate ambulances.

BEN
(to Moon)
Thank you. For everything.

Moon smiles wearily.

MOON
You are most welcome, my dear.

As they part, Ewan stares back at Moon over his father's shoulder, unblinking and expressionless. Moon weakly waves as she's loaded into the ambulance.

As they part ways, Ewan stares back at Moon over his father's shoulder, unblinking and expressionless. Moon weakly waves to the boy as she's loaded into the ambulance.

Unnoticed by Ben, Ewan drops Mr. Hugglesworth. Moon is about to call out when she sees what the child is holding: an aged wooden raven carving.

Ewan grins sinisterly, his eyes momentarily flashing a brilliant fiery red.

Moon's eyes widen with fear as the horrifying truth dawns on her. A police officer shuts her ambulance doors and BANGS on the back, signalling the all clear.

The engine roars to life, and the vehicle pulls away, lights flashing. Ben and Ewan board a second ambulance, which departs the scene soon after.

CAW. White-Eye is perched atop a tall tree, watching. The unearthly bird takes to the air, covertly tailing the traveling vehicles from high above - SQUAWK!

THE END