

DAYLIGHT AGAIN

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Based on a short story by
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EXT. FOREST - DUSK

From the top of a tree-lined hill we look down onto a yellow house, centred in a large yard. There's a trailer out back and a cabana, and at the far rear of the yard, a storage container.

We zoom out from this house until we are in an OTS with a cloaked figure looking down at the house. The figure turns around and walks away, carrying a large sack of indistinguishable items.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DUSK - WIDE

From a distance we watch this cloaked figure begin to dig a hole.

In the forest evening we hear birds chirp, crickets, and:
Footsteps. Jogging.

The cloaked figure cocks its head and runs off to an unseen location, still carrying the shovel.

Around a bend comes a jogger in bright red sneakers.

He stops when he sees the bag and hole and approaches cautiously.

He wipes his brow - he's not nervous, but he's curious as to what left the package here.

He bends over and reaches for the bag - and at that moment hears a stick snap behind him. He turns to see what made the noise but is wacked in the head with a metal shovel.

We pan up to the sky as we hear a continued beating of the shovel on flesh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ARTIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

AN EVICTION NOTICE fills the frame. As we pull back and reveal the larger scope of the apartment, a figure, blurred and dark, paces back and forth across the screen.

We hear a buzz of a phone ringing.

The figure stops moving as the frame settles on his face. We see ARTIE, a small-in-stature thin twenty-something.

He appears nervous and taps his foot at a steady pace.

PETER (V.O.)
(answering phone)
Hello...?

Artie smiles a forced smile as though Peter were in the room with him.

ARTIE
Hey! Peter! Great to hear from you man.

PETER
Who is this?

ARTIE
It's Artie! Your cousin. From Toronto.

PETER
Oh, cool. Yeah, cool, hey man, what's up?

ARTIE
Nothing! Nothing up, what's up with you?

Artie looks back down at the eviction notice.

PETER
Not really much, man... So...

ARTIE
Nice.

PETER
Did you call me for something?

ARTIE
Yeah you know what, I...

He thinks about his wording for a moment.

ARTIE (cont'd)
What are you doing over the next few days?

PETER
Nothing much, why?

ARTIE

I was thinking I'd come up and see you! If that's okay.

PETER

Ah... Right. You know, I think it'd be a lot easier if I came down to you, I haven't been in the city for a -

ARTIE

Nah, don't worry about it! I wanna get out of the city.

PETER

Right. Yeah, see I think I might be on a... work thing? For the next few days? So like... Not at the house.

ARTIE

No worries man! I can get myself up there and you know, hang out.

PETER

Right.

ARTIE

So.... I'll see you tonight?

PETER

You sure you want to come here? It's a long drive. I can come down and stay at your place.

ARTIE

Nah! My place is, you know. I'd really like to come up to you.

PETER

Okay. Hang on, let me talk to my roommates.

ARTIE

Cool!

Artie pauses. His foot tapping turns into a combined finger tapping on the counter. We slowly push in on him as he waits for Peter to return to the phone.

PETER

Artie?

ARTIE

Peter!

PETER

Yeah that... Should be fine. I'll be away for the next few days but I might be able to see you if you get here early enough tonight. Just call me when you're almost here.

ARTIE

Sweet! See you then!

The call cuts off before he gets a chance to finish his sentence and he sits for a moment.

He looks back down at his phone and clicks another name - screen out of view.

The phone buzzes.

The line is answered and a woman's voice is heard on the other end:

WOMAN

Hello?

ARTIE

Hey mom! Do you mind if I use your car for the week? I can come pick it up in a half hour. Can you make some of that dip?

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Artie packs the car, continuously moving into and out of the house's front door for more and more luggage.

It's a brisk autumn morning. The suburb in which Artie's mother resides is unimposing and average.

He returns to the house again and again.

A cooler, a suitcase, a backpack.

All loaded into the car.

On his final trip to the car, Artie drops a casserole tray full of chicken-cheese dip. It flies all over the driveway, and we hear a faint-

ARTIE
 Son of a bitch...

-as he leans down to pick it up, covering his hands in residue.

Music picks up. Something akin to "Everybody's Talkin'" by Harry Nilson.

ARTIE (V.O.)
 (leaving a message
 for his mother)
 Hey mom! Thanks again for letting me use the car. I had some... Trouble... with the dip so I took a twenty from your purse if that's okay. I owe you! See you soon. Love you.

INT. ARTIE'S CAR - LATER THAT MORNING

Artie hangs up his phone and looks down into the cup holder. A \$50 bill sits in plain view.

He watches the road roll by and is quite content with long drives. It usually allows him time to think.

EXT. ROADWAY - MORNING

Artie's car drives down a somewhat-rural-somewhat urban road.

Another answering machine beep can be heard.

The sun pierces the trees that line the road and the traffic begins its morning routine - becoming more and more dense as time goes on.

INT./EXT. ARTIE'S CAR - MORNING

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Artie drives. We switch from his POV to tight angles of his eyes distractedly wandering. Occasionally a car honk brings his attention back to the road.

ARTIE (V.O.)
 Peter! You know who it is. Haha, looking forward to seeing you! It's Artie by the way. Anything I can bring up for you guys? Food? Beer?
 (MORE)

ARTIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
I'm gonna grab some stuff so I can make the dip for you. You know the stuff. I should be there around six -- You said you're leaving at seven? We should have plenty of time to catch up. See you tonight! Can't wait to meet your roommates.

Artie continues to drive, peeling back the layers and layers of city scapes to more sparse suburbia until he reaches the hard stop of urban developments and continues on his drive northward, into the countryside.

There are still vague sightings of highrise apartments and bizarre brand-new neighbourhoods that seem to exist in a void.

EXT. TIM HORTON'S PARKING LOT - DAY

Artie sits in the driver's seat of the car as he chows down on a big breakfast. The \$50 in the cup holder has turned into a twenty, a ten and some change.

EXT./INT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

More driving. The day gets later, the sun directly overhead at this point. It's mid-day. Traffic is at a peak, even out in this country setting.

Artie stops again for some more food. This time a diner.

"THE RED ONION" shines from the sign above the parking lot.

The money in his cup holder disappearing as he exits and returns to the car.

He tosses the change that remains, a ten and a five and a toonie, and starts the car back up.

He pulls out again and continues his drive.

He drives and drives. And drives. The journey is pretty long and looks like it'll take him the bulk of his day to get there.

He spots a gas station/convenience store on the side of the road and pulls into it.

He comes out with a bag of chips and a pop. At this point he's got a \$5 and some loonies and toonies.

Once again, he resumes his drive. This time going for a ways longer, but he stops - The dip! He pulls into another hasty market type store and counts the change he has left. Nada.

Instead, he throws a box of ice cream sandwiches in the passenger seat.

Another answering machine beep.

ARTIE (V.O.)

Hey man! I'm experiencing some delays, sorry. The dip... Well the dip was rancid or something, so I hope you guys like ice cream sandwiches.

(an awkward chuckle followed by a beat)

Well anyway, don't leave before I get there! Still aiming to arrive before seven. See you tonight, dude!

He continues his drive as the evening gets later and later.

INT. ARTIE'S CAR - EARLY EVENING

Artie drives along but catches a glimpse of the corner of the ice cream sandwich box. It's gooey and soggy.

ARTIE

Oh, son of a....

He pulls off to the side of the road and gets out of the car.

EXT. SIDE OF RURAL ROAD - EARLY EVENING

Artie pulls the ice cream sandwich box out of the passenger seat and pops open the rear door, pulling out the cooler in the process.

He opens the top of the cooler and shoves the box of melted sandwiches into the ice bath.

SERIES OF SHOTS: ARTIE DRIVES INTO THE LATE EVENING

The road has gotten dark. There are next to no streetlights nor other traffic occupying the narrow dirt path that careens Artie through a small valley.

Finally - His destination.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Artie pulls into the roundabout but winds up occupying more room on the driveway than he needs to - both blocking the exit of the roundabout and the exit of the straightaway.

The house is rather unassuming. It's isolated, but has a nice yellow paintjob. There's a big front window that's bookended by two doors. One close to the driveway, the other more centred to the lawn.

There's no other cars in the driveway so he figures it's fine.

He's tired - the clock reads 9:02. He's missed Peter. Artie lets out a sigh of exhaustion and then swings his door open.

Upon opening the rear door once again, and popping open the lid of the cooler to see if he rectified the melting ice cream issue, he is greeted by a sloppy puddle of ice water.

His face says anger and frustration but he's too tired to muster any words.

Instead, he closes the cooler and starts collecting his things from the car.

He looks at the house and once again clocks the two front doors. He opts for the one on the left, closer to the driveway.

Juggling his suitcase and the cooler, he scurries his way to the front door whilst on the verge of dropping all of it.

Tentatively, he puts down his suitcase and jiggles the handle - it's stuck. He's gone to the wrong door.

He stiffly so as not to drop anything picks his suitcase back up and shuffles over to the other door.

Already fed up with the events of the day, he wastes no time in putting his full force in opening the second door which gives way much easier than he expected.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

As a result, he spills into the space. It's dark, and is illuminated only by the outdoor light pouring in through the window and open door.

He dusts himself off and stands up taking the ice cream out of the cooler and closing the front door behind him - On the adjacent door (which lies at the bottom of a stairway) a note sits taped to the frame:

(V.O. as Artie walks to the Kitchen):

"Hey Artie, looks like you just missed me. As I said I'll be gone for a few days but should be back before you know it. This is your room here. Jackson's upstairs, Hector's downstairs - nice guys! Just a few ground rules:

- Don't go downstairs.
- Don't make too much noise.
- Don't touch the thermostat.

Also: make sure you don't let the cat out.

Other than that, hope you have a great time. Call me if you need --"

Artie walks into the kitchen as he reads the note, carrying the ice cream sandwiches under one arm and walks over to the fridge.

He tries to pull it open. It won't budge. -(This is where he stops reading the note)-. Evidently, it's stuck - or locked.

He notices behind him a shorter but wider top-down freezer, which he approaches and tugs at as well - but no luck.

His shoulders drop, and he's defeated. He puts the ice cream box down on the table and notices a bit of the note that he missed:

"P.S. Make sure your car's not in the way. Jackson works at odd hours so don't block the driveway."

Artie sighs and walks over to the living room.

He looks out of the large front window and sees his car - most certainly in the way.

He walks over and swings the door open.

Beyond his line of sight and too quiet for him to notice, a small cat slips out of the door with him.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Artie trudges along the lawn to his car. He enters, turns it on, but isn't quite sure of where his car would be "out of the way".

He puts the gear shifter into reverse and begins to back into the straightaway part of the driveway.

As he nears the garage he feels a sudden BUMP along with an cat's screech.

ARTIE
(under his breath)
Oh no. Oh no oh no oh no oh no.

He looks at the mirror to try and see what he hit.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no
oh no...

He opens his door and sees the cat under his car, dead.

His face goes blank.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Oh shit. Oh shit.

He picks up the body.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Hey little guy! Hey it's okay come
on!

The cat is limp.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Oh god.

He's panicking. This can't be how he begins his visit. His split second decision is to hide it.

Artie brings the cat into the front seat of the car with him but as he clicks his keys into the ignition, he sees a trail of headlights turning into the driveway.

He slips his keys back out of the ignition and ducks down below the dashboard.

Artie hears the car pull up close to his and someone exits. The sound of footsteps along the grass and then the door shutting.

Artie peaks above the dashboard to see if the coast is clear and then gets out of his car.

The newly arrived car has blocked him in. There's no way he can get his car out of the driveway.

ARTIE (cont'd)
(wide-eyed)
Shit.

He shoves the cat into a backpack that was left in the passenger seat - He'll have to hide it out back.

Artie exits the car as quietly as he can and sneaks around the side of the house to the rear yard.

Just as he enters the clearing by the back porch, the door swings open and Artie flops back around the corner so as not to be seen.

The person walks from the back porch over to the trailer near to Artie. They enter, and Artie sighs a breath of relief before sneaking out again once the coast is clear.

But as he makes his way past the trailer, he catches himself on a long extension chord - and pulls it right out of the wall.

He freezes. His eyes follow the chord all the way through the yard to the storage container at the rear - a loud beeping erupts from inside it almost on cue.

The door of the trailer swings open - Artie's head swings back and forth, he has no idea where he can hide - before he sees a little opening below the trailer.

He bolts into the tight space, lying down with the backpack on his back.

The man walks over to the extension chord and plugs it back into the wall, but the beeping doesn't stop.

JACKSON
Damn it.

The cat's body flops forward - it looks as though the cat is leaning on Artie's shoulder.

Wide-eyed and disgusted, he pushes the cat's head back into the bag on his back.

The figure then marches out to the rear of the yard, towards the storage container.

As soon as the figure is far enough to not be heard, Artie makes a stealthy break out from beneath the camper.

He looks at the back of the yard where Jackson walked - too risky. He looks back to the front of the house. Nowhere to go there either.

His eyes land on the rear door into the kitchen. He'll have to hide it for the night and bury it tomorrow.

He speed walks towards the back door and slips inside.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Artie closes the door as quietly as he can.

He turns around and is greeted by a sludge of melted ice cream on the kitchen table.

ARTIE

Oh boy.

Artie takes the melted, soggy box and shoves it in his backpack alongside the cat.

The sticky mess persists on the kitchen table and he attempts to wipe some of it with his hands but out of the corner of his eye sees the figure returning from the back of the yard, heading right for the kitchen door.

Artie panics and runs back towards his room.

He pulls his suitcase and the cooler into the bedroom and slams the door shut behind him.

INT. ARTIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Artie pulls the cooler top open and dumps out all the sticky, gross contents of his backpack into it - including the cat.

He hears footsteps nearing his door so at the final moment slams the lid and sits on the cooler.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

JACKSON

Hey... Are you in there?

Artie pauses.

ARTIE

Y...Yep!

JACKSON

Were you just in the backyard?

ARTIE

Nope! I've been in here since I arrived!

JACKSON

Okay. Also, I just wanted to let you know that my car is blocking yours. I can move it if you want, if you need to go out or anything.

ARTIE

(trying not to arouse suspicion)

Nope! That's fine. Don't worry about it!

He bites his tongue. Why did he say that?

JACKSON

Cool. Let me know if you need anything.

ARTIE

You too!

Artie cringes at the awkward tension.

He hears the footsteps disappear up the stairs and lets out another sigh of relief.

Artie stands up off the cooler and collapses onto the bed with an exhale.

He closes his eyes for a moment. Then a sound of footsteps coming back down the stairs creak above him. His eyes shoot open.

It's unclear if seconds have passed or hours.

He sits up and listens as the footsteps carry on into the main floor and toward the back of the house.

As the sound subsides, Artie's attention returns to the cooler.

He stands up and turns on the light (or lamp), and makes his way back over to the cooler.

He opens the lid. We don't see inside but it's quite clear that everything that was in there is still in there. It wasn't just a bad dream.

At that very moment some footsteps once again break up his focus - Someone's coming back to his door.

He flicks off the light and is about to make his way quickly back into bed but stops - the footsteps stopped when the light went off.

He tiptoes over to the door to try and get a look out, but:

The coast is clear.

Nobody's there.

He creaks open the door a little bit more and looks up the stairs. No lights on, nothing. He looks back at the cooler to make sure it's in a safe spot and then continues out into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Artie makes his way into the kitchen to look around for the source of the noise.

He looks over at the basement door - the jet black void that occupies the left side of the room. He's not going to bother even looking down.

His attention turns to the kitchen table - No mess.

He wipes his finger on the tabletop to make sure he's not just seeing things - someone clearly cleaned the sticky ice cream residue that he left there.

Behind him, in the basement door-frame darkness, a very vague, shadowy face pokes out about halfway down. The features on this face remain unseen, and Artie doesn't notice it behind him.

Artie spins around and heads back to his room and the face retreats back into the dark.

ESTABLISHING: HOUSE - MORNING

A beautiful landscape illuminated by the warm morning sun. Dew reflects on the grass. Birds chirp.

INT. ARTIE'S ROOM - MORNING

Artie shakes off the jitters from the freezing night he had and rubs his hands together. Hopefully he's up before anyone else so he can sneak out.

Digging through his suitcase, he grabs a sweater and pulls it over his head.

He opens his backpack up and opens the top of the freezer to move the cat into the bag, but the smell is horrendous.

He tries to reach his hand in the cooler but recoils and gags.

Artie looks once again at the bag and the cooler and opts for the lazy-yet-less-subtle-yet-less-gross option and shuts the cooler top, picking it up and carrying it over to the door with a sloshing.

He creaks open the door and once again peaks his head out to make sure the coast is clear.

INT. DEN INTO KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

He tiptoes through the space and winds up in the kitchen, heading for the back door.

Creaking open the door into the rear yard, Artie slips out into the morning mist.

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Artie creeps through the backyard to the year of the yard.

He sees a wall of tools - pitchforks, hoes, and most important - a shovel.

Artie grabs it off the wall and continues towards the forest up the hill - the cooler still sloshes under his arm with each step.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Less than a dozen yards into his trek Artie is beginning to regret his decision. The shoes he brought, tennis shoes, are horribly inadequate for this type of terrain.

The trail is barely level. Its mostly comprised of peaks and valleys.

He reaches the top of the first large hill, then stops to catch his breath.

He gives it a beat before resuming his hike. He's not sure where he's going to bury the thing but he should probably make it a fair distance.

He takes one mighty step forward. Right into a mucky spot. His shoes do not get the job done. He attempts to step back but loses his balance and:

Tumbles 20 feet to the bottom of the hill.

Snapping sticks in the process. And making a lot of noise.

The cooler goes flying in one direction and the shovel in another.

He reaches the bottom and though he's a bit dirty and bruised nothing of true harm was done to him by the fall.

Artie stands up and dusts himself off. He figures this is as good a spot as any to bury the cat.

He grabs the cooler and the shovel and gets to work, starting to dig.

And dig.

And dig.

Finally he's got a hole that seems like it'll fit the cat. He walks over to the cooler but notices beyond it some freshly patted dirt.

And another spot of it as well. He looks around him and realises that throughout this tiny clearing there are dozens and dozens of holes that appear to have been filled in.

Some more recently than others by the looks.

His eyes continue to wander along the clearing until he reaches a FIGURE.

Someone is watching him. Cloaked, from the treeline.

Artie freezes.

The cloaked figure stands still as well.

Artie looks to the shovel on the ground and then back at the figure, but he sees the figure's back now. It's running off. Towards the house.

Artie panics. Is he going to be found out?

He starts running after the figure but stops in his tracks - the damn cooler.

He runs back and picks up the cooler and the shovel and starts a slow and tiring run back to the house.

ARTIE

Shit shit shit shit shit....

We see Artie awkwardly climbing up hills and sliding down hills until at last he reaches the backyard again.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Artie bolts as fast as he can into the backyard but stops when he only sees Jackson on the back porch, barbecuing. From his view, he watches as Jackson goes back into the kitchen.

He looks down at his items, and ditches the shovel on the outside of the storage container.

He carries the cooler back towards the house and tries to make it seem like he's in a hurry to get inside - hopefully in that case Jackson won't strike up a conversation.

But alas: Jackson exits the kitchen door right as Artie steps on the porch.

JACKSON

Oh, hey.

ARTIE

Hey dude!

They stand for a moment.

JACKSON

What's with the cooler?

ARTIE

Oh... This? Haha...

JACKSON

Yes...?

ARTIE

Picnic.

ARTIE

Oh, no. I mean yes. Well, it was more of like a... Slide down kinda thing.

JACKSON

Right.

Another beat.

ARTIE

So... That wasn't you out there, then? I mean in the-

Suddenly, from inside, a phone rings.

JACKSON

Ah. That's me!

Jackson walks back into the house and picks up the phone. Miscellaneous muffled dialogue ensues for a moment.

The moment he's alone, Artie pulls out his own phone and scrolls down the contacts to PETER.

He clicks it and the phone starts to ring. But from inside, Artie makes out:

JACKSON (cont'd)

Wait, he's calling you right now?

Artie's face goes blank. He hangs up his phone and returns it to his pocket. Peeking his head over to the window on the kitchen door, he sees Jackson exit the front door to continue his conversation.

Artie sneaks once again around the side of the house and crouches down around the corner to the front yard, where he can hear Jackson speaking.

JACKSON (cont'd)

So he was in the woods...? I can't figure out why else he'd have been out there. -- He said it was a picnic. -- I don't know. -- I mean, he also left ice cream all over the kitchen table. -- Okay. I'll call you if anything else happens.

Jackson goes back inside the house.

Artie runs over to the front door and peaks through the window - Jackson's out back again.

He looks around, presumably for Artie, and then walks back inside. Artie ducks down so as not to be seen.

After a moment, Artie pops his head up again and sees Jackson walking upstairs.

He sits back down on the front doorstep.

Artie ponders his choices for a moment. Has he been found out? And then his stomach grumbles.

He puts his hand on his torso. He's hungry. Very hungry.

He opens the front door softly and steps inside.

Shame fills him. He's been a pretty bad guest thus far. But he's also starving.

He looks up the stairs and decides to try his best effort at coming clean, and hopefully getting a bite to eat.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

Artie arrives at the top of the steps and is surrounded by three doors. One to his front, one to his left, and one to the rear.

The one to his right is slightly ajar. He pushes it open with one hand, and it's a messy storage room. There's a pile of clothes in the centre of the space, and with a slight turn to his right, he sees the thermostat on the wall. It's set to an ungodly low temperature.

He pulls the door back to it's semi-shut position and then moves to the door to his left, and lightly knocks.

JACKSON

(other side of door)

Yes?

ARTIE

Hey... I uh...

Artie thinks for a moment and is about to confess, but his stomach growls again. This doesn't necessarily take precedent, but it's something he's able to use as an excuse in his own head so as to not have to take the responsibility.

ARTIE (cont'd)

...Is there anything around that I might be able to eat?

JACKSON

Don't you have some food in your cooler?

ARTIE

Right my...

Artie's eyes widen.

ARTIE (cont'd)

...cooler.

He does a quick one-eighty and darts down the stairs. As he leaves the landing, Jackson slightly opens the door and watches him go.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Artie runs out of the door onto the back porch and charges over to the cooler.

He flips open the lid and:

The cat is gone.

ARTIE

Where's the cat. Where's the cat!?!

Artie slams the lid shut.

ARTIE (cont'd)

Oh Jesus.

He rushes back inside, towards his room.

INT. ARTIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Artie arrives at his room and slams the door shut, pulling out his phone.

He once again scrolls down to Peter's contact and attempts to give him a call, but to no luck.

He slithers down into the chair and looks at his hands - filthy, sticky, worn.

He taps his finger on the desk hastily, thinking of what to do.

ARTIE
 (to himself)
 Okay... Maybe it's alive?

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Artie wanders around the rear yard, searching for the cat.

ARTIE
 Here kitty kitty... Come here...

He clicks his mouth a few times in an attempt to lure the possibly living cat to him.

He looks over at the barbecue - Bait? Or food for himself perhaps.

Artie wanders over to the back porch nonchalantly.

He checks inside the glass kitchen window to make sure he won't be spotted taking the burger, and tiptoes over to the barbecue once he sees he's certainly alone.

He wraps his hand around the handle to open the lid BUT:

A door shuts behind him.

He whips around, and Jackson stands in silence, staring at him.

ARTIE (cont'd)
 Oh!

They both stare at each other.

ARTIE (cont'd)
 ...Hello.

JACKSON
 Whatcha doin there...

ARTIE
 Me? Nothin'.

Artie looks at his hand, still gripped on the handle, and rips it off as if it were stuck to it with glue.

ARTIE (cont'd)
 ...So, uh, what do you do?

JACKSON
 For a living?

ARTIE

Sure.

JACKSON

Food prep.

ARTIE

Ah... What's that entail?

JACKSON

(changing topics)

So you were saying you saw someone
out in the woods?

ARTIE

Me? No.

JACKSON

I'm pretty sure you said before I
went inside that you saw someone...

ARTIE

Nope, had a nice private picnic.

JACKSON

In the woods.

ARTIE

Yes.

JACKSON

And you are still hungry now.

ARTIE

...Peckish.

JACKSON

Was that why you were trying to look
at the barbecue?

ARTIE

Oh, this? No, was just checking the
temperature! Didn't want your burger
to burn while you were on the phone.

Beat.

JACKSON

Right... I think I can take it from
here.

ARTIE

Gotcha!

Artie steps aside and Jackson awkwardly steps past him over to the grill.

JACKSON

Thanks.

Jackson stares at Artie as if waiting for him to leave.

EXT. ESTABLISHING OF NIGHTFALL - EVENING

The sun sets through trees. The forest settles. The house is calm at dusk.

INT. ARTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSEUP of Artie's phone: 26 Outgoing (but failed, signified by the red font) Calls to Peter. Artie's thumb enters frame and clicks the name again.

He holds the phone up to his ear as it buzzes. But: He hears Jackson talking in the kitchen. He cancels the call.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Artie creaks open his door and tip toes over to the kitchen door, still holding his phone in his hand.

He listens in:

JACKSON

Yes, I realize that. -- I've tried to keep Hector downstairs. -- No. He's gotten antsy in the past day and a half. -- I have no idea. -- Probably the cat!

Just as Jackson raises his voice, Artie's phone bursts out into sound and colour, an annoying "nee nee nee-nee nee nee-nee nee-nee" emitting loudly (like the ringtone in Jurassic Park 3).

Artie panics and juggles the phone in his hand like a slippery bar of soap he's lost the grip of.

MOM scrawls across the touch screen - a call he quickly declines by smashing the screen with his thumb.

As he turns around from declining the call, Jackson towers right over him.

ARTIE
Sorry! Thought I'd left my phone out here.
(he holds it up)
Ah! Here it is.

Jackson watches Artie as he briskly walks back to his bedroom.

INT. ARTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Artie leans back on the door to slam it shut, sighing from a combination of stress and exhaustion.

He pulls up his phone once more and opens Google.

TYPING: Do cats fake death

He clicks search but right as he's about to click a result, the LOW BATTERY warning pops up.

He trudges over to the desk and plugs his phone into the charging cable, sitting down at the chair.

He clicks that result and gets to a shitty web comic about putting a pet down.

He makes a face of annoyance and backs out of the page -
CREAK!

A loud creaking from Jackson heading upstairs, followed by a door slammed shut, and Artie is back to the phone after a brief look of worry.

He keeps scrolling, and scrolling, going to next pages at random.

He then goes back to Google and types: Can cats survive car tire

As he does this he hears the jingle of a small bell (like one that would be found on a cats collar) outside his door.

His eyes narrow and his face goes blank.

A few moments later and that jingle is followed by a soft, distant meow.

Artie whips his head around to his bedroom door, and without wasting much time, slams his phone down on his desk and leaps over to his door, yanking open the knob.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Artie rushes out of his room and pauses to see the front door wide open. He looks around the room to ensure the cat's not there, and rushes out the door, running to the centre of the front lawn.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

As he stops centre of the dewy grass by the roundabout on the driveway, he takes a quick scan of the front yard, trying to locate the cat.

Suddenly, as if on cue, the front door slams shut.

Artie is stunned.

He looks at it for a moment, not sure if it was the wind, or what.

Artie then tentatively approaches the front door, one step at a time. He grabs the handle slowly and turns it, gently pushing at first.

But it won't budge.

He pushes harder.

Harder.

Finally he resorts to shaking the handle like crazy.

He takes a few steps back and stares at the door.

ARTIE

Well.

He scratches his head and looks up at the sky, to the moon.

But his gaze is interrupted:

The door to the mudroom, which was locked earlier, now creaks open, as if to invite him in.

He approaches the door cautiously and looks in, but can't make anything out in the darkness.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Jackson?

No response, only stillness.

He steps inside the door frame.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Hello?

INT. MUDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The mudroom is dark. The light from outside washes in, and the glass door which leads to the kitchen provides little illumination.

He approaches the interior door and jiggles the handle. Locked. Could have guessed.

But just then the door he entered through also slams shut behind him.

He rushes over to it but it's stuck. Or locked.

A noise behind him perks his ears - He cocks his head to the side and slowly turns around.

The space is small, too small for anybody else to be in there without him knowing - and yet it feels like he's not alone.

He sees a flashlight on a table beside him and ignites it.

The room is filled with light, but the beam is narrow - he can't really see the full space.

ARTIE
Jackson?

Once again, silence.

ARTIE (cont'd)
...Hector?

Still, nothing.

ARTIE (cont'd)
.....Cat?

The interior door to the kitchen swings open, as though he got a password correct.

He holds the flashlight in front of him as he enters, as if a defensive weapon.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Walking down the narrow hallway to the kitchen is a bigger task than he'd initially thought.

There aren't any physical obstacles, but the fear of whatever is taunting him this way overtakes him.

He's scared.

As he nears the end of the kitchen hallway, the door in which he entered slams shut behind him.

He jumps and shines the flashlight back towards the poltergeist door but nothing's there.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

He tiptoes the rest of the way into the kitchen and turns his flashlight immediately around - but is startled by the soft sound of crying coming from the basement.

He takes a deep breath, and looks around the rest of the kitchen.

But he knows his eyes will rest on the basement doorway. The black void.

He shines the light out in front of him and begins marching at a snails pace towards the downward stairs.

As soon as he reaches the top of the steps, a NEE-NEE-NEE from his phone - still inside his room - cries out. Someone is calling him.

He runs over to his bedroom and pulls up his phone.

MOM is displayed across the screen.

He drops his head down out of exhaustion and clicks "decline".

Artie stands for a moment. He rubs his temples, flashlight still in hand, turned on.

He then takes a few steps back and sits on his bed.

Shortly after, the sit turns into a lie down.

And at long last, he slides his legs under the covers and clicks off the flashlight.

But not for long.

He clicks the flashlight back on and aims it down at the same time that he pulls the covers back...

...and back...

...and back...

...until he sees the corpse of the cat.

ARTIE
Jesus Christ!

Artie flips out of bed, and points the flashlight at the cat to double check its existence.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ!

He rushes out the door and up the stairs.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Jesus Christ!

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

Artie slams on Jackson's door.

ARTIE
Jackson! Jackson! I'm sorry! Jackson!

Jackson sleepily opens the door.

JACKSON
(groggy)
...What?

ARTIE
I...! I... Were you asleep?

JACKSON
What's going on?

ARTIE
I just... What?

Jackson stares at Artie for a moment.

ARTIE (cont'd)
What the hell is happening.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Artie sits at the kitchen table with the flashlight beside him, turned off. Jackson stands, leaning against the counter.

JACKSON
So tell me what you think you saw.

Artie taps his hands on the table, thinking for a moment, before leading with:

ARTIE
Look, I... I... I'm sorry Jackson, that I came here and... I, truth is, I... I got evicted. I know I sort of forced this visit on you guys. I know I've... And you, you guys have been nothing but kind to me, and I--

JACKSON
No, no. Tell me what you saw.

Artie looks at Jackson, sort of shocked about being interrupted during his monologue. He rethinks.

ARTIE
I went outside because I... Needed something from my car... So I went outside, and the door slammed behind me and I was locked out. And then the other door opened and--

JACKSON
Yep.

ARTIE
What?

JACKSON
House does that. It's drafty.

ARTIE
It slams doors shut? And opens them?

JACKSON
I live here, don't I?

Artie once again ponders that answer. He tries a different tactic.

ARTIE
Was someone crying?

JACKSON
No...?

ARTIE
Was it Hector?

JACKSON
Nah, Hector's... Out.

Beat.

ARTIE
Yeah... Well, I was on a walk this morning--

JACKSON
The picnic, yeah.

ARTIE
And I didn't see anyone. At least I don't think I saw... Hector...

JACKSON
Well did you see Hector?

ARTIE
No.

JACKSON
Well, did you see anybody?

ARTIE
There was someone... Looked like nobody I know, though. Haha...

JACKSON
What were they doing?

ARTIE
How should I know, I don't know them.

Jackson pauses and stares at Artie. Artie, in turn, shifts his gaze away out of discomfort.

JACKSON
Maybe you should shower and go to sleep.

Artie looks back at Jackson.

ARTIE
I would love to.

Artie stands up and exits the kitchen, towards the upstairs bathroom.

As he leaves, Jackson reaches over and pulls a steak knife from the nearby knife rack.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Artie turns on the shower and stands, hand in the water checking the temperature.

After a few moments, he shivers. It's freezing.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

Artie creaks open the bathroom door allowing a slight pool of light to form in the landing.

He tiptoes over to the room he'd seen earlier with the thermostat, and once again pushes the door open.

INT. UPSTAIRS STORAGE - NIGHT

Still quite cold, rubbing his arms, he walks over to the thermostat and looks at it.

He sorta leans over to the door to check if it'd be okay if he just slightly raised the temperature from freezing, and shrugs it off.

He dials it up a few degrees. Just as he does, he hears footsteps creaking up the stairs and, while leaning close against the wall so he's not seen in the room, angles the door back to where it was nearly closed.

He peers through the crack and sees Jackson pass, towards the bathroom door. Looking down, he spots the knife in his hand.

As Jackson slowly pushes open the door to the bathroom, Artie stumbles back through the room, shocked and scared, and arrives at the window.

He bumps his back on it and turns around.

He looks back over his shoulder and hears Jackson rip open the shower curtain.

JACKSON (O.S.)

What!?

Artie unclicks the window locks and pushes it open, sliding it upward.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

He steps out onto the roof and slams the window shut, ducking down below the edge of the window so as to not be seen.

From the corner of the window, carefully, Artie watches Jackson aggressively push open the door to the storage room, scan it, and then head downstairs. As he leaves he whistles and shouts:

JACKSON

Hector!

ARTIE

(to himself)

Holy shit they're mad about this cat.

Suddenly, the sound of a car engine starting.

Artie tentatively crawls across the roof and over to the overlook of the driveway.

Jackson's car is still there, but as he looks down, he sees his car is not.

ARTIE (cont'd)

Did they just... Steal my car?

Artie crawls back towards the window, opens it, and slips inside.

INT. UPSTAIRS STORAGE - NIGHT

Artie sneaks over to the door and peers out into the landing, and then down to the stairs.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Artie tiptoes down the stairs - CREAK CREAK CREAK - slowly at first, but speeding up the creaks progressively, to his bedroom door, and slips inside.

INT. ARTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Artie tiptoes over to his phone and tries once again to call Peter.

The dial tone rings.

PETER (O.S.)
I get it, I'm coming right now, stop calling me!

ARTIE
What?

PETER (O.S.)
Oh... Artie?

ARTIE
Yes.

PETER (O.S.)
Sorry I thought you were... What's up?

Artie gulps to prepare for his confession.

ARTIE
I did something bad, Peter.

PETER (O.S.)
Uh huh... What's that exactly?

ARTIE
I ran over the cat. My first night here, and I didn't tell anyone, and I--

PETER (O.S.)
Wait, what?

ARTIE
I know, I'm so sor--

PETER (O.S.)
You *just* killed the cat?

ARTIE

Well, I didn't just kill the cat, I'm sorry about it, too. And I think Jackson's really mad about it.

PETER (O.S.)

Yes, Jackson is... Definitely mad about the cat. Very mad.

ARTIE

So I'm gonna go tell him about all this and see if there's anything I can do to make up for it.

PETER (O.S.)

Nope! You should stay in your room. I think you really should stay in your room, and you really really should not talk to Jackson. I'm on my way back.

ARTIE

No, Peter. I think for once in my life, it's time I take responsibility and own up to the shitty situations I've gotten myself into. I'll talk to you later.

PETER (O.S.)

Artie, wait--

Artie puts his phone back down where it was charging, and spins around to face his door.

He yanks it open.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Artie marches over to the kitchen like a decorated soldier going on a suicide mission. Full of honour and fear.

But the kitchen is empty.

Artie takes a step in and looks at the dark room. Jackson's phone sits on the table, and just as he sees it, it starts to ring.

Artie walks over to the phone and sees PETER displayed across the screen.

His eyes narrow, confused.

But behind him, arms have stretched out - knife in hand.

It swings down, just as Artie notices.

Artie struggles, and rolls around the blade, keeping it from piercing him. It instead lands and sticks into the table beside him.

Jackson uses his brute force to knock Artie back and twists him around.

Artie reaches out for the knife and grabs hold of it just as he's toppled over the table and onto the ground on the other side.

Jackson rushes around and takes hold of his shirt, dragging him towards the basement door.

JACKSON

You did want to meet Hector, didn't
you?

Just as they arrive at the door frame and the top of the steep, dark staircase, Artie stabs Jackson in the thigh with a THWAP!

Jackson belts out an angry yell.

JACKSON (cont'd)

You fucking prick!

Artie manages to wrangle himself free while Jackson's distracted by the pain and sprints out into the backyard.

Jackson yanks the knife out of his flesh and throws it on the kitchen floor where it lands with a clang.

He limps out of the rear door, left ajar by Artie.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Artie runs in to the backyard and over to the trailer, trying to yank open the door.

Jackson on the other hand approaches the wall of shovels and hoes and more importantly - pitchforks.

He takes the large fork with one hand and limps over to Artie at the trailer, who sees him coming and backs off, further into the central backyard.

JACKSON
You're dead, Artie. Dead!

Artie says nothing, he's stumbling backwards and winds up landing in the central cabana of the yard.

Jackson limps after him into the open-air structure.

Artie dosey-doe's around the wooden lattices, almost playing a game of cat-and-mouse with Jackson, pitchfork in hand and on the hunt.

Artie goes clockwise, Jackson goes counter. Artie switches, and in turn Jackson does as well.

Artie finally makes a break for it and runs for the storage container.

He opts to go for the side door since it seems less heavy, but only gets it open by an inch before the pitchfork clangs off of the metal wall of the big container.

Artie runs, leaving the storage door slightly open, to the smaller, rustier camper at the back of the yard.

This one too is locked. He jiggles the handle for a bit and then takes a sprint back to the house.

Jackson's close behind, once again pitchfork in hand.

Artie gets back to the still open kitchen door, sprinting inside.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

He darts directly through the kitchen and over to his bedroom, sprinting for his phone -

INT. ARTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

But it's not there. The charging cable sits in the same place, phone disappeared.

ARTIE
Oh, what the hell.

He whips around and sprints out of the bedroom door, towards the front entrance.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Artie yanks open the front door and dives out, when suddenly, from the dark interior of the house, a football rockets out and hits him square in the back, knocking him forward and onto the grass.

Artie takes a moment to catch his breath, winded, and spins around to meet a pitchfork inches from his face.

He crawls backwards on the ground to avoid impalement as Jackson presses closer and closer.

ARTIE
Okayokayokayokayokay!

Artie sticks his hands up.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Can we just talk about this!

Jackson prods Artie further and further.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Jackson?! Can we-

He tries to stand up but trips over himself and lands back on the ground.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Can we have a conversation!

JACKSON
Talking time is over, chump.

ARTIE
I'm very sorry about all of this, I was just about to come to you and tell you and apologize and then--

JACKSON
You're gonna die.

Artie gulps as his back is running out of space to back away.

SUDDENLY

Headlights fill up the whole front lawn. A car is pulling into the driveway, and a figure gets out.

PETER
What the hell is going on? Jackson!?

ARTIE
Keep the car running!!

Artie, using this distraction as a chance to get up and put some distance between him and Jackson, does so.

Peter walks over, putting himself between the two.

PETER
What the hell is this?!

JACKSON
He stabbed me! Look!

Jackson shows his bloodied leg.

PETER
Artie! Did you stab him!?

ARTIE
No! Well, yes! But he tried to stab me first! In the shower!

JACKSON
What are you talking about!

ARTIE
You know what I'm talking about!

PETER
Quiet, both of you! Jackson, Arite -
Inside! Now!

Artie looks at Peter, dumbfounded.

ARTIE
Absolutely not!

PETER
Artie!

ARTIE
I'm not going back in there, I'm
leaving right now!

JACKSON
Don't let him leave, Peter!

PETER
Shut up, Jackson!

ARTIE
I'm not going back inside!

JACKSON
Well you're not leaving either!

PETER
Jackson!

Peter eyes Jackson with a piercing glare. In return, Jackson lowers his head.

Peter sighs, and turns around to look at Artie with a judgmental stare.

PETER (cont'd)
Artie, you're my cousin and I love you, but if you leave right now I will have no choice but to call the police. Not only for the cat, but for what you did to Jackson's leg. That's your choice. You can come in now and we can clear up this very,
(looking at Jackson)
very big misunderstanding,
(back to Artie)
or we can explain the situation to the cops and you can try and figure your way out of that one.

Artie shakes his head and gives Peter a "what are we doing here?" look.

PETER (cont'd)
Last chance, Artie.

ARTIE
Fine. Fine! Fine.

PETER
Good.

Peter begins walking inside. Artie follows, passing Jackson, who whilst doing so does a little "made you flinch" jump at Artie.

Artie hurries inside after Peter, and Jackson limps in afterwards.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

They all wind up in the kitchen.

Jackson leans against the counter next to the pitchfork.

Artie sits at the kitchen table, timid.

Peter paces, and then lands his eyes on Artie.

PETER

So, Artie, is there something you'd like to tell Jackson?

ARTIE

Yes, but... Before I do that, can I please, please just have something to eat. I can't think. I haven't eaten in two days!

Peter sighs.

PETER

Sure! Sure. Why not.

Peter walks over to the fridge, fiddles a metal rod into the side of it and pops it open.

Artie tries to sneak a peak of the inside of the fridge but with no luck.

He pulls out a casserole dish full of dip and drops it down on the table.

It looks grey, spongy, unnatural. The type of food described in *Rapper's Delight*.

PETER (cont'd)

Eat.

ARTIE

You know, on second thought... I think I'm okay.

Peter shrugs and puts the dish on the counter beside Jackson, who grabs a big wooden stir-spoon and digs in.

Peter returns to the centre of the room.

He paces around for a bit and takes his car keys out of his pocket, spinning them in his hand.

He tosses them onto the table and grabs hold of the back of one of the chairs, leaning onto it.

Peter sighs. He positions himself in between the two of them. He looks at Artie.

PETER

So?

Artie looks at Jackson, who's occupied with the grey residue.

He takes a deep breath.

ARTIE

Okay. Before I say anything, I just want to say, I'm sorry. But also,
(to Peter)
he stole my car! Or Hector did. Someone took my car, and I have no idea where it is.

PETER

Artie. Tell Jackson what you told me on the phone.

Artie shuffles in the chair, he breaths in about to talk, but Jackson interrupts:

JACKSON

Peter, I don't know what he told you on the phone, but I can guarantee he was trying to cover his own ass.

PETER

Jackson, you are *this* close!

Peter holds his fingers up to motion a tiny crack between them.

ARTIE

Cover up? Cover up!? Jackson, I was trying to come clean to you!

JACKSON

Trying to come clean to me! Hah!

ARTIE

Yes! Yes! I was trying to tell you what happened and apologize for it!

JACKSON

What the hell are you talking about?!

PETER

Enough! Artie! Tell! Jackson! What! You! Told! Me! On! The! Phone!

ARTIE
He already knows!

JACKSON
Yeah! I already know!

PETER
(to Jackson)
No, you don't!
(to Artie)
No, he doesn't! So tell him!

ARTIE
(taking a deep breath)
Jackson, I'm...

He pauses. He fears coming clean, and taking this responsibility.

ARTIE (cont'd)
I... I was moving...

PETER
Oh, for fuck's sake. Jackson, he didn't find anything, he *killed* the cat!

JACKSON
What? What cat?

PETER
Hector's cat!

JACKSON
Hector's cat is dead?

PETER
Yes! That is what Artie did!

ARTIE
Woah, woah, Peter, it's not like it was on purpose.

PETER
Artie, just for one moment, please shut the fuck up.

JACKSON
Peter, he's *clearly* trying to cover up what he's been doing. Snooping.

ARTIE
Snooping?! I haven't been snooping!

JACKSON
You sure as hell have been snooping!

ARTIE
What the hell does snooping even mean? I've been trying to bury the--
Gah! I'm sorry about the damn cat!

JACKSON
I don't know what you're talking about!

PETER
Artie! Jackson *did* know about the cat
(eyeing Jackson)
and now that you've told us about it
and apologized, everything's okay,
right Jackson?

JACKSON
No! Everything is not okay, because I
didn't know about the cat, and I
don't *care* about the cat!

Peter buries his head in his hands.

ARTIE
Wait - What?

JACKSON
Yes! I don't give a shit about the
cat, I didn't even -- What the hell
does the cat have to do with any of
this?

ARTIE
I killed the cat!

JACKSON
Cool! I don't care!

PETER
Jackson, stop talking.

JACKSON
Peter, he clearly knows!

PETER
No, he clearly does not!

ARTIE
I know what? What is this about?

JACKSON
Oh my god, you idiot.

Jackson walks over to the fridge and uses the rod to open it once more. He throws a severed, frozen arm on the table with a thud.

JACKSON (cont'd)
We eat people, you fucking moron!

Artie looks at the arm, then back at Jackson, then over to Peter.

ARTIE
Oh.

Artie looks over at Peter, who looks stressed out of his mind.

ARTIE (cont'd)
So... The cat doesn't matter...

PETER
(with a deep sigh)
Artie, you are really not doing yourself any favours.

JACKSON
See? Now he knows. Now we *have* to kill him!

Peter stares long and hard at Jackson, and then back at Artie, who is still in a state of shock trying to piece everything together.

PETER
Well. He does have a point, Artie.

ARTIE
(hardly paying attention)
I'm... Gonna go to... my room...

Artie stands up stiffly and begins to walk to the kitchen exit when Peter steps in his way.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Hello.

PETER
We can't let you leave, Arthur.

Artie stares at Peter for a moment, then over to Jackson.

ARTIE

Why?

Jackson picks up the pitchfork and approaches Artie.

Artie notices this - he puts his hands up defensively, and begins to back his way through the kitchen.

PETER

Artie, you were a good cousin. And I'm sorry it has to be this way. Nah, who am I kidding. You were a pretty shit cousin.

ARTIE

Wait, wait, wait--

JACKSON

You know, I've been wanting to do this all weekend.

ARTIE

I'm sorry about the cat! Sorry about the barbecue! I'm sorry for snooping!

Artie backs into the kitchen table and starts to slide along the side of it to avoid the pitchfork.

But he stops when his hand touches something familiar - the flashlight he left the night before.

He pulls it over to him and holds it behind his back.

Jackson starts making weird, wobbly noises - sorta like he's shaking his face back and forth to play around with Artie.

As Jackson gets closer and closer the pressure builds on Artie to act.

He pulls the flashlight out from behind him and

SMACK

Brings it down right on Jackson's forehead. Jackson yelps and falls backwards into Peter, his forehead beginning to leak blood.

JACKSON

Ow!

Artie runs for the exit but Peter catches up to him, essentially using Artie's own momentum to throw him back into the kitchen wall.

Artie's head hits the wall with force so he's a bit dazed but shakes himself out of it just enough to dodge the incoming pitchfork.

This has consequences however. His dodge is quick, but it knocks him off-balance. He trips down into the stairway to the basement, and loses his footing, falling backwards into the dark pit, disappearing.

Peter and Jackson stand at the top of the stairs and look at each other - Jackson holding his forehead.

PETER

That was easier than I thought it'd be. Hope Hector has some fun.

Jackson nods.

JACKSON

So is he your cousin on your mom's side or your dad's side?

INT. BASEMENT - SOME TIME LATER (DAY)

Artie groggily opens his eyes. He's been unconscious for a while, and he rubs his head. He sits up to take in his surroundings.

Light barely reaches this place. It's cold, damp, and pitch black apart from a few light leaks.

The stairs were steeper and longer than he expected.

There's a shaft of light on the other side of the room, presumably from a window well, but it appears to have been mostly covered.

It's too dark for him to really see what anything in the basement looks like. The sound of swinging chains reverberates but not loudly.

He notices his flashlight on the ground a few feet from him and crawls over to get it.

Slapping it a few times, it flickers on and he begins to take in his surroundings.

There's some dark bags hanging from hooks on the ceiling. Further down, the black bags turn to clear plastic. Some sort of meat is being stored here.

Artie figures what it is. Hanging human corpses.

He pushes a few of the bags side to side to get a better view of the window well. Perhaps it's an escape. But that's when he sees it.

A bed.

Unoccupied, or so it seems.

He returns his attention to pushing aside the meat bags.

Suddenly, he kicks something on the ground. Something small and plastic.

It's a phone. His phone. Half-chewed charging wire still plugged into the device. He rips the cable out. Low battery but it works. He puts it in his pocket.

He continues his slow way through the hanging meat.

Suddenly: NEE-NEE-NEE-NEE from his phone. Pulling out the phone from his pocket, which only brightens and increases the noise, he rushes to click the decline call button. He panics, looking at the screen: MOM.

He slams the screen again and again to quell the noise, which finally shuts off. He breaths heavily, looking at the phone and closing his eyes.

But stops when he hears it.

Crinkling. He turns around and looks behind him.

The bed is moving. A decrepit, dark figure stirs awake, slowly.

It rises like Nosferatu from his coffin and turns to face Artie like an animatronic.

Artie flicks the flashlight off and dwells back into the dark part of the basement.

He finds a hidden spot behind a small shelf that shields him from Hector's direct line of sight.

He steadies his breathing, as if he were playing hide and seek, but this always makes it more difficult to breath anyway.

He covers his mouth, but his nose exhales become louder because of it.

Nothing is working. He'll just have to hope Hector didn't see him.

The bags behind him are moving. He can't exactly pinpoint the position of Hector within those hanging bags but has a rough estimate as to where in the basement he is.

Then the sound stops.

Artie tentatively peers around the corner of his safe spot and sees nothing.

It's now or never.

Artie slowly crawls around, back into the main space, and ducks beneath the meat bags, heading for the window well.

A bag to his left begins to crinkle and shake.

Artie freezes.

He won't even look at the direction the noise is coming from, frozen with fear.

All he can do is close his eyes and hope that Hector moves on.

To Artie's luck, he does. He continues his military styles crawl along the floor.

NEE-NEE NEE NEE NEE-NEE-NEE-NEE-NEE!

Artie's ringtone is going off once more.

"MOM" lights up the screen.

He manages to cancel the call and silence the phone. He grips it tightly and closes his eyes. Maybe he got away with it?

Nope! He's dragged back by Hector into a more densely bagged part of the room.

Hector smacks him around and Artie in turn lands a few hits, but nothing stops him.

But then Artie gets an idea - He grabs his flashlight and shines it in Hector's eyes, who recoils and squeals away back into the dark, holding his hands over his face.

Artie backs away, over to the window well.

He makes it about eight feet from his target when the flashlight starts to flicker.

ARTIE

Oh, you are *fucking* kidding me.

Artie whips the dying flashlight in the direction of Hector and climbs up onto the table below the window, ripping the coverings off and pouring a little bit more sunlight into the space.

He's less efficient with his phone in his hand so he stuffs it in his pocket and continues.

Finally, he pulls open the window and sticks his arms through, pulling himself up with his upper-body strength.

But his sweater gets caught on an exposed nail.

His sweater begins to tear, but is still trapping him.

Hector's appearing from behind, within reach of his dangling legs.

Artie pulls with all his strength and manages to rip a hole in the sweater large enough to break free.

His feet are pulled through the window just as Hector would have grabbed them.

Hector recoils from the pooling sunlight and retreats back into the dark.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Artie runs back through the yard in an attempt to get to the forest. It's bright and his eyes are adjusting, and from his head pounding, he stumbles around.

INT. HOUSE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jackson and Peter lean on the counter, both eating out of the casserole dish.

PETER

You know, he doesn't taste half bad for his age.

JACKSON

I think age ripens it.

Peter hears commotion outside.

He puts down his spoon and approaches the window.

PETER

He got out. For god's sake, he got out.

Peter rips open the back door and runs out, Jackson grabbing the pitchfork and limping behind.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Artie runs but upon turning around and seeing Peter and Jackson in hot pursuit, alters his plan.

He heads for the storage container, the side door still slightly ajar from his scuffle with Jackson earlier.

Pulling it open and then shut behind him, he locks it from the inside.

Peter and Jackson arrive, and attempt to pry open the door.

JACKSON

Shit.

PETER

He's locked it from the inside. God damn it. Okay, let's open the main doors.

They start to walk around to the back of the container and lift the metal bars keeping the large loading doors shut.

JACKSON

I'll tell you one thing, Peter. He's a tricky son of a bitch. Hardly got any meat on him, too. Might as well just throw him out whole when we get him.

PETER

Shut up, and get this thing open.

JACKSON

Sorry.

They finally unlock the doors and swing them open -

AND ARE GREETED WITH HEADLIGHTS AND AN ENGINE REVVING!

Artie floors it. His car flies out of the container and crushes Jackson under its weight, turning him to spaghetti.

Peter gets knocked away and falls unconscious on the ground.

The car is stuck - the corner out of the container didn't have enough room to fully make a turn and now Artie's wheels are just barely skimming the dirt.

Not enough to move him.

He opts to hop out of the car and run for the woods again, but as he comes around the car, he sees Peter coming-to directly in his path. No dice.

Artie does a 180 and runs back for the house.

Peter brushes off his daze and picks up the pitchfork from Jackson's pulpy remains. He limps for the house, slowly.

Artie makes it to the house - he grabs a metal spade off of the wall of tools and jumps through the kitchen door into the house, tripping on the frame and spilling onto the kitchen floor.

INT. HOUSE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The spade clangs away from him onto the floor making a racket.

Artie picks himself up but sees/hears Hector coming up the basement stairs for him. He runs through the door towards the front of the house.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Artie arrives at the front door, finally an escape.

But it's locked.

He jiggles the handle as he's done throughout the past two days. Even unlocking the latch won't do it. He needs a key.

ARTIE
Motherfucker.

He hears Hector coming, so he darts up the stairs instead.

INT. UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Artie ducks back into the closet, just as he did before. Only this time he pulls the door entirely shut and is only illuminated by the warm glow of the bulb above him.

He holds onto the doorknob for dear life as he hears Hector scrambling up the stairs.

Hector's footsteps culminate with a screech, and then a relentless onslaught of scratching at the door, attempting to peel open the container to feast on his prey.

Eventually, it stops.

Artie sits for a moment. This may be the only chance he has to catch his breath for the next few hours.

He closes his eyes to hear what's below him. Are they setting a trap? Have they lost him? There's only one way to find out.

Artie opens the door.

CREAK

He stops. He closes his eyes. For one second, could something just go in his favour?

He continues to open it.

CREAK

He stops once again.

He sternly exhales through his nose.

And opens the door a little bit more so he can slip out.

CREEEEEAAAAK

He tiptoes out of the closet and peers downstairs.

The wooden stairs. The creaky, noisy wooden stairs.

CREAK

He takes a step.

CREAK

Another.

CREAK

And another.

He bites the bullet and shuffles to the bottom of the staircase.

CREAK CREAK CREAK CREAK

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

He arrives at the base of the set of stairs as if he's just run a marathon.

He once again jiggles the door knob but it still won't budge.

The coast appears to be clear. Artie sneaks. He's as quiet as he can be.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN HALLWAY, SAME TIME

Peter sneaks with the pitchfork at his side. It'll be an ambush. He enters through the mudroom and tries to remain as quiet as possible.

INT. HOUSE - DEN, MOMENTS LATER

Artie sneaks through the den and heads towards the kitchen.

Behind him, out of his line of sight, Hector scurries out from his bedroom and behind the couch.

Artie whips around. He saw something. He knows it was Hector. But where is he?

He continues backing towards the kitchen doorway, keeping an eye on all corners of the room.

But little does he know:

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN HALLWAY, SAME TIME

Peter continues his slow advance to the door frame that leads into the den. He arrives right at the edge of the frame and stops, holding up the pitchfork, ready to strike.

INT. HOUSE - DEN

Artie can't see Hector. He turns back around to face the kitchen door.

He nears the kitchen doorway from the adjacent angle of Peter.

But at this moment, perhaps an odd twist of fate, Hector rises up from behind him - seemingly out of nowhere.

Artie's ears are piqued, so he hears something behind him.

He turns around just at the right moment and Hector pounces on him -

But he catches him.

Artie uses Hector's forward momentum to swing him around through the door frame.

BANG!

Hector squeals. Peter has impaled him right in the gut with the pitchfork.

Hector slams onto the ground and squirms around like a fish out of water. His noises are petrifying.

PETER

Hector!

Peter, tears filling his eyes, bends over to see Hector's struggle.

PETER (cont'd)

Hector I'm so sorry, I thought you-
Hector please don't go, stay with me!

Artie uses this moment to sneak by Peter and slips into the kitchen.

PETER (cont'd)

Oh Hector, you'll be okay boy, come
on! I'm sorry boy, I'm so sorry!

But Peter's head snaps up. There are footsteps behind him.

He looks around just in time to see the big metal shovel of the spade that meets his face.

BANG

He collapses.

Hector continues to squeal and squirm on the ground.

It's done. Peter lays lifeless on the ground. Artie looks at Hector but, whether by pity or tire, decides to let him die on his own time. He tosses the shovel onto the ground and walks out to the kitchen, exhausted.

Peter's car keys rest on the table, right where he left them.

Artie picks them up - But the sound from the other room stops.

He backtracks over to the doorway into the den and rechecks the site - Peter, dead. Pitchfork on ground. Pool of blood. No Hector.

Peter narrows his eyes and sprints down the hallway to the mudroom.

He bursts through the door.

We can hear the clattering of Hector's feet close behind.

He puts his full body weight through the mudroom door to the front lawn and spills out of the dark.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Artie stumbles his way across the lawn over to Peter's car.

He rips open the front door and jumps into the driver's seat.

He spins the keys in the ignition.

The engine chokes.

He spins the keys again.

The engine revs but something's not working.

ARTIE
Come on, come on!

From the front seat, Artie sees Hector slide out of the kitchen hallway and into the mudroom. His sprint is so brisk it almost looks like he's running on ice.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Come on you piece of shit!

VROOM

The engine revs to life.

Hector's about to jump right through the front windshield but Artie pounds the gear shifter into reverse and slams the gas peddle.

He backs up at a rocket's speed as Hector chases him down the driveway, pulling out onto the road and flying away at an incredible pace.

Hector can be seen coming after him, but at long last, Artie has escaped.

INT. PETER'S CAR, COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Artie drives quickly, wiping the sweat from his brim.

He looks into the passenger seat and sees a cloak - the same cloak that was on the figure in the forest. He picks it up and looks at it while driving.

After a few moments of driving, his phone buzzes.

He pulls it out:

MOM: TEXT:
"Stop ignoring my calls!"

Artie can't muster the energy. He tosses the phone and the cloak out the driver's window and drives off, back to civilization.

"Sundown" by Gordon Lightfoot plays (if available).

THE END.

