

THE COCKROACH MAN

Written by

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As a travel writer explores a coastal town, he becomes entangled in the legend of the 'Cockroach Man,' leaving him to wonder what's real and what isn't.

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FADE IN:

EXT. SEABYRTUN - MORNING

A picturesque coastal town. A sandy beach stretches out, dotted with colorful beach huts and families enjoying the sun. Fishermen unload their catch of the day at the bustling harbour.

Locals stop and chat in the street, laughter blending with the crashing waves. It's an idyllic place - with just enough tourists to keep things ticking over.

CUT TO:

EXT. RENTAL HOUSE - MORNING

Situated on the main road, but looking onto the beach and shiny blue sea it offers the best of both worlds.

The door opens and DARREN RICE (late 20s, bearded, long hair) steps out into the morning light. He takes in a deep breath of sea air.

Rucksack and coffee flask in tow, he sets off down the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Darren has found a lovely spot on a hill overlooking the town and the deep blue sea.

He's hard at work in front of the easel - a beautiful portrait of the town is slowly coming to life. As he paints he talks into a wireless headset.

DARREN

(Into phone)

I know! The weekend went too fast... do you think you can get time off to come down Friday? It's the carnival.

(Beat)

No, no problem. You'll be tired after that, but the weekend after?

(Beat)

Good. I love you too. Have a good day.

He hangs up and is about to continue when...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. Rice.

Darren turns round with a start, his visitor remains off screen.

DARREN

Ah! You startled me.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

My apologies, did you have your music on?

DARREN

Yeah.

He takes his headphones out.

DARREN (CONT'D)

How you doing today?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Good, don't let me stop you. Your masterpiece is looking good - I can't wait to see the final version!

DARREN

You'll get a copy don't worry.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

I just wanted to bring you some refreshments. It's a hot day, you'll want to keep your strength up.

A hand reaches out and gives Darren a package of food.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I think you said you had a soft spot for a Ploughman's?

DARREN

(Grinning)

Well remembered.

A beat passes.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, and here's something to get your creative juices flowing...

A hand offers Darren a small bottle of rum. He looks at it uneasily.

DARREN

Oh, thank you. But I... err.. I don't drink.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Sorry I didn't realise. But you must try it. It's a local delicacy!

The hand reaches down and places the bottle next to Darren.

DARREN

No, really, I can't.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Well, I'll leave it there just in case. I'm sure it's thirsty work. Have a good day.

DARREN

Err... yeah, you too.

Darren looks at the bottle for a couple of seconds.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Night has fallen over Seabrytun's sweeping, unspoiled beach. The waves lap against the shore - as old timey music plays in the background.

Suddenly Darren runs into frame. A very different Darren from before. Hair a mess, eyes wide and frantic. He's either very drunk, very high or both.

As he runs, he keeps looking over his shoulder - as if he's being followed.

He hears a scuttling noise and looks down to see a horde of bugs moving beneath his feet. It's hard to see in the darkness, but whatever they are there's a lot of them.

DARREN

Fuck this place.

Darren runs faster and faster. A figure appears from the darkness and SWINGS something at Darren - catching him in the head. With a cry he completely loses his balance and crashes to the ground.

Darren looks around him helplessly, body tensing up as he watches something or someone approach him. He holds up his hands for mercy.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. SEABYRTUN - DAY

A single stretch of road runs through the majority of the town. Among the cars that dot it is a weather-beaten SUV. A sign on top of the roof reads 'TERRY'S CABS - NORTH NORFOLK AND BEYOND'.

INT. TERRY'S CAB - DAY

TERRY (50s, flat cap, belly big enough to steer the wheel) taps his fingers on the dashboard in time to a classic rock song. The windows are rolled down and a cool summer breeze wafts through the cabin.

In the back sits his passenger ALAN MCCULLOUGH (mid-thirties, bespectacled, stocky) taps away at his laptop.

TERRY

I dunno how you can do that without feeling sick.

ALAN

(Looks up confused)  
What's that?

TERRY

Typing on that there computer while we're driving. I can't so much as read a billboard while I'm driving without feeling like I've had too much stout.

ALAN

It's a skill. I've spent a lot of time in cabs and trains.

TERRY

I see.

Terry continues drumming the wheel and dashboard.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You're from the big smoke, right?

ALAN

I live in London, wasn't born there.

TERRY

What brings you to Seabyrtun? Ain't exactly a hotspot to anyone who don't know it. I imagine it ain't up there with Margate, Whitstable and the like.

Alan sighs and shuts his laptop down. Resigning himself to the dreaded small talk.

ALAN

I'm writing a book.

TERRY

Ohhh! A novel?

ALAN

Ha! I wish. Maybe one day.

TERRY

Is it a book about Seabyrtun?  
(Chuckles)  
If so, that'll be a pretty short one. Ain't much going on.

ALAN

It's about Norfolk and Suffolk coastal towns.

TERRY

You into that sorta thing?

ALAN

Ish. I have a deal with a publisher.

TERRY

Well, in my opinion, that's exciting. Lot of folks around who think themselves writers, but very few who actually get paid for doing it.

For the first time since he's been on screen Alan flashes a rare smile.

ALAN

I agree!

TERRY

So you're staying here for a few days?

ALAN

A couple of weeks. I've been given a budget for travel, so I'm making the most.

TERRY

Oh, you'll love it. People weren't meant to live in cities, if you ask me. That coastal air'll make you think twice about wanting to go back to London.

ALAN

We'll see.

The conversation pauses for a second. Alan leans forward a little and says:

ALAN (CONT'D)

Do you live here?

TERRY

No, not me. I'm from Sheringham. Dad came here during the war when he got evacuated from London. So I guess you'd call me a second generation Norfolk.

ALAN

But you know Seabyrtun fairly well?

TERRY

Yeah, suppose I do. Spend a fair bit of time driving tourists and other folk here. Why d'you ask?

ALAN

I'm interested. With the internet now I could get all the research I need from my apartment. But I come here to speak to the people, and find out more than I'd get online.

TERRY

I see. Well, it's a nice place. Pretty much dead in the winter, as you'd imagine - but the spring and summer are busy enough to keep everyone ticking over. Couple of good pubs too.

ALAN

Thanks!

A beat passes, Alan can't help himself from asking:

ALAN (CONT'D)

One thing I did see about Seabyrtun. There are a lot of folk lores and ghost stories here, what do you reckon to all that?

TERRY

Ha! Me old man was one for stuff like that. He hit the dirt a couple years ago unfortunately, else the two of you could have had a good chat about it. Country folk love their ghost stories.

ALAN

So, you think it's all just nonsense, then?

Terry guffaws at this.

TERRY

Damned if I know!

Alan nods. A beat of silence falls. He waits to see if Terry will say anything more.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Me grandmother, god rest her, used to always say 'there's a reason the unknown is the unknown, so you best leave it so' - out of the two of 'em I stick with her view.

ALAN

That's a good rule to live by.

TERRY

I agree. Anyway, in other news, this is your home for the next couple of weeks. Just coming up to it now - on the corner there.

EXT. RENTAL HOUSE - DAY

The cab pulls up on the edge of the pavement. Both get out and Terry opens the boot so Alan can wrestle his luggage free.

He turns and looks at the house. It's the one from the opening scenes.

TERRY

Well, good luck with your book, and it was nice meeting ya. That'll be £33.50.

Alan takes his wallet out and hands Terry £40.

ALAN

Keep the change. Well deserved.

TERRY

Too kind. Thank ya.

Terry goes to get in his car.

ALAN

Oh, one more question. Anywhere you'd recommend for a bit to eat?

TERRY

Well, fish & chip shop will be closing soon. So your best bet is the Dog & Duck. They call it tea in these parts, though. Don't say dinner too much or they might think you're posh.

He laughs and jumps back into his cab - waving as he drives away.

Alan, luggage in hand, looks at his home for the next couple of weeks.

CUT TO:

INT. RENTAL HOUSE - DAY

Faded wallpaper and worn-out furniture. An air of simplicity and neglect lingers, with only the essentials present.

A series of quick cuts follows Alan as he unpacks and familiarises himself with the house.

CUT TO:

INT. SPARE ROOM - AFTERNOON

All unpacked and ready, Alan has set up a spare room as a study. His laptop sits atop a stand, surrounded by a keyboard, mouse and mouse mat.

Alan speaks into an old-fashioned dictaphone.

ALAN

(Into dictaphone)

So, first impressions of Seabyrtun... The air is salty, and you can hear seagulls everywhere. The cottages are cute, and there are these big hills nearby. It feels like a blast from the past. If you told me I'd gone back in time and it was 1952, I'd believe you.

With a smile he turns off the dictaphone. He's about to get up when something on the wall moves. He turns and stares intently at it. For a split second it looks like some kind of bug is scurrying across the wall.

Alan stands up, alarmed. He cranes his neck to follow the journey of the bug. But it seems to have disappeared.

ALAN (CONT'D)

If that's a cockroach, I'm gonna be so pissed off.

He scans the room once more. But everything is silent.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DOG AND DUCK - EVENING

An early summer evening falls over The Dog and Duck. A picture perfect example of a traditional English seaside pub. A mix of tourists and locals eat and drink outside as the sun watches them from up high.

Alan, dressed in a casual check shirt and chinos, arrives and enters.

INT. THE DOG AND DUCK - CONTINUOUS

Framed prints of old school illustrated postcards adorn the walls. The furniture is old, wooden and charming - just like some of the locals.

The landlord DENNIS FLINT (50s, long dark hair, well-built) is in the middle of telling a story to some other patrons.

The way he's standing blocks Alan's access to the bar, so he has no choice but to stop and listen...

FLINT

(Dramatic)

... and so, like I said, at least six separate witnesses watched Arthur Rodman make his way down Maryland Road. In fact, one even claimed to have exchanged a good morning with him as he went on his way. You can imagine their shock when they found out he'd died five days previously.

This earns a gasp from his captivated audience. Flint looks up and sees Alan.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Sorry, young man, I'm in your way.

He moves aside and Alan manages to edge past him.

ALAN

No problem. That sounded like a good story, I'm sorry to have missed the start.

FLINT

Ha! Thank you. A few of us old boys like to exchange scary stories from time to time.

(Puts on a spooky voice)

Some are myths, some are downright mad and some... well, some might just be real!

This gets a laugh from the others. Alan looks visibly uncomfortable - the man is completely in his personal space.

FLINT (CONT'D)

You a tourist?

ALAN

Sort of. I'm staying for a couple of weeks.

FLINT

Oh! Mr. McCullough, is it?

ALAN

(A little surprised)  
Yeah... you're either psychic or...

FLINT

Ha! You're renting one of my cottages, actually.  
(Holds out his hands)  
I'm the Landlord of this here fine establishment and I also rent out a couple of places. Dennis Flint.  
Nice to meet you.

Flint offers a hand and Alan shakes it, wincing at the landlord's iron grip.

ALAN

Thank you. It's a nice place.

FLINT

Glad you like it. Lovely view of the sea. What brings you here?

ALAN

I'm writing a book.

FLINT

A novel?

ALAN

Ah, if I had a quid for everyone who said that. I wish. It's more of a travel book, with a bit of local history thrown in.

FLINT

Well, you've come to the right place. Plenty of history in the sea and shores here. Anyway, I best be on my way as my missus is waiting. As a guest of mine you get a free pint on the house, maybe you're more of a lager man, but if you're game give the Seabyrtun bitter a try. It's a lovely drop of stuff.

ALAN

That's really kind of you - thank you.

FLINT

No bother.  
(To the barmaid)  
(MORE)

FLINT (CONT'D)

Lucy - pint on the house for the gentleman here.

Flint turns to go. Then stops and leans in.

FLINT (CONT'D)

This book you're writing. I'd love to see what you write before it goes out to print.

ALAN

Okay, sure...

FLINT

I sort of see myself as the unofficial mayor here. Been here a long time so I feel protective of the place, wouldn't want you saying anything that weren't true about it.

ALAN

It's a pretty lighthearted piece, plus everything I've seen and heard has been great so far.

Flint nods.

FLINT

Well, I shall look forward to seeing your first draft. And, do swing on by here if you want to pick my brains on anything.

ALAN

Thanks, I will do.

Flint nods, waves goodbye to his patrons and takes his leave. Alan watches him go, a little confused.

LUCY (O.S.)

So. Are you trying the Seabyrtun bitter, or is that too adventurous for you?

Alan snaps out of his thoughts, looks up and notices LUCY (30, flowing blonde hair, strikingly pretty). She gives him a dazzling smile.

ALAN

I actually don't like lager. So I'm more than happy with that.

LUCY

A man after my own heart. Makes me sound like an old lady but it's way too...

ALAN/LUCY

(Same time)

... fizzy for me.

They both laugh.

ALAN

That's usually my line.

LUCY

Welcome to Seabyrtun! You're writing a book?

ALAN

That's right.

(Looks back to make sure  
Flint has gone)

He... err... seems a little...  
eccentric?

Lucy laughs.

LUCY

That's one word for it.

(Mimics drinking)

By this time of day he's usually sunk a few, so you never know what you're gonna get from him.

ALAN

So, you're a local?

LUCY

No, not at all. This is actually my summer job!

She laughs - one of those endearing and thoroughly contagious laughs.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You might be wondering, "a summer job? Isn't that a bit unusual for someone my age?" Well, I left the corporate world about a year ago, I decided to take a break and do things on my own terms. There's just this inexplicable pull towards the coast, you know?

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

So, I figured why not live off the radar in a place like this for a summer.

ALAN

That's so cool. I'm jealous of the freedom you have to do that.

LUCY

Yeah, unfortunately my folks passed away a few years' back so I had a bit of inheritance, I'd give anything to have them back though.

ALAN

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

LUCY

(Shaking her head to shake the thoughts away)  
Anyway, sorry, you must be hungry! You haven't come here to listen to my life story.

ALAN

Not at all, I'd love to hear your life story when I've got a full stomach!

Lucy laughs and starts pulling his pint. Alan takes a look at the menu.

ALAN (CONT'D)

What would you recommend?

LUCY

Oh! Is that even a question? Look where you are! It has to be cod and chips, the best you'll ever have.

Lucy blushes and gives her belly a delicate pat.

LUCY (CONT'D)

It's a bit too good. By the time I finish here I'll be so round they'll have to roll me out.

She laughs again, and Alan can't help laughing too.

ALAN

That's a glowing recommendation! I'll go for that, plenty of tartare sauce.

LUCY  
Coming right up. Sitting in or out?

Alan looks out the open door at the pleasant evening outside.

ALAN  
It's outside weather!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DOG AND DUCK - EVENING

It's a little later now and a series of street lamps light up the pier around the pub.

The benches outside are still pretty busy. Alan sits alone at a bench, he's in the zone - making notes and checking something on an Ipad. A half-full pint sits in front of him.

LUCY (O.S.)  
Mind if I sit here for a minute?

Jolted out of his thoughts, Alan looks up to see Lucy standing there.

ALAN  
What? Err... sorry! I was in the zone. Of course you can.

LUCY  
Sorry, I didn't mean to distract you.

She sits opposite him and plucks a cigarette out of a pack, she offers him one.

ALAN  
I'm okay, thanks.

She lights up and takes a drag.

LUCY  
Sorry! It was either sit with you or...  
(Waves hand)  
... a table of drunk and likely lecherous locals.

ALAN  
Was that a tough call to make? Or did I win fair and square?

She laughs.

LUCY  
You just edged it.  
(Shows a small gap with  
her finger and thumb)  
Just.

Alan laughs.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
I'll be honest, I'm also SUPER  
intrigued about your book - I'm a  
bookworm at heart.

Alan moves his notepad and Ipad aside, and gives his full attention. Framed by the night sky and street lamps, she looks even lovelier.

ALAN  
It's nothing too exciting.  
Basically I've got a deal to write  
a travel books.

LUCY  
How is that not exciting? My dream  
would be to write for Lonely Planet  
or something.

ALAN  
Well, when you put it like that!  
This one is about a few off the  
beaten track coastal towns and  
destinations. Seabyrtun was on the  
list.

LUCY  
It's lovely, isn't it?

ALAN  
Really nice. So, genuinely, the  
last year or so you've just done  
what you wanted? Surely you must  
have some exciting stories?

LUCY  
It kind of just started out with me  
being a bit lost. Mum and dad went  
suddenly, there was a car crash. I  
don't have a close family, so I was  
just left with a job I hated and  
well.. nothing else.

ALAN

I'm sorry to hear that, but I feel you found something positive from it?

LUCY

I guess. Or maybe I'm just a bit lost. I don't have any siblings or anyone really, I kinda feel like if I just disappeared no one would miss me!

She laughs - but it's not as genuine as her usual laugh. Alan puts a hand on her shoulder.

ALAN

Well I've only known you for two hours, but I'd miss you and I'm sure dear Mr. Flint would miss you too.

She laughs at this. This time it's a real laugh.

LUCY

You're too kind! I won't miss Mr. Flint when I leave that's for sure.

ALAN

So, what do you think of the town? I've got to start exploring tomorrow, and the hardest part is knowing where to start.

LUCY

It's lovely. Very quaint. Most of the locals have lived their whole lives here - they pass on their properties to neighbours or family members to try and stop too many people moving in or buying holiday homes.

ALAN

I bet houses are expensive here.

LUCY

You probably heard Mr. Flint going on earlier, but the folks here can't seem to get enough of ghost stories. I think they're a superstitious bunch! You could probably write a good section on that.

ALAN  
(Laughing)  
Not sure if that helps or hinders  
tourism.

Lucy drains the last of her cigarette and stubs it out.  
Wearily she gets to her feet and checks her watch.

LUCY  
Well I best get back to it before  
they start reaching behind the bar  
and pulling their own pints. Nice  
to talk to you.

ALAN  
You too. I still want to hear more  
about your adventures the last  
couple of years.

LUCY  
And I want to hear more about your  
book.

She starts to go, then turns back.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
Oh! I just remembered! The  
Seabyrtun carnival is on Friday -  
you should definitely go! It'll be  
full of locals with all the stories  
you can imagine.

ALAN  
Sounds like a big event.

LUCY  
You joke but I think it is, it's  
all Mr. Flint can talk about. It  
only happens every five years.

ALAN  
Are you going?

LUCY  
I will be. There'll be a stand  
there with some local ales.

ALAN  
Then count me in!

She blushes and, with a smile, heads back into the pub. Alan  
cringes.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
(To self)  
Cringe.

Alan watches as a cockroach appears from the shadows near his table, scurrying as fast as it can to move away from the light. It disappears into another patch of darkness.

He looks after it thoughtfully.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Plainly decorated and in need of a bit of TLC - with a couple of coastal landscape paintings on the walls.

Alan is asleep in bed. His glasses lie on the bedside table next to him.

He's twisted and turning, clearly having a bad dream.

From somewhere there's a loud noise - kind of a rumble. Alan snaps awake and gasps. He sits there in the darkness for a couple of minutes, everything is silent.

He's just about to lay back down when he hears something. A loud frantic tapping - almost as if someone somewhere is hitting the keys of a typewriter really hard.

He puts on his glasses and flicks the bedside light on. Everything looks normal. The sound seems to be getting louder.

Suddenly the whole room shakes - almost as if there were a mini earthquake.

ALAN  
Hello?

No reply. Just the continuous, intense tapping sound. Alan jumps out of bed and heads out into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He flicks the light on - but there's nothing out of place here. The whole house shakes again - Alan has to grab the side of the doorframe to keep his balance.

The tapping noise appears to be coming from a room at the end of the corridor. The kitchen. He edges towards it, half clinging onto the walls in case there's another quake.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alan rounds the corner and steps into the kitchen. He flicks the light on - nothing seems to be out of the ordinary.

Eagle-eyed viewers may notice that the walls now seem to be painted black, previously they were white.

Alan looks around the room, eyes narrow with suspicion. For a second all seems normal.

Then he hears a skittering noise on the laminate flooring - looks down to see a big, nasty cockroach moving below him.

ALAN

Fuck's sake.

He grabs a thick cookbook from the kitchen table and in one smooth motion drops it down on the cockroach. Making a satisfying splattering sound.

Alan bends down and carefully lifts the book up - sure enough the cockroach is dead. Movement from somewhere else in the room gets his attention.

He looks up at the wall. For a second nothing looks normal and then he realises it's MOVING. What looks like black paint is actually lots and lots of cockroaches. All of them are starting to move around. Some make horrible hissing noises.

Alan gasps and gets to his feet. Backing away. The door suddenly slams closed behind him. The previously dead cockroach suddenly gets back to its feet.

Alan watches in horror as it skitters across the wall and climbs up to join the others.

Alan suddenly feels something move on his arm - turning to see a couple of cockroaches crawling across his bare skin. He bats them away.

He turns and tries the door. It's jammed.

ALAN (CONT'D)

What the fuck? What the actual fuck!?

He spins around and looks back at the wall. The cockroaches have completely moved now.

They're spelling something out, using their own bodies as the letters. Alan watches in morbid fascination as the following words begin to appear: 'HE. IS. COMING. SOON.'

Alan screams and turns back to the door, this time it opens - but instead of opening out into the hallway, it opens out into millions and millions of cockroaches. So many that they're piled up on top of each other - high enough to hit the ceiling.

They converge on Alan as he screams and screams and screams! Disappearing from view as the whole screen goes black.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

A few rays of morning sunshine peek in through a crack in the curtains. Everything in the bedroom looks normal.

Alan wakes up and sits bolt upright, letting out a stifled scream. He sits for a few seconds, hand on heart as it beats wildly. Sweat trickling down his forehead.

He gets up and runs out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alan sprints into the kitchen. Everything looks normal, the walls are white and the cookbook is where he left it. He breathes a sigh of relief and leans against the kitchen counter to catch his breath.

A series of knocks at the front door snap him out of it and he hurries out of the room.

ANGLE ON

The cookbook - there's a slight residue on the front cover. Could it be bug guts or is it just an age-old cooking stain?

CUT TO:

EXT. RENTAL HOUSE - MORNING

It's a beautiful day outside, and the beach is already packed with families and sun worshippers.

Lucy stands outside holding a basket full of cleaning products.

Alan, still only dressed in a baggy pair of boxers, answers the door. He perks up when he sees who it is. She's surprised to see him semi-nude.

ALAN  
Am I dreaming or?

LUCY  
Maybe I'd be dressed differently if  
you were?

They both laugh. Alan becomes aware of what he's wearing.

ALAN  
Oh! Maybe it's a nightmare for you  
that I'm not dressed - sorry!

LUCY  
Nothing to be sorry for.

Alan reaches into the house and comes back with a jumper, he pulls it over his head and tugs it down so it covers some of his pants. Lucy laughs.

ALAN  
So it's 9am and you're on my front  
doorstep? Was my chat at the pub  
that good?

Lucy laugh again.

LUCY  
I also clean some of the rental  
cottages for Mr. Flint in the  
mornings. It's a glamorous life I  
lead.

ALAN  
Oh, I see. To be fair I only got  
here at 4 o'clock so I haven't had  
a chance to make much of a mess...

LUCY  
I'd love a coffee, though?

ALAN  
Oh, of course, sure...

Alan is about to open the door further when:

FLINT (O.S.)  
Lucy! There you are!

They both turn as Flint hurries down the path towards the bungalow.

ALAN

So, the only two people I know in town have seen me in my pants. What a start.

FLINT

Was Mr. McCullough's bungalow on today's cleaning rota?

LUCY

Yes - this and the house on Constable Way.

Flint nods.

FLINT

Must have been an oversight on my part. Mr. McCullough has only just arrived, so I doubt he's made a mess yet. Or at least I hope he hasn't?

ALAN

Not just yet I haven't.

FLINT

Okay, good.

(Turns to Lucy)

Just go and do Constable Way, then. But be quick - the next guests are coming at midday.

A disappointed Lucy nods.

LUCY

Okay, no problem.

(Smiles at Alan)

Nice to see you.

ALAN

You too.

Alan watches her leave - Flint steps into his eyeline and gives him a stern look.

FLINT

Got your eye on her, have you?

ALAN

I've only just met her.

FLINT

I see. I heard you two spent some time talking at the pub last night?

Alan looks confused.

ALAN  
We had a brief chat...

FLINT  
Not getting any ideas are you?

ALAN  
What? No... I... why does it matter?

Flint eases up a bit.

FLINT  
Sorry, just protective. I've got a couple of grown-up daughters myself, so I get a bit fatherly sometimes. I think Lucy has had a lot going on the last couple of years and I don't want her being upset.

ALAN  
Okay. Well I wouldn't worry about that, I'm not the type to go around breaking hearts.

FLINT  
Good, okay. Well I'm not saying keep your distance, but I am saying don't go out of your way to be seeing her.

ALAN  
That sounds like the same thing?

FLINT  
Anyway, it's your first day in Seabyrtun! I recommend you take a walk through town and see a bit of the countryside, and a good port of call would be the library. Librarian's name is Alice Jennings, she's a goldmine of information.

ALAN  
Thanks, that sounds like a plan.

Flint nods and turns to go.

FLINT  
I'm looking forward to seeing your first draft.

ALAN  
So's my publisher.

Flint stalks off and Alan watches him go.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
What the fuck is with that guy?

With a shake of his head Alan heads back in and closes the door. As soon as the door closes a cockroach appears and rushes from one side of the front path to the other - disappearing into the hedge.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A beautiful series of grassy fields sit at the edge of the town, creating a barrier between the beach and the road.

Asides from a few cows and some faraway car engines there appears to be no one in sight.

LINDA RICE (60, willowy, wild-eyed) comes into view. She's looking for something.

LINDA  
(To self; slightly mad)  
Now, where would you be? If I was you, where would I hide? Where are you?

She stops sharp and suddenly begins to sob.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Oh. Darren. Why did this have to happen?

ALAN (O.S.)  
Is everything okay?

Linda's head snaps round - startled. She looks to see Alan making his way across the field. A Nikon camera hung around his neck on a little strap.

LINDA  
Who are you?

ALAN  
My name's Alan, and you're...

Linda starts backing away from him.

LINDA  
Stay back!

Alan holds his hands up.

ALAN  
Sorry! I didn't mean to upset you,  
I just wanted to make sure you were  
okay? You looked upset?

Linda eyes him suspiciously.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
Can I help? Perhaps I could call  
someone for you?

LINDA  
Do you see them too?

ALAN  
What?

LINDA  
You know what.

ALAN  
I really don't.

LINDA  
The roaches. He saw them too, you  
know?

ALAN  
Who?

Linda suddenly swivels around as if something has grabbed her attention. Alan cranes his neck to see, but the field looks empty.

Linda turns back and violently points a gnarly finger at him.

LINDA  
Don't end up like Darren.

ALAN  
Darren? Sorry, what was that about  
roaches, how did you...

But with that said, she's gone. Jogging across the meadow with surprising pace.

Alan is left scratching his head.

ALAN (CONT'D)

What is with this town?

He slides his dictaphone out of his pocket and speaks into it, cupping his hands around the mic so as to shield it from the wind.

ALAN (CONT'D)

First full day in Seabyrtun. Would recommend for those who want a seaside break, but also want to get away from it all to an extent.

(Beat)

Now the people... maybe it's because I'm not used to country folk, but they're an... interesting... bunch.

(Beat)

Next stop for today, I'm going to head to the library and do a little bit of a find out. Looking for those little gems and stories you can't find on the internet.

Alan clicks his dictaphone off and looks back out at the field. Linda is nowhere to be seen.

It's almost as if she was never there in the first place.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEABYRTUN LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

A modest, slightly run-down library. A faded sign above the entrance reads "Seabyrtun Public Library." The exterior of the building shows signs of wear, with peeling paint.

A small outdoor seating area with worn benches provides a place for patrons to enjoy a book in the sun

Alan appears and makes his way inside.

INT. SEABYRTUN LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

While it's clean and tidy, the library clearly hasn't seen a decorator's brush since the 1980s. ALICE JENNINGS, (60, stern, short brown hair), sits at a large desk - lost in a book.

The library is mostly empty - the only other occupants are a few older people who've come in to use the computers.

Alice looks up and offers a smile as Alan appears. He's about to say something when something catches his eye - he watches as a big cockroach scuttles across the floor and disappears underneath a trolley full of books.

Alice either hasn't noticed or doesn't care, she's looking at Alan expectantly.

ALICE

Can I help you, sir?

ALAN

Afternoon.

(Looks around)

There are a LOT of books here!

ALICE

Yes, libraries with books tend to do better than those without.

ALAN

I was wondering what you've got in terms of books about the area? The more obscure they are, the better. I don't want to read anything I could easily find on the internet.

ALICE

I see. You must be the writer? Mr. McCullough, is it?

ALAN

Yeah... how did you...

ALICE

Mr. Flint called and said you might be heading my way.

ALAN

I see. He's been very...

(Searches for the word)

... engaged... in my project.

ALICE

(slightly formal)

We do have a collection dedicated to local history. I'm sure you'll find something there that'll pique your interest. I did put aside a few books I thought you might like, they're on the left hand side of the display.

ALAN

Okay, great. I'm intrigued.

(Pause)

What about the spooky tales and urban legends? Anything worth diving into? I've heard that Seabyrtun has a few tales to tell...

ALICE

(reserved)

There are indeed stories that have circulated for generations, but it's best to discover them on your own. Seabyrtun has its share of secrets and mysteries. Enjoy your reading.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

Alan sits at a table, making notes, taking photos and shifting through various volumes. Some are ancient, some fresh, and some look like they've been stapled and cobbled together by amateur historians.

He picks up an aged, tattered volume titled 'Haunted North Norfolk'. He flicks through it until he finds a chapter on Seabyrtun.

ALAN

(As he scanned)

Ghost of a lady in white, ghost of a haunted carriage, mermaid sighting, Cockroach Man...

Alan looks startled at this.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(Reading)

There are whispers of unverified sightings surrounding a peculiar creature known as the Cockroach Man. Legends suggest this half-human, half-cockroach being may be the restless spirit of a Victorian professor who delved too deeply into his experiments with the resilient insects while residing in Seabyrtun.

Alan flicks to the front page of the book it reads 'This edition published in 1974'.

He gets up and heads back to the aisle of books Alice recommended. He scans the shelves, can't see anything of interest.

He spots something and bends down to get it - it had fallen down a gap in between the wall and the rack. It's a thin, hand-bounded book titled 'The Legend of the Cockroach Man'.

Alan takes the book over to his desk and begins leafing through.

ANGLE ON

The book. As Alan flicks through the pages - it's all wrong. It's just a series of kid's nursery rhymes, running from 'Jack & Jill' to Humpty Dumpty.

BACK TO SCENE

Alan sighs and heads over to Alice with the book. She looks a little alarmed when she sees it.

ALAN (CONT'D)

I don't suppose you have the original text for this?

ALICE

Isn't it inside?

Alan holds open a page about Humpty Dumpty.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Ah! Not again. The local children seem to enjoy nothing more than causing mischief. The other week they swapped the contents of 'Gone With the Wind' with EL James. It gave one of our older regulars a bit of a shock.

ALAN

Do you have a digital version of this one?

ALICE

I don't I'm afraid. We're a bit behind the times here. That looks like it was self-published, so you probably can't find it online.

ALAN

What's this about the Cockroach Man?

ALICE

I'm surprised you haven't heard about that before. It's one of the more popular folk tales from round here.

ALAN

What do you know?

ALICE

Not much. I doubt your readers will be interested in that, surely a section on the local ale will be better?

ALAN

I'll cover that one for sure. But I'm intrigued about this now?

ALICE

There's not much to tell. Over the years there have been a few sightings of a sort of half human half cockroach creature. About as real as Spring-Heeled Jack, I'm sure. A lot of those sorts of things are old stories made up by the smugglers to keep the coast clear at night.

ALAN

Any idea where they might have hidden the text from this one?

ALICE

Your guess is as good as mine! There are 10,000 books here and you're welcome to search as many as you'd like.

Alan smiles.

ALAN

Maybe another time.

ALICE

Did you get what you needed?

ALAN

I think so. I'll let you know if I need anything else.

Alan notices a sparkling ring on her finger.

ALAN (CONT'D)

That looks nice! Where's it from?

Alice looks at it self consciously.

ALICE

This, oh just a family heirloom.

ALAN

I've never seen anything like it before. It's really cool.

ALICE

Something of an expert?

ALAN

No, my dad was a jeweler so I know a good ring when I see one.

ALICE

I see. Anyway, good day, Mr. McCullough.

Alan awkwardly smiles.

ALAN

Thanks.

He exits. As soon as the door closes Alice picks up a phone and quickly dials a number.

ALICE

(Into phone)

Hello? Yes, yes, just left. All was fine, I don't know why you're so worried - I think he's genuine, it's not a cover.

(Beat)

Yes... err... yes he did. No, he was just intrigued, it's all going to be okay, I promise...

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOG AND DUCK - EVENING

It's early evening at The Dog & Duck. Flint sits chatting amicably with his usual cronies.

Lucy is behind the bar along with a barman, ALFIE (20s, curly red hair, well-muscled).

Alan enters and Lucy visibly brightens. He smiles and makes his way towards her, Flint jumps up and cuts him off.

FLINT

Mr. McCullough! How has your day been?

ALAN

Good thanks.

FLINT

Did you find what you needed in the library?

ALAN

I did, thank you, lots of interesting resources there.

FLINT

Good, good. You must be hungry and thirsty after all that reading in that dusty old place.

Flint puts an arm around Alan and leads him towards the other side of the bar where Alfie is. Deliberately away from Lucy.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Alfie! Could you sort Mr. McCullough here out with a pint of our finest bitter, and some of the beef & stilton pie?

ALFIE

Yes, Mr. Flint, sir.

FLINT

Great. Pint's on the house.

ALAN

That's very kind of you.  
(To Alfie)  
I'll be sitting outside.

Alan gives Lucy a quick shrug of his shoulders and heads outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DOG AND DUCK - EVENING

It's a little later in the evening and just like last night, Alan is sat outside - writing up some notes with a pint.

Flint walks out of the pub, slightly worse for wear.

FLINT

Good evening to you, Mr.  
McCullough.

ALAN

You too. And thanks again for the  
pint.

FLINT

My pleasure. There'll be another  
one tomorrow for you. How long do  
you reckon it'll be before I can  
take a look at that draft of yours?

ALAN

I'm literally in the note taking  
stages. I probably won't write it  
up until I get back home.

Flint stiffens.

FLINT

Of course, I suppose it ain't a  
quick process. Anyway you have a  
good night, now.

And with that he's gone - trotting away down the high street.  
As soon as he disappears from view Lucy comes out.

LUCY

Evening.

ALAN

Oh hey there.

LUCY

Mind if I sit here for a second?

ALAN

You mean to say you still find  
sitting with me more enticing than  
the punters?

LUCY

Just a fraction.

She takes a cigarette out of her carton and lights up.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh that's better. Was absolutely gasping for one - Flint's been really tight with breaks the last couple of nights.

ALAN

Surely that doesn't make for an enjoyable summer job?

LUCY

I know, I know. I'm a bit of a goody two shoes I guess, if there's a rule I tend to follow it.

ALAN

That's not a bad way to live.

LUCY

How's your day been?

ALAN

Good, thank you. Got to sample the delights of Seabyrtun Public Library.

LUCY

How was it?

ALAN

As action-packed as you could imagine. I thought the librarian might be a little more helpful, but she did have some good books.

LUCY

Oooh, anything interesting?

ALAN

Have you heard anything about this cockroach man? I found a little except on it in one of the library books, but she wouldn't elaborate on it.

Lucy takes a thoughtful drag of her cigarette before answering.

LUCY

Oooh, I'm easily spooked so I try to avoid anything like that. I think it's a local tale to scare the kids. Every town has one, right?

ALAN

I guess so. Do you know anyone in town who might have some interesting stories to share?

LUCY

Hmmm, there's Mrs. Jenkins, an elderly woman who lives on the outskirts of town. She's a real treasure trove of stories, I take her food sometimes for Mr. Flint and, if she's awake, she'll chat your ear off.

(Beat)

But as a heads up, she's not in the best of health.

Alfie appears at the door.

ALFIE

Lucy! There's a queue, and I can't get the Greene King tap to work.

Lucy rolls her eyes.

LUCY

(Quietly)

This guy's hopeless.

She takes one last drag from her cigarette and stubs it out.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Still going to the carnival tomorrow?

ALAN

I'll be there.

LUCY

Kicks off at 3. See you there!

That said, she hurries off into the pub. Alan can't help watching her go.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

All the lights are on this time, the alarm clock next to the bed tells us it's '1:30 am'.

Alan sits up in bed with a paperback.

For a second his eyes close but they quickly snap open again - he waves his hands around as if he's batting away an invisible assailant.

He looks at the clock and sighs, before pulling himself out of bed and slipping on some clothes.

CUT TO:

EXT. RENTAL HOUSE - NIGHT

Alan steps out onto the street outside. The whole town is asleep - there's no noise aside from Alan's footsteps and the gentle lapping of the sea.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Alan walks through the beach, talking quietly into his dictaphone.

ALAN

I've always thought that you can really get to know a place by seeing what it's like in its quietest moments. For any night owls, I'd recommend a walk across the beach in Seabyrtun. It's beautiful, peaceful and safe...

As he says this he hears a footstep from somewhere above. He stops sharp and watches as a dark figure hurries down a set of stairs and onto the beachfront.

It's Alfie. He's carrying some kind of a satchel, the top is slightly undone - it looks like paper inside.

Alfie seems completely oblivious to Alan. Alan goes to call out, but stops. Instead he starts slowly following the barman - sticking to the shadows to try his best not to be spotted.

Alfie reaches a small, empty caged bin. He lights a fire inside and begins to burn some papers. Once the fire begins to rage and he's out of paper he takes a look around - but as far as he can see he's all alone. Alan has crouched down at the edge of the shore, obscured by shadow.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Weird.

Once Alfie disappears out of sight, Alan emerges from his hiding spot and creeps over to the bin.

The paper is well and truly burning to a crisp. He's about to turn away when something nudges against his trainer - he looks down and sees half a page of paper on the sandy ground, slightly burnt at the corners.

The top of the page reads 'The Legend of the Cockroach Man'. Alan gasps.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(Reading)

Throughout the years, a handful of locals and wandering souls have vanished from the tranquil coastal town, sparking whispers of the Cockroach Man. However, with the passage of time and the rise of modern explanations, the disappearances are now attributed to the treacherous currents of the sea, sweeping away those who ventured too close.

He shakes his head.

ALAN (CONT'D)

What a town.

He turns and slowly walks away down the beach. Leaving the fire burning away - smoke blending in with the moody night time sky.

Once he disappears out of sight, another figure steps into view and watches him go. It's Lucy.

From somewhere faraway a long, inhuman sound suddenly rings out. It's somewhere between a shout and a squeal. Lucy shivers uncontrollably.

She looks down and watches a group of cockroaches make their way past her - they disappear into the darkness of the beach.

She shivers again and hurries away. As she goes a scrap of paper comes into view - blown upwards by the wind. It hits the camera and stays pressed against it for a few seconds. 'He is coming soon!' it says.

FADE TO:

EXT. MRS JENKINS' HOUSE - MORNING

Mrs. Jenkins' house is out on the edge of town, not far from where Alan encountered Linda.

It's one of the bigger homes in the area. Once upon a time it must have been great, but it's fallen into a state of disrepair - garden thick with weeds and walls covered in ivy.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS JENKINS' LIVING ROOM - MORNING

An old-fashioned living room with faded floral wallpaper and vintage furniture. At the center of the room is a large bed, where Mrs. Jenkins (100, frail, long grey hair, piercing blue eyes) rests. A big TV sits opposite her, playing out a classic tele-novella.

Mrs. Jenkins has drifted off and snores lightly. A shrill ringing sound jostles her awake.

MRS. JENKINS

(Groggy)

Hmmm... what's that?

A lost look in her eyes betrays the fact her mind isn't as sharp as it once was.

There's another ring. With effort she sits up and touches a small device on her bedside table. It shows a black and white view of her front porch.

Alan stands outside, awkwardly looking up at the camera.

MRS. JENKINS (CONT'D)

Who is it?

CUT TO:

INT. MRS. JENKINS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alan sits in a chair across from Mrs. Jenkins, who is propped up in bed, blue eyes filled with memories.

MRS. JENKINS

(softly)

Ah, Seabyrtun... Back in my day, it was a different world. No flashy gadgets, just the sound of the waves and the smell of the sea. We were all so close-knit, like a big family.

ALAN

(nods)

Sounds like a cosy place to grow up.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh, it was. But during the war, everything changed. We had evacuee kids from London and other cities, seeking refuge from the bombings. They were scared and homesick, but we welcomed them with open arms. We all had to stick together.

ALAN

That must have been quite an experience.

MRS. JENKINS

It was. We'd dance at the pier, even during air raids, trying to make the most of things. Life was tough, but we lived it to the fullest.

ALAN

Dangerous!

MRS. JENKINS

(leaning in)

We had our fair share of hardships, but we never lost sight of what truly mattered - our community and the strength we found in each other.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS JENKINS' LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Some time has passed. Alan scrawls away at his notepad while Mrs. Jenkins talks.

MRS. JENKINS (MURMURING)

... back then, this whole area was owned by the Jones and Phoenix families. The two most prominent farmers in these parts. Their fields stretched as far as the eye could see.

ALAN

That must've been something to see.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh, it was indeed! Why, there was a time when I'd watch them tending to their crops from my very window. Now, you've probably been to The Dog and Duck down the road? Used to be called the Seaman's Arms back then. Full of fisherman and good old boys. They've seen a lot of changes, they have.

ALAN

I bet they have. Did you know the families well?

MRS. JENKINS

Oh, yes, they were kind folk. Especially old Mrs. Jones. She had the most beautiful garden, and you'd often find her selling fresh vegetables in the village. But things have changed now, haven't they? Supermarkets and the like have taken over.

ALAN

They have, but it's nice to hear about how it was back then.

MRS. JENKINS

Memories keep you company when you're alone, young man. Don't ever forget that. And speaking of memories, did I tell you about the time the evacuee kids came to Seabyrtun from London during the war? Oh, what a lively bunch they were!

ALAN

Mrs. Jenkins, this has been great. So valuable.

MRS. JENKINS

We'd dance at the pier, even during air raids...

ALAN

(Gently)

Mrs. Jenkins, there were a few other things I wanted to ask you.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh, but I must tell you about the war and how Seabyrtun changed.

ALAN

Just before you do, I'm interested in the folk lore of the area, particularly any ghost stories you might have heard?

MRS. JENKINS

What was that? You'll have to speak up - my hearing isn't so good these days.

ALAN

Do you know of any ghost stories in Seabyrtun?

MRS. JENKINS

Oh, dear, you mustn't pay too much attention to old ghost stories. Little towns like ours have their fair share of tall tales and superstitions. There was talk of a 'grey lady' once, wandering through the town on winter nights. They say she was a bride, tragically killed on her wedding day. But don't let your imagination get carried away with such things. I never saw her.

A beat passes.

ALAN

Mrs. Jenkins, have you heard of The Cockroach Man?

MRS. JENKINS

What's that? The Coachmaker's Arms? Yes, it was an old pub in North Walsham. Closed in the 80s.

ALAN

No, Mrs. Jenkins - The Cockroach Man.

Mrs. Jenkins remains silent - it's hard to tell whether she's avoiding the question, or doesn't understand.

MRS. JENKINS

Have I told you about Mrs. Jones, she had...

ALAN

(Softly)

Just before you do, what about The Cockroach Man?

Her lost eyes narrow for a second.

MRS. JENKINS  
The Cockroach Man, did you say?

ALAN  
Yes, that's right. Do you know  
anything about him? I hear there's  
a local legend.

MRS. JENKINS  
Hmmm.

She looks over at a large wall calendar.

MRS. JENKINS (CONT'D)  
Yes, I suppose it is that time once  
again.

ALAN  
What do you mean?

MRS. JENKINS  
What's that?

ALAN  
You mentioned it's that time once  
again, what did...

Before Alan can finish his sentence, Flint suddenly steps  
into the room. Alan jumps out of his skin.

Mrs. Jenkins smiles as she spots him, he's holding some food  
wrapped in foil.

FLINT  
Mrs. Jenkins!

MRS. JENKINS  
Dennis, what a lovely surprise.  
(To Alan)  
This man always looks after me! I  
can remember him when he was a  
baby, and now here he is. He owns  
half the town!

FLINT  
You're too kind, Mrs. Jenkins, I  
just wanted to check in and make  
sure you've eaten today. If not  
I've got your favourite.  
(To Alan)  
Coronation chicken. She can't get  
enough of it.

ALAN

I see.

FLINT

How were you two getting on?

ALAN

Pretty well, I've made some good notes.

FLINT

I'm pleased to hear it. Mrs. Jenkins looks a little tired now, so I hope you got what you needed.

With a sigh Alan gets to his feet.

FLINT (CONT'D)

(Quietly)

And, Alan, I appreciate you talking to the village elders. But she's very old, and while she's very precious - I'm not sure she knows what she's saying.

ALAN

Thanks for the tip, though she seems pretty with it most of the time.

A beat passes. Flint forces a smile.

FLINT

Anyway, it's a big day today. The carnival starts at 3, I hope you're still joining us?

ALAN

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

FLINT

Great. I'll see you on the town green.

ALAN

Thank you for your time, Mrs. Jenkins.

MRS. JENKINS

(Mumbling nearly incoherently)

... yes, suppose it is that time once again...

Alan and Flint exchange a look.

FLINT  
See what I mean?

Alan nods and takes his leave.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

A busy newsroom in the head office of a broadsheet newspaper. A flurry of workers zip here and there, tapping away at laptops and barking into phones.

HUGH DONOVAN (40s, wiry, close-cropped hair) is looking thoughtfully at a page of copy on his laptop. His phone rings.

HUGH  
Hugh Donovan speaking.

ALAN (V.O.)  
Hugh! Long time no speak.

HUGH  
Alan, now there's a voice I haven't heard in a while.

ALAN (V.O.)  
How you doing?

HUGH  
All good. It's a busy day so I'll cut to the chase, I'm guessing this isn't a social call?

ALAN (V.O.)  
Ha. You got me. I'd like to cash in a favour if that's okay.

HUGH  
How much effort is it gonna be?

ALAN (V.O.)  
Minimum effort. Prepared to hear me out?

HUGH  
Shoot.

ALAN (V.O.)

So I'm up in North Norfolk, I've been doing a travel book. Coastal towns and all that.

HUGH

How scintillating. Nice part of the world, though.

ALAN (V.O.)

Ha, it's a little weird. Lots of folklore and oddballs.

HUGH

That's the countryside all over. Anyway, what is it you need? I'm bored already.

ALAN (V.O.)

Anything you can get on something call The Cockroach Man.

Hugh laughs.

HUGH

You've called in a favour for this? I could tell you every secret affair the royal family's ever had, but this is what you want?

ALAN (V.O.)

Ha! You know what I'm like, if something piques my interest I've just gotta know more.

HUGH

Well you have access to the same internet I do, nothing there?

ALAN (V.O.)

Nothing more than a few lines on a few sites and a couple of reddit posts. But I know you've got access to everything, everywhere - maybe there's nothing out there, but could you give it a go? The town's called Seabyrtun.

HUGH

Sure, why not.

A beat passes, Hugh drops his facade for a second and looks concerned.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Alan, is everything okay? This sounds a bit odd.

ALAN (V.O.)

(Laughs)

All good, don't worry. I'm just intrigued and I'd love to spin some interesting tales into this book. It'll save me from the boredom of writing about rambling routes and the texture of the sand.

HUGH

Okay. I'll see what I can do. Seabyrtun. Hmmm. Name rings a bell for some reason - I'll come back to you if can remember why.

ALAN (V.O.)

Cheers.

HUGH

Oh and Alan. Even if the subject is ridiculous it's nice to hear you sounding like you're on the hunt for a story once again. You're wasted writing this pithy travel shit. You know, for as long as I'm in charge here there'll always be a desk for you. Might also be a chance to patch things up with Samantha, she's still here. Or is that all over?

ALAN (V.O.)

That's very much over. But who knows, maybe one day I'll come back and fill that desk for you.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEABYRTUN GREEN - AFTERNOON

The town green buzzes with activity as the carnival is about to begin. Townsfolk of all ages apply the finishing touches to classic carnival stands and games. Lucy and Alfie are behind the beer stand, which is already proving popular.

Nearby, an old-timey band plays on a small stage, filling the air with lively music. It's almost as if the whole town has gone back in time to the 50s.

Flint moves between stalls and floats to greet locals and offer advice to the stall-holders.

A camera clicks - pull back to reveal Alan, standing at the edge of the green, he crouches down and takes a couple more shots.

Alice Jennings appears next to him.

ALICE

Good to see you've decided to join us for the carnival.

ALAN

Wouldn't miss it for the world. When I was doing my research yesterday I didn't actually discover too much about it. Is it a new thing?

ALICE

Oh no. We've done it for the last... twenty years... or so.

ALAN

Is it annual?

ALICE

Every five years.

ALAN

That's unusual, no?

ALICE

No? Why would it be? It's an expensive event, and the town only has so much money. Plus, it's more special this way.

ALAN

I guess so.

ALICE

You ask a lot of questions, Mr. McCullough.

ALAN

I've always found well-informed books to be the best books.

ALICE

(Nodding)

Of course. Anyway, enjoy the day.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

If you're susceptible to such things, I'd recommend the punch.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEER STAND - DAY

Alan patiently waits in line for the beer stand. He catches Lucy's eye and she smiles and waves - she's wearing a flowery summer dress.

FLINT

Mr. McCullough.

Flint sidles up next to him and claps a hand on his shoulder.

ALAN

Quite an event, isn't it?

Flint takes a look around the green, an emperor surveying his empire.

FLINT

I'm glad you're here to share it with us.

ALAN

Me too.

FLINT

Come with me. You've already sampled our beer, but I want you to try our punch - it's always a carnival talking point and I've heard that it gets stronger every time.

ALAN

Thank you, but I'm more of a beer guy...

FLINT

You can't say until you've tried, and anyway there are a few locals I've still not been able to introduce you to, so you can join me as I do my rounds.

Begrudgingly Alan allows himself to be led away, stopping only to wave a quick goodbye to Lucy.

Flint brings him over to a large table fully dedicated to bowls of bright orange punch. Flint pours a glass for both of them and then raises his aloft.

FLINT (CONT'D)  
To your health.

With little enthusiasm, Alan clinks glasses with him and both take a sip.

ALAN  
I can see what you meant about it being strong. What's in it?

FLINT  
Rum and orange mostly, often with another spirit for a kick.  
(Looks up)  
And talking of people for you to meet, here are a couple of Seabyrtun's finest.

Alan looks up as they're joined by GEOFF BROOKS (50s, built like a brick shithouse, crew cut) and DR ISABEL BROOKS (50, tall, glamorous, well-nourished)

GEOFF  
Dennis. Trust you to be found around the punch bowl.

Flint chuckles and holds up his hands.

GEOFF (CONT'D)  
(Scans Alan)  
And who do we have here?

FLINT  
I'm pleased to introduce you to Alan McCullough.

ALAN  
Hi.

FLINT  
Meet Inspector Geoff Brooks and his lovely wife, Dr. Isabel Brooks. The resident copper and the resident sawbones living together in holy matrimony.

Geoff forcefully shakes Alan's hand.

GEOFF

Semi-retired and hoping to be fully retired by the end of the year.

Dr. Brooks shakes Alan's hand.

DR. BROOKS

Pleasure to meet you.

ALAN

Likewise. So you're the town's sheriff?

Geoff laughs.

GEOFF

I wish. Seabyrtun is too small for a station - I'm based in North Walsham.

DR. BROOKS

You're the writer?

ALAN

Ha. Writer is a strong word for what I'm doing, I'm putting together a book on some off-the-beaten track coastal towns.

DR. BROOKS

I'm glad you've chosen Seabyrtun, although we don't want too many more tourists here! Nice that you've been able to come and do some research in person.

ALAN

Have you two always lived here?

GEOFF

We were both born here - although I had a stint in the army in my 20s. It didn't last long though, we were high school sweethearts and I didn't want to be too far away from Isabel.

She smiles.

DR. BROOKS

He's only ever this charming in front of people.

ALAN

Well, it'd be great to perhaps interview the two of you if I could.

GEOFF

We're both pretty busy...

ALAN

I thought you were semi-retired?

Geoff gives him a look.

GEOFF

Semi-retired from the force, I have plenty to keep me busy outside of that.

ALAN

Got you. Well, if the two of you do find time I'm here for another week and a bit.

They smile. A moment of silence falls.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, lovely meeting you - I might go and take a seat for a bit and write down some notes.

GEOFF

Notes?

ALAN

On the carnival.

GEOFF

Got you.

FLINT

You'll be okay without me for a bit won't you? I might stay and catch up with the Brookses for a moment.

ALAN

I should be able to manage - I did okay for the first 35 years before I met you.

Flint lets out a forced laugh. Alan smiles and heads off towards a seating area near the band and the stage.

Geoff watches him go.

GEOFF  
He has a bit of a smart mouth.

FLINT  
Doesn't he just? This is why I'm wondering what he's really doing here.

Geoff nods solemnly.

FLINT (CONT'D)  
So? What do you think?

GEOFF  
It's hard to know. It wouldn't surprise me if he was.

DR. BROOKS  
For the record I don't think he is, Alice doesn't either.

FLINT  
Alice isn't sure.

DR. BROOKS  
Fine. But she's not fully convinced.

FLINT  
Am I the only one taking this seriously?

DR. BROOKS  
You're being paranoid  
(Coldly)  
I can prescribe something for that if it'd help?

GEOFF  
Come on, Isabel - Dennis is just being cautious.

DR. BROOKS  
Well, let's keep an eye. You know where your focus needs to be, Dennis, it's nearly that time. Is everything ready?

FLINT  
Everything's ready.  
(Sighs)  
I just.. well...

GEOFF

What?

FLINT

It just gets harder every time.

GEOFF

(Sharply)

Pull yourself together.

DR. BROOKS

It's better than the other option.

FLINT

How do we know that?

GEOFF

Dennis. Pull. Yourself. Together.

Flint shakes his head and sighs.

FLINT

You're right. It's the dreams, I haven't been sleeping well.

DR. BROOKS

It's always like that when it's time. Which is why it needs to happen.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEABYRTUN GREEN - LATER

It's a little later and the band has stopped for a refreshment break. Alan is sat towards the back of the seating area, head down and scribbling away in his notepad.

He takes his dictaphone out of his pocket.

ALAN

(Into dictaphone)

Quick note to self - look more into the history of the Seabyrtun carnival. Any famous attendees? When was the first one?

He clicks the dictaphone off and looks up to see Alfie standing over him. He holds a pint of the punch in his hand.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Oh hi.

ALFIE  
Was that a walkie-talkie?

ALAN  
What? Oh no, it's a dictaphone.

Alfie looks at him as if he's just spoken Klingon.

ALFIE  
A dick phone?

ALAN  
Dic-ta-phone. An audio voice recorder.

ALFIE  
You can do that on your phone.

ALAN  
Yeah I know, I just like to keep it separate.

A beat passes.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
Can I help?

Alfie hands him the punch.

ALFIE  
Mr. Flint asked me to give this to you, so you can keep hydrated.

ALAN  
That's very kind of him.

ALFIE  
What were you talking into your dicto phone about?

ALAN  
The carnival.

ALFIE  
Do you like it?

ALAN  
The carnival? Yeah. Although, there's a lack of candyfloss.

Alfie nods and then turns to go.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
Alfie.

ALFIE

Yeah?

ALAN

Have you ever heard about The  
Cockroach Man?

Alfie stares at him with a strange expression for a couple of seconds. It's hard to know if he's shocked or just playing dumb.

ALFIE

Was he in The Avengers?

Alan smiles.

ALAN

Never-mind. You best be getting  
back to the bar, looks like there's  
a queue.

Alfie jogs off. Alan takes a sip of the punch.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Has to be said, they do make a  
great punch in these parts.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEER STAND - AFTERNOON

Lucy and Alfie finish serving a couple of customers. Finally there's a break in the queue.

Lucy lets out a sigh and wipes a bit of sweat from her brow. She looks over and notices Alan sitting by himself.

She steps away from the bar and starts to make her way towards him, smiling. She gets a few paces before:

FLINT

Lucy! How's it going?

LUCY

(Forcing a smile)  
Good, thanks - I was just nipping  
for a cheeky cig...

FLINT

We're running low on snacks, would  
you mind taking a detour to the pub  
while you have your smoke and pick  
some up?

Lucy sighs and looks over at Alan.

FLINT (CONT'D)  
Hurry though, I don't want to run out.

LUCY  
Okay, no problem.

She walks off in the other direction to Alan, looking thoughtful.

Two LITTLE BOYS scurry past with balloons.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
Hey you two!

They turn to her. She takes a crisp five pound note out of her dress pocket.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
How'd you like to earn a fiver?

LITTLE BOY 1  
Yes! Yes! Yes!

LUCY  
Okay. In exchange for this, I just need you to deliver a message to the man over there.

She points at Alan, who is preoccupied with his notepad. The boys nod eagerly.

LITTLE BOY 2  
Sure!

LUCY  
But you need to be like secret agents about this! It's for his ears only, got it?

LITTLE BOY 1  
Sure.

Lucy hands him the fiver.

LUCY  
Okay, so...

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

The same spot where Alan met Linda the other day. It's late afternoon, and for a second it seems as if all is quiet.

Then Linda lurches into frame. Wild-eyed. Clutching a half-full bottle of rum in one hand. Just like last time she's looking for something.

LINDA

Why won't you just show yourself?

She takes a mighty swig of rum, before looking over at the town. Seabyrtun Town Green can just about be seen and the sounds of the band playing 'Scarborough Fair'.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Bastards. Bastards all of you.

Linda chugs the rest of bottle and throws it to the ground - it shatters against a rock. Some of the glass cuts her leg, but she doesn't even notice.

She begins running towards the carnival. Anger in her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEABYRTUN GREEN - EVENING

Afternoon slowly gives way to evening. Alan is still sat to the side, with one eye on the band and one eye on his notepad. A half-drunk glass of punch is next to him, and by the looks of the cups stacked under it he's had several.

The two boys come over to him.

LITTLE BOY 1

Hey, sir.

Alan looks up, confused.

ALAN

(Clearly a bit drunk)

Err... hey.

LITTLE BOY 2

We've got a message for you. But it's top secret.

ALAN

Right...

LITTLE BOY 1  
Meet on the beach at 8:15.

ALAN  
I'm not sure if arranging to meet  
two little boys on the beach at  
night is a wise move.

They giggle.

LITTLE BOY 2  
No, stupid. The message isn't from  
us.

ALAN  
Well if it's from Mr. Flint you can  
tell him to fu...  
(beat)  
...fudge off...

They giggle again.

LITTLE BOY 1  
No! No! Stupid. It's from the  
blonde lady.

They point over to Lucy, who's pouring a pint for a customer.

ALAN  
Oh!

Alan checks his watch. It's '8.05'.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
Okay, that sounds good.

LITTLE BOY 2  
She said to be extra sneaky. Like a  
ninja. No one can see you!

The both start laughing.

ALAN  
Got ya.

The boys hurry off. Alan runs a hand through his hair.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
Best try and tame this mane.

He gets up and, with a slight wobble, makes his way towards  
the toilets. Taking him away from the stand, and into a  
slightly quieter part of the green.

The toilets are situated in an old, dilapidated brick building. He's about to step into the men's when he hears a noise.

He spins as Linda comes hurtling into the field from a clearing in the hedge. Blood trickling down her leg.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Let me guess, you're about to do a solo act on the stage?

He notices her leg and her demeanor.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

LINDA

Are you with them?

ALAN

Who?

LINDA

Do you know what happened to Darren? Does anyone know what happened to Darren?

ALAN

What are you talking about? Darren who? I think we need to get you some medical attention.

Alan takes a step towards her, reaching out a hand to steady her - she slaps it away.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Ouch! Look, if you're gonna keep talking in riddles I can't help you...

DR. BROOKS (O.S.)

Mr. McCullough. I can take it from here thank you.

Alan turns as Dr. Brooks and Geoff appear. Linda stiffens.

DR. BROOKS (CONT'D)

Come now, haven't you been taking your medicine?

LINDA

Medicine? What medicine? Don't act like you know me.

Geoff puts a reassuring hand on Alan's shoulder.

GEOFF

She's one of Isabel's oldest patients. Lovely lady, but when she doesn't take her medication, well...

DR. BROOKS

Come now, Linda.

LINDA

Get away from me! Get away!

Linda turns and runs back onto the road.

GEOFF

Damn it.

Geoff sprints after her.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

Police! Stop!

ALAN

Can I help?

DR. BROOKS

I think you've done enough. I also think you've also drunk enough, my best advice for you would be to go and have a coffee, and forget all about this.

She turns and hurries through the clearing in the hedge after Geoff.

Alan is left scratching his head. He's about to follow them, when he checks his watch. It's 8:15.

ALAN

Shit.

He looks over at the beer stand - Lucy's gone, it's just Alfie serving by himself.

Alan slicks back his hair as best he can with his hands and hurries away in the direction of the beach.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - EVENING

In the darkness, Seabyrtun beach is empty and eerie. The sound of crashing waves adds to the desolation. A small collection of abandoned deck chairs and sandcastles line the shore.

With a little drunken difficulty, Alan climbs down the stairs. As he gets to the bottom he reaches out a hand to steady himself on the bannister.

ALAN

Fuck me, what was in that punch?

Alan massages his temples for a second and moves onto the sand. Glancing left and right, he finds the coast clear. There's not a soul in sight, all the townsfolk are at the carnival, its old-timey music faintly echoes in the background. Reminiscent of an earlier scene with Darren.

A sudden curtain of fog appears, making it even harder to see in front of him. If it wasn't for the twinkling light of the moon he'd be completely alone in the darkness.

From somewhere up ahead there's a sound like a twig snapping - Alan spins, squinting to see up ahead, he can just about make out the outline of a shadowy figure.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Lucy?

Alan pulls his phone from his pocket and clicks the light on. It's not great, but helps to illuminate a few feet ahead of him. The beach looks empty.

Another noise. This time a skittering sound, the tip-tap of lots of little legs scurrying.

Alan shines his torch onto the ground and gasps as he sees a thick line of roaches marching through the beach.

One starts to climb up his leg, he tries to beat it away and eventually it drops off, disappearing into the midst of its cousins. Another quickly takes its place - hurrying up his leg.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Fuck's sake.

Again he beats away, he's so distracted that a sudden voice from the darkness makes him scream.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

He's coming soon...

Alan looks up. There's no one around. He looks back down and sees more cockroaches climbing his legs.

Panicked now, he flails wildly - sending some of them flying off. He's about to beat at them again when he hears another noise. A kind of groaning and hissing, a distorted voice that may be slightly human.

ALAN

Hello?

He shines his torch and notices something happening within the mass of cockroaches. It looks as if they're crawling over a dead body.

Alan moves forwards and, as he does, the body begins to shake. It starts slow, but the tempo rapidly picks up.

Alan watches, frozen with fear, as the figure gets to its knees. While it looks like a man in silhouette, there's something really off about it.

Alan holds out his phone torch to get a better look - as he does the creature looks up at him. And for a few terrifying seconds shows a face even a mother couldn't love.

Vaguely human in shape it contains two beady black, bug-like eyes and strange pincers that tuck under a nasty-looking slit of a mouth. Two crumpled antennas sit above its haunting face. It lets out a guttural hissing noise.

Alan SCREAMS and turns to run, dropping his phone in the process. He sprints across the beach, not daring to look behind him.

Unfortunately he doesn't notice a discarded deck chair and trips - craching to the ground. We hear another horrid hissing noise as EVERYTHING GOES BLACK.

ON BLACK:

TEENAGE BOY (V.O.)

Hey.... Hey man! Are you okay? Hey?

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Alan wakes up with a start. A lanky TEENAGE BOY stands over him, looking concerned. A TEENAGE GIRL stands a few steps away.

Alan gasps and instantly runs his hands over his body, batting away invisible cockroaches.

TEENAGE BOY

You okay?

ALAN

What the f... yeah, yeah...

Alan checks his watch. It's 2AM.

TEENAGE GIRL

Thank God, we were worried.

The Teenage Boy helps a shaky Alan to his feet.

ALAN

What... what happened?

TEENAGE BOY

I have no idea, man, we were...  
err... you know... meeting up. And  
we heard you talking in your sleep.

The Teenage Girl walks over and hands Alan his phone.

TEENAGE GIRL

Is this yours?

Alan pats his pocket. It's empty.

ALAN

Yeah... thank you.

TEENAGE BOY

Did you sink a bit too at the  
carnival?

ALAN

Yeah... a good lesson not to drink  
too much when you're old enough.

He nods to a bottle of beer in the girl's hand. She laughs.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Err... was there a girl around at  
all?

TEENAGE BOY

No one, man. Just you. Everyone  
else was at the carnival until like  
midnight.

ALAN  
Okay, thanks.

TEENAGE GIRL  
You should get home.

ALAN  
Thanks for the advice.

Alan turns to go, leaving the couple perplexed. He stops a few paces away, and turns back.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
This is gonna sound weird. But, did you see any cockroaches on the beach?

They look at each other.

TEENAGE BOY  
No, man, it's too dark.

ALAN  
This is gonna sound even weirder. Do you know anything about a Cockroach Man?

They look at him like he's crazy. The Boy protectively steps in front of his girlfriend.

TEENAGE BOY  
I dunno what you're talking about, if you're huffing drugs or something then...

ALAN  
You're not from around here?

TEENAGE BOY  
Nah, man, our families are friends and we hired an Air B n B.

ALAN  
Okay, got it.

TEENAGE GIRL  
Get back safe.

Alan nods and walks away.

The two look at each other.

TEENAGE BOY  
Did you see the size of his pupils?

## TEENAGE GIRL

(Shakes her head)

Yes. And if you keep hanging round  
with Danny Hayes and that lot  
you'll end up like that.

Teenage Boy shakes his head and the two walk through the moonlight, hand in hand. Everything seems peaceful.

CUT TO:

## EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - TWILIGHT

Twilight dawns over a patch of Norfolk countryside. Lined by a wide, sweeping forest.

Alan suddenly runs into frame. Wild-eyed, with sweat cascading down his forehead. He's either running a marathon, or running from something scary.

He turns and sees something chasing him. A dark, shapeless form that's always a little too far away to see.

Predictably enough, Alan trips and falls to the ground, desperately trying to get up as thundering footsteps grow closer.

CUT TO:

## INT. BEDROOM - DAY

As Alan wakes up with a start. Covered in sweat, but not quite as wild-eyed as he was in his dream.

He clutches his chest as his heart hammers.

ALAN

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

He looks around the room. Sunlight comes in from behind the curtains, along with the peaceful buzz of happy people going about their day.

He looks at the alarm clock next to him. It's already midday.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(Clutching his head)

Jesus. What was in that punch?

He puts his glasses on and, with effort, clambers out of bed. He looks around his room. It's a mess. His laptop is open and most of his drawers are ajar.

ALAN (CONT'D)  
 (Confused)  
 Did I do this or...?

He shakes his head, as if to dismiss the thought and hurriedly pulls a shirt on.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOG AND DUCK - DAY

The pub is mostly empty. A few old-timers reflect on days gone by over jars of nectar ale, while youngsters chat over steaming lattes.

A bored-looking Alfie stands behind the bar, drying a pint glass with a towel.

Alan, still looking a little disheveled, comes hurrying in. He hurries over to Alfie.

ALFIE  
 Morning. What you having?

ALAN  
 Is Lucy here?

Alfie looks at him blankly for a second.

ALFIE  
 Lucy?

Alan scowls at him.

ALAN  
 Blonde. Pretty. Barmaid. You've been working with her for a while.

ALFIE  
 Oh yeah.  
 (Beat)  
 Yeah, she's gone.

ALAN  
 Gone?

ALFIE  
 Yeah, she got bored and went home.  
 Want a drink?

ALAN  
 Why?

ALFIE

Dunno.

ALAN

Is it hard work being this useless  
or does it just come naturally?

Alfie doesn't respond.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Where's Flint?

ALFIE

Mr. Flint is helping pack up the  
carnival.

ALAN

You're sure she's gone?

ALFIE

Yeah. Left this morning.

Alan hurries out of the pub. Alfie watches him go with his  
trademark vacant expression.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEABYRTUN GREEN - DAY

Flint strolls along the green, arms behind his back, watching  
a small army of villagers as they pick litter and pack up  
tables.

Stopping to shout the odd instruction, an emperor surveying  
his empire.

Alan arrives and hurries over to him.

ALAN

Where is she?

Flint gives him a look.

FLINT

Mr. McCullough, I hear you were a  
little worse for wear last night?  
We do brew things strong down in  
the country.

ALAN

Lucy, where is she?

FLINT

She left early this morning.  
Decided she'd had enough. The  
country air just doesn't agree with  
some people.

ALAN

She said she was staying for the  
rest of the summer.

FLINT

Things change. If you want to make  
yourself useful...

ALAN

Cut the bullshit. Come on! She  
wanted to meet me last night, and  
when I turned up she wasn't there  
and now you tell me she's suddenly  
left?

FLINT

You sound a little... crazy. I'm  
assuming a few liters of the punch  
are still in your system.

ALAN

Where is she staying? I want to see  
that the room's empty...

FLINT

I thought you weren't going to be  
having much to do with her.

ALAN

(Raising his voice)  
Flint! I feel like something weird  
is going on here, and I'm way too  
hungover to deal with any bullshit.

A few of the villagers look around.

ALAN (CONT'D)

It seems really fucking weird, in  
fact everything seems fucking weird  
here, especially you.

FLINT

You're making a scene.

ALAN

Yeah, and I'll keep making a scene.  
(Loudly)

HEY!

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

Has anyone seen Lucy the barmaid?  
She's suddenly disappeared...

Flint grabs his arm and pulls him closer.

FLINT

(In a low voice)

For fuck's sake. Come with me. I  
can assure you she's gone, but if  
you're going to make a scene then  
I'll show you.

(To the villagers)

I'll be back in a couple of minutes  
- Mr. McCullough had a rough night  
last night, so I'm going to get him  
some black coffee.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOG & DUCK APARTMENT - DAY

Flint and Alan step into a small apartment above the pub.  
It's little more than a bedsit - with a small kitchen, a  
small bedroom and an equally small living area.

Asides from a bit of artwork, a few plants and some furniture  
there's no sign anyone's staying there.

FLINT

See? Empty. She packed her bags  
early this morning and called me to  
say she was off. I think she maybe  
had an ex-boyfriend back home who  
she wanted to get back with. Sorry  
for the disappointment.

Alan walks around the apartment - opening cupboards and  
checking under the bed.

FLINT (CONT'D)

I assure you she's not hiding under  
the bed.

ALAN

Seems weird to me.

FLINT

I can't help how you feel. But,  
come on, she came here to live by  
the seaside, probably got bored of  
standing behind a bar and decided  
to go back to the city. Hardly a  
great mystery.

Alan shakes his head and pushes past Flint to leave.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Alan. I think you should try and cool off a bit. I'm sorry if you liked Lucy and she didn't like you back. You'd only known her a few days, I'm sure you'll cope.

(Pause)

I think it would be best if you stayed at home for the rest of the day.

Alan turns back and looks at him.

ALAN

What's that supposed to mean?

FLINT

(Awkwardly)

Nothing at all, just some friendly advice from an old man. Tonight's not a night to be out, maybe you could type up some of your notes - I'm still looking forward to seeing that first draft.

Alan nods slowly and then exits. Flint watches him leave, before turning back to the empty apartment. A cockroach makes its way across the carpet, Flint sees it and shudders.

FLINT (CONT'D)

God help me.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEABYRTUN - AFTERNOON

It's mid-afternoon and heavy rain peppers the village and its surrounding beach.

The main streets and the beach are almost completely deserted, there's something ever-so-slightly eerie about it.

CUT TO:

INT. SPARE ROOM - AFTERNOON

As rain splatters the window, Alan sits at the desk typing away at his laptop. A bottle of beer stands within reach.

He picks up the dictaphone and speaks into it.

ALAN

(Into dictaphone)

On the surface, as you pull in for the first time, Seabyrtun is about as tranquil and picturesque as you'll get on the East Anglian coast. But there's something below the surface that's a little...

(Takes a swig of beer)

... off. Maybe if I was visiting as a normal holiday maker and hadn't made the mistake of telling everyone what I was here for it might have been different. Anyway, as it goes I'm going to leave tomorrow morning - I think I've got what I need and some of the locals aren't exactly friendly.

Alan clicks the dictaphone off, but then turns it on again.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Personal note to add - have tried various ways of trying to find Lucy on social media and other records. Without knowing a last name, where she used to live and where she worked it's a needle in a haystack job. Starting to think that she genuinely has just headed off - I don't blame her. She's just doing cleaning and bar work here for a creepy guy, surprised she stuck it out for as long as she did.

Alan clicks the dictaphone off and takes a deep breath. He's about to go back to his laptop when his phone rings.

He answers in a split screen with Hugh.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Hello?

HUGH

I was speaking to the board about you earlier. They've said they'd be happy to earmark a salary if you wanted to come back.

ALAN

Too kind, Hugh. But I've got a book deal I need to see through...

HUGH

Pah! Where's it from? Some tinpot publishing house? We'd be able to get that dissolved for you...

ALAN

Did you find anything?

HUGH

On the Cockroach Man? About as much as you'd expect, probably the same snippets you'd found.

ALAN

Anything interesting?

HUGH

I found an article on a local paper's site from around a decade ago. They redacted it pretty quickly, but it mentioned something about a cult in the area. No real details, likely bullshit. I'll email it over to you.

ALAN

(raising an eyebrow)

Cult activities? What were they worshipping?

HUGH

Doesn't really say. Just vague accounts of strange ceremonies up on the hills. Sounds like rubbish to me. I found a little on the Cockroach mystery.

ALAN

Go on...

HUGH

Back in the 1800s, there was a Victorian doctor or professor, a real oddball, used to be a circus magician. He lived just outside the village. Was known for experimenting on bugs, especially cockroaches. Locals spun tales around him, you know how they do.

ALAN

And that's it?

HUGH

About the Cockroach Man? Yeah. What were you expecting? A Jonathan Ross interview with him?

Alan can't help but laugh.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Anyway, in terms of real news, I realised why I remembered the area. It must have been about 5 years ago but an artist went missing in the area, he'd gone there to find some divine inspiration. Think he had a history of substance problems, but he disappeared. I think he just got fucked up and fell in the sea, but his loved ones kicked up a fuss at the time.

ALAN

What was his name?

HUGH

Darren Rice. I'll send you some bits on that too.

ALAN

(Eyes widen)

I've heard that name mentioned.

HUGH

I'll bet. I guess it was big news for a little area.

ALAN

Was there anything that might hint at foul play?

HUGH

Nah. As I said, just the family's words that it was unlike him. Anyway, that's all I got, take a look at the email.

ALAN

Thanks, Hugh, appreciate it.

HUGH

Sure and I'd appreciate you coming back whenever you're ready for some real work.

Alan laughs and hangs up.

He opens up an email from Hugh containing a series of links - clicks on one that says 'CrimeNight clip'.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

A sleek, dark set with a big screen and a desk. The "CrimeNight" logo looms behind a presenter, JAMES DOUGLAS (60, silver-haired, charismatic).

JAMES DOUGLAS

(looking into the camera)

Good evening, crime enthusiasts. Welcome back to another gripping episode of CrimeNight. Tonight, we delve into the disappearance of a talented artist, Darren Rice, in the coastal town of Seabyrtun.

The screen behind him changes to display pictures of the picturesque coastal town and a montage of Darren's artwork.

JAMES DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Darren vanished under mysterious circumstances, leaving a few people scratching their heads. Some believe it was a simple case of death by misadventure as the tide swept him away, but others question if there's more to the story.

Mystery-style music plays on cue.

JAMES DOUGLAS

Of course it's worth noting that Darren had battled addiction to prescription drugs and opioids for the last few years, although those close to him say he was clean and doing well.

(Pause)

His long-term girlfriend, Karen Bernetti, in particular...

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

KAREN BERNETTI stands behind the podium of a press conference room. A picture of Darren on the screen behind her.

Karen Bernetti is none other than Lucy. She looks a little younger, slimmer and has short dark hair cut into a bob stopping just by her neck.

LUCY

(In mid-flow)

I want everyone to know that Darren was clean and in high spirits when I saw him just the weekend before. He was having a lovely time in Seabyrtun, surrounded by all the inspo he needed.

Cameras zoom in even further, capturing every word as she continues.

LUCY (CONT'D)

He would never just disappear without a trace.

Her hands grip the edges of the podium.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I beg anyone with information about his whereabouts to come forward. No matter how small. Please, help us find him and bring him back home. We miss him. I miss him. And won't rest until he's safe.

(Pause)

We're holding onto hope, and we won't give up until we find Darren.

CUT TO:

INT. SPARE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Alan has all but fallen off his chair with shock.

ALAN

She never struck me as a Karen.

He picks up his phone - almost dropping it in the excitement. Dials 999.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(intensely dialing a number)

Operator...

(Pause)

Police, please.

(Pause)

It's to do with a missing person, no - I think someone's gone missing.

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

(Pause)

Yep, 2 Star Cottages, Seabyrtun...

CUT TO:

EXT. RENTAL HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A squad car pulls up and a CONSTABLE (40s, female, frizzy red hair) climbs out wearily.

She makes her way to the door and knocks. Alan answers in seconds.

CONSTABLE

Police.

ALAN

Ahh, thank God you're here...

(Looks out onto the  
street)

Is it just you?

CONSTABLE

Yes... have you been drinking?

ALAN

No... err, well, only a bit.

CONSTABLE

What's happened?

ALAN

Oh god, where do I begin? So, how well do you...

CONSTABLE

Can I come in?

ALAN

Oh what. Yeah of course...

GEOFF (O.S.)

Constable Stevens!

The Constable and Alan turn and see Geoff hurry up the path towards them.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

Mr. McCullough. What seems to be the problem?

ALAN

I...

CONSTABLE  
I got a call from dispatch,  
something about a missing person.

GEOFF  
A missing person? Who would that  
be, Alan?

Alan gives Geoff a look. It's clear he doesn't trust him.

GEOFF (CONT'D)  
(Sniffs)  
Smells like beer... been drinking  
again, Mr. McCullough?

CONSTABLE  
Again?

GEOFF  
Yes, it was the carnival yesterday  
and Mr. McCullough was a bit too  
fond of the punch.

The Constable laughs.

GEOFF (CONT'D)  
Anyway, PC Stevens, you must have  
been about to clock off?

CONSTABLE  
Well, I was on my way home...

GEOFF  
You head back. I'm sure I can help  
Mr. McCullough.

CONSTABLE  
Okay, sir.

ALAN  
No, no, don't go. I'd rather talk  
to you than him...

The Constable looks confused, she turns to Geoff for  
direction - he waves her on.

GEOFF  
Don't worry. I've got this one. Say  
hello to Miriam and John for me.

She nods and, after one last look at Alan, heads off.

Geoff makes a move to step inside. Alan stands firm.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

Easier if we chat inside, no?

ALAN

I'd rather the fresh air if it's all the same to you. Might sober me up, hey?

GEOFF

What's the problem?

ALAN

You know full well.

GEOFF

What's that supposed to mean? All I saw was a squad car pull up outside yours, so I rushed to see what had happened.

ALAN

Convenient that you were walking past...

GEOFF

I don't like your tone.

(Leans in)

I can make your life very difficult if I need to.

ALAN

Look. I don't know what's going on here, but Lucy, the barmaid, seems to have disappeared.

GEOFF

She left town this morning. I spoke to Dennis about it earlier. I think she'd had enough.

ALAN

How do you know?

GEOFF

It would be a strange thing for Dennis to make up, wouldn't it?

ALAN

Just seems a bit weird to me. She asked me to meet her on the beach, and when I turned up she wasn't around. Next morning I'm told she left...

GEOFF

Think about what you're saying, Alan. You're saying that IF she has gone missing, you'd have been the last person to have seen her...

ALAN

Hey now...

GEOFF

... secluded on a beach, late at night, while everyone else was busy.

ALAN

That's not what I'm saying.

GEOFF

I know. But that's what could be said.

A chilling pause settles between the two.

ALAN

As an officer of the law, you give me your word that you don't think she's come to any harm and all is okay?

GEOFF

That's exactly what I'm saying.

A car pulls up outside. Alan looks over Geoff's shoulder and watches Dr. Brooks get out.

She walks over to them.

DR. BROOKS

Is everything okay? Someone said a police car was spotted outside...

ALAN

Everything's fine. Completely fine. Your husband and I were sharing pleasantries.

DR. BROOKS

Are you okay, Mr. McCullough? You look a little flushed.

ALAN

Never been better.

DR. BROOKS

Anxiety is a funny thing, isn't it?  
Can hit any of us at any time, can  
make us think all kinds of funny  
things.

She motions to her jacket pocket.

DR. BROOKS (CONT'D)

I shouldn't really do this...

She takes out a small jar of big white pills.

DR. BROOKS (CONT'D)

... but if you're feeling a little  
funny today, I could prescribe you  
some of these?

GEOFF

They'll help you sleep through the  
night - you'll feel right as rain  
in the morning.

ALAN

What are they?

DR. BROOKS

A type of valium. Completely  
natural, but fast-working and  
reliable.

ALAN

I'm fine, thanks.

An awkward beat passes. Geoff and Dr. Brooks share a look.  
For a second it seems as if they might try and charge Alan.

Then it passes.

DR. BROOKS

Okay, it's up to you.

She hands him the jar of pills.

DR. BROOKS (CONT'D)

Here they are just in case.

GEOFF

Sure we can't come in for a coffee?  
Just to make sure you're alright.

ALAN

I'm sure.

Dr. Brooks looks at her watch and then at Geoff.

DR. BROOKS  
Anyway we must be off. It's nearly  
that time.

ALAN  
What time?

DR. BROOKS  
Oh... err... time to eat, of  
course.

GEOFF  
Make sure you stay in tonight,  
Alan.

The two of them turn and walk away. Alan watches them go for a couple of seconds, then looks down at the pills in his hand.

After a couple of seconds he closes the door. Once they're a good few feet away, Dr. Brooks turns to Geoff.

DR. BROOKS  
Well?

GEOFF  
I tried my best. Bastard wouldn't  
let me in. I couldn't risk someone  
seeing me force my way in.

DR. BROOKS  
This isn't good. I can't believe  
this has happened, just as  
everything was going fine.

GEOFF  
At least we know he isn't on the  
force.

DR. BROOKS  
How?

GEOFF  
I can't find anything on him, and  
he wouldn't have called the  
operator like that if he was.

DR. BROOKS  
Hmmm. I don't like it.

A loud noise, somewhere between a screech and groan, rings out. Both of them involuntarily shudder.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Early evening has fallen and it's starting to get dark. Alan creeps into the room and, ducking as he does, looks out of the window.

Alice sits in a car on the opposite side of the road. Quite blatantly keeping an eye on his house.

ALAN

You know something's really going down when the librarian is involved.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK GARDEN - EVENING

Alan, dressed in dark jeans and a jacket, exits from the back door and creeps across the back garden.

With a little difficulty, he climbs over the fence.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

He lands awkwardly on the pavement, he's about to step into the road when he sees Flint hurrying past.

He manages to duck down against the fence and stays out of sight.

Flint looks nervous and holds a brown paper bag. Alan waits a couple of seconds and, once Flint is several yards ahead, starts to follow him. Keeping as stealthy as possible.

ALAN

(Quietly)

Whatever the fuck is going on here, I'm going to find out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MRS JENKINS' HOUSE - EVENING

Alan crouches down beside a parked car and keeps an eye on Mrs. Jenkins' house.

After a couple of beats the door opens and Flint exits. He takes a quick look left and right, then hurries off.

Alan starts to follow him, but then thinks better of it. Once Flint has disappeared into the night he heads to Mrs. Jenkins' front door.

He rings the bell. There's no answer. He rings again, still no answer.

He's about to walk away, but then thinks better of it.

ALAN

Fuck it.

To the side of the house a window is slightly ajar, Alan heads over to it.

INT. MRS JENKINS' LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Jenkins lies on her bed. Very still. The remains of a sandwich lie on a tray on her lap.

Alan clambers in through the window.

ALAN

Mrs. Jenkins?

No reply. He makes his way towards her. Her eyes are closed and it doesn't look as if she's moving.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Mrs. Jenkins!

The tension builds as Alan gets to her. She's completely still. He slowly reaches out his hand to touch her, he's seconds away from grabbing her shoulder when suddenly her eyes snap open.

Alan jumps out of his skin.

MRS. JENKINS

Ooooh, sorry, Dennis, I was just resting my eyes.

ALAN

Mrs. Jenkins. Let me get rid of that plate for you.

Alan takes the tray away from her and deposits it in the sink.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh you're too kind. If you'll excuse me, I really need to get some sleep.

She closes her eyes and lays back down.

ALAN

Mrs. Jenkins?

She begins snoring lightly.

ALAN (CONT'D)

For fuck's sake.

Alan grabs a wooden spoon from the side and uses to it to bash a frying pan. Mrs. Jenkins wakes up with a start.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh, sorry, I was just...

ALAN

Mrs. Jenkins...

He moves closer, she recognises him.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh you're not Dennis, are you?

ALAN

We spoke the other day.

MRS. JENKINS

Yes, that's right. I'm sorry, I'm awfully tired, can you come back tomorrow?

ALAN

I'm sorry, I can't. I just need your help with something.

MRS. JENKINS

Help? Look at me! I haven't been able to help anyone in years.

ALAN

It's a really quick question. When I was last here, you said it was nearly that time. I want to know what you meant?

MRS. JENKINS

Oh goodness me, I don't know.  
What's the date?

ALAN

July 31st.

Mrs. Jenkins suddenly seems to wake up. For a second her dull eyes flicker with realisation.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh yes. He must be coming.

ALAN

Who is he?

MRS. JENKINS

(Matter-of-factly)

Why, the Cockroach Man of course.

ALAN

Who is that? What is that?

MRS. JENKINS

My dear, there are some things you don't want to know. My pop used to say that there's a reason the unknown is the unknown...

ALAN

I need to know. Someone I know might be in danger.

MRS. JENKINS

It's getting late, young man, there's not much you can do now.

ALAN

But what if I wanted to?

MRS. JENKINS

You'll never understand it like I will, but sometimes one horrible thing needs to happen to make sure many horrible things don't. The painter they used the other year was such a lovely boy...

ALAN

Where can I find the Cockroach Man?

Mrs. Jenkins looks at him solemnly.

MRS. JENKINS

You don't want to find him.

ALAN

What is he? Who is he?

MRS. JENKINS

He's been here longer than memory serves. My grandfather said he was once a man, but struck a deal with something we can't fathom. Others believe he's a guardian, bound to an ancient duty that demands sacrifice. Some say he was a crazy professor.

(Beat)

In the past, he wanted to feed constantly, until they found a way to space it out to every five years. It's still terrible, but it's progress.

ALAN

So that's it? You just accept it, you don't really know...

MRS. JENKINS

Your generation, with your internet and your broad bands, you think everything is there to know. Legends twist through time. Whatever the truth, it's part of this town's fabric. My advice to you is to steer well clear.

The conversation is cut short by agitated male voices outside the door.

VOICE 1

Have you got the key?

VOICE 2

It's in my pocket, hang on...

Alan turns back to Mrs. Jenkins. She's fallen asleep. The doorbell rings.

VOICE 1

Fuck it, she's asleep, find the fucking key, quick...

The sound of a rattling key chain. Alan looks to the window, he hasn't got time.

There's enough space under her bed for a man of Alan's size to hide, so, without a second thought, he dives under it.

ANGLE ON:

Alan, as he lies under the bed. Keeping his body as curled up as possible.

The door unlocks and opens. Two sets of heavy footsteps thunder in. Alan tries all he can to get his breath under control.

VOICE 1 (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Jenkins?

VOICE 2  
She's asleep.

VOICE 1  
Doesn't look like there was anyone here. Flint is being paranoid again.

VOICE 2  
He's losing it. Everyone's saying it.

The footsteps continue around the room.

VOICE 1  
Right let's go. We don't want to miss anything.

One set of footsteps retreats. Alan breathes a sigh of relief.

And then suddenly the face of Alfie appears - looking under the bed. He stares right at Alan.

ALFIE  
He's here!

Alan desperately tries to get away but Alfie and another of the village youths grab him.

BACK TO SCENE

A kicking and flailing Alan is dragged out from under the bed.

ALAN  
Get the fuck off me.

ALFIE

You were told to stay in tonight.

ALAN

Why? So you could all go and  
fucking murder someone or whatever  
it is...

Alfie punches him. Hard. Alan falls back against the wall and the younger, stronger man is instantly upon him. A series of blows rain down - ribs, face, stomach. Nothing's safe.

The other Youth swings a cricket bat and it catches Alan in the head. He falls to the ground, dazed.

YOUTH

What are we gonna do?

ALFIE

Get him to where they are. They can  
decide.

Alfie and his companion drag Alan out of the room. All the while Mrs. Jenkins sleeps peacefully. As if she didn't have a worry in the world.

A cockroach slowly crawls up her body and onto her forehead.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The moon casts an eerie glow over a desolate field on the outskirts of Seabyrtun. The town's distant lights twinkle on the horizon.

A World War II machine bunker, now weathered and decaying, sits in the middle of the field.

A handful of older townsfolk stand patiently near the bunker, their cars parked behind them. Including a couple of the guys Flint was speaking to in the pub at the start.

Dr. Brooks' car pulls up with its lights off. Geoff and Dr. Brooks get out.

GEOFF

Is Dennis here yet?

Before anyone can answer a truck pulls up behind their car. Flint gets out. He looks worried.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

What is it?

FLINT

(With a grimace)

Alfie called. They've got him.

GEOFF

Who? The writer?

FLINT

Who else?

GEOFF

For fuck's sake! I thought we'd got that under control, Alice was keeping an eye?

FLINT

He must have snuck out.

GEOFF

You didn't ask anyone to look at the back?

FLINT

You're the policeman here. You must have done hundreds of stakeouts, you could have helped.

GEOFF

Fuck. We'll sort this later. Where was he?

FLINT

At old Jenkins' house.

DR. BROOKS

God knows what she's told him.

A murmur of unease spreads around the group.

GEOFF

Don't worry, everyone. We'll sort this. We always do.

A groan comes from somewhere inside the bunker. Everyone shudders.

FLINT

Come help me.

Flint and Geoff make their way to the back of the truck. Flint pops the boot to reveal Lucy lying inside. She's just about conscious, bound and gagged.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Such a pretty girl. What a shame.

The two of them lift Lucy out of the car. She starts to come round, and looks at them with shocked eyes. The gag muffling her screams.

GEOFF

Come now, don't struggle. It'll be quick.

Another car pulls up beside them.

FLINT

(Quietly)

What are we going to do?

GEOFF

He'll just have to have a second portion tonight.

FLINT

That's dangerous. Two disappearing in one night. He's also never eaten twice before, we don't want to set a precedent here...

GEOFF

We're out of options here. It would be three if we'd been able to catch that mad old lady, whoever she was.

Alfie and the Youth get out of the car. Manhandling a groggy Alan between them. Hands loosely bound by a cable tie, a trickle of blood on his forehead.

Some of the villagers gasp - another murmur of unease spreads through them.

ALFIE

Here he is.

GEOFF

(To Alan)

What did we tell you? Stay in.

Alan snaps out of his daze and sees Lucy. She looks at him with wide, terrified eyes.

ALAN  
I was right.

GEOFF  
Fat lot of good that'll do you.

Alan tries to struggle. Alfie slugs him in the guts. He doubles over, coughing.

A moment of silent falls.

FLINT  
How long do we have?

DR. BROOKS  
(Checks watch)  
5 minutes.

As if on cue another groan rings out from the bunker. Followed by a distant scuttling sound.

Lucy begins struggling wildly, but she's too tied up to do anything.

Flint bites his bottom lip. He looks at the two hostages, more conflicted than we've ever seen him.

FLINT  
This is... I don't know...

GEOFF  
It's too late now. It has to be done. We'll talk about it later.

Alan begins laughing, blood bubbling around his mouth.

GEOFF (CONT'D)  
I'm glad you see the funny side.

ALAN  
You... you really don't know, do you?

GEOFF  
What?

ALAN  
A fucking police detective or whatever you are, and you haven't twigged?

Alfie goes to hit him.

GEOFF

Stop. Get to the point.

ALAN

Don't you recognise her?

Everyone's eyes rest on Lucy.

ALAN (CONT'D)

I'm still not sure what I believe.

(Coughs)

But I'm guessing this is some kind of weird sacrifice thing, right?

And you've chosen her because she seems like a bit of a drifter.

Someone who could disappear easy.

(Pause)

Maybe it was a bit difficult with Darren before, lots of ends to tie up, but you managed cos he had a reputation as a junkie. So you thought this time you'd find someone no one would miss...

DR. BROOKS

Who is she?

ALAN

Karen... Karen Fucking Bernetti.

(Pause)

Maybe that rings a bell? Or maybe it doesn't. If it doesn't, god help all of you, if you're that thick, I can't believe you could cover all this up for so long.

Murmurs in the crowd.

ALAN (CONT'D)

It's his girlfriend. It's Darren Rice's girlfriend.

Flint's eyes widen.

ALAN (CONT'D)

She's gone in here, right under your stupid noses. No doubt trying to find out what the fuck happened. I have no idea how much she knows...

Geoff's face turns crimson. He rounds on Flint.

GEOFF

Surely you checked her out when you hired her? You told me she was perfect.

FLINT

Of course I did... it's fine... he's trying to confuse us...

DR. BROOKS

It's definitely her...

Alan turns to the other villagers.

ALAN

What a bunch of cowards you all are. How could you let this happen?

Flint starts to panic now. He steps away.

GEOFF

Shut him up! Shut him the fuck up!

And then from nowhere a GUNSHOT. Everyone jumps out of their skin - another horrible groan comes from inside the bunker.

No one knows where to look.

And then suddenly she steps out of the darkness. Linda Rice. Smoking gun in her hands. Vicious look in her eyes.

DR. BROOKS

My god.

(To Geoff)

I told you there was something odd about her, we should have done more to find her...

ALAN

(Laughs through a bloody mouth)

She doesn't seem happy...

Linda steps forwards. Everyone stiffens.

LINDA

Bastards. I knew it. You'll have hell to pay for this...

A couple of the townsfolk make a run for it.

GEOFF

I'm a police officer, I can assure you this isn't what you think...

He makes the mistake of stepping forwards. BLAM. A shot catches him in the gut. Dr. Brooks screams.

Geoff staggers but manages to stay on his feet and tackles her, the youth with the cricket bat close behind.

A struggle ensues, another gunshot.

Alfie takes his eyes off of Alan. Also a mistake. He turns back as Alan's forehead connects with his nose, sending him flying. Once he hits the deck Alan kicks him in the head.

ALAN

That's for the sucker punch.

DR. BROOKS

Stop them!

Alan runs forwards, there's so much commotion going on it's hard to know what to do.

Meanwhile Lucy has done her best to get her leg ties off, Alan reaches her and, with difficulty, helps her up.

ALAN

Come on...

Flint and another of the townsfolk sprint towards them. There's nowhere to go, the only way to run is inside the bunker.

FLINT

Don't go in there... for fuck's sake don't go in there...

Before he can get to them the dead body of Geoff lands at his feet, tripping him to his knees.

He watches with terror in his eyes as Alan and Lucy blindly rush into the bunker.

INT. BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Alan and Lucy are in near darkness.

LUCY

(Muffled)

This isn't safe...

And then she lets out a muffled scream as she falls, disappearing from view.

Alan tries to stop himself - but it's too late. There's some kind of opening in the ground, right by his feet - without the use of his arms he can't get his balance and topples forward.

From outside there's another gunshot.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

They land with a painful thud at the bottom of a dark, narrow tunnel. Faint sounds of skittering bugs echo in the shadows.

The tunnel seems to pulsate with a life of its own, like its a creature in its own right. The air is filled with other unsettling noises, a symphony of buzzing and hissing.

Alan grimaces in pain.

ALAN

Are you okay? My ankle... I think  
it's bust...

Lucy moves her face towards Alan's hand and, with difficult, he manages to rip off her gag.

LUCY

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. We can't be here,  
this is the one place we can't  
be...

She gets to her feet and tries to reach the top of the tunnel. There's no chance. It's too high.

More hissing from somewhere in the distance.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Can you give me a foot up?

Alan tries to stand, but howls in pain - falling back down.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Fuck.

Lucy wrestles with the rope around her hands, it won't come loose.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Have you got any kind of weapon?  
Anything?

ALAN  
Nothing...

LUCY  
What kind of a rescue mission was  
this?

(Beat)  
Light we need light.

ALAN  
My phone... my pocket...

Lucy bends down and fishes in Alan's pocket until she gets his phone. Predictably enough it says 'NO SIGNAL'.

LUCY  
Are you a cop?

ALAN  
N... No...

LUCY  
Damn it. So there's no back up or  
anything coming?

Lucy turns the light on and screams. The tunnel is well and truly alive - it was hard to see in the half-light before. But the walls are teeming with roaches, some of them making their way towards them.

Lucy kicks them away as best she can.

She looks back up at the opening they fell from - it's weirdly silent up top.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
LINDA?

No reply.

ALAN  
W... what's going on?

LUCY  
It's real. I can't believe it's  
real. When Darren died I knew there  
was something.

ALAN  
The Cockroach Man is real?

Lucy gestures to the tunnel.

LUCY  
Looks like it.

ALAN  
W... what's going on?

LUCY  
There's no time to go on about it,  
I'm sure you can fill in the  
blanks. They feed people to him.  
Every five years... to keep him  
from snatching people.

ALAN  
Why didn't you tell me sooner?

LUCY  
Why would I? I had suspicions but  
until the fucking carnival I  
couldn't be sure.. when you're  
dealing with something like this  
it's easy to think you're mad.  
(Beat)  
I thought you might be a cop or  
something, I've been pestering them  
for years to do more. It was what I  
wanted to ask you at the beach,  
before they snatched me...

The tunnel falls silent. Both of them shudder. Lucy shines  
the torch around the floor, finds a big rock. She picks it up  
and holds it in front of her like a weapon.

ALAN  
W... well, guess you're gonna have  
to leave me... I didn't kinda think  
I'd go out like this...

Lucy jumps up and tries to reach the opening but it's futile.

LUCY  
I couldn't leave you here if I  
wanted to. It's too high.

She looks into the darkness at the tunnel.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
We either stay and die, or try and  
find another way out.

ALAN  
This seems like the kinda place  
that's difficult to get out of.

Lucy unclips the tie from his hands and helps him to his feet. His broken ankle clicks and cracks as he tries to raise himself up.

LUCY

You're in shock now, there's a good chance you won't feel the pain for a bit.

She hands him the phone and he holds it in front of him as the two of them stumble through the tunnel. Roaches climb up their legs and run across their feet.

ALAN

With any luck maybe he'll attack them...

LUCY

I wish. You seen the rings they wear? I think they keep them safe.

ALAN

This is insane.

From just up ahead comes the most grotesque of all the hissing growls so far.

A huge figure appears in the darkness.

The cockroaches around them go berserk. Smashing into the walls and crashing into one another.

LUCY

Oh my god...

Lucy and Alan back up. For a second the monster appears in sight. Nasty eyes fixated on its prey. Looking just as bad as it did that night on the beach.

The two of them scream and try to scramble away. The phone falls to the ground and lands on its back, blocking the torch light. All hell breaks loose as the monster powers forwards.

Lucy and Alan hit the deck in the confusion. Lucy grabs the light and shines it.

Illuminating the Cockroach Man as he lands on a terrified Alan. Grabbing the sides of his head with huge, scaly hands.

Alan is screaming. The monster flinches at the light and holds a twisted hand up to block it.

LUCY (CONT'D)

FUCK YOU!

Lucy grabs the rock and hurls it at the monster. Hitting it in the shoulder. It SHRIEKS and pounces for her.

It's halfway there when BLAM! A bullet hits it in the shoulder. Another figure emerges from the darkness behind Alan and Lucy.

Wide-eyed she looks up at Flint, who holds Linda's gun in shaking hands.

FLINT

I can't do this anymore.

The monster, barely affected by the bullet, turns on him. Hissing and squealing. Alan's head falls back against the ground as he drifts into unconsciousness.

The Monster moves towards Flint but stops. It can't seem to go any further. It sees the ring on his finger and lets out a disappointed growl.

LUCY

Kill it!

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Flint fires wildly at the monster, hands shaking. Some of the bullets go astray, while some hit home.

They're nothing more than an inconvenience to the Cockroach Man. It turns its attentions to Alan once more.

FLINT

Come with me. Now.

LUCY

And leave him?

FLINT

You don't know him. He's no one to you...

Flint holds out a hand to Lucy. She looks back at Alan, who is completely unconscious. The Monster puts its hands on his head and begins to pull.

Lucy lets out a battle cry and grabs some more rocks off the ground. Hurling them in the direction of the monster.

LUCY

I can't.

She tries to tackle the Cockroach Man but it flings her away as if she were a gnat. Sending her crashing into the wall.

Flint watches the horror. Shaking uncontrollably. The gun falls from his hand and lands on the roach-laden floor.

He looks back at the opening. It's not too far, he could try and get back up.

But then stops himself. He stops shaking and in a moment of stillness begins to take the ring off his finger.

FLINT

This really has gone on too long.

He throws the ring to the ground and steps forwards. The Cockroach Man looks up at him with hungry eyes.

FLINT (CONT'D)

Take me. I may be old meat, but I'm more than you deserve.

With that said he too charges the Cockroach Man and somehow manages to knock him over. The two fall into a writhing mass on the ground.

Lucy scoops up the ring and then grabs Alan, desperately pulling him along. Squashing roaches as they go.

From just ahead, Flint starts screaming. He's being eaten alive, for just a second, in the light of the phone, Lucy sees it happening and closes her eyes in horror.

CUT TO:

EXT. TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

A battered Lucy lies against the edge of the tunnel, an unconscious Alan by her feet.

She holds out the ring in one hand - in the hope it'll create some kind of a force field.

Alan's eyes open.

ALAN

D... did... did we win?

The sounds of the Cockroach Man feeding can be heard. Alan winces.

LUCY

I... I.. I can barely keep my eyes  
open. Hit my head when it threw  
me...

That said she closes her eyes and passes out. Alan takes the ring from her hand and holds it up. He tries to get up, but he's in too much pain.

So he just lies there. Squinting to try and make out a form in the distance.

Silence falls. Alan sits up as best as he can and watches. Waiting for something to come out of the darkness.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Lucy, with a bandaged head, sits behind a desk opposite a Detective. She eyes her wearily over a steaming coffee.

DETECTIVE

Let me get this straight, you managed to change your appearance and blend into the town without anyone noticing?

LUCY

That's right, nobody suspected a thing.

DETECTIVE

The death of Darren Rice was ruled as accidental, what made you doubt it?

LUCY

You have to understand, Darren was no ordinary person to me. If someone close to you died under mysterious circumstances, wouldn't you want answers?

DETECTIVE

Sure, but there are proper channels for investigation...

LUCY

I did try, believe me. I spoke to the police multiple times, but they weren't bothered. Check your records.

DETECTIVE

So, five years later, you decide to pursue it again?

LUCY

It was something he'd mentioned before, about slightly strange locals and some carnival they were desperate he went to. Then I noticed that incidents seemed to occur every five years. I couldn't shake it off, especially when I discovered other disappearances related to the town.

DETECTIVE

Frankly, I'm not sure what to make of all this.

LUCY

I spoke to police about it several times. No one believed me. The people who disappeared before were people no one would miss, they made a mistake with Darren.

DETECTIVE

I see.

LUCY

But you can't deny what Alan and I witnessed. Even Mr. Flint saw it...

DETECTIVE

We found no trace of Dennis Flint. And no monster either.

Lucy shudders.

LUCY

And Mrs. Rice, is she alright?

DETECTIVE

She's in intensive care. Were you working together?

LUCY

She... she was the only one aware of what I was doing. But she's not of sound mind. I didn't expect her to turn up.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

A quick fire montage of newspaper headlines, articles and video clips. In some of them we see Dr. Brooks, Alice, Alfie and others - either in court or handcuffed.

Murderous Satanists in Norfolk town?  
 Local town shaken by mysterious disappearances  
 Police Investigate Cult Activity  
 Unexplained Deaths in Seabyrtun Spark Police Probe  
 Norfolk Police uncover sinister cult ties  
 High-Ranking Norfolk Detective linked to bizarre Seabyrtun deaths  
 Seabyrtun Residents Fearful as Cult rumours spread  
 Police uncover bizarre series of empty tunnels in seaside town.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

A busy, bustling street buzzing with life. A sharp contrast to a sleepy coastal town.

Alan appears, walking with a limp. He's clean-shaven and well-dressed, but there are bags under his eyes.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

A friendly cafe in the heart of the city. It's a sunny day and everyone's sitting outside.

Among them is Lucy. Dressed in a flowing summer dress, hair freshly done - with enough make-up to cover the bags under her eyes.

She smokes a cigarette as she watches the world over a steaming latte.

Alan turns the corner and they see each other. Both share a world-weary look. Two survivors who share an experience no one else can even imagine.

ALAN

Afternoon.

LUCY

Afternoon.

She stands up and gives him a hug. He gently lowers himself into the seat opposite her.

LUCY (CONT'D)

How's the leg?

ALAN

It's still attached. So I guess that's a plus, right?

She laughs. A waitress passes by.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Americano, please.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and drops a book onto the table. 'Memoirs of a Cockroach Man - by Alan McCullough'.

Lucy stares at it.

LUCY

Am I the first person to get a copy?

ALAN

Well, yeah. And if there's anything you want me to take out, just let me know.

LUCY

The world needs to know everything.

ALAN

Even if everyone thinks we're crazy?

Silence falls.

ALAN (CONT'D)

They still haven't found anything.

Lucy nods. Alan puts his hand on the table, involuntarily trembling. She puts hers over his.

LUCY

1705.

ALAN

Sorry?

LUCY

That's how many days we have.

ALAN

Until what?

LUCY

He's hungry again.

ALAN  
Ha. Good maths.

LUCY  
You know we'll need to do something  
right? We need to find something.  
Some way to stop him.

Alan bites his bottom lip as Lucy lights up another  
cigarette.

ALAN  
Well, until then...

Both of them shudder. A silence falls.

Lucy is about to say something when something catches their  
attention.

They watch as a cockroach scuttles out from under a table and  
makes its way into the cafe. Lucy looks at her latte with  
disgust.

LUCY  
Shall we go somewhere else?

ALAN  
Let's get a beer.

FADE OUT

SUPER: Alan & Karen will return in 'The Cockroach Man 2'...  
or will they?

THE END