

COBWEB

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Once upon a time

There was a spooky old house

That sat alone on a hill

With no neighbors around

To hear the screams

TAP

TAP

TAP

## INT. PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT

PETER (8) opens his eyes

He heard something

He's lying in BED, and it's dark, and this time

*He definitely heard something*

So he waits

But all he hears now is the HOWL of the wind outside

And the CLOCK by his bed

Nothing more - silence

He closes his eyes and lets the clock lull him back to sleep

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

TAP

TAP

TAP

No

He heard it

Peter sits up in bed

He stares unblinking at THE WALL - at the peeling wallpaper

He then turns to the opposite wall - to the WINDOW

He crawls out of bed

He tiptoes to the window, the floor creaking with every step

He looks out into his backyard

At the GARDEN

At the SHED

At the GNARLED TREE and the SWING that hangs from its branch  
The swing GROANS as it sways in the wind, but it does not tap  
Peter turns his attention to the TOY CHEST in the corner  
To the grinning JACK IN THE BOX  
He creeps to the corner - cautiously reaches his hand out to  
the smiling CLOWN protruding from the box and  
Flicks it

The clown TWANGS back on forth on its spring, but it does not  
tap

He looks to his CLOSET - to its closed door

He inches closer - opens it and jumps

A RED BALL falls out and rolls across the floor, but it does  
not tap

Peter can't deny it any longer

He turns back to The Wall - to the peeling wall paper

He sucks in his breath

Tiptoes to The Wall

When he has summoned enough bravery

He places his ear against the wallpaper, and with his finger

TAPS

And waits - nothing

He exhales

TAP

TAP

TAP

Peter gasps

He stumbles backwards and falls

He scrambles back to his feet and sprints out of his room and  
into the

**UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Where he runs past the BATHROOM

Past the BOOK SHELF

Past the STAIRCASE

And to the DOOR at the end of the hall

He stops - his hand hovers above the knob

Finally - he opens the door into his

**PARENT'S ROOM**

EYES stare back Peter, illuminated by the hallway light

THE CAT glares at him from the foot of the bed

He ignores it and slowly, cautiously walks to the side of the bed where

His MOTHER sleeps

Peter gently tugs on her bedsheets

But she remains asleep

So he places his hand on her shoulder and shakes her

Finally, she opens her eyes and sees her son silhouetted by the hallway light

MOTHER

Peter?

PETER

Can I sleep with you?

Silence

MOTHER

What's wrong?

Peter hesitates

He looks to the hallway, then back to his Mother

PETER

I heard something.

MOTHER

You what?

On the other side of the bed, his FATHER stirs

FATHER

Peter?

MOTHER

He says he heard something.

Father reaches for the CLOCK by his bedside

He groans when he sees the time

MOTHER (CONT'D)

What did you hear, Peter?

But Peter doesn't answer

Father turns to face him

FATHER

Well?

MOTHER

Peter.

He shuffles his feet - hangs his head

Father's had enough - he lays back down

Mother too

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You didn't hear anything.

She lays her head on the pillow and closes her eyes

PETER

But--

MOTHER

Go to bed...

And with that, she's already asleep

Peter's shoulder's sink

**INT. PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Peter goes back into his room

But this time, he leaves the door open - the light from the hall falling onto his pillow

He tiptoes back to his bed - crawls under the blankets

Turns his back to The Wall

It takes all his strength to close his eyes and keep them shut

The room is silent once again, save for the steady

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

But then

TAP

PETER

No.

TAP

PETER (CONT'D)

*You're not real.*

TAP

TAP

TAP

He pulls the covers over his head.

PETER (CONT'D)

*You're only my imagination.*

And then nothing - silence

Until

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Peter...*

**MORNING**

Morning light floods through the window

And as the clock strikes 7:00am the ALARM rings  
But there's no one to turn it off  
Footsteps storm down the hallway and  
Mother - in her nightgown - pops her head inside Peter's room

MOTHER  
What are you--

But all she sees is an empty bed stripped of its blankets

**INT. BATHROOM**

Mother stands in the doorway of the bathroom  
She looks down at the BATHTUB  
At Peter curled up inside, wrapped in his sheets

**INT. PETER'S ROOM**

Peter stands outside his closet, his Mother kneeling before him buttoning his shirt  
He can't help but stare nervously at The Wall - at it's peeling wallpaper

Mother catches him

MOTHER  
The circles under your eyes are  
getting worse.

She ties his BOW TIE

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
It's okay to be scared.  
This is an old house.  
There are bound to be bumps in the  
night.  
Even rats in the walls.

She looks back at The Wall

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
But anything else...  
Any ghouls or ghosts or goblins...

Back at Peter

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
They're all in your head.  
You understand that, don't you?

He hesitates

Nods

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
You've always had an active  
imagination.  
Such a mind for fantasy.

She stands

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Put on your shoes.  
You don't want to be late.

She walks out the door into the hallway

Peter reaches into his closet and retrieves his shoes

He sits on the floor and wrestles them on

But he doesn't take his eyes off The Wall

Once his shoes are on his feet, he takes a deep breath

He takes a step towards The Wall

Then another and another

He places his ear against the wallpaper and TAPS

Waits

MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Peter!

He leaps out of his skin

Runs out the door into the hallway

**EXT. THE HOUSE - MORNING**

The spooky old HOUSE sits atop a lonely HILL

Even in the daylight it looks haunted

Autumn leaves dance in the wind, blown from the branches of  
the back yard's gnarled tree

Mother holds the CAT in her arms as she watches Peter trudge down the hill to the

SCHOOL BUS waiting at the road

**INT. SCHOOL BUS**

Watching Peter from inside the bus is BRIAN (8)

His eyes follow Peter as he gets on the bus and makes his way to the back

Surrounded by the other children, Peter in his antiquated, overly formal clothing is an anachronism

So it is no wonder he's a target

As Peter passes Brian's seat

Brian sticks out his leg

Peter trips and falls

The whole bus erupts in laughter

Peter looks up at Brian and Brian looks down at Peter

Neither says a word

Peter climbs to his feet and continues to the back

He takes the empty seat in the last row

He ignores the laughter, avoids the stares

Looks out the window back at his spooky old house

Wipes his eyes

**INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING**

The classroom is dark until

MISS DEVINE (30s) walks in the door and turns on the lights

Shopping bags in hand, she surveys the classroom before getting to work

She mounts a fake SPIDERWEB in the corner

Places a stuffed BLACK CAT on her desk

She cuts construction-paper GHOSTS and hangs them on the wall  
 And finally - places a piece of CANDY on every desk  
 When she reaches the final desk - last row, furthest corner  
 She stops - considers for a moment  
 Lays down an extra piece

**LATER**

STUDENTS spill into her classroom  
 After the initial horde has gone to their cubbies and run to  
 their desks to claim their candy  
 Peter straggles in  
 Miss Devine smiles warmly from her desk

MISS DEVINE  
 Good morning, Peter.

He doesn't acknowledge her  
 She watches as he solemnly deposits his bag and coat in his  
 cubby and goes to his desk in the last row, furthest corner  
 She watches him take his seat and discover the two candies  
 She watches him scan the classroom, see that everyone else  
 has only one  
 And even though his gloomy expression never changes  
 Miss Devine grins to herself

**LATER**

Miss Devine wears a WITCH HAT and stands in the middle of a  
 CIRCLE of students  
 She mimes stirring a cauldron, and the children do the same

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
 Double, double, toil and...

THE CLASS  
 Trouble!

MISS DEVINE  
 Fire burn and cauldron...

THE CLASS

Bubble!

MISS DEVINE

By the pricking of my...

THE CLASS

Thumb!

MISS DEVINE

Something wicked this way...

THE CLASS

Comes!

She claps

MISS DEVINE

Ahhh, you're so scary!

The class collectively giggles

She glances at Peter sitting outside the circle, his face in his hand

He's asleep

**LATER**

Miss Devine walks around the classroom

The children paint with water colors

Peter only uses BLACK

**LATER**

Outside the WINDOW the children take recess

Meanwhile, Miss Devine is in an empty classroom

She hangs the children's WATERCOLOR PICTURES on the wall

She hangs a VAMPIRE - a MUMMY - a WEREWOLF

But as she's hanging the next one - she furrows her brow

It's almost entirely BLACK, save for the very bottom

A BOY in bed, and scrawled above his head:

HELP ME

Miss Devine studies the picture

Takes it with her to the window  
 She looks outside and scans the PLAYGROUND  
 She looks past the children on the slide, jumping hopscotch,  
 playing tag  
 And to the far end of the grounds  
 Where Peter sits alone, clutching his knees to his chest

**LATER**

The children swarm their cubbies  
 But Peter waits outside the chaos  
 When the crowd has left, he retrieves his coat and bookbag  
 As he heads to the door

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
 Peter?

He turns to Miss Devine sitting at her desk with her hands folded

She smiles warmly, but he knows its forced

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
 May I have a word?

He looks longingly at the door

But approaches her desk anyway

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
 How is everything? At home, I mean.

He shrugs

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
 Are you getting enough sleep?

He shrugs again

New tactic

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
 Have you thought about what you're  
 going to be for Halloween?

He shakes his head "No"

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
That's okay. Me neither.

She places his PICTURE on the desk between them

He turns to see the wall where every other picture is hanging

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
I really liked your picture.  
You're very talented.

He shuffles his feet

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
I was wondering though - what's  
going on here?

PETER  
It's just a picture.

MISS DEVINE  
Oh I know, I know - I only mean...

Her smile falters, but for only a moment

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Who needs help?

He says nothing

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Does the boy in this picture need  
help?

Miss Devine reaches her hand across the desk, but Peter  
doesn't take it

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Why is the boy asking for help?

PETER  
He's not.

MISS DEVINE  
But it says--

He points to the black

PETER  
She is.

He looks to the door

PETER (CONT'D)  
I'm going to miss the bus.

Miss Devine nods

MISS DEVINE  
Okay.

Peter turns on his heel and marches out the door

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Don't forget to bring a pumpkin!

**EXT. THE BACK YARD - EVENING**

The perfect PUMPKIN sits still attached to its vine

Peter stands above it, his Father waiting at the edge of the GARDEN

FATHER  
Is that the one?

Peter surveys the rest of the pumpkins

He nods

FATHER (CONT'D)  
All right then.

Father reaches into his pocket and removes a KNIFE

Father trudges into the garden, crouches down next to Peter

He starts to saw at the vine

FATHER (CONT'D)  
You know, when I was your age, I  
was convinced a crocodile lived  
under my bed.

He laughs and shakes his head

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Can you believe that? What would a  
crocodile be doing under there? It  
was completely irrational, but that  
made no difference to me - I was  
certain it was below me when I  
slept, biding its time before it  
could eat me whole.

He stops sawing

FATHER (CONT'D)  
But there was no crocodile, Peter.  
It was only my imagination.

His face grows stern

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Being a big boy means learning to  
distinguish fantasy from reality.  
And you're a big boy, aren't you?

Peter shifts his weight

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Peter.

PETER  
Yes.

FATHER  
I thought so.

He's about to return to sawing the vine, but has a thought

Instead, he hands the knife to Peter

Peter looks at it reluctantly

FATHER (CONT'D)  
It's okay. It won't hurt you.

Peter takes it

He crouches down and saws the vine

When he cuts through, Father musses his hair

FATHER (CONT'D)  
That's a big boy.

He stands

He starts towards the SHED

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Now come on.

Peter follows

**INT. SHED**

Father stands in the doorway, watching Peter assess the SHELF

Peter furrows his brow as he scans its contents  
He points, then looks back at Father  
Father nods  
Peter approaches the shelf  
Stands on his tippy-toes  
And after stretching his arms as far as they'll go  
He retrieves a bag of RAT POISON  
He brings it back to his father

FATHER  
This oughta take care of it.

He closes the door

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
No more bumps in the night.

**INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

A framed FAMILY PORTRAIT hangs on the wall - Mother, Father, and Peter as a baby

The family sits under it, eating their dinner in silence, their silverware scraping against the plates

Eventually, Father clears his throat

FATHER  
We put out some poison.

MOTHER  
Mmm?

FATHER  
Peter and I.

Mother nods

MOTHER  
For the rats?

FATHER  
Uh huh. Up high. Where the cat  
won't get at it.

They both look to Peter - so that's settled then

He pushes the food around on his plate

**INT. PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT**

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

TAP

TAP

TAP

Peter opens his eyes

He stares unblinking at The Wall - at the peeling wallpaper

He waits

TAP

TAP

TAP

His whole body tenses, he stops breathing

But he's defiant - he turns around to face the window

The shadow of the tree cast against the glass

TAP

TAP

TAP

He buries his head under his pillow

And for a few moments, that seems to do the trick

If there is any tapping, he doesn't hear it

But then

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Peter...*

He heard *that*

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Please...*

He whimpers

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Help me...*

He's had enough

He bolts up and spins around

PETER  
You're not real!

He hurls the CLOCK at The Wall

It shatters

But now it's quiet

Peter's shoulders rise and fall with every heaving breath

He glares at The Wall

He dares Her to make another sound

## **MORNING**

Morning light floods through the window

It's 7:00am, but the room is silent

Footsteps storm down the hallway and

Mother peers inside

MOTHER  
Peter, it's way past--

She sees Peter sound asleep in bed

She sees the broken alarm clock in pieces on the floor

## **INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING**

A pumpkin rests next to Brian on the bus seat as he peers out the window at

Peter trudging down the hill

He watches Peter climb onto the bus and make his way to the back

As Peter passes

Brian sticks out his leg

But this time, Peter steps over it

He glances at Brian for just a moment before continuing to the last row

He sits in the empty seat and rests the pumpkin on his lap

He catches Brian staring back at him

Peter ignores him and looks out the window as the bus pulls away

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

The desks are all moved out of the way and NEWSPAPER is spread across the floor

The children sit in a circle, each painting a face on their respective PUMPKIN

Miss Devine navigates the floor admiring their work, paying compliments to various students

She walks past Brian and notes the crude, lopsided face he's painting

MISS DEVINE  
Very nice, Brian.

She moves on

Peter sits outside the circle, concentrating hard

Miss Devine kneels down next to him

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Oh, wow!

She looks at the big, goofy FACE Peter has painted

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
This is so great, Peter!

Brian watches them from across the circle

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
What's his name?

Peter shrugs

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
But everyone has a name.

He considers this

PETER  
Hector.

Miss Devine laughs

MISS DEVINE  
Of course.  
He sure looks like a Hector to me.

She leans in close - whispers so that only he can hear

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
*This one is my favorite.*

She holds a finger to her lips - *Our little secret*

She stands and moves onto the next student

Peter stares at Hector's face, and something odd happens

His lips curl upward

Brian notices

**EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY**

Hanging from the monkey bars, Brian is still watching Peter from across the playground

Peter is sitting at his usual spot, away from everyone else

But he isn't alone - he has Hector

Hector with a smile so goofy that Peter can't help but smile back

He's content to simply sit there with the pumpkin between his legs, giggling at his own handiwork

Until the sound of LAUGHTER catches his attention

Peter looks to the SLIDE - to the children playing on it

And he gets an idea he's never had before  
Brian watches as Peter stands and brings Hector to the SLIDE  
Once the last CHILD has gone down, Peter tucks Hector under  
his arm

And climbs the ladder

When he reaches the summit, he rests Hector on his lap

And SLIDES DOWN

He squeals with unbridled joy the whole way down

And when he reaches the bottom and lands on his rear

He can't contain his laughter

With a new sense of purpose, he leaps to his feet with Hector  
in his arms

But as he's about to reach the ladder

He's SHOVED from behind

Peter flies forward - Hector sails through the air

Peter hits the ground hard, his chin smacking the macadam

But worse is what lies ahead of him

He looks up to see Hector BROKEN in HALF

Peter twists his head back

Standing behind him, no emotion on his face, is Brian

He remains emotionless as he circumvents Peter to Hector's  
remains

And STOMPS them into mush

PETER  
Stop it!

Peter scrambles to his feet and rushes towards Brian

But Brian turns to face him and Peter freezes

While Peter trembles with fury, Brian is stone faced

Peter realizes that all the other children on the playground  
have stopped to watch them, waiting for something to happen

He clenches his fists  
Uses his forearm to wipe the tears welling in his eyes  
Then turns and RUNS  
The RECESS MONITOR sees Peter running off the school grounds  
She tries to chase after him - blows her WHISTLE

**INT. CLASSROOM**

Grading quizzes, Miss Devine perks up from her desk when she hears the whistle blowing outside

She bolts to the WINDOW just in time to see

MISS DEVINE  
Peter!

He disappears from the playground

**OUTSIDE**

Peter runs

He runs across roads

He runs through fields

He runs through woods

He runs up the lonely hill

And finally, he runs to the front door of the spooky old house

But he stops - his hand hovers above the knob

Knowing what kind of trouble will be in store for him inside

He instead trudges into the

**BACKYARD**

His feet crunch dead leaves as he walks past the garden

And to the GNARLED TREE

But as he's about to climb onto the SWING

He hears something, a loud noise coming from inside the house

A WHIRRING

Curiosity overwhelming him, he approaches the house  
The sound gets louder and louder the closer he gets to the  
KITCHEN WINDOW

He stands on his tippy-toes to see inside  
He sees his Mother

She's standing at the kitchen counter operating a BLENDER  
full of GRAY GRUEL

**EXT. THE ROAD**

A CAR screeches to a halt at the bottom of the hill  
Miss Devine hurries out of the vehicle  
She looks up the hill with panic in her eyes

**EXT. BACK YARD**

Peter watches as his Mother turns off the blender  
She pours the sickening concoction into a CUP  
She opens a DRAWER and removes a KNIFE  
With both in hand, she starts to walk out of the kitchen when  
The DOOR BELL chimes  
Both Peter and his Mother freeze  
He watches Mother rest the cup and knife on the counter and  
disappear down the hall  
He hears the front door open

**MOMENTS LATER**

The BACK DOOR flies open  
Mother and Miss Devine rush into the backyard but stop when  
they see  
Peter sitting solemnly on the swing

Miss Devine breathes a sigh of relief, rests her hand on her heart

But Mother stares daggers

Peter doesn't look either in the eye

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY**

Peter sits at the top of the STAIRCASE clutching the bars of the railing

He strains to hear the conversation happening in the

**KITCHEN**

Miss Devine sits at the KITCHEN TABLE dabbing her eyes with a tissue

MISS DEVINE

I am so sorry.  
It's completely my fault.

Mother is at the counter pouring two cups of COFFEE

MOTHER

Peter can be a difficult child.  
I'm sorry he put you through this.

She hands Miss Devine her cup and sits down across from her

MISS DEVINE

Goodness no, Peter is the sweetest--

MOTHER

He will be punished accordingly.

MISS DEVINE

Oh no.  
No, I wouldn't want that.

MOTHER

Oh? What would you want?

Miss Devine tries to read her big, bright smile

MISS DEVINE

All I mean is...

She struggles to find her words

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
I think, perhaps...  
There might be something else going  
on.

Mother sips her coffee

MOTHER  
Please. Do tell.

Miss Devine hesitates before reaching into her BAG

She removes Peter's PICTURE and places it on the table

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
What is this?

MISS DEVINE  
I was hoping you might be able to  
tell me.

Mother rests her mug on the table

She picks up the picture - examines it closely

MOTHER  
Peter painted this?

MISS DEVINE  
For the holiday.  
Most of the children drew monsters  
or witches, but Peter...

MOTHER  
I see.

MISS DEVINE  
It's probably nothing, but--

Mother folds the paper in half

MOTHER  
You're right. It is nothing.  
A spooky picture. For the Holiday.

But Miss Devine isn't satisfied with that

MISS DEVINE  
But you can understand why one  
might be concerned, no?

MOTHER  
Peter has always had a very active  
imagination.  
(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

For years he would wake his Father  
and I up in the middle of the night  
with tales of ghosts and spectres.  
His flights of fancy are not  
something I'm eager to indulge.

MISS DEVINE

Often these things can be a sign of  
a deeper issue.

MOTHER

Oh? What are you implying?

MISS DEVINE

I'm not implying anything.

MOTHER

But you are.

Miss Devine is disarmed by her smile

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Please. If you believe there to be  
an issue, I should be aware of it.

She can't help but feel she's in treacherous waters

MISS DEVINE

Children sometimes have trouble  
expressing what's wrong with them.

MOTHER

So there's something wrong with  
Peter?

MISS DEVINE

...I just wanted to bring it to  
your attention.

MOTHER

And now you have.

Mother stands

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's getting late, Miss Devine. I  
still have quite a bit to do before  
my husband returns from work.

She takes Miss Devine's untouched coffee

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I appreciate you coming and...  
Expressing your concerns.

She dumps it in the sink then throws Miss Devine a cheerful and utterly insincere smile

Miss Devine nods

MISS DEVINE  
Have a good evening.

Miss Devine stands as Mother places the mugs in the sink

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

From behind the railing

Peter sees Miss Devine opening the front door

As she exits, she glances up at Peter

She gives him a small wave

And after a moment

Peter waves back

She smiles wistfully

As she turns to leave out the door

She notices for the first time that there are BARS over all the windows

She furrows her brow, but chooses not to think any more of it

She closes the door behind her

And for a moment, it's quiet

Until Mother appears at the bottom of the stairs

And she's holding the FOLDED PICTURE

MOTHER  
Peter...

Peter scurries backwards

PETER  
I'm sorry!

Mother stomps up each step while

Peter crawls backwards faster and faster until he reaches his

**BEDROOM**

He runs and darts behind his bed but  
Mother follows him inside  
She looms in the doorway and displays the picture

MOTHER  
Tell me what this is.

Peter cowers behind the bed

PETER  
It's just a picture...

Mother trembles with fury

MOTHER  
A picture of what?

PETER  
Not anything.

She steps forward

MOTHER  
A picture of what?

PETER  
Nothing!

She's about to scream back when they both hear the front door open

Peter goes white

But Mother gets her temper under control

FATHER (O.S.)  
Hello?

Peter's eyes plead for mercy from his Mother

MOTHER  
(Calling)  
Honey. Come upstairs.

Peter shrinks down below the bed as they listen to Father come up the stairs

He appears in the doorway next to Mother

FATHER

What's going on here?

MOTHER

Peter ran away from school today.

FATHER

He what?

She hands him the picture

MOTHER

And he painted this.

Father assesses the picture

FATHER

Did he now...

He shakes his head

FATHER (CONT'D)

I thought we were finished with  
this nonsense.

Isn't that right, Peter?

I thought you were a big boy.

PETER

I am...

FATHER

You're not.

Not when you insist on subjecting  
your Mother and I to make believe.

MOTHER

You assured us you had outgrown  
these fantasies.

FATHER

Do you know what this is?

He rips the picture into pieces

FATHER (CONT'D)

This is a lie. Are you a liar?

PETER

No.

FATHER

You are. You're a liar.

PETER

But...

This is a mistake

PETER (CONT'D)

But...

Don't do it

PETER (CONT'D)

But I hear her though...

Oh no

For a moment, all is still

It starts slow

Father's face turns red

He convulses with anger

He lets loose

FATHER

SHE

ISN'T

*REAL!*

Peter cowers behind the bed

Father's outburst surprised even himself

He composes himself and rubs his temples

Sighs

FATHER (CONT'D)

Do we need to ground you?

"Ground you"

Peter jumps to his feet, his eyes wide

PETER

No!

FATHER

What do you think Mother?

PETER

No, no, no, no, no!

She crosses her arms

MOTHER  
I'm not sure...

Peter crawls on his knees towards them

PETER  
Please, please, please don't ground  
me! I promise I'll be good!

His parents look down at him on the floor

MOTHER  
This...Girl...

PETER  
I made her up!

Neither looks convinced

PETER (CONT'D)  
*Please don't ground me.*

It could go either way

But after a long, pregnant silence

Mother sighs

MOTHER  
Fine then.  
But if we hear any more talk--

PETER  
You won't.

FATHER  
Good.

Mother reaches into her pocket and removes a

KEY RING

She and Father step out into the hall

MOTHER  
There will be no supper.

Mother closes the door

Locks it

Peter listens as they go downstairs

When he no longer hears their footsteps, he rises to his feet  
Tries the knob - confirms that yes, it is locked  
His shoulders sink  
He plods back to his bed  
Sits on the edge facing the window  
Tears build in his eyes, snot drips from his nose  
He CRIES  
But in between sniffs and whimpers

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Peter...*

Peter tenses  
He cranes his neck back to look at The Wall

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*I'm sorry...  
I didn't meant to get you in  
trouble...*

He turns back to the window

PETER  
Be quiet.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Please don't cry...*

He wipes his tears

PETER  
I said be quiet.  
You aren't real.  
I'm making you up.

He looks down at his dangling feet

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Why did you run away from  
school...?*

Peter thinks

He turns around

Sits on the edge of the bed facing The Wall

PETER  
Because of Brian.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Is Brian your friend...?*

PETER  
No.  
I don't have any friends.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*What did Brian do...?*

PETER  
He broke my pumpkin.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*That was mean of him...*

PETER  
He *is* mean.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Why...?*

Peter shrugs

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*You shouldn't let people be mean to you, Peter...*

Peter considers this

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*You should do something about that...*

Yeah, *he* should

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Peter...?*

He's lost in thought

TAP

TAP

TAP

On the third TAP

A STRIP of WALLPAPER peels off The Wall, exposing the WOOD behind it

That snaps Peter out of his trance

He looks down at his feet

PETER

I shouldn't be talking to you.

He crawls underneath the covers

Lies facing the window

PETER (CONT'D)

You're just make believe.

**MORNING**

Rain patters against the window

Peter wakes to the sound of his door being unlocked

The door opens, but that's all

He hears his Mother's footsteps going down the stairs

**INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING**

Peter walks onto the bus

He stares at his feet as he makes his way to the back

And although he doesn't want to, he can't help but glance at

Brian's seat - it's VACANT

He pauses for a moment before continuing to the back

He takes his seat in the last row

Stares ahead at where Brian should be

**INT. CLASSROOM**

The children file into the classroom

Miss Devine waits patiently at her desk for

MISS DEVINE

Peter.

He stops

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

She *is* sorry - incredibly so

He can see that in her eyes

But he doesn't say anything - just drops his things in his cubby and goes to his desk

He sits down

Notices Brian's desk is EMPTY

**LATER**

The entire class stands with their hands on their chests

They all face the FLAG in the corner

THE CLASS  
I pledge allegiance  
To the flag  
Of the United States of America  
And to the Republic  
For which it stands  
One Nation  
Under God--

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Peter jumps

Miss Devine goes to the classroom door and opens it

A MOM stands on the other side

Miss Devine looks back at Peter before joining her in the hallway

Peter can't hear what they're saying, but he picks up on

MISS DEVINE  
*I think that would be very nice.*

Miss Devine comes back inside, followed by the Mom

And Brian

He's holding a PUMPKIN

Peter slinks down in his seat

Brian hesitates a moment but his Mom pushes him forward

He gradually weaves through the desks until he reaches Peter  
Peter feels everyone's eyes  
Brian holds out the pumpkin

BRIAN  
I'm sorry, Peter.

Peter stares at the pumpkin's painted face  
It's stupid and bad and looks *nothing* like Hector

MISS DEVINE  
That was very nice of Brian, wasn't  
it Peter?

Peter glances up at Brian's blank, soulless expression  
Then to Miss Devine's hopeful smile  
Peter takes the pumpkin from Brian  
Raises it above his head  
And HURLS it at the ground by Brian's feet, smashing it to  
pieces

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Peter!

Peter's face turns red, he vibrates with anger  
Brian shows no emotion  
Miss Devine rushes between the two of them

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Hey!

She looms over Peter  
He shrinks in her shadow

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
That was bad, Peter.  
That was very bad.

She turns to Brian  
MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Take your seat, Brian.

Brian returns to his desk

She looks back to Peter

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
I am so disappointed in you.

Peter seethes

He focuses that anger on the back of Brian's head

**EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY**

Peter sits at the edge of the playground clutching his knees to his chest

He watches Brian hanging from the monkey bars

He waits

And waits

And waits

**INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON**

Peter stares at the CLOCK above the door

TICK

TOCK

TICK

TOCK

The BELL rings

All the Children stand from their desks and swarm the cubbies

All except Peter who watches Brian collect his coat and backpack

When the chaos has dissipated

Peter goes to his cubby and puts on his coat

As he heads out the door

MISS DEVINE  
Bye Peter.

But Peter's already gone

Miss Devine goes back to the papers she's working on  
But something isn't sitting right  
She looks to the hallway

**INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY**

Brian trudges down the corridor  
Peter follows him, getting closer and closer  
Miss Devine pokes her head out of her door  
Just in time to see Peter catch up to Brian by the STAIRCASE  
*And SHOVE him from behind*  
Miss Devine sees Brian disappear off the stair's horizon  
And the world shifts beneath her feet  
Time slows  
She sprints down the hall  
She hears the dull THUD of meat  
The sharp CRACK of bones  
And when she arrives next to Peter at the edge of the stairs  
She hears a HOWL like a wounded animal  
She looks down in horror at what lays at the bottom  
While Peter looks down with pride

**INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE, LOBBY - AFTERNOON**

In a GLASS ROOM, ADULTS shout at each other  
Brian's Mom yells at Peter's Mother  
Peter's Mother yells back  
The Principal yells at both of them  
But Miss Devine - sitting in the corner - remains silent  
Her eyes are glassy - her complexion pale

She stares off into the middle distance

Peter sits outside the glass, watching it all from the lobby

He lets his arms dangle and his feet swing

He remembers

Miss Devine taking the stairs three at a time

He remembers

The revulsion on her face

He remembers

The bone protruding from the leg

He remembers

The screams of agony

He remembers

And he smiles

Without thinking, he places his finger against the wall

TAP

TAP

TAP

From inside the Glass Room, Miss Devine looks at Peter

And he looks back at her

TAP

TAP

TAP

**INT. THE CAR - EVENING**

Peter sits in the back seat

He looks out the window and counts the raindrops sliding down the glass

Mother watches him from the REARVIEW

MOTHER  
Expelled...

She shakes her head

Peter says nothing

**INT. THE FOYER**

The front door opens

Peter stares ahead at what awaits him down the hall, in the KITCHEN

Father, sitting at the kitchen table, stroking The Cat on his lap

MOTHER  
Go on.

But Peter doesn't move

So she shoves him

He walks glacially down the

**HALL**

The floorboards creak with every heavy step

But he isn't going fast enough

So Mother grabs him by the scruff of his neck and drags him into the

**KITCHEN**

Father puts The Cat on the floor, stands, and

Pulls out a CHAIR

Mother forces Peter onto the seat

His Parents stand looking down on him, their arms crossed

He stares at his feet

For a long time, no one says a word

FATHER  
I don't know what to do anymore.

MOTHER  
Don't you have anything to say for  
yourself?

Silence

FATHER  
Peter.

PETER  
Brian was mean to me.

MOTHER  
So you sent him to the hospital?

FATHER  
We don't solve our problems with  
violence, Peter.

Peter clenches his jaw, prepares himself for what's to come

PETER  
She said I shouldn't let people be  
mean to me.

The air leaves the room

MOTHER  
...Who said that to you?

He shrugs

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Peter.  
Who said that to you?  
Who have you been speaking to?

He gives no reply, which is the only answer they need

FATHER  
Oh Jesus Christ.

He SLAMS his hand against the wall

FATHER (CONT'D)  
JESUS CHRIST.

He grabs the table and hurls it across the room

But then he takes a breath

Regains his composure - rubs his temples

FATHER (CONT'D)  
This is the last straw, Peter.

He looks at Mother

She nods

FATHER (CONT'D)  
There's only one thing that's  
worked in the past.

No

Peter grips the sides of the chair - his fingers turn white

FATHER (CONT'D)  
We have to ground you.

He knew it was coming but it hurts all the same

Peter remains completely still, every muscle tense

Mother grasps Peter's arm

And Peter SCREAMS

She tries to pull him but he won't release the chair

Meanwhile, Father goes to the REFRIGERATOR, braces himself

And slides it away from the wall revealing

A DOOR

Mother yanks Peter and the chair topples to the floor

Peter jumps to his feet and RUNS down the HALL into the

#### **FOYER**

He tries to open the front door

But it's LOCKED

Mother marches from behind

With nowhere to go, Peter falls to the floor and kicks his legs furiously

But Mother manages to grab an ankle

He screams and claws at the floor as he's dragged back into the

**KITCHEN**

She pulls the thrashing Peter across the floorboards  
 With her free hand, Mother reaches into her pocket and  
 retrieves the KEY RING  
 She hands the keys to Father who unlocks the door leading to  
 the

**COLD****DARK****BASEMENT**

Father descends the stairs and disappears into the shadows  
 Mother hoists the screaming and struggling Peter into her  
 arms and carries him into the dark

Footsteps echo throughout the cavernous room  
 Father turns on a single, exposed LIGHT BULB that reveals  
 A METAL DOOR in the damp floor  
 When Mother and Peter are close enough  
 He lifts the heavy door revealing

**THE PIT**

Mother brings him to the hole in the ground

**MOTHER**  
 Make use of your time.

She lowers Peter into the hole

**FATHER**  
 Think about why you're down there.

She drops him and he hits the moist dirt with a dull thud  
 Peter scrambles to his feet - tries to climb out  
 But there's no use

He weeps

**PETER**  
 Please don't!  
 I'll be good!  
 (MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)  
 I swear I'll be a big boy!  
 Please please please don't!  
 She's not real! I know she's not  
 real!  
 Please don't leave me down here!

Father and Mother look down at him

His pleas fall on deaf ears

The door SLAMS CLOSED

**IN TOTAL DARKNESS**

He's all alone

Completely, utterly alone

He jumps as high as he can

He scratches at the walls

He screams and bellows and wails

But it does him no good - he's trapped

His crying subsides

He sits on the cold, wet ground

PETER (CONT'D)  
*If you're not real...  
 If you really are my imagination...  
 Please...  
 Talk to me...  
 I don't want to be alone...*

He waits

And waits

And waits

PETER (CONT'D)  
*Help me...*

But nobody can

Nobody will

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Miss Devine stands in front of the class with her clipboard

MISS DEVINE  
Katie D?

Katie D raises her hand

KATIE D  
Here.

Miss Devine checks her name

MISS DEVINE  
Ryan G?

Ryan G raises his hand

RYAN G  
Here.

Check

MISS DEVINE  
Peter--

She stops herself

She looks to the empty desk in the last row, furthest corner

And for a moment, she's lost in thought

But she remembers herself

Shakes her head

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
Elizabeth J?

**LATER**

Outside the WINDOW the children take their recess

Inside, Miss Devine sits at her desk grading math quizzes

But try as she might to concentrate, she can't focus

She puts her pen down and sighs

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

While The Cat eats from its bowl

Mother opens the refrigerator

She removes a TUPPERWARE container

Brings it the BLENDER and opens the lid  
A stew of LEFTOVERS sits congealed inside  
She dumps its contents into the blender  
Behind her - the PHONE RINGS  
She turns - eyes it suspiciously  
It keeps ringing  
So she walks across the kitchen and answers it

MOTHER  
Hello?

Miss Devine paces around the **CLASSROOM**

MISS DEVINE  
Hi. Is this Peter's Mother?

MOTHER  
...It is.

The flatness in her voice immediatly telegraphs to Miss Devine that this was a mistake

But too late now

MISS DEVINE  
This is Miss Devine.

MOTHER  
What a delight.

She walks back to the blender

MISS DEVINE  
I'm sorry to call, but I...  
I wanted to check in.  
How is Peter doing?

Mother glances to the refrigerator

MOTHER  
He's thinking long and hard about  
what a bad boy he's been.  
The other one?

MISS DEVINE  
Brian?  
His Mom says he'll be back in class  
for Halloween.

She takes a breath

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
I want to apologize again--

Mother turns the blender ON

Miss Divine grimaces at the sound

Waits for it to stop

Mother lets it run until the concoction has turned gray

MOTHER  
What was that?

MISS DEVINE  
I said I want to apologize.  
For what happened.  
I can't help but feel responsible--

MOTHER  
No. It was entirely Peter's doing.

MISS DEVINE  
Have you figured out what school  
he'll go to?

Mother dumps the gruel into a CUP

MOTHER  
Here. At home.

MISS DEVINE  
...Oh.

MOTHER  
Peter is an delicate child.  
An isolated environment is more  
suited to his needs.  
This is for the best.

She opens the DRAWER and retrieves a KNIFE

Miss Devine closes her eyes and prepares herself

MISS DEVINE  
May I speak with him?

Mother opens her mouth to respond when

TAP

She looks up at the ceiling

TAP

It's faint

But there is definitely a noise coming from upstairs

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Hello?

Mother turns her attention back to the phone

MOTHER

I don't think that would be  
appropriate.

MISS DEVINE

Oh...

TAP

TAP

TAP

MOTHER

I must go.  
Thank you for the call.

Mother hangs up

Looks back at the ceiling

Miss Devine, meanwhile, listens to a dial-tone and is left  
feeling even worse than she did before she called

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Mother slowly ascends the stairs, cup in one hand, knife in  
the other

TAP

TAP

TAP

She cautiously walks down the hallway, the floorboards  
creaking with every step

She gets closer and closer to the incessant TAPing

Until she stands facing The Wall

She pounds her fist against the wood

MOTHER

Shut up!

Then nothing - silence

**THE DARKNESS**

It's quiet and still

All that can be heard is Peter's steady breathing

Until the heavy door is UNLOCKED

The door is opened

And a blinding light illuminates the hole

Peter squints at the silhouettes of his Parents above him

They look down at their filthy child below

**INT. BATHROOM - EVENING**

Peter's urine-stained underwear soaks in the sink while

Peter sits naked in the bathtub, the water black from all the grime

Mother turns off the faucet and sits on the edge

She soaks a WASHCLOTH in the dirty water

Takes him by the chin

MOTHER

I know your Father and I can be strict.

She scrubs above his eyes

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Our punishments harsh.

His cheeks

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Perhaps even cruel.

She glides the cloth along his arm

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
But one day you'll realize what we  
do is born of love.

Scrubs the dirt and blood underneath his fingernails

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
That this is all for your own good.

She places her hand on his shoulder and pushes him forward

She runs the cloth across his BACK

*Over the SCARS*

The four, jagged LACERATIONS that cross his spine

She traces her finger along the raised flesh

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
To keep you safe.

She sits him upright - smiles

Kisses him on the forehead and stands

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Dry off.  
It's time for supper.

Mother leaves the bathroom

Peter listens to her descend the stairs

He grabs the TOWEL

**INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

Peter walks into the kitchen to see

Mother and Father sitting at the table under the family portrait, dinner plates before them

They both smile at him

MOTHER  
Come.

She pulls out his chair

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Sit.

Skeptically, Peter takes his place at the table  
Mother and Father stare at him as he sits on his hands

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Aren't you hungry?

He makes a show of taking a bite, then sets his fork back on  
the table

FATHER  
Well Son...  
Did you have a good think?

Peter nods

FATHER (CONT'D)  
What about?

PETER  
About how I need to grow up  
About how I need to be a good boy.  
Stop acting out.  
Stop telling fibs.

MOTHER  
That's very nice to hear.

FATHER  
We're both very proud of you.

Mother and Father reach across the table and take each others  
hands

MOTHER  
Things are going to be different  
now, Peter.  
You won't be attending school any  
longer. I will be your teacher.  
Lessons will begin in the morning.

FATHER  
The three "R"s.  
Do you know what those are?

Peter shakes his head

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Reading, writing...and 'rithmetic.

Father laughs

MOTHER

Not only will you finally receive a proper education, but I'm confident you and I will have a lot of--

THUMP

It came from upstairs

Mother and Father go absolutely still

They look to the ceiling, then to each other, then to Peter

But Peter has no reaction at all - simply chews his food

After he's swallowed

PETER

A lot of what?

They both relax

MOTHER

A lot of *fun*.

Father musses his hair

FATHER

You're a good boy, Peter.

MOTHER

A *big* boy.

FATHER

That's right. A *big* boy.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Peter's all tucked in

Father stands by the doorway, Mother sits on the edge of the bed

She's reading from a picture book

MOTHER

"Well look at that! This is the end of the book, and the only one here is...ME.

I am the Monster at the end of this book.

And you were so scared!

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
I told you and told you there was  
nothing to be afraid of."

She closes the book - Peter smiles

He may be a big boy, but he still loves that one

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Good night, Peter.

She kisses him on the forehead, then joins Father in the doorway

PETER  
Good night, Mother.  
Good night, Father.

They close the door

He listens to their footsteps travel to the end of the hall

Hears their bedroom door close

His smile vanishes

He sits up in bed, moves to the edge

Looks to The Wall

PETER (CONT'D)  
Are you real?

He waits

PETER (CONT'D)  
I said are you real?

And waits

PETER (CONT'D)  
Talk to me.

And waits

PETER (CONT'D)  
Talk to me!

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*I'm real, Peter...*

He nods - he knew it

He crawls off the bed and drags himself across the floorboards

PETER  
Where are you?

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*I don't know...*  
*It's dark...*

PETER  
How long have you been there?

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*As long as I can remember...*

But then

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*No...*

*No?*

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*I remember a room...*  
*A bed...*  
*Toys...*

Peter looks around his room

He has those things

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*There was a ball...*

Peter looks to his closet

PETER  
...Was it red?

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*What is...red...?*

PETER  
Red is...a strawberry.  
A fire truck.  
Blood--

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Yes.*  
*It was red...*  
*Oh, how I loved to play...*  
*How I wish I had it now...*

PETER  
Wait.

Peter stands

Slowly walks to the closet, careful not to make too much noise

He gently turns the knob and opens the closet door

The RED BALL falls out and bounces across the floor

Peter clasps his hand over his mouth

That was too loud

He watches it roll to The Wall

He looks to his bedroom door

Waits to hear his parent's door open

It doesn't

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Is that it...?*

*Is that my red ball...?*

He nods

PETER

Yes.

And for a moment, the room is quiet - but then

SCRATCH

At first, Peter isn't sure of the source of the sound

SCRATCH

But then he sees it

SCRATCH

Where the wall meets the floor

SCRATCH

The WALLPAPER - it's protruding

As if a finger is poking from the other side

PETER (CONT'D)

Stop!

She does

Peter starts to tremble

He listens for his parent's bedroom door again

Silence

After his nerves have calmed, he creeps his way back to  
The Wall

Gets down on his knees and with his thumb and forefinger

He takes hold of the peeling wallpaper

And pulls - just for a second

Simply testing its resilience

But it separates from the wall with a satisfying rip

So he keeps pulling

And slowly, inch by inch

Reveals a HOLE

As soon as he realizes what he's done, he lets go

Scurries backwards

Allows the wallpaper to fall back into place

When he catches his breath

PETER (CONT'D)  
You're my sister...aren't you?

There's a silence

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
Yes...

He gulps

PETER  
Why are you in there?

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Mommy and Daddy...*  
*They said I was bad...*

Peter nods

PETER  
They say that to me sometimes.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Peter...*

PETER  
Yes?

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*May I play with it...?*

It takes him a moment to understand what she means  
When he does, he picks up the BALL - looks to The Wall  
And decides "yes"  
So he crawls back to The Wall  
Peels back the paper - curls it so that it stays put  
And looks into the deep, dark, absolute darkness of The Hole  
It isn't big, but the small red ball will fit  
So he readies himself  
And rolls it inside and it disappears into the darkness  
Then he waits  
And waits  
And waits  
Until the ball rolls back

#### **MORNING**

Morning light floods through the window  
Mother gently opens the door to Peter's room  
Sees him sleeping soundly  
She glides across the floor and sits on the edge of his bed  
Caresses his face

MOTHER  
*Peter. Wake up.*

Peter opens his eyes

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
It's almost time for school.

He smiles - nods

PETER  
Okay.

Mother stands and moves towards the door

Then stops

All of Peter's TOYS have been propped up and displayed  
against The Wall

**INT. STORAGE CLOSET - DAY**

Mother pulls the chain that turns on the LIGHT

She digs through the old board games and cleaning products  
before she finds

A stack of WORK BOOKS

She blows off the dust and turns off the light

**INT. KITCHEN**

Mother sits at the kitchen table, a work book open before her

She rubs at its pages with a pink eraser

MOTHER  
(Calling)  
Ring, ring, ring.  
That's the bell.  
Heaven knows you don't want to be  
late for your first day of school.

Peter walks into the kitchen

Mother closes the book, stands, sweeps the eraser residue  
into her hand, and throws it away in the sink

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Please everyone take your seats.

Peter pulls out a chair and sits at the table

He looks at the old math work book on the table in front of  
him

Mother stands in front of the table with her hands clasped before her

She puts on her best "Teacher Voice"

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
For the first lesson of the day, we  
will be learning multiplication.

She stifles a self-satisfied smile

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Won't you all open your books to  
page 15.

Peter opens his book

He can't help but notice that - despite being erased  
There's still the faint trace of already answered questions

**LATER**

Mother paces back and forth while Peter furrows his brow

PETER  
M...A...

He pauses

MOTHER  
...Go on.

PETER  
...I...?

She nods

PETER (CONT'D)  
N...D...E...R  
Remainder.

MOTHER  
Very good, Peter.  
How about..."Hostile."

Peter thinks

PETER  
Hostile.  
H...O...S...T

CUCKOO - CUCKOO - CUCKOO

Peter and Mother both turn to the CUCKOO CLOCK hanging on the wall - to the BIRD popping in and out

Mother bites her lip and sighs

MOTHER

Okay...  
Time for a break.

**INT. LIVING ROOM**

Mother sits Peter down on the couch

MOTHER

You've earned a few minutes of  
television.

She turns on the TELEVISION SET

A black & white movie plays - a WOMAN walks down a dark alley

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Oooh.  
This is a spooky one.

She turns up the volume

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Stay put.

She goes into the kitchen - Peter watches the movie

The woman in the film hears footsteps behind her, but every time she turns around - no one is there

Peter hears the BLENDER running in the kitchen

Over the sound of the movie, he hears Mother's footsteps

He listens as she goes upstairs

Hears the creak of the floorboards above him

Then a GROAN

As if heavy furniture is being shifted above his head

**INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

Mother works at the stove while Peter does his homework at the table

Father walks through the kitchen with a grin on his face  
He saunters over to Mother

FATHER  
Something to add to the stew.

She turns to see him holding up a DEAD RAT

She screams and smacks him

MOTHER  
Get that out of here!

He laughs as she hits him again

Peter watches as he takes it out to the backyard

FATHER  
Poison's working.

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Peter is wearing his pajamas as he brushes his teeth

After he spits and rinses

He looks out into the

**HALLWAY**

He creeps out of the bathroom - Walks to the BOOK SHELF

And kneels down

He grazes his thumb along the deep scratch in the floor from  
all the times the shelf has been moved

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Peter sits facing The Wall

The wallpaper has been peeled back - The Hole is exposed

And the red ball comes rolling out

Peter catches it - rolls it back

PETER  
What's your name?

After a moment

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*I don't know...*  
*I...*  
*I don't have one...*

It rolls out again

PETER  
But everyone has a name.

He rolls it in

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*I don't know any girls names...*

Rolls out

PETER  
There are girls at school.  
Some are named Katie, or Mary, or  
Tabitha, or Sarah.

In

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Sarah...*  
*I like that...*

Out

PETER  
Sarah, then. That's your name.

In

He waits for the ball's return

But it doesn't come out again

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Peter...*  
*Help me...*

He stares at The Hole

He knew this was coming, and he looks away

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Please...*

He doesn't say anything

He clutches his knees to his chest

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Let me out...*

PETER  
I don't know how.

He can sense her disappointment

PETER (CONT'D)  
...I'm sorry.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*I'm so hungry...*

Peter nods - that he can handle

PETER  
Okay.

He slowly heads to the door

PETER (CONT'D)  
I'll get you an apple--

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
No.

He stops

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Meat.*

Looks back at The Hole

PETER  
What?

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Bring me meat...*

Silence

PETER  
Why?

He stands frozen by the door

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Please...*  
*Bring me meat...*

For a while, he does nothing

PETER  
All right.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

The moon shines through the window

Peter uses its light to navigate the kitchen on his hands and knees

He moves slowly, deliberately - the dark amplifying every sound

He reaches the refrigerator - takes hold of the handle

And pulls open the door

The light from inside cascades throughout the kitchen

Revealing Mother behind him

MOTHER  
What are you doing, Peter?

Peter yelps - slams the door closed

He turns to Mother now lit only by moonlight

PETER  
I...

He catches his breath

PETER (CONT'D)  
I wanted a snack.

She doesn't move

MOTHER  
It's very late.

Peter touches his stomach

PETER  
...I couldn't sleep.

MOTHER  
You're not supposed to be out of bed.

He looks at his feet

She takes a step forward - he takes one back

She opens the refrigerator door

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Mother closes Peter's bedroom door

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Go to sleep.

He hears the key ring - hears the door LOCK

And when he hears Mother's footsteps travel down the hall,  
hears her bedroom door close

He goes to The Wall

Peels back the wallpaper

And places a pink slice of lunch meat outside The Hole

And then he waits

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*What is this...?*

PETER  
Bologna.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*I said to bring meat...*

PETER  
It is meat.

Silence

PETER (CONT'D)  
This is all we have.

He holds his breath

Then watches as the bologna is dragged inside

PETER (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*It's okay, Peter...*  
*You tried...*  
*Thank you...*

But then he hears whimpering

Followed sobs

PETER

Please.  
Don't cry.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Peter...*  
*I'm sick...*  
*I...*  
*I think I'm dying...*

PETER

...I can try and get medicine,  
or...

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*I'm scared...*

He stands impotently in the center of the room

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*I need to get out...*  
*I need your help...*

PETER

I told you.  
I don't know how.

He listens as she sniffs - takes a breath

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*There's a door...*

He wipes the tears from his eyes - nods

PETER

I know there is.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*You do...?*

He looks to the hall

PETER

It's in the hallway.  
Behind the book shelf.  
It's how she feeds you.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Yes...*

A long quiet - they both think

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*You'll need the key...*

PETER  
She always keeps it on her.  
I could never sneak it.

But he has a thought

He walks to the window

Looks out into the back yard

PETER (CONT'D)  
I have an idea.

**INT. BUS - MORNING**

All the CHILDREN are dressed in their HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

Brian is dressed as a FOOTBALL PLAYER - an injured one

His leg is in a CAST

As they approach the spooky old house on the hill

He looks out the window

And as the bus roars past the house

He sees Peter standing in the window

Watching

**INT. BATHROOM**

Peter stares out the window at the bus speeding by

When its gone, he goes back to brushing his teeth

He return to the mirror - stares at his reflection

He stops brushing

Lets the toothpaste froth from his lips like a rabid beast

Lets it dribble down his chin

He spits

**INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

Mother paces back and forth as Peter furrows his brow

PETER  
A...F...R...A...I...D  
Afraid.

MOTHER  
Very good.

CUCKOO - CUCKOO - CUCKOO

They both turn to the cuckoo clock - to the bird popping in and out

Mother looks to Peter and smiles

**INT. LIVING ROOM**

Mother sits Peter on the couch

She turns on the television set then goes to the kitchen

A black & white movie is playing - a girl bangs on a door begging her mother to let her in

But the begging and banging stop and blood pools under the door

Peter hears the blender in the kitchen

Hears Mother go upstairs

**INT. STAIRCASE**

As Mother ascends the staircase

Peter creeps to the bottom

He listens to her walking down the hall

Hears the groan of the bookshelf being moved

He darts away into the

**KITCHEN**

And to the back door

He swings it open and runs into the back yard

Past the garden, past the gnarled tree  
And to the Shed

**INT. STAIRCASE**

Mother descends the stairs  
When she reaches the bottom, she walks down the HALLWAY and  
into the

**KITCHEN**

Where she stops  
She looks at the back door - at the screen door blowing in  
the wind  
She looks into the LIVING ROOM  
Where Peter is still sitting on the couch watching television  
He looks over to her with an innocent smile

**EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY**

PARENTS and TEACHERS alike stand as audience, gawking and  
waving at

The PARADE of children in their costumes  
Miss Devine forces a smile as she watches the procession of  
superheroes and princesses  
She sees Brian limping by on his crutches, and the smile  
fades  
But only for a moment before she remembers herself

**EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING**

The sun is just beginning to set  
The first TRICK-OR-TREATERS have begun to prowl  
Miss Devine's CAR pulls into the driveway of her HOUSE

**INT. MISS DEVINE'S LIVING ROOM**

Miss Devine sits on the floor of her living room, bathed in the TV's light as she plunges a KNIFE into a PUMPKIN

She carves a face, periodically looking up at the television

A black & white film is playing

A WOMAN with dark black hair enters her apartment to find a NOOSE hanging from the ceiling

Miss Devine gets chills

She pops out the last chunk and admires her handiwork

She bites her lip

She can't help but notice it looks an awful lot like Hector

**INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

Father sets the table while mother ladles SOUP into three bowls and

Peter finishes pouring three glasses of MILK at the counter

He looks back at his parents

Neither of them are paying him any attention

Father sits as Mother brings the tray of soup bowls to the table

**FATHER**

I was thinking after dinner we could make a bowl of popcorn and the three of us watch a scary movie.  
What do you say?

Mother takes her seat

**MOTHER**

Oh, I don't know.

Peter distributes the glasses

**MOTHER (CONT'D)**

I don't want Peter having nightmares.

He takes his seat between them

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
He already has so much trouble  
sleeping.

FATHER  
Nah.

He musses Peter's hair

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Peter's a big boy, aren't you  
champ?

Peter swirls the soup around with his spoon

MOTHER  
We'll see...

Peter glances up as Mother is about to sip her soup, but then

RING RING

She stops - puts the spoon down

Mother and Father exchange glances

RING RING - the DOORBELL

Mother sighs

She stands up from the table and walks up the hallway towards  
the front door

Tense, Father stares at Peter

Peter stares at his soup

They hear the front door open

CHILDREN (O.S.)  
Trick or treat!

Father relaxes

He brings the spoon to his mouth and sips

FATHER  
Mmmm.

He sips another spoonful - and another

MOTHER (O.S.)  
We don't have any candy.

But after a moment - he frowns  
Peter watches as Father looks into his bowl  
But when Mother walks back into the kitchen  
He continues eating as if nothing was the matter

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Trick or treaters.

FATHER  
Did you turn the porch light out?

MOTHER  
I did just now.

She takes her seat  
Father takes another sip and stifles a shiver

FATHER  
It's very good, honey.

MOTHER  
Thank you, dear.

FATHER  
Don't you think, Peter?

PETER  
Uh huh.

FATHER  
Did you do anything differently?

Mother shakes her head as she blows the steam off her spoon

MOTHER  
Same recipe as always.

Father nods  
He drinks from his milk and grimaces  
Peter holds his breath as Mother finally takes her first sip  
And then her second  
By the third, the taste cannot be ignored - she winces

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Oh goodness.

Father puts his spoon down

FATHER

Right?

Mother sniffs her bowl

Takes a fourth sip just to be sure

Spits it back

MOTHER

That's terrible.

She gulps down her milk

But that's just as bad as the soup

She retches

MOTHER (CONT'D)

My God, what is...

It's at that moment she realizes Peter hasn't touched his meal

He's simply been sitting swirling his spoon

She looks to Father

He understands

He knocks his chair over as he bolts up from the table

He runs towards the back door and out into

### **BACK YARD**

Sprints past the garden

Past the gnarled tree

And into

### **THE SHED**

Where he finds on the shelf

An empty spot where the RAT POISON used to be

## INT. KITCHEN

Mother slowly backs away from the table shaking her head

MOTHER  
What did you do, Peter?

He doesn't look up - simply swirls the spoon

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
WHAT DID YOU DO?

Father runs back into the kitchen

FATHER  
Call 911!

As Mother goes for the PHONE

Father GRABS Peter by the shirt and YANKS him up from his chair and

SLAMS him into the wall

The framed portrait is knocked from the wall and SHATTERS onto the floor

Mother gets to the phone, holds it to her ear, dials, only to realize

Peter cut the cord

Father's eyes bulge with rage as he hoists Peter into the air

He screams like an animal in Peter's face

But then he stops - as if the sound is caught in his chest

Rage gives way to confusion

He drops Peter and clasps at his throat

Backs away - stumbles

Peter scrambles away and watches from the hall as

Father VOMITS black BILE all over the floor

Terrified, he looks to Mother for help but she remains paralyzed

He vomits again - even more this time - and moans in pain

He collapses onto the floor

Spasms in a pool of his own sick  
Suddenly, a moment of clarity washes over Mother  
She looks at Peter in the hall  
Rushes to the drawer  
Grabs the KNIFE and darts after Peter into the

**HALLWAY**

Spitting up over herself, she chases Peter to the

**STAIRCASE**

Peter goes as fast as he can, taking two steps at a time but  
Mother is right behind him, knife in hand  
Just as he reaches the top, Mother GRABS his ankle

He falls

She yanks him backwards - he grasps the railing

Turns to see vomit spewing from her mouth

He KICKS

His foot hits her between the eyes

She lets go of his ankle and falls backwards

Down

And

Down

Step

After

Step

He hears the dull THUD of meat

The sharp CRACK of bones

Until she lands in a heap at the bottom of the stairs

Peter stares in disbelief at the sight of her lying there,  
her body contorted in unnatural angles

He catches his breath as he watches her side pool with blood

The knife in her hand as gone through her back

She doesn't move

And for a while - a long, long while

Everything is quiet

Eventually, Peter looks down the hall at the book shelf

Then back to his Mother

When he finds the strength

He slowly descends the stairs

The closer he gets to the bottom, the slower he goes

Until he finally reaches the bottom

He does his best to avoid his Mother's eyes staring up the ceiling

Still holding onto the railing

He reaches out and puts his hand in her pocket - nothing

He tries the other - hears the jangling of KEYS

He carefully extracts the key ring from her pocket

When Mother GRABS his wrist

Peter screams

MOTHER

*Peter...*

He tries to pull away, but he can't

MOTHER (CONT'D)

*Don't...*

She tries to lift her head

MOTHER (CONT'D)

*Don't let her out.*

Vomit drips from her lips

Her head falls and her grip loosens  
Peter pulls away  
And the life leaves Mother's eyes  
Silence  
Nothing but the sound of Peter's labored breathing - until

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Peter...*

He looks upstairs

**INT. PETER'S ROOM**

Peter stands in the doorway and stares at The Wall

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Peter...*  
*Are you there...?*

He shifts his weight

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Did you do it...?*  
*Are they gone...?*

PETER  
Yes.

The Girl squeals with delight

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*Did you get the keys...?*

He takes a few cautious steps forward then stops himself

Tosses the keys

They land outside The Hole

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Thank you, thank you!*  
*But I can't get out myself.*  
*You need to move the shelf.*  
*You need to unlock the door.*

He looks down at his feet

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Peter...?*

He shuffles across the floor to The Wall  
 Picks up the keys  
 Then he notices something  
 He takes hold of the peeling wallpaper  
 And pulls, separating it from The Wall  
 He steps back, pulling it more and more, revealing the wood underneath  
 Finally, the strip rips off and falls to the floor  
 Peter takes in the sight of the exposed wall  
 It's covered in crisscrossing SCRATCHES  
 Just like the ones on his back

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Keys in hand, Peter slowly approaches the BOOK SHELF  
 He closes his eyes - takes a deep breath  
 Readies his stance - positions his fingers between the shelf and the wall  
 And pulls  
 It doesn't budge

PETER  
 It's too heavy. I can't move it.

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*No, Peter!*  
*You can!*  
*I believe in you!*  
*You're a big boy!*  
*A big, strong boy!*

His shoulders sink  
 He tries again - pulls harder  
 The shelf moves an inch

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*See!*  
*You can do it!*

He pulls and tugs and wrenches  
 And with every brief exertion of strength  
 The shelf moves further and further from The Wall  
 Until it gets caught on an uneven floorboard  
 Peter grits his teeth  
 Sweat drips from his forehead  
 The shelf begins to TIP  
 He steps backwards, shuts his eyes, and covers his ears as  
 The shelf CRASHES to the ground

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Peter!*  
*Peter, are you hurt?*

Peter opens his eyes, takes his hands off his ears  
 He stares at the DOOR in The Wall

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Peter...*  
*Answer me, Peter...*  
*Are you all right...?*

PETER  
 I'm okay.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Yes!*  
*We're almost done!*  
*Unlock the door!*  
*Let me out!*  
*Let me out, Peter!*

Peter looks at the keys in his hand  
 He looks to the door - looks to the staircase  
 He shakes his head

PETER  
 No.

Silence

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Peter...*

PETER

I can't.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*Yes you can, Peter...*  
*You have the key...*

Tears well in his eyes

PETER

I'm scared.

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*There's no reason to be scared...*  
*You're doing the right thing...*  
*Let me out...*

He doesn't move

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Let me out!***BANG****BANG****BANG**

Peter throws the keys

He covers his ears and sprints to the stairs but stops when he sees Mother's dead eyes staring back at him

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Let me out!***BANG****BANG****BANG**

He runs the other direction

Leaps over the fallen book shelf

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Let me out!*

And runs into his

**PARENT'S ROOM**

He slams the door closed

He sprints to the bed

And dives under the covers

**EXT. MISS DEVINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

A GHOST, a SPACEMAN, and an ICE SKATER stand on the porch

The door opens and Miss Devine - in her witches hat - is on the other side with a bowl of candy

CHILDREN  
Trick or treat!

MISS DEVINE  
Wow! You look great!

She holds out the bowl

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
You can each take two.

They reach and grab handfuls before running off

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
You're welcome.

She's about to turn back inside but then stops

She looks at her pumpkin at the end of the porch

**INT. MISS DEVINE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Miss Devine flips through the directory

She dials her phone and holds it to her ear

But all the she hears is a persistent BEEP

The call cannot be connected

She hangs up

**EXT. MISS DEVINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Miss Devine peers out the front window and looks for trick-or-treaters but there's no one outside

She turns out the porch light

**INT. PARENT'S ROOM - MORNING**

Morning light floods through the window

Peter is asleep under the covers

The clock strikes 6:30am and the ALARM rings

Peter slowly emerges from the sheets

It wasn't a dream - he gulps

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Peter looks out into the hallway

He sees the tipped over book shelf and the door in the wall

PETER

Hello?

Nothing - silence

He creeps across the floor to the staircase and looks downstairs

His Mother is still dead on the floor

Flies swarm her corpse

The Cat nibbles on her face

PETER (CONT'D)

Hey!

It ignores him

Peter disappears down the hall and into his room

He return with the red ball

He throws it at The Cat - it hisses and skitters away

Peter takes a deep breath then proceeds down the

**STAIRCASE**

The steps groan under his feet

He covers his ears to hide from the buzzing of flies and steps over his Mother

His feet stick to the drying blood on the floor

**INT. KITCHEN**

Peter maneuvers around his Father's body and the puddles of bile

He gets CEREAL from the closet and MILK from the refrigerator

**INT. LIVING ROOM**

Peter carries his bowl of cereal to the couch

He takes a seat and turns on the television

A black & white Christmas movie is playing

He glances at the KITCHEN - at his Father's glassy eyes - then looks back at the TV

**INT. KITCHEN**

The Cat stares at its empty food bowl

It looks to Peter watching TV in the LIVING ROOM

Then saunters over to the body on the kitchen floor

As it sniffs the cold, dead flesh - it hears

SCRATCH

It raises its head - flicks its ears

SCRATCH

SCRATCH

It wanders out of the kitchen

**INT. PETER'S ROOM**

The Cat stands waiting for

SCRATCH

SCRATCH

SCRATCH

That

It sees the wallpaper and smells the bologna outside The Hole  
The Cat stalks towards The Wall and sniffs the meat  
It moves closer and closer

**INT. LIVING ROOM**

The cereal crunches in Peter's ears as he eats  
He doesn't hear the cat YOWLING upstairs

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Miss Devine stands in the empty classroom in front of the  
Halloween pictures  
She stares at the blank space on the wall where Peter's  
painting was supposed to go  
She begins taking them down

**LATER**

Miss Devine finishes hanging the last of the Thanksgiving  
decorations just as  
STUDENTS spill into the room

MISS DEVINE  
Good morning.

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

Peter sits at the kitchen table writing in his work book  
A blanket is draped over his Father's body  
He solves a math problem by counting on his fingers  
CUCKOO - CUCKOO - CUCKOO  
He watches the bird pop in and out of the cuckoo clock

He looks to the refrigerator

**LATER**

Peter stands on a chair by the counter

He pours leftovers into the blender and starts it

He watches the food turn to gray mush

Once it's finished, he pours the gruel into a cup and starts out the door

But he stops when something on the floor catches his eye

He crouches down and picks up the FAMILY PORTRAIT, now free from its frame

He realizes the photo has been FOLDED - so he unfolds it

And for the first time he sees the full picture of his family

Mother, Father, Peter as a baby, and standing next to them

His SISTER concealed under a SHROUD

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Peter carries a cup of gruel up the staircase

He reaches the summit and starts down the hall

Then stops

He drops the cup

His face turns white and his blood curdles

Because the door in the wall is OPEN

A bloody CAT BONE sticks out from the lock

*She got out*

All he can do is stare into the darkness

Eventually he cranes his neck and looks to his bedroom, his parent's bedroom, the bathroom

She could be anywhere

He looks down the stairs, past his Mother, at the FRONT DOOR

He gulps

The sprints down the

**STAIRCASE**

He takes two steps at a time

But just as he's almost reached the bottom

His Mother's corpse is DRAGGED out of sight

He falls backwards and scrambles back up the stairs

But he stops when he hears it

Biting and crunching and slurping

She's FEEDING

He clasps his hands over his mouth to stifle his whimpers

But one small cry escapes his lips

She stops eating - goes quiet

Then

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*I hear you Peter...*

He hears Her FEET stomp across the floor

He spins and bolts up the stairs

He hears her racing behind him

Getting closer and closer and closer

**INT. PETER'S ROOM**

Peter darts into his room and slams the door closed

BANG

BANG

BANG

He presses his back against the door and digs his feet

He feels in his pockets

PETER

No...

Then hears the jangling of KEYS outside his room

THE GIRL (O.S.)

*It's okay, Peter...*

*You don't have to come out...*

He hears the door LOCK

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*You can stay in there as long as  
you like...*

He listens to her footsteps walk to the stairs

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*I'll be waiting for when you want  
to come out and play...*

And then she's gone

Peter slides down the door and hugs his knees

He crawls across the floor

And hides under his bed

**INT. CAR - EVENING**

Miss Devine sits in traffic

She fiddles with the radio but all she can find is static

She stares ahead at the unmoving vehicles and sighs

The only cars getting anywhere are the ones turning right up ahead

As she watches car after car pass her, a thought occurs

She chews her lip

And makes the right

**EXT. THE HOUSE - EVENING**

The sun sets behind the spooky old house atop the lonely hill  
No one could know the terrors within  
Miss Devine's car comes to a stop on the road below

**INT. CAR**

Miss Devine looks up at the house

MISS DEVINE  
This is stupid

She puts the gear back in drive  
But she doesn't take her foot off the brake  
She sighs - back to park  
She turns off the engine

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
This is so stupid.

**EXT. THE HOUSE**

Miss Devine climbs out of her car  
She rubs her arms in the autumn chill  
She climbs up the hill  
Walks onto the dark PORCH  
And rings the doorbell  
She shivers and waits but there's no response  
She rings again - knocks  
But maybe they're not home - the lights are out  
She sighs and turns around

MISS DEVINE  
So stupid.

But as she heads down the hill  
She hears the GROAN of hinges

She looks back

The front door is OPEN

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Hello?

Silence

**INT. FOYER**

Miss Devine peers through the doorway and gazes into the darkness

A RUG covers the blood on the floor and the deep shadows hide the other horrors

MISS DEVINE

Helloooo?

**INT. PETER'S ROOM**

Peter opens his eyes

He's lying under his bed and it's dark and he definitely heard something

MISS DEVINE (O.S.)

Is someone home?

No

Peter scrambles from out under the bed and rushes to the door

He beats his fists against the wood

PETER

Miss Devine!

**INT. FOYER**

Miss Devine hears the pounding upstairs

She hears the terror in his voice

MISS DEVINE

Peter?

She rushes up the STAIRS

**UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

She follows the sound of Peter's screams to the hall

MISS DEVINE  
I'm coming!

She jumps over the fallen bookshelf and runs to Peter's door

She tries the knob but it's locked

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
I can't open the door!

She frantically looks around for any clue as to what to do next

It's only then that she realizes what he's been yelling at her

PETER (O.S.)  
You have to get out!

MISS DEVINE  
What?

PETER (O.S.)  
She escaped! She's in the house!  
You have to leave before it's too late!

She tries to comprehend

MISS DEVINE  
I don't understand. Who is in the house?

PETER (O.S.)  
The Girl!

Then she sees the door and the cat bone sticking from out the lock

MISS DEVINE  
What is...

As Peter continues to pound at the door

Miss Devine crouches and looks into the dark

As she gets closer and closer

BANG

She jumps to her feet - it came from downstairs  
She hears the jangling of KEYS

PETER (O.S.)  
Run!

She doesn't - she walks up the hall to the STAIRS  
She looks down and sees the front door is SHUT

PETER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
RUN!

She looks back at Peter's door finally starting to take him seriously

MISS DEVINE  
I'm going to go get help.  
I'll be right back.

**INT. FOYER**

Miss Devine hurries down the stairs and grabs the door  
But it's LOCKED

MISS DEVINE  
No.

She twists and pulls but it's no use

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
No no no no.

She goes to the WINDOW - grabs the BARS

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)  
No!

She hears the CREAK of floorboards

She freezes - the hairs on her neck stand on end

She turns and looks into the darkness, realizing she's not alone

After a moment of quiet that lasts an eternity

She realizes what she's staring at is not a shadow

Because it MOVES

She sprints through the HALLWAY into the

**KITCHEN**

But she doesn't see the LUMP under the blanket

She TRIPS and flies forward

Her chin smacks into the linoleum

She moans in pain and grabs her knee

She sees the disturbed blanket and Father's head

She screams and scrambles to her feet but collapses in agony

She tries again, dragging herself to the BACK DOOR

But that's locked too

Thinking fast, she lunges for the counter and pulls out drawer after drawer until she finds

**A KNIFE**

The footsteps get closer and closer and closer

Her eyes SHUT, she spins and SLASHES

Knife scrapes against bone, blood splashes across the floor, and an inhuman CRY pierces her ears

Miss Devine falls backwards, crashing into the counter

She continues wildly swinging the blade through the air

But she's alone - for now

She climbs to her feet

Holding the knife in front of her, ready to strike at any moment, she moves across the kitchen and steps on something

She looks down at the KEYS under her foot

She grabs them just as she hears another CRY from somewhere in the dark

She turns and darts for the BACK DOOR

She hears the tearing of sinew and ripping of flesh

She fumbles with the keys, trying one after another in the lock until finally - it turns

But she stops herself before opening it

She looks at the ceiling

MISS DEVINE  
God damn it.

She leaves the door and turns around just as

Something flies through the air

Miss Devine dodges it as it SMACKS into the door behind her, shutting it closed

Mother's head rolls across the floor and looks back at Miss Devine

She hears the footsteps approaching

She rushes into the

#### **LIVING ROOM**

Guided by the light of the TV, Miss Devine backs away ready to stab

She backs into the wall and realizes there's nowhere else to go and the footsteps are slowly getting closer

She thinks fast - dives behind the couch

She looks out from underneath, the knife trembling in her grip

The TV flashes various patterns of light across the floor

Until it's UNPLUGGED, plunging the room into darkness

Miss Devine holds her breath as the floorboards groan under footsteps

And then silence

*Followed by the sound of someone SNIFFING the air*

After a moment

She hears a giggle

## INT. PETER'S ROOM

Peter hears her SCREAM

PETER

No!

He pounds impotently against the door but it's no use

He's forced to listen to the carnage down stairs - the crashing and the breaking and the wailing

He can't stand it - he presses his hands against his ears

And he stays like that for a long while

Until finally he takes his hands away

It's quiet - he knows what that means

He falls onto his knees and sinks

Then he hears FOOTSTEPS running up the stairs

Charging down the hall

He crawls backwards away from the door

He hears the jangling of keys

He hides behind his bed

He sees the knob twist and the door open and

Miss Devine on the other side

MISS DEVINE

Peter!

He can't believe what he's seeing

She's covered in blood, with deep LACERATIONS cut across her body

But she's ALIVE

MISS DEVINE (CONT'D)

Quickly!

He jumps to his feet and runs to the door out into the

**UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Miss Devine grabs his hand and pulls him across the hall  
They leap over the shelf and Miss Devine picks Peter into her arms as they run down the STAIRCASE

**FOYER**

Miss Devine carries Peter to the bottom of the stairs  
She sets him down and hobbles to the door  
She fumbles with the keys

PETER  
Hurry!

She's trying

PETER (CONT'D)  
That one!

She shoves the key in the lock but before she turns it  
A DROP of BLOOD lands on her hand  
She looks UP  
And SCREAMS

•  
•  
•

**INT. THE WALL**

Peter wakes with a GASP  
He's in the DARK - he can't see a thing  
All he can hear is the blood pumping in his ears and his panicked breathing  
Whereever he is - it's small and it's cramped  
He bangs into the edges with every move  
He whimpers and cries and smacks against the wood

He shifts around before seeing  
 A single beam of LIGHT on the floor  
 He rushes to it and crouches down  
 He looks through The Hole into  
 HIS ROOM

PETER  
 Hello...?

He hears the CREAK of floorboards

PETER (CONT'D)  
 Miss Devine...are you there?

After a moment

Miss Devine's SEVERED HEAD is dropped onto the floor

He screams and wails and howls until his voice is hoarse

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*It's okay Peter...  
 You're safe...  
 No one can hurt you anymore...  
 Not your bullies or your parents or  
 anyone else...*

He reaches his hand through The Hole

PETER  
 Please...  
 Let me out...

THE GIRL (O.S.)  
*You'll get used to the dark...  
 You'll find comfort in the cold...  
 We have plenty of meat...  
 And when we run out...  
 I'll find us more...*

He retracts his hand

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*I brought you a gift...*

She rolls the RED BALL through The Hole

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Your big sister is going to take  
 care of you...*

He hears her footsteps creeping to the door

THE GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Now good night...*

*Sleep tight...*

*Don't let the bed bugs bite...*

She turns off the light

Closes the door

He's all alone

In the dark

In the cold

PETER

*Help me...*

**THE END**