

False Implications: A Ministry Corpse

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FALSE IMPLICATIONS -A MINISTRY OF PLAYWRITING PRODUCTION

INT. RUM (ROOM)

DULASS consumes it. It = ? He does this for himself.
Grasping the reality of "it".

DULASS
(Aside)
Hark. It beeps.

He looks down at "it".

DULASS
Beep it ont, brutha.

He finishes consuming "it". His Jettis Pie. "It" = Jettis Pie. BUGGLY BEAU apparates inward.

DULASS
(Startled)
You've thwarted the family otter,
you monstrous carp.

BUGGLY BEAU
(Unveiling his mighty lance)
Nien. Carp I am not, crap is my
fame.

DULASS
Then, is it war?

BUGGLY BEAU
Verily.

Time freezes. It is cold. So cold.

DULASS
(Aside)
I am aware that I am pure
consciousness. I am not lonely or
lost or abandoned. I am one with
all life. I am pure spirit.

INT. TELEVISION ROOM

The camera zooms out revealing that this whole exchange is being played out on a television. The program is being watched by a little girl sitting cross-legged on a couch, clutching a blanket face in her hands. A small kitten named DINAH is sleeping next to her.

She is lit solely by the television.

DULASS

(cont'd) Not that I do not exist! I exist, but only within this frame of reference. A frame that holds my picture. A picture of me, which is an autopicture. So I don't exist.

BUGGLY BEAU

Not of import, imports are in to me. You do not exist but have a war upon your head. Of course not having a head, you are made quite exclusively of nothing.

DULASS

Quite. I don't have a head for many many things.

BUGGLY BEAU

Like books?

The things they mention all start hopping out from behind them.

DULASS

And bees.

BUGGLY BEAU

And Fleas.

DULASS

And Knees.

BUGGLY BEAU

And BUFFALO TREES.

DULASS

(looking behind them)

My my, what a mess. We will just have to clean it.

BUGGLY BEAU

Yes.

Dulass walks off screen and wheels in a cannon, while Buggly Beau draws and brandishes a saber. Carnage ensues.

The little girl draws the blanket closer to her and has upon her face a look of either glee or terror.

The girl's name is Brenda, which she finds repulsive. She likes to be called FLORA and sometimes pretends to be a tree (mostly when she doesn't want to listen to you). Anyhoo: Flora's MOTHER walks in.

MOTHER
(clearly disgusted)
What are you watching?

FLORA
(wide-eyed)
Unreality!

MOTHER
Well, it's tripe.

FLORA
(believes she is referring to
the food)
Really? Gross...

MOTHER
Quite.

The Mother switches off the television.

FLORA
(protest, of course)
Hey!

MOTHER
It's far too late, Brenda.

Flora makes a face, puts her arms above her head and becomes motionless.

MOTHER
(insistent)
It's time for bed.

Flora makes no reaction.

MOTHER
(sigh)
Sweetie.

No reaction. The Mother rolls her eyes.

MOTHER
MY! What a lovely tree! I simply
must plant it!

The Mother grabs Flora by the waist and lifts her up. Flora is surprisingly adamant about pretending and does not move at all while being carried. Dinah is grumpily woken.

The Mother carries Flora all the way upstairs to her room.

MOTHER
(referring to Flora's bed)
This looks good!

The Mother places Flora in the bed at which point Flora stops pretending. Dinah wanders in and begins kneading the blankets at the end of the bed.

FLORA
Mom? Why can't I stay up?

MOTHER
Even the plants sleep at night,
sweetie.*

*This is mostly a lie.

FLORA
That doesn't sound right.

MOTHER
It is.

FLORA
Stupid sleep.

MOTHER
Yes, yes. I know.

FLORA
Why do we sleep?

MOTHER
We all just do. I don't know why.
Please try though? ...Would you
like a story?

FLORA
No... I'm alright.

Flora lays down, at some point so did Dinah.

MOTHER
Okay.

She kisses her.

MOTHER

Goodnight, goodnight. Everything is
right, You're sleepy and warm, and
safe from the storm, Awake to the
soft morning light.

FLORA

(smiles)

Goodnight, Mom. I love you.

MOTHER

'night. I love you too.

She closes the door.

FLORA

Sleep is silly. Why does anyone
sleep?

She tries and tosses and turns, but can't sleep.

A playful laugh issues from the hall.

She sits up.

FLORA

Mom?

Another laugh issues.

Flora gets up. She opens the door and peers out.

The hall is gone. In its place is a black void of sorts.
There is a single patch of light some 20 feet away. A spot
of it. Into the spot waltzes a pair of white dress shoes,
white dress gloves, a wide grin of white teeth and two white
holes of eyes, all in the vague form of a man. When he
talks, his mouth moves very exaggeratedly. He intermittently
switches between his normal voice and a Cockney'd one.

DULASS

'Allo.

Flora puts her arms above her head. Dulass does the same.
They stare-off for a few seconds.

DULASS

You don't look very much like a
tree.

Flora does not respond.

DULASS

This would be better.

The mouth opens wide and from the holes in the shoes, gloves, mouth and eyes shoot branches and roots and leaves. A tree now stands in the spot.

Flora is very frightened by this, and she slams shut the door. She runs back to her bed and climbs in. Dinah is startled and perturbed by this.

FLORA

MOM!

Nothing. Suddenly she can see a spot of light appear some distance in front of her under the covers. Dulass waltzes into it. Flora is now no longer under the covers, and is in front of her door.

DULASS

(Cockney'd)

I don't exist, you know. [laugh]

Flora is very frightened. She opens the door only to find her bedroom gone and Dulass in the spot of light there instead.

DULASS

(Normal, whimsical)

Neither does this. Neither do you!

FLORA

I do too exist! I do!

DULASS

Neither you nor I nor the
jack'o'lantern fly. Yet fly they
do. Fly they do.

The doorway is now gone as well, and the black void is suddenly pierced by hundreds of small orange fireflies. Dulass' shoes are gone. There was nothing there at all.

DULASS

(Cockney'd)

So many today. ALL for you. [laugh]

FLORA

I want my mom.

DULASS

(normal)

And she must want you!

His hands grow very large. They seize Flora.

DULASS
 (Cockney'd)
 You are very small... just like a
 LITTLE DOLL!

He drops her and she is now clothed in doll's clothes.

FLORA
 I am not a DOLL!

She wipes the clothes off.

DULASS
 (normal)
 A gift those were! A gift to YOU!

In a spot of light to the side of Flora appears Buggly Beau.
 It is a mess of wires clutching a lance and a saber. It
 forms itself into what ever it pleases.

BUGGLY BEAU
 Do not haste make in assumptions.
 She was not given but forced.

Dulass' gloves are gone. There was nothing there at all.

The jack'o'lantern flies have increased in population, it is
 now akin to a fog, though a glowing orange fog.

DULASS
 You're [sic] head does not exist.
 You do not exist.

BUGGLY BEAU
 Words of tricks and tricks of
 words, WARS WAR WERE!

DULASS
 War is yours, yours alone. Do not
 bring me it. I do not exist.
 Nothing does. I have never existed
 for many years. And neither has
 here or this.

FLORA
 I want my mom.

BUGGLY BEAU
 You shall have war of this I know.
 Fighting fighting fighting.

He becomes the likeness of a knight on horseback.

BUGGLY BEAU

En garde!

Dulass' eyes are swirling very large. It is very difficult to see and hear both him and Buggly Beau as the jack'o'lantern flies are very thick.

DULASS

Never have never will exist.

BUGGLY BEAU

You I have this. For this you have!

Concurrently, fading:

DULASS

Never exist never exist never exist
 never exist never exist never exist
 never exist never exist never exist
 never exist never exist

BUGGLY BEAU

War you you war war you you war war
 you you war war you you war war you
 you war war you you war war you you
 war war you you war...

Flora is left in the thick fog of jack'o'lantern flies. She walks about.

FLORA

Mom? Mom? Hello?

Nothing.

FLORA

Hello?!

She runs, panicked. She runs and runs. Nothing.

FLORA

(about to cry, weak)

Hello?

A vague dark shape is apparent though the flies. Flora races towards it. It is the tree from earlier. Flora embraces it. Dinah is sleeping in its roots.

It creaks and cracks (onomatopoeia, it is not breaking). Flora backs away.

Its bark is arranging itself. It spells out, "Your Mother was looking for you."

FLORA
 Mom? She was here?

It arranges again to spell, "Go behind me."

Flora walks around. On the back of the tree, it has spelled, "Go down."

FLORA
 Is Mom down there?

The tree does not change. Flora takes this as an affirmative. She gazes at the hole in the roots of the tree to which the tree was referring.

FLORA
 It's dark.

The tree does not change.

FLORA
 [Anxious noise]

She closes her eyes and eases in.

She gives a startled gasp as she is jerked in more, and screams as she is jerked all the way in.

INT. TREE

Flora is in a dark room that could be a kitchen. Corridors leech off in every direction. The entrance Flora has just been pulled through is a good 200 to 300 feet above her. She could not have survived such a fall. There is no one evident to have pulled her.

Flora gets to her feet. Down several corridors a laugh issues. It seems to be echoing in them all. In one it is several steps lower in pitch, however.

Dinah leaps onto a table near Flora.

FLORA
 (confused, and, in a way,
 relieved)
 Dinah?

Dinah looks at her, pauses and then leaps down and into one of the corridors.

FLORA

Dinah!

Flora steps toward the passage, pauses (for it is quite dark), and then runs after the silly kitty.

There are many branches in the corridor, but Flora is close enough to the kitty to see which way it is going, and what turn it is taking. Eventually she follows it to a long hallway of doors and doors.

The hallway is very well lit, though no light source is apparent.

Flora scoops up the kitten.

FLORA

Oh, Dinah.

She looks back at the way she came.

FLORA

I'll never remember the way we came! I would never be able to get back outside through that hole, anyway.

Dinah gives a soft, high meow.

FLORA

At least you're here with me.
(Quite)

She looks up and down the hallway. The doors are all different, some large, some small, some portcullises, and some barely more substantial than a screen. She walks a bit, and then attempts to open a hospitable-looking door. It is locked. She attempts another, it is locked. She attempts many, they are all locked.

FLORA

Oh.

She cannot see an end to the hallway.

FLORA

What are we to do, Dinah?

The sound of a door closing startles Flora. She looks in the sound's direction, someone is staring at her. Flora gets up and runs toward them.

FLORA
Hi! Hi! We're lost!

The person steps back inside the door before Flora gets there. She tries it. It is locked.

FLORA
No! Nonononono!

There is a click behind her. She turns to find a very ornate iron-wrought ovular gate. She tries it. It opens.

FLORA
(happy happy)
Sigh

Flora enters the gate.

EXT. HAZY GARDEN -TWILIGHT

This is a hazy garden. The gate closes behind Brenda/Flora. Dinah leaps from the girl's arms and runs through the garden. She leaps again and sits atop a decorative statue, which is in the shape of a large plant.

The vegetation in the garden is exotic. Its bright greens are subdued by the dark lighting and hazy atmosphere, but they still shine through.

Dinah mews loudly and Flora approaches the feline. The ground is soft and almost spongy. Dora examines the statue, which is really a real plant growing from the ground, which just happens to be made of plaster.

FLORA
What is that, Dinah?

DINAH
(mew)

A hand reaches out and taps Flora on the shoulder. Flora starts and turns around quickly. A very, very tall being towers over her. His legs make up 2/3 of his height, and his arms are at least twice as long as his legs. His mouth is perfectly round and gigantic, and when he speaks his tongue splits apart and reunites erratically.

FROMP
What's your name?

Dinah meows and leaps from the stone plant, disappearing into the haze.

FLORA

F... F-flora.

FROMP

No, no, nononononononono. No it's not. Why do you change your name?

FLORA

I... I-

FROMP

(taking on a motherly tone)
There are plenty of children all around the world who aren't allowed to change their names, who have much more unfortunate names than you do...

(tone growing more sinister)
...Brenda. Would you be so kind as to tell your dear old Fromp what exactly it is that's so horrible about the name Brenda, hmm?

FLORA

I... I just-

FROMP

Your mother and father chose that name verrry carefully, they spent months and months thinking about you... about only you and what they should call you... and that's how you repay them? Changing your name?

FLORA

I... I'm sorry, I-

FROMP

Well, no matter, you've finally made it home.

FLORA

(looking around)
W-what?

FROMP

Trees belong in gardens, my dear. Don't you know that?

Flora looks down and sees that her feet have sunk into the soft earth. She struggles to get free.

FLORA
No! No, wait! I'm not a tree!

Fromp, who had turned away and begun to depart, turns back.

FROMP
Then what are you doing in the
ground?

Fromp stomps away, disappearing into the mist.

Flora continues to struggle in the ground, succeeding only
in sinking deeper into the ground.

She shouts and struggles. Dinah reappears, mewing
cautiously, and approaches Flora. She continues to sink,
calling to Dinah, who meows, panicked.

Finally Flora sinks all the way into the ground, her screams
silenced.

DINAH
(worried meow)

UNDER THE GROUND

The earth, now behaving much like a throat, squeezes and
constricts, pushing Flora farther down. This goes on for a
few moments until she is pushed out into:

INT. RUM (ROOM)

Flora = It. It = Brenda. Grasping the reality of "it."
Dulass consumes Buggly Beau.

Flora looks at Dulass, who looks concerned.

DULASS
That was not my Jettis pie.

Dulass notices Flora.

DULASS
(approaching her)
What are you doing here? Nobody
watches unreality anymore! You're a
spy, aren't you? A spy of crap?!

FLORA
N-no, I-

DULASS

Then who are you? What are you?

(pause)

What? Oh, all right. I see.

(to Flora)

You're the tree from earlier. You still don't look very much like a tree.

FLORA

I'm not a tree! I... I-I...

P-please don't p-put me in the ground.

DULASS

Have you seen my Jettis pie?

FLORA

N-no...

Dulass suddenly bursts into tears. He falls to the floor, sobbing.

DULASS

(heartbroken)

Fuck!

Flora is speechless.

DULASS

I need my Jettis pie!

Flora opens her mouth to say something, when she is interrupted by Dinah's meow. She looks behind her. The cat is sitting on a pile of cardboard boxes in the corner of the rum.

Flora lets out a relieved shout and approaches Dinah. Dulass snatches Dinah up, and consumes it. It = Dinah. Dinah = Jettis pie.

DULASS

Ah! There's my jettis pie.

FLORA

(frightened, screaming)

That was my cat!

DULASS

Nonsense, child! Cats don't belong in unreality.

FLORA
Uh-unreality?

DULASS
Yes. That is where we are, isn't
it?
(pause)
Wh-where am I? Where am I?! Where
am I?!

Dulass is now crying and screaming childishly.

FLORA
I- I don't know!

DULASS
I wanna go home!

Flora, unhappy with Dulass, leaves him crying. She examines the pile of cardboard boxes and discovers huge voids in the bottom of each. She sticks her hand down one. She examines them closely, then decides to descend through one.

INT. RUM (ROOM)

Flora emerges from a different box. In the center of the room, Dulass and Buggly Beau sword fight. This is obviously a different room.

FLORA
Hello?

The two sword fighters ignore her, instead shouting cryptic taunts at one another.

The fight continues for a few more moments, until Buggly Beau runs Dulass through. The swordpoint flashes, sticking out of Dulass' back. Buggly Beau shouts in triumph, and twists the sword. The sword grinds against Dulass' spine and makes a sickly churning noise.

Flora screams as Buggly Beau pulls the sword out of Dulass, then thrusts it through his chest. He stabs him again and again, even as Dulass falls to the ground. Buggly Beau hacks at the neck with his sword, finally severing the head messily.

As Buggly Beau picks up the head and pushes his hand up into the neck, Flora backs away. Buggly Beau smiles at her and approaches. She turns, and runs straight into the pile of cardboard boxes.

She falls headfirst into one, disappearing.

INT. FLORA'S BEDROOM

Flora falls from a hole in her ceiling (which quickly disappears) onto her bed, landing flat on her back. The moment she hits the bed, her alarm begins sounding.

She looks at the alarm. Her bedroom door opens and her mother enters.

MOTHER
Breakfast time, dear!

Her mother switches off the alarm.

MOTHER
Come on, Brenda. Get up!

Flora slowly gets out of bed, lowering her legs to the ground and shaking.

She follows her mother out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN

The table is set with breakfast. Flora's FATHER already sits at the table, eating eggs and drinking coffee.

FATHER
Good morning, Brenda.

FLORA
'morning.

FATHER
(looking up)
Everything all right, dear?

FLORA
Yes.

Flora's father finishes his breakfast, and stands up.

MOTHER
Oh, you'll have to take your
breakfast with you, Brenda, you'll
be late to school.

She hands a couple waffles wrapped in paper towel to Flora, who takes them and follows her father out the door.

INT. FATHER'S CAR - MORNING

The morning sun shines brightly in Flora's eyes. Her father is wearing sunglasses. They are driving to school.

They arrive at school. Flora says goodbye to her father and gets out of the car, sun still shining in her eyes.

As she steps on the sidewalk, she regains her vision, but it is spotty. Through her obscured vision, she sees the same person that she saw in the hallway inside of the tree. She gasps. The person looks at her, then begins turning away.

Flora's vision is obstructed by traffic for a few moments, and when she can see across the street once more, the person is disappearing around a corner.

Flora starts after him, running into the street. A car brakes loudly and stops just before hitting Flora. She stops in her tracks.

MR. PAPANTONIO, her teacher, calls to her.

MR. PAPANTONIO

Flora! Get out of the street! Come into class, now.

Flora looks at the corner around which the person disappeared, then turns and walks toward her teacher, rubbing her eyes or head.

INT. CLASSROOM

Flora is walked into class by Mr. Papantonio, who scolds her for jumping into traffic.

She takes her seat. Mr. Papantonio addresses the students.

MR. PAPANTONIO

Good morning, good morning, everyone. How **was**

CLASS

(not really in unison)

Good... Okay... Fine...

MR. PAPANTONIO

Did anybody do anything fun? Who has a good story?

Several hands shoot into the air.

MR. PAPANTONIO
(pointing)
Okay... Kenny. What did you do this weekend?

Kenny, a very plump boy, stands up.

KENNY
(deliberate and slow)
On Saturday, I was playing in my front yard, and I saw a snake on the ground, and I picked it up, and I threw it into the street, and a truck squished it!

The class doesn't really react. Tired eyes widen slightly, but no one really says anything.

There is a silence.

MR. PAPANTONIO
(after a moment)
... Okay! Uh, let's see... Flora! What did you do this weekend?

FLORA
I... I went inside a tree and then a garden and I fell into the ground and I saw Dulass and Buggly Beau there and it was just like unreality!

Again, a very minor reaction from the class.

MR. PAPANTONIO
(bemused)
Okay, that's great, Flora. Take a seat. Now, if everyone could get out their math books, we're going to start the week off with some practice problems!

Amidst the shuffling of backpacks and books and the like, Flora looks out the window. The same person is staring at her through the window, from the school playground. They are sitting on the swings (but not swinging) and occasionally jotting something down on a notepad, almost as if they are observing Flora.

Flora stares back at them, frozen.

MR. PAPANTONIO
Flora...? Flora! Your math book?

Flora snaps out of her trance, breaking her gaze. She opens her backpack and takes out her math book. She looks around. Everyone else's book is open to the same page.

MR. PAPANTONIO
Page 304, Flora?

Flora flips open to that page. Mr. Papantonio starts teaching stuff. Flora looks out the window again. The stranger is still staring at her.

She swallows, turns away, and starts paying attention.

Time passes. The end of the day arrives, and all of Flora's classmates exeunt precipitately. She is left to her thoughts.

EXT. PLAYGROUND

As she leaves the school to meet her father under the flagpole where they normally meet, she notices the stranger from before is hiding ineffectively behind a tetherball pole. He has hollowed out the ball and inserted a spy camera into it. He punches it and it flashes.

Flora walks to the flagpole perturbed. She meets her father, who is looking harassed. Something is clearly amiss with him. He gives her a big awkward hug.

FATHER
Brenda! How's my brave, brave
little girl?

He ends the embrace. Awkward pause. He hugs her again.

FATHER
How was your day at school?

FLORA
It was fine, except someone kept
looking at me.

FATHER
(absently)
He probably just likes you,. (to
himself) ...Are you old enough for
that yet?

They walk to the car.

INT. CAR

Flora's father clearly has something significant to say. They drive. He beats a tattoo on the steering wheel, blows his breath out through his clenched teeth, and begins:

FATHER
Brenda? Sweetie?

The Stranger is following them on a bicycle. Though he is speeding to keep up with the car, he is also trying to look nonchalant. He is trying hard.

FLORA
(watching him)
Hmm?

FATHER
Honey, I'm afraid I have some, some bad news. It's y - it's Dinah, Brenda. I'm afraid she passed away this morning. Or sometime last night, I'm not sure...

FLORA
(Snapping to attention)
Dinah?

FATHER
She's gone now, honey.

FLORA
No! She's... H- What happened?

FATHER
I don't think that's important. Honey, I'm sorry...

FLORA
(Tearful)
Dinah?

FATHER
I'm so sorry. She was a good cat.

FLORA
(crying)
She was just a baby!

FATHER
I know. Honey, it's hard to lose a pet. I remember when we -

FLORA
 (crying harder)
 Dad, what happened? What happened?
 Oh, Dinah...

FATHER
 Honey, I don't want to tell you
 about that nnnn...

FLORA
 (interrupting, growing
 hysterical)
 Daddy, please. Daddy please.
 please. Daddy please. (etc.)

FATHER
 No, I don't think -

FLORA
 NO! You said I could have a cat.
 You said. I deserve to know about
 what happened to, oh my god, no,
 Dinah...

She trails off into quiet sobs. Long pause.

FATHER
 (Trying to be diplomatic)
 All right. You have to learn about
 this stuff someday. Brenda. Mom
 found Dinah this morning. She
 didn't look, uh, so good. Like a
 wildcat or, I don't know, a pit
 bull had... Um... tried to eat her.

FLORA
 (Hiccuping sobs. Her dejection
 is replaced by interest)
 ...Eat...?

FATHER
 I'm so sorry, angel. We can pick
 out a new cat for you this weekend.
 I'm sorry.

Flora continues to sob, but it's no longer comprehensible to
 her father. Something about Jets and pie.

INT. A DINER

The Stranger from Flora's dream is seated in a booth in a diner. He wears a trench coat and a camera around his neck. Around one of his wrists are a string of prayer beads, which he presently fingers. He is shortly joined by a fat balding man with a handlebar mustache. This man is Spaulding. His significance to this story is as yet unclear.

The stranger flags down a waitress. He speaks. **He is**

STRANGER

Hey, could you do me a slice of pumpkin pie, ah - (to Spaulding) what do you want?

SPAULDING

Ice water.

STRANGER

And a glass of ice water? Please?

WAITRESS

Sure thing, hon.

She leaves.

SPAULDING

So whaddya got for me, Darling?

STRANGER

(Snapping)

Don't call me Darling.

Spaulding gives him a look.

STRANGER

Please. It's, you know... queer.

SPAULDING

That's your name, though.

STRANGER

Well - [could you at least say] Mr. Darling? Please?

SPAULDING

Fine. Whaddya got for me, Mr. Darling.

MR. DARLING

I'm afraid it's her.

Pause. Spaulding nervously pulls at his hair.

SPAULDING
You, you're sure?

MR. DARLING
She-

Waitress returns.

WAITRESS
One slice of pumpkin pie and one
ice water. Let me know if you need
anything else.

She puts the bill on the table. It is signed "Bunny." Next
to the signature is a picture of a bunny.

SPAULDING
Thank you.

MR. DARLING
Yeah, thanks.

She goes.

MR. DARLING
Listen. That kid's the one.

SPAULDING
(Overlapping "the one")
Yes, yes, but how sure are you? The
father-

MR. DARLING
Listen to me! I'm fucking positive!
It's my job to find her and I'm
fucking good at it! She's the one!

Pause.

SPAULDING
Did you triple check, though.

MR. DARLING
I Encountered her, Spaulding.

SPAULDING
You Encount... (pause. He sips his
water and clears his throat.) Well,
Fuck.

MR. DARLING
Yeah. "Well fuck." The bitch is
back.

SPAULDING

(Pause)

I guess I can stop putting money
away for Bryce's college.

Pause. Mr. Darling pulls out his wallet, and puts some case
on the table. We see his ID. It appears to be government
issue. It reads "Agent Hugh Darling: SAVANT CLASS 1".

MR. DARLING

I'll give you another report soon.

SPAULDING

Wait, where you going?

Mr. Darling slips his prayer beads into his sleeve. He flips
up the collar of his trench coat.

MR. DARLING

Know thy enemy, Spaulding. Or, fail
that, meet her parents.

He exits the diner. Spaulding pulls at his hair.

EXT. FLORA'S BACKYARD

Briefly we see Dinah, mangled, in a shoebox that is
summarily closed. Flora's mother holds it. She wears black.
At her feet is a cat-sized grave and a dirty white stone
slab meant to mark it.

MOTHER

Poor little kitty....

She calls towards the house.

MOTHER

Okay, Brenda, ready!

Flora and her father emerge from the house in a miniature
funeral procession. Flora cries, her father holds her hand.
They reach the grave, and Mother eulogizes.

MOTHER

Dinah. She was a good little cat.
She was a faithful friend. She
loved Brenda, and Brenda loved her.
It was too soon to say goodbye to
Dinah, but sometimes god has
important plans for our pets.
Goodbye Dinah.

FLORA
Goodbye Dinah. I love you.

Flora cries. Mother puts the box in the grave and throws a handful of dirt on it. Father encourages Flora to do the same. They bury the cat in silence, mark the grave, and head back towards the house.

MOTHER
We can have some ice cream for the
wake, Okay, hon?

Flora is still too choked up to answer. She nods.

MOTHER
OK.

INT. KITCHEN

The family eats ice cream in silent reflection. Eventually, Flora clears her throat and speaks. Her voice is reedy.

FLORA
It's 8:30. May I watch Unreality?

FATHER
Yes you may.

Flora exits to living room.

MOTHER
But just one episode and it's
bedtime, hon.

O.S. Flora turns on Unreality. Opening credits roll. The doorbell rings.

MOTHER
Are you expecting someone?

Father shakes his head. Mother rises.

MOTHER
Maybe a canvasser.

She opens the door.

EXT. PORCH

We see Darling. He is holding a pair of jumper cables and grinning sheepishly.

MR. DARLING

Hi there. Look, I sure am sorry to bother you so late, but I'm in awful need of a jump...

Mother looks at him for a moment, and calls Father.

MOTHER

Jim!

FATHER

Yeah?

MOTHER

Come here! There's a guy here needs to jump his car!

From the dining room, we hear a chair scrape the floor. Darling grins winningly.

INT. RUM (ROOM)

Dulass sits cross-legged in the room. His problems are over. "It"= Bespeckled carpet. Dulass sits on it.

DULASS

Within this sit I shall be a new frog on a diamond row. Come! We shall sing the song of a thousand byrnstones smoking into a thousand craters full of pie.

Buggly Beau enters on a large black stallion.

BUGGLY BEAU

My hand is all better now that we have eaten it off ont. But I heard there were pies perhaps I Can Eat?

DULASS

Aye! There shall be pies here and forevermore.

BUGGLY BEAU

But how can there be pies when there are no fingers to sift through the sands of all time going

BUGGLY BEAU
down to the sewer of never ending
torment and death.

DULASS
The pies are not here but in the
air.

The horse rears and mews before running through one of the
walls of the rum.

INT. TELEVISION ROOM

Flora is watching the television quizzically, searching for
answers within the light dots and cathode rays.

FLORA
Dinah?

BUGGLY BEAU
Where is my air? Is it in my shoe?
Is it in my hat?

DULASS
Perhaps it's in the tree!

Dulass and Buggly Beau face Flora in her living room.

DULASS
(cokcneyed)
Do you 'ave our pies?

BUGGLY BEAU
Do you have our stew?

DULASS
Or are you filled with lies?

BUGGLY BEAU
For Dulass and Buggly Beau?

FLORA
Are you asking me?

DULASS
Don't see any other trees round
'ere.

BUGGLY BEAU
She's not much of a tree though.

DULASS
Do you have our pies?

FLORA
No.

DULASS
(genuinely disappointed)
That's too bad.

FLORA
Did you eat my cat?

DULASS
My Jettis pie was there and here
but now it's gone and I've no boat
to steer.

BUGGLY BEAU
Your cat was the eponymous name of
the the only hotel of center of
nowhere town in Illinois with fire
breathing windows and a room of
fortunes for you and me and me and
you but there's just one thing that
can't be which is not what is but
is that which is not.

FLORA
I miss her.

BUGGLY BEAU
Darling's going to kill you, Flora.

Flora looks quizzically at the television.

EXT. FLORA'S HOME

Mr. Darling and Flora's parents are all looking at Darling's
bicycle, which is apparently out of battery power.

MR. DARLING
-and so I think that the battery
died when I went over that bump
over there.

Flora's parents are concerned for the sanity of the
stranger.

MOTHER
Honey, it looks like his battery
isn't even in his... bicycle

MOTHER
 anymore. We have an extra one,
 don't we?

FATHER
 Honey, why would we-Ah. Yes, I
 think I have an extra battery in
 the garage. I'll go get it.

MOTHER
 Good idea, I'll help.

MR. DARLING
 Oh no, I'll help him. Garages are
 full of rakes and spiders and the
 like and I need someone to keep an
 eye on my bicycle. Come on, Jim!
 It'll be fun!

Mother gives a concerned glance at Father.

FATHER
 (aside to Mother)
 I'll be okay, I don't really think
 he knows what a battery is.

Father and Mr. Darling walk off to the garage. Mother keeps
 an eye on the bicycle.

INT. GARAGE

Father and Darling walk into the garage.

FATHER
 I'm pretty sure it's over here by
 the tool rack.

Father goes to the back of the garage where his tools are
 hanging. Darling stays back and looks at a shelf with boxes,
 particularly one box labeled "Brenda's stuff".

FATHER
 Yep...yep I think I'm seeing it
 back here.

Darling takes the box out of the shelf and reaches into it.
 He pulls out a teddy bear. Darling pockets the bear and
 walks over to the tool shelf.

MR. DARLING
 You see it? That's fantastic. Thank
 you so much for helping me.

FATHER

Yeah it's not a problem. Oh look!
Here it is, your battery!

The father hands Darling a wing nut. Darling looks at the wing nut.

MR. DARLING

This is the battery?

FATHER

Yeah. They make them... much much smaller now.

Darling stares silently at Father.

FATHER

Well...you have your battery. Have a safe drive home.

Father turns toward the entrance to the house.

MR. DARLING

Thank you Jim. And say hello to Flora for me!

Father stops.

FATHER

How did you know my daughter's name?

Father turns back to the garage, but no one is there anymore. Father shrugs and walks into the house.

INT. TELEVISION ROOM

Father walks in from the garage, and Flora is sitting close to the television.

FLORA

DID YOU KILL HER? I NEED TO KNOW!

FATHER

Honey, don't sit so close to the screen it'll blind you.

FLORA

Dad, they killed Dinah!

FATHER
That's nice, isn't it time for bed
for you, little lady?

FLORA
But Dad!

FATHER
Yeah, it's no fair. Go to bed.

Mother enters through the front door.

MOTHER
Is my little tree ready for bed?

FLORA
I'm not a tree.

MOTHER
Sure you aren't. Come on.

FATHER
Night honey.

Mother leads Flora up to bed.

INT. FLORA'S BEDROOM

Mother is putting Flora to bed, having just finished tucking
Flora in.

MOTHER
Alright, well you try to get some
sleep, okay? You've had a long day.

FLORA
Mommy?

MOTHER
Yes honey?

FLORA
I miss Dinah.

MOTHER
I know, sweetie, we all do.

FLORA
Something ate her.

MOTHER

Just try to forget it. Good night.

FLORA

Dulass ate her.

Flora lies down, but can't sleep. She turns on her side and looks out her window. It is very dark, much darker than just a moment ago. A mew sounds near Flora's door.

FLORA

Dinah?

Flora turns on her lamp and looks around her room. No kitty can be seen. Flora relaxes and turns off her lamp. Flora lies back down, and when her head reaches the pillow another mew issues from outside of Flora's window.

Flora jolts back up, turns on her lamp, and runs to the window.

FLORA

Dinah!

Flora looks out the window and sees Dinah's grave dug up and little paw prints leading off into the night. Flora gives a noise of delight and runs to her closet. She puts on a jacket and her slippers, then runs out the door.

INT. KITCHEN

Flora runs into the kitchen and takes a flashlight out a drawer, and runs out the front door. The house is strangely dark and quiet, and neither Mother nor Father can be seen.

EXT. STREETS OF SUBURBIA

Flora walks through the streets following the trail of kitty footprints which are strangely visible even in asphalt and concrete.

FLORA

Dinah? Dinah where are you? I'm
sorry you were eaten. Dinah!
Dinah!?

Flora's flashlight begins to flicker. She hits the flashlight a few times, and it appears to work. Flora looks up and down the street, trying to locate her home.

FLORA
This isn't my street.

DULASS
(OS)
Trees don' live on streets, they
live in the ground.

The moon morphs into one of Dulass' eyes, another eye opens up as do his mouth, shoes, and gloves.

DULASS
In the ground with beetles and
worms

Where little tiny mice

Work on their butter churns. 'Ello.
Awfully late to be walking, innit?

FLORA
I'm looking for my cat.

DULASS
Cat you had? Oh I think not. No cat
have you nor have can cat. Cat not
here, cat not exist, No cat for you
and no you for cat.

FLORA
Shut up, you don't exist.

DULASS
And neither do you, least you
won't.

Dulass gives a high shrieking laugh and bursts into a swarm of jack-o-lantern flies. Flora coughs and swats away at the flies, trying to find the cat's path again. Flora staggers for a while but it is in vain, the jack-o-lantern flies have obscured everything around her.

FLORA
Dinah? Mom? Dulass? I don't know
where I am, I can't find my way.
Hello! Hello? Anyone?

Flora staggers through the fog for a while, calling out for help. Suddenly she can no longer move, as she is stuck in the ground. The Jack-o-lantern fog clears and Flora finds herself in...

EXT. HAZY GARDEN -TWILIGHT

Flora is stuck in the ground of the Hazy garden, about a few yards away from the plaster plant. Flora twists and turns and tries to get free. In the midst of her turning she sees Fromp trimming a large purple hedge.

FLORA

Excuse me? Mr... uh... excuse me
mister? Mister?

Fromp turns around from the hedge and waves Flora off.

FROMP

I'm not watering the trees yet.

Fromp goes back to the hedge.

FLORA

But-but I just wanted to find my
cat. I just wanted to sleep. I
DON'T WANT DINAH TO BE DEAD!

Flora sits down the best she can with her feet buried and cries. Fromp notices this and walks over to comfort her.

FROMP

Oh, there there Brenda. Trees can't
very well water themselves, now can
they? Tell Fromp what's the matter?

FLORA

He ate my cat.

FROMP

Who?

FLORA

Dulass.

FROMP

Well he must have been hungry.

FLORA

And I think someone else might try
to kill me.

FROMP

That's ridiculous! Why would anyone
want to kill a tree?

FLORA
I'm not a tree.

FROMP
If you're not a tree, then why are
you sprouting?

Flora looks at her arm and sees a green twig sprouting out of her skin. Fromp pats Flora on the back and goes back to watering the hedge.

Flora eeps at the sight of the twig and tries to brush it off, but it only grows larger. Flora stands back up and uses all of her weight to lift her feet from the ground. Once she is free, she runs toward the iron gate.

FROMP
(turning around from the
hedge)
I'll see what I can do about your
cat.

INT. TREE

Flora is back in the hallway underneath the tree. She catches her breath and looks hurriedly around for an exit. Out of one of the doors is a warm glow of orange light. Flora approaches this door and cracks it open.

INT./EXT. DARLING'S OFFICE

The door leads to Mr. Darling's office, where Mr. Darling is at his desk working on the teddy bear he took from Flora's box still wearing his trench coat, prayer beads, and wide-brimmed hat.

Massive gears turn all over Darling's office, as though it were situated in the middle of a giant clock. On one wall hang various tools: hammers, screwdrivers, drill guns, saws, weed-whackers, chainsaws, pesticides, etc. Darling's desk is made of rusting steel, and the lamp (from which the orange glow is coming) seems to be seamlessly built into the desk. Boxes of wires and gears and motors are scattered throughout the office. The only natural item in the room is a wilting poppy sitting on his desk. Dust is blown around the room by the gears and various unseen fans.

MR. DARLING
(speaking to the bear)
We can't get the girl if we don't
have enough information, you see.

MR. DARLING

And to get that information, we need a bug. That's where you're going to come in.

Darling squeezes the tummy of the bear.

TEDDY BEAR

(cutesy)

Ha ha ha! That tickles, friend.

MR. DARLING

Yes indeed. But you can't be the bug. Oh no, why would I want a stationary bug? Sure you'll be able to move, but they can't see you move. That's why we need a human bug.

Darling presses something with his scalpel which causes the bear to go off again. Meanwhile Flora, who has been watching silently from the door, tries not to sneeze from all of the dust.

TEDDY BEAR

Ha ha ha! That tickles, friend.

MR. DARLING

Don't worry, you're almost done teddy. Now where was I? Oh yes, the human bug. That's what I need you for, Teddy. You see, I need to kill him to make him join our forces. Then he'll be our bug and we can learn about our enemy.

TEDDY BEAR

Ha ha ha! That tickles, friend.

MR. DARLING

I'm getting there. I'm not going to kill him because I'm not meant to kill. I'm meant to observe. But between you and I, I'm not going to let her get away again. I missed my chance the first time, little teddy, and look where that's gotten us. No, Teddy, this time the victory will belong to me. You won't tell anyone will you?

TEDDY BEAR

Ha ha ha! That tickles, friend.

MR. DARLING

Good, I'm glad I can trust you.

Flora sneezes. Mr. Darling looks up, and the bear slowly rises to its feet. The bear has wires sticking out of its gut, a robotic claw, another button eye made with a very very large button, and a large sewn grin.

MR. DARLING

Did you think I wouldn't see you there, Flora?

Mr. Darling point out the door and the bear jumps up and begins to run toward her. Flora screams and runs away.

INT. TREE

Flora runs through the hallway with the bear following behind her (it appears as though the bear also has a glowing ember inside of it where its heart should be), Flora frantically tries every door, but they're all locked. The bear's laughter echoes through the hall.

Flora begins to get tired of running and her pace slows, she looks behind her, panicked, and sees the bear still approaching quickly. Flora tries more doors, but they're all locked. Having lost all her energy, Flora falls to the ground gasping for air. The ground proves to be almost water-like, and she sinks through the floor, as the bear runs over her, still laughing.

INT. FLORA'S BEDROOM

Flora sinks through her ceiling and onto her bed, her face buried in her pillow. She wakes up, and breathes heavily, turning over and staring up at the ceiling.

FLORA

It must have been a dream.

Flora breathes heavily and sit up in bed. She looks around her room for anything strange. There is nothing.

FLORA

It has to have been a dream.

Flora remembers that her arm had a sprout growing out of it. She draws back the covers and checks her arm, only to find it the same arm she's always had: no sprout and no branch. Flora gives a sigh of relief.

FLORA

It was a dream. It was only a dream.

Flora's heart rate has steadied, and she reassures herself that all of the creepies and ghoulies are gone away in her subconscious, although not in so many words.

FLORA

I'm...really thirsty.

Flora gets out of bed and exits down the hallways to her kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Flora turns on the light to the kitchen and crosses to a cupboard where she pulls out a glass with cartoons on it. She then crosses to the refrigerator and uses the lever to pour a steady stream of water into the cup. When the cup is full, she sits down at the kitchen table with her back to the entrance of the kitchen and sips her water.

While drinking water, a thought occurs to Flora. She stands, picks up the chair and drags it to the kitchen window. Once the chair is in place, she stands on it and looks out the window to where Dinah's grave is. Flora gives a shriek, as she sees that the grave is still dug up with the paw prints leading away from it. Flora stares more carefully out the window.

The sound of a knife being pulled out of the supperware drawer and laughter startle Flora out of her thoughts. She turns around to see the bear walking out of the kitchen light, holding a large knife and laughing uncontrollably.

FLORA

No!

The bear turns around and faces Flora.

TEDDY BEAR

(cutesily sinister)

Ha ha ha! That tickles, friend!

The bear runs at Flora with the knife, and Flora screams and ducks out of the way.

The knife goes through the window, shattering the glass all over. While the bear is distracted, Flora runs out of the kitchen. The bear turns and runs after her.

INT. TELEVISION ROOM

Flora runs for the front door, the bear gaining quickly on her. Suddenly a door opens out of the wall directly in front of Flora, and out walks Mr. Darling dragging behind him his weed-whacker. Flora stops quickly and topples to the ground.

MR. DARLING

Teddy, get back to your mission.
And thank you for leading me to
her.

The bear nods and walks up the stairs while Darling closes the door and puts a ring of keys into his inner-trench coat pocket. Flora backs away from Mr. Darling to the couch.

FLORA

Who are you?

MR. DARLING

Now where are my manners? I'm Agent
Hugh Darling, and I'm here to
monitor you and make decisions
accordingly.

FLORA

Do you... exist?

MR. DARLING

Oh my no, but a lot of things don't
exist, Flora. Soon your father
won't exist.

FLORA

Daddy?

MR. DARLING

Yes, sorry. But we need to keep a
very close eye on you, so he needs
to be killed to live again under my
control, and the only way to do
that is have him killed by
unreality.

Flora's eyes grow wide and she gets up and runs to the stairs, only to find herself looking straight at Mr. Darling again.

MR. DARLING

You're not going anywhere, Flora.
That is what you like to be called,
is it not? Flora?

FLORA

Y-yes.

MR. DARLING

Good. You see, Flora, we've been
looking for you for a long, long
time. I've been looking for you for
a long long time. You're special,
Flora, do you know that? You're
very very special. You're the one
who will join reality to unreality.
You are the one who will make all
of non-existence exist, the one to
collide matter with anti-matter,
the one to combine the two elements
of the universe that have been
living separately from each other.
And all that I need to do to make
this happen is kill you.

FLORA

Kill me?

MR. DARLING

Don't worry Flora, death only hurts
a little bit. And pain is part of
life. After all, without pain you
wouldn't be able to grow. Every
time you get a paper cut, your skin
comes back stronger, when you break
your leg the bones grows in again
less brittle, when you make a
mistake that costs you a finger you
learn from that and grow. Don't you
see, Flora? Without pain we'd be
nothing more than miserable worms
crawling across the earths surface
sucking on the refuse of the world.
So don't worry about death. Your
death will be the greatest pain you
will ever experience. But you'll
grow out of it, Flora. You'll grow
more powerful than you ever
imagined. So let's get started,
shall we?

Mr. Darling holds up his Weed whacker and turns it on,
causing the blades to twirl around rapidly. Flora screams

and jumps over the couch just as Mr. Darling lunges at it, tearing a hole into the upholstery that Flora was sitting on. Flora, no longer being inhibited by Darling, runs up the stairs as quick as she can. Darling yanks the weed-whacker out of the couch and chases after her.

INT. HALLWAY

Flora runs down the small corridor of her upstairs toward her parents room at the end of corridor to the right. She comes to the door and pushes it open.

INT./EXT. PARENT'S ROOM

The sheets to the parents bed are completely bloody on one side, and the bear is poised over Flora's father's body with the knife arched. Flora screams as the bear brings the knife down to the father's neck, causing blood to squirt everywhere. The father's eyes jolt open and he utters a low groan and reaches up to the bear, pressing its tummy.

TEDDY BEAR

Ha ha ha! That tickles, friend!

The father's groan continues as his eyes slowly close and he dissolves into nothingness. The bear laughs and crawls into a mouse hole.

INT. HALLWAY

Flora turns to look down the corridor at Mr. Darling, weed-whacker still running.

MR. DARLING

It's too late, Flora. Your father belongs to me now.

Mr. Darling inches toward Flora, raising the weed-whacker.

MR. DARLING

So will your Mother, so will your Teach, so will everyone you care about until you die.

Mr. Darling is now getting very close to Flora, and the weed-whacker is at the apex of Darling's swing. Darling brings the weed-whacker down towards Flora's head and Flora screams. Just as the weed-whacker is about to hit her, a rectangular object flies from Flora's room and hits Darling in the head. Darling drops the weed-whacker and wrestles

with the object, which Flora sees to be the shoe box she buried Dinah in.

FLORA

Dinah?

The shoe box's lid opens up at the short side like a mouth. The shoe box (Dinah) spits dirt as she speaks.

DINAH

Go to bed, Flora. Go to bed and wake up, it's morning. Wake up Flora. WAKE UP!

INT. TELEVISION ROOM

Flora shrieks and jolts awake on the couch in the television room. Flora's Mother is standing over her, nudging her.

MOTHER

Don't worry, honey, it was just a nightmare. My, it must have been a bad one, you sleep walked all the way to the couch.

FLORA

Mom! Mom there's this guy named Mr. Darling and he's trying to kill me to make reality and unreality into one thing and he killed Dad with a Teddy Bear and Fromp thinks I'm a tree even though he knows I'm not, and I had twig growing out my arm and WHY DIDN'T YOU WAKE UP AND SAVE DAD?!

MOTHER

Flora. Flora honey, it was all just a nightmare. Your father's in the kitchen and he's not dead. Honey, I don't know what you're talking about. THAT IS ENOUGH!

MOTHER

(cont.)

Young lady, I don't know what is wrong with you, but I think you've been watching too much of that television show. Now stop this madness or we'll send you to Dr. Spaulding, okay?

FLORA

Okay.

MOTHER

Okay, good. Now come on, your
breakfast is ready.

Flora gets off the couch and notices that the scar from the
weed-whacker is still there.

FLORA

Mommy, what happened to the couch?

MOTHER

Hmmm? Oh, the house was broken into
last night. Don't worry, nothing
too important was taken and we've
called the police to investigate.

FLORA

What about Dinah? Is Dinah okay?

MOTHER

(sighs)

Honey, I'm sorry. Those animals
that ate her must have still
smelled her because they dug up
grave and took her away. But her
headstone's still there. Have some
eggs now, sweetie.

INT. KITCHEN

Flora and her Mother walk into the kitchen. Father is seated
at the breakfast table with a newspaper covering all of the
upper part of his seated body except for his fingers and
hands. Flora stops and looks at her father.

FLORA

Daddy?

FATHER

(something is off kilter,
although we don't know what
just yet)

Yes, honey?

FLORA

Are you okay?

FATHER

Yes, honey, I've just been reading
the newspaper.

Flora looks at the clock on the wall. She is going to be
late to school.

FLORA
Aren't you going to take me to
school?

Father glances at the clock, and then his watch.

FATHER
Oh! Yes yes of...of course dear.

INT. CAR

The morning sun shines brightly in Flora's eyes. Her father is wearing sunglasses. As they drive along Flora nervously looks around, peering out the windows for anything abnormal. She is unable to see much. Her sight is overpowered by the sunlight.

They arrive at school.

FLORA
Dad?

FATHER
I'll be here to pick you up after
school, honey.

Her father does not turn to look at her for the exchange and Flora worriedly exits the car.

When she exits into the light, she continues to have a hard time seeing. Her sight begins to clear and her attention is caught by a figure on the sidewalk to her right. Through her obscured vision she sees what looks like Dulass, everyone walking around him like he wasn't there. She blinks and he's gone.

FLORA
(anxious noise)

She enters the school

INT. CLASSROOM

Flora sits in her class, not paying attention to Mr. Papantonio. Instead she stares out the window into the playground.

MR. PAPANTONIO
Math is a cornerstone for many
things that help us understand the
world. Science depends largely on

MR. PAPANTONIO
math to quantify and measure all
the many things that are studied in
every field.

Herbert Simon, a man who worked on
psychology and early computers,
once said that "the central task of
natural science is to make the
wonderful commonplace: to show that
complexity, correctly viewed, is
only a mask for simplicity; to find
pattern hidden in apparent chaos."

Flora slowly watches for anything out of the ordinary, but
she focuses her attention primarily on the swing where she
saw Mr. Darling. The class around her seems largely bored.

MR. PAPANTONIO
In math you can find simple
patterns in chaos too. One
interesting principle of math is
that the explanation for the answer
to an equation is always more
complicated than the equation
itself. That is to say *why* 2 plus
2 equals 4 is more complicated than
just 2 plus 2.

Flora continues to stare into the empty playground, the wind
blows the swing gently.

MR. PAPANTONIO
Unreality is the equation that
defines Reality.

Flora jerks her head to the front of the room on hearing
this, her mouth hangs open slightly. She looks around and no
other students are reacting in any way out of the ordinary.

MR. PAPANTONIO
Well, that's something you'll see
in higher level algebra. Now, if
you would open your books to page
117, we'll get on with the lesson.

Flora still looks back and forth, desperate to see any sign
that anyone else heard the same thing she had. Instead the
students dutifully opened their text books to page 117.
Flora sinks in her chair and does the same.

EXT. SCHOOL

After school Flora meets her father at the flagpole. He kneels down and meets her with a somewhat awkward hug.

FATHER
Brenda! How's my brave, brave
little girl?

Hearing this, Flora recoils from him and takes a step back. He seems un-phased and holds out his hand. She hesitantly grabs it and he take her to the car.

INT. CAR

They drive in awkward silence, they are both clearly uncomfortable. Her father breaks the silence.

FATHER
How was your day at school?

FLORA
(quietly)
Dad, I think I might be sick.

FATHER
Sick?

Flora takes a deep breath.

FLORA
(talking fast)
I've been having really bad dreams,
I dreamed you died, and mommy
didn't wake up, and now I'm seeing
things and they aren't there, like
Dulass, and hearing people say
things they can't be saying, like
in school. It's all becoming like
too much, too much like Unreality
and...and...

Flora breathes heavily, nearly hyperventilating. She looks over at her father desperately and his face is contorted. It looks as if he is sad, concerned, and happy all at once. His eyes are still covered by sunglasses. After a moment of looking at her, his face returns to a neutral/happy.

FATHER
(casually)
You have to learn about this stuff
someday.

FLORA

What? Learn about what?

She continues looking at him desperately. His face seems to reflect her look of desperation.

FATHER

I'm sorry, angel. We can pick out a new cat for you this weekend.

A second before saying his last two words, his face becomes very sad.

FATHER

I'm sorry.

Flora begins crying. Her father's face returns to a neutral/happy and they drive home.

INT. FLORA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Flora enters and lies down in bed. She glances out the window at Dinah's grave, and lies down again. She falls asleep. She rises from the bed and goes to the door. When she opens it it leads to her front yard, which is in broad daylight, instead of the hallway. She looks back to her bedroom, which is still there, and is night outside the window. She goes outside. Dulass is now outside, still just shoes and vague facial features.

DULASS

(without any cockney)

I trusted you Brenda. You were supposed to be the normal one.

FLORA

How did you...how did you know my name?

DULASS

It's mine.

FLORA

What?

Dulass fades away. Flora calls after him but eventually starts walking down her neighborhood street, following Dinah's paw prints, which are visible as a bright blue. Sunlight glares off of something on a rooftop. Flora covers her eyes, and Agent Darling is visible prone on a roof, with a large sniper rifle, the sun glinting off its scope.

MR. DARLING

You have to die Flora! Unreality
must exist!

He pulls the trigger and a swarm of jack'o'lantern flies issue forth from the barrel, and surround Flora. She swats at them and spits. A large bundle of paper bound by paperclips flies at her feet, and the flies scatter. It is apparently a math report. She looks around. A MAN in dark green clothes, almost like army fatigues, jumps in front of her. He has bare feet, an open shirt, a long beard, and a thin sword, which seems to have scribbles etched along the blade.

FLORA

Who-

Agent Darling stands up and appears furious.

MR. DARLING

YOU! You son of a bitch!

Mr. Darling ejects the cartridge from the rifle and begins loading another one. Man turns to Flora.

MAN

Come on!

He scoops up the papers and picks Flora up. Mr. Darling starts firing real bullets in rapid succession. Man turns a corner and runs down an alley. He finds a patch of concrete and pulls out a piece of chalk, and puts Flora down. He begins scrawling furiously in a circle.

FLORA

Who are you?!

MAN

Get back in the circle!

MR. DARLING

HOLIDAY!!

He yanks her closer to him. He finishes scrawling, and stands in the center of the circle. Glass erupts from the scrawl, and the piece of concrete they stand on begins to descend like an elevator into the ground. It gets dark, but they are somehow still illuminated. Bullets hit the glass at the top. Man wipes his brow and sighs.

FLORA

Who are you!?

Man looks at her and leans down.

MAN

My name is John Holiday, I knew your father.

FLORA

My father? Is he really dead?

JOHN

No. That man wasn't your father, not really. Dulass is your father. Was your father.

FLORA

NO! No No! Daddy wouldn't eat Dinah!

JOHN

I'm sorry Flora. It's my fault. We were both Guardians, your father and I.

FLORA

Guardians?

JOHN

Of Reality. We've been around since the beginning. We guard this world from Unreality, keep them separate. There are always two, a knight and a squire.

Flora sits down and looks very interested, like she's hearing a bedtime story, but tears still issue from her eyes.

JOHN

I was your father's squire. The squire exists to keep the knight in check you see, knights are exposed to so much unreality that the squire has to ground him in reality, to make sure he doesn't turn to their side. I was the one who encouraged him to settle down with your mom and have you, to give him something to fight for here in the real world, to keep him focused. But... but I guess that wasn't enough. He became Dulass.

He bends down and touches Flora's cheek.

JOHN

I'm so sorry.

Flora cries even more and hugs John. The elevator descends into the middle of a long white hallway and stops. The glass is now gone. The hallway seems to stretch forever in both ways. The walls are covered in the same scrawl as the sword and circle. Flora's tears turn to curiosity as she looks around.

FLORA

What is this place?

JOHN

This is the sanctuary. This is the one place that doesn't actually exist that's safe from Unreality.

Flora goes up to the wall.

FLORA

What is this stuff?

JOHN

Math.

The wall is covered in numbers and equations, from pythagorean theorem to the multiplication tables.

JOHN

Math is the only thing we can use against Unreality; it's the only way to prove something actually exists. Even it has it's limits, though.

They walk down the hallway and are silent for a while.

FLORA

Why is that man trying to kill me?

JOHN

Agent Darling, he's with the government. He watched your father and I too, they don't quite understand what we do. He's only supposed to watch you, but instead he's been corrupted by Unreality. If you die, then reality will become unreality, but we can't allow that to happen.

Flora stops walking.

FLORA

I don't...I don't want to keep
going.

John smiles.

JOHN

Come on. Dinah wants to see you.

Flora beams and runs forward.

INT. A DINER

Spaulding sits and drinks coffee while reading the newspaper. Mr. Darling sits next to him, he looks like he has lost sleep and pats his forehead with a napkin with one hand as he frantically rubs his prayer beads with the other.

SPAULDING

Darling.

MR. DARLING

Sp-Spaulding. How's the wife?

SPAULDING

Is something wrong? You look like
hell.

MR. DARLING

I've been dreaming, about... I've
been losing sleep lately.

SPAULDING

I am a doctor Darling, you can tell
me.

MR. DARLING

I've been having dreams about her
Spaulding, about Unreality,
about...

SPAULDING

About?

MR. DARLING

About killing her Spaulding, with a
fucking weed whacker. Uniting
unreality and reality, and...and
there's a bear too.

SPAULDING

A bear?

MR. DARLING

Like, like a little stuffed bear. I was supposed to tap their house, right? I dreamed that I, uh, made this bear to kill her father. To kill people!

Spaulding now seems to be taking this seriously.

SPAULDING

This is a problem Darling. You should get reassigned.

MR. DARLING

What?! And who would take my place, Jenkins? That asshole? Compromised or not I'm in too deep, and I'm the only one who knows what's best for this assignment. I need more of the pills, Spaulding.

SPAULDING

Fair enough. But if the shit hits the fan I'm not going to back you up. I could recite the protocols your breaking right now.

MR. DARLING

I know I know, just give me the fucking pills.

He digs in his coat and hands Darling a bottle of pills. He craddles them for a moment and then looks at Spaulding.

MR. DARLING

How did the blood work turn out?

Spaulding hands Darling a folder.

SPAULDING

About what we thought. At least we're positive now. You called it early, I owe you lunch.

MR. DARLING

I'll take a rain check.

SPAULDING

Well she's the one, you don't need to worry, not that you were.

MR. DARLING

Hmm. Better this way to explain to the inquiry board anyway, if the shit hits the fan.

SPAULDING

You should get some sleep Darling. I'm not going to report you but I'll be damned if I let you do any of the observations today in the state you're in, pills or no.

MR. DARLING

Fine fine, just let me know OK? Detailed reports.

SPAULING

As always.

Darling gets up and walks out the dinner door. Spaulding watches him get into his car and drive off, and continues to read his paper.

INT. WHITE HALLWAY

FLORA

(excited, quizzical)
Dinah's here?

JOHN

Yes, she's sleeping my desk last I knew.

They come to a door that seems to only appear out of the infinite walls as they draw near. John opens the door.

JOHN

My office is a little small for two people, but we'll manage.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE

The door opens into a large, spherical room that resembles Flora's classroom. Its walls are white and covered with the same kind scrawling as those seen in the hallway.

JOHN

(mild surprise)
Hm. Not bad, Flora.

FLORA

What?

JOHN

Oh it's nothing, but this will
accommodate us better, won't it?

Flora begins to say something when she spots Dinah on the desk at the front of the classroom. She runs to the front of the room. Dinah gets up and stretches as she approaches, yawning and mewling quietly. As Flora picks up Dinah and pets her lovingly and enthusiastically, John sits at the desk.

FLORA

(holding Dinah)

You protect Reality from
Unreality...with math?

JOHN

Math, yes. Math let's us quantify
and define the world around us.
Math forms the very borders that
restrain Unreality from crossing
into Reality.

Flora sits on a nearby desk as Dinah jumps out of her arms and onto John's desk. The white chalkboard becomes covered with complex equations trickling down to simple answers.

JOHN

Reality and Unreality are meant to
be mutually exclusive, you see.
Reality is defined by absence of
Unreality.

The white chalkboard behind John displays a Venn Diagram. Unreality is represented by a much larger circle than Reality, they overlap slightly.

JOHN

Any time something that isn't real
effects someone deeply, it has the
risk of spilling over into Reality.
It is the Guardian's job to keep
that from happening.

FLORA

And my father helped you?

JOHN

(sighing)

He did once. He could exist in both
Reality and Unreality, and he was

JOHN

capable of making small changes to maintain the balance. He lost touch with Reality though, and slipped away. Your mother tried to get him to see a psychologist, Dr. Spaulding, when he started drifting. Spaulding didn't seem to do him any good and now he's lost in Unreality, living as Dulass. He can't be a Guardian anymore, Flora, it can't work if you're stuck on only one side.

FLORA

Then why would those men want to kill daddy?

JOHN

Darling tried to kill your father because they think you and your father are the only things holding back Unreality from pouring over. Your father though...ever since he lost himself in Unreality, he's been hollow. All his passion, all his creativity, and all his imagination are lost here.

FLORA

My daddy is...

JOHN

Gone. The father you've known in Reality is like a placeholder. When Dulass lost his mind to Unreality, his body couldn't go with him, nor could it stop existing. So he's still been there all this time...but its not really him, not his whole self. What's still out there is like an echo of his old persona. Darling and Spaulding tried to take him over and turn him to their side, but that shell can't give them anything now.

Dinah lies down on John's desk and watches them, tail flicking back and forth.

JOHN

I've tried to bring him back. It seems all I do in Unreality these

JOHN
days is fight him as Buggly Beau:
Squire against Knight.

FLORA
(quietly)
I want to go home...

JOHN
(ignoring her statement)
Darling is the same way, I fear.
He's losing himself and becoming a
tool for Dulass now, a tool for
Unreality.

FLORA
(louder)
I just want to go home with
Dinah...

JOHN
(Looking down sympathetically)
Flora, you have great potential. No
one has been able to bridge the gap
like you can since the beginning,
since Reality was first defined
from Unreality. Adults lose their
imaginations as they grow older;
they learn the difference between
Reality and Unreality and stop
considering anything that isn't
Real. They learn to control their
emotions and their thoughts. They
gain a strong sense of where the
border is, and so Guardians have
always been adults. Children
though, children like you, have
potent imaginations and that has
granted you quite a lot in
Unreality.

John gently reaches out and pats Flora's head. She recoils
for a second before relaxing. She looks up at him.

FLORA
(understandingly)
So I can control Unreality.

JOHN
Exactly. Your thoughts, your dreams
have shaped everything that's
happened around you. You may have
crossed into many places of

JOHN

Unreality that already existed, but you have shaped them as you've moved, for better or worse.

FLORA

If I can control Unreality, then why did Dinah get eaten? Why would daddy kill my cat?

JOHN

He wants you here, Flora. He wants you to stay here. He brought Dinah here so you would follow. Dulass is part of Unreality now, and he wants you with him. He feels you have the potential to break into the Real world. Then anything anyone has ever imagined or dreamed will come into Reality.

FLORA

Well...that means some good things, happy dreams could too, right?

JOHN

That's true, and that's what started Dulass down the path he's on. He wanted to bring the good things from Unreality into Reality. He wanted to bring out the good dreams, the happy stories...

John leans back a little and takes a sadder tone.

JOHN

He means well, I know, but he's out of control. In trying to bring good things to this world, he's opened himself to the dark things and he's started to encompass all of Unreality.

Numbers began appearing at random on the white chalkboard, getting bigger and more multiple. John looks over at Dinah and reaches out to pet her. Dinah mews quietly as he touches her, but does not move.

JOHN

I know you've seen the garden, the one Fromp takes care for. Dulass created that; he dreamed it when he was young. It's beauty isn't

JOHN

completely lost yet, but you've seen that it is being consumed by darkness. He made the jack'o'lantern flies too. They used to light up the dark places of Unreality, but now they've been twisted just as he has. He used his potential for great things once, but now he's lost his mind. The madness is spreading too, he can even infect me with it when I'm near him. I become just like him.

The numbers of the chalkboards swirl and shrivel until they are completely incoherent. Then they fade away, back to white.

In his mind he doesn't acknowledge the harm he's doing, or that he can do harm at all. That's what he's using Darling for. He's extending his control into Reality and Darling is doing his dirty work. He is trying to use Darling to kill you and trap you in Unreality. With Darling getting the blood on his hands, what's left of Dulass' mind only remembers the good side things.

They all don't understand how dangerous this is. If he succeeds, if he merges Unreality with Reality, so many horrible things - nightmares - will find their way into the world.

The white chalkboard behind John goes black.

FLORA

(nervously, anticipating the answer)

Can't you stop him? I have to, don't I?

JOHN

I can't, Flora. I've tried. I've tried for years, but now I'm losing ground. The more time I spend here - the more I play the part of Buggly Beau - the more I lose myself in Unreality. Now I can't even control myself near him, I

JOHN
 become lost to the same madness.
 Darling too, is a shadow of
 himself. But you're special, Flora.
 You have great control in Unreality
 and I think it will be enough to
 stop Dulass.

John gets up.

JOHN
 We don't have long. Darling and
 Spaulding are still out there and I
 can't protect you in Reality. We
 have to go. We have to put an end
 to this as soon as possible.

John walks toward the door. Flora gets up nervously, looking
 back at Dinah.

FLORA
 What about Dinah...can she come
 with?

JOHN
 I'm sorry, Flora. She can't come
 back into Reality anymore. But I
 promise you, she will always be
 safe here.

Flora sniffs back some tears as she follows John out of the
 room. She looks back one last time as she exits and sees
 Dinah sitting up on the desk, staring back at her.

INT. WHITE HALLWAY

As they exit the room, the door disappears and John walks
 down the infinite hallway. They walk further down and John
 studies the walls as they go. At some specific point, for
 reasons unknown to Flora, he stops and kneels down.

JOHN
 Flora: Dulass showed you a tree
 when you first saw him, right?

Flora nods.

JOHN
 And you found the tree again later,
 didn't you? It talked to you?

Flora nods again, nervously.

JOHN

I want you to imagine it, Flora.
Imagine it as clearly as you can.

Flora closes her eyes.

JOHN

Can you see it, Flora?

FLORA

Yes.

JOHN

Alright, now imagine that it is
nearby, imagine that it is so close
that it could be just on the other
side of this wall.

Flora stands with her eyes closed for a couple moments, John kneeling next to her. Suddenly another door appears in the white wall.

JOHN

Excellent! Excellent. Here we are.

John pats her on the shoulder as he stands up and goes to the door. He places his hand on the knob.

JOHN

Come on now, Flora. I know you can
do it. If your father showed you
this tree, he must have thought you
were ready for this.

She comes next to him, standing behind him as he opens the door.

EXT. TREE

As the door opens, they see the large tree standing before them. Aside from the tree, they seem to enter black void. John gently pulls Flora through the doorway and it closes behind them, disappearing.

JOHN

This tree is very important, Flora.
This is the core of all Unreality;
its branches and roots reach in
every direction. This is the tree
you've imagined you were. It all
started here. The barrier that
defined Reality from Unreality

JOHN
formed when the tree was planted.
Now, it stands as the link between
the two worlds.

Flora looks up at the tree, feeling it is taller than she remembered. The tree is beautiful, almost glowing with a light of its own as its branches gently sway in a subtle breeze. John takes off his small pack. He sets it on the ground and kneels, putting both his hands on Flora's shoulders.

JOHN
Take my pack. Inside it are my
papers and my chalk. You need to
climb the tree to the Zenith: the
edge between Reality and Unreality.

Flora shakes nervously, her eyes tearing up.

FLORA
Can't you come with me? I don't
want to be alone!

JOHN
Flora, you're the only one, the
only one in the world, who can do
this. Will you do this for me? For
your father?

Flora pauses, fidgeting nervously. After a moment she wipes away her tears and nods resolutely. John smiles and hugs her.

JOHN
I know you can do it.

With one arm around her shoulder, he turns and points to the tree.

JOHN
When you are ready, Flora, walk up
to the tree and it will show you
the way.

John picks up his pack and puts it on Flora's back.

JOHN
Tell your father I'm sorry. I'm
sorry I wasn't able to bring him
back myself.

John stands up and Flora turns to face the tree. As she steps toward it, the bark shifts to spell out endless lists of mathematical formulas and sequences. The tree changes: its branches shift, divide, and twist to form a spiraling stairway.

Flora takes several steps up, branch by branch before looking back. John waves to her, but suddenly looks behind him, hearing a loud thud. The invisible, ethereal wall that they had exited from suddenly cracks. With more heavy pounding sounds it shatters. Darling steps out of the broken wall, a large hammer in hand. His appearance has changed. There is a glow like an ember inside his chest and several turning gears are sticking out of his body. While his face is rough with anger, his mouth is curled into a broad grin.

MR. DARLING

(breathing heavily)

This ends here, Holiday! Flora must die. Unreality must exist. This time the victory will belong to me!

John draws his sword.

JOHN

Run, Flora!

Flora turns away and begins running up the branches, choking back tears while she hears the sounds of fighting below.

EXT. ZENITH

Flora travels up for a very long time and can no longer see the ground. Despite this, she does not feel tired and is instead strangely energized.

At the top of the branch-formed stairway, she finds three solid stone stairs. She climbs them and finds herself in a perfectly flat, empty white plane. Far to her right the flat plane fades into what looks like water and waves. Far to her left the flat plane fades into what looks like a beach. Both sides are shrouded in a seemingly infinite haze of jack'o'lantern flies, preventing her from seeing any further.

In front of her, only a couple paces away, stands Dulass. He is more clearly defined now. Flora can tell he looks like her father. He is wearing a white suit, hat, gloves, and shoes. As she enters he is bowing to her. One hand is courteously behind his back while the other is gripping the brim of his hat. He tips his hat, obscuring all of his face but a supernaturally wide smile as he bows.

He rises and lifts his head, revealing two unnerving, over-sized eyes.

DULASS
Words, words, words!

Dulass removes his hand from behind his back. Flowers are growing from the tips of each of his five fingers. He plucks them one by one and hands them to Flora.

DULASS
Flora, Flora, Flora!

Flora takes the flowers, unsure of herself.

EXT. TREE

Darling and John do battle. John's sword seems impotent against Darling's hammer, which has become part of his arm. The sword sparks and dents every time it comes in contact with the hammer.

JOHN
Look at yourself, Hugh.

Darling's clockwork eyes spin back in his head and out the other side, a full 360 degrees.

DARLING
The coal burns bright at night!
Flight to height and sleight of
sight!

JOHN
This isn't your job!

DARLING
BLATHER BLATHER--You're the one
who's wrong, John! The whole world
is wrong! The whole world doesn't
know what it's about! Let me show
you what it's about! Let me SHOUT
OUT what it is ABOUT!

John ducks a swing from Darling's hammer, which demolishes a large rock sitting at the base of the tree.

EXT. ZENITH

DULASS

Let me show you what a father can
do for his daughter, Flora.

The bones vanish from Dulass' body and he collapses into a pile on the ground, one arm sprawling out to the side.

Flora gapes.

Dulass' body inflates into a swing set.

DULASS

Come swing on me!

Flora, terrified, holds her ground.

DULASS

Daddy loves you!

Dulass changes shape again, becoming a SMALL BROWN. It = Small Brown. It is very cute. It dances.

SMALL BROWN

Hugg me!

Flora stares at the small brown.

The small brown continues to dance.

EXT. TREE

Darling's hammer crashes down on John's ankle, shattering it. John SCREAMS in agony and crumples to the ground, grimacing.

DARLING

I have a NEWWWS for you, Buggle
Booo!

Darling stands over John. He picks up John's sword and easily twists it into a corkscrew.

DARLING

I know something do to you! I know
maths TOOOOOO!

Darling extends a felt-tipped finger to John's forehead and begins to write. John's eyes widen.

Darling draws a square-root symbol.

JOHN
(whispering)

No.

EXT. ZENITH

The small brown is now a LARGE BROWN. It = Large Brown. It is not so cute.

The large brown bellows angrily at Flora, then walks over to her.

Flora backs off to the edge of the Zenith. Far down below, she can see Darling standing over John.

The large brown now has her cornered. It kneels in front of her, strokes her hand.

Flora looks at her hand. Her hand is LEAVES. She looks up at the large brown. It nods. It becomes two large browns, then four, then eight, until there are at least 1,024 large browns (maybe even 2,048).

Flora looks down at her feet. They have begun to take root in the hard ground. Her skin is rough and bark-like, and her eyes are a vibrant shade of green.

The large browns bow before her.

A deep, melodic, almost heartbreaking MOAN travels in a wave across the sea of large browns. Flora looks down to see that she now holds a scepter in her right branch.

EXT. TREE

Darling continues to draw on John's forehead. He puts a '1' underneath the radical.

John's eyes well with tears.

JOHN
Don't do this.

Darling puts a small minus in front of the one.

Suddenly, John BELLOWS.

JOHN
NO!!!!

In one swift motion, John grabs his corkscrewed sword, leaps to his feet, and impales Darling, twisting the sword through his torso.

Darling looks down at the sword in shock. His gears grind to a halt, and the glow in his chest begins to flicker.

John looks on, astonishment in his eyes. His eyes are now "i"s. The equation $\sqrt{-1}$ is still drawn on his forehead. Otherwise, he is unchanged.

EXT. ZENITH

Dulass emerges from the back of the throng of kneeling browns. He is again in the form of her father, with large eyes and mouth.

He surveys the assembled browns with awe and a little bit of paternal pride.

He approaches Flora, who is no longer startled or afraid.

DULASS

It's nice here, isn't it?

Dulass holds a closed hand up in front of Flora's face and slowly opens it to reveal a jack-o-lantern fly. This is the first time we have seen one up close, and it is beautiful. It is baroque in its complexity, and it casts warm rainbows of light in every direction. It flaps its gossamer wings and hovers just above Dulass' palm, spinning slowly.

Flora's eyes sparkle in wonder. She looks back up at Dulass.

Dulass smiles a tender smile.

EXT. TREE

Darling has stopped moving entirely; in fact, he has turned to STONE, the corkscrew sword still protruding from his belly.

John (his eyes still "i"s) leaps up into the tree. On his first attempt, he the bark crumbles away in his hands and he slides back down, further injuring his ankle.

Again he leaps into the tree and this time finds purchase. He begins to scramble upward.

JOHN

Flora!

EXT. ZENITH

Flora extends a barky hand towards the jack-o-lantern fly and brings her finger close to it.

A small bolt of electricity passes from the fly into her hand, turning her finger back to a healthy shade of pink. She smiles. So does Dulass.

With a small gesture, Dulass summons into being a second jack-o-lantern fly, which hovers momentarily next to the first before the two of them stick together like magnets and begin to spin in midair.

Flora GIGGLES. With another small gesture, she slows their spinning. With another, she turns them purple.

Dulass LAUGHS.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Flora, honey! Time for school!

DULASS

Would you like to stay here?

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Flora's father sits at the table, eating breakfast and reading the paper.

MOTHER

That girl has been a real handful lately.

FATHER

She sure has.

Flora's mother puts a bowl of oatmeal in the microwave and turns it on.

MOTHER

Maybe she does need to go see Dr. Spaulding.

After a long pause, Flora's father responds.

FATHER
She'll be ok.

EXT. ZENITH

DULASS
Would you like to stay here with
me?

JOHN (O.S.)
NO!!!

John dives at Dulass, knocking him down and sending them
both sailing off the edge of the zenith.

FLORA
Daddy!

Flora watches, transfixed, as John and Dulass fall and fall
and fall, until--very far below--they hit the ground,
bathing the tree and surrounding rocks in a red mist.

O.S., a microwave BEEPS.

INT. KITCHEN

Flora's mother is standing at the kitchen sink, holding a
cup of coffee and staring out the window when Flora's father
GASPS and collapses onto the table.

Flora's mother turns around.

MOTHER
Dale?

She rushes over to the table and shakes him by the shoulder.

MOTHER
Dale? Oh God, Dale?!

EXT. ZENITH

Flora, panicked, looks around for a way down.

FLORA
Help! Hellllp!

A swarm of jack-o-lantern flies rush in, enshrouding Flora
in a dense cloud. Laura SHRIEKS, but the flies soon resolve
into the shape of a sphere around her. They lift her gently
into the air and fly her to the ground.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

Flora stumbles from the cloud of jack-o-lantern flies, which disperse. She runs up to the place where Dulass and John landed.

Her father is irrefutably dead.

John, though mostly disemboweled, is still alive. He drags himself along the ground with his arms until he reaches the base of the tree.

Once there, he claws at the trunk with his hands, tearing it apart piece by piece.

FLORA

What are you doing?

JOHN

You should go home. You need to wake up, Flora. What's done is done. It's too late for me. I'm going to stop it once and for all.

FLORA

Why did you kill Daddy?

JOHN

You need to go, Flora.

In an act of impossible strength for a person in his condition, John picks up Flora and throws her in high arc towards a bright blue lake.

With a SPLASH, she hits the water.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

When Flora awakes, she is standing at the sink. Her mother is splashing water in her face.

MOTHER

(on the verge of tears)

Flora, sweetie, your daddy had an accident. The ambulance is coming to take him to the hospital and we're going to ride with him. You've never gotten to ride in an ambulance, have you?

FLORA
Is daddy dead?

Flora's mother falls silent. She looks like she is about to cry.

The WHINE of an ambulance approaches the house and stops outside.

Flora's mother grabs her arm and tugs her towards the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Flora's mother throws open the door as the PARAMEDICS hurry towards the house with a gurney.

MOTHER
He's in the kitchen!

The paramedics rush past Flora and her mother and enter the kitchen. Flora watches the paramedics, trying to see her father, as her mother puts on her coat.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Although her view is obstructed by the refrigerator and the paramedics going about their work, Laura catches a fleeting glimpse of her father's face, which is pale and lifeless, with eerily large eyes and mouth.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Flora's mother notices her looking into the kitchen and opens the door.

MOTHER
Come on, Flora. Let's wait for them
outside.

Flora's mother guides her gently out the door and into the front yard.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MORNING

Flora looks around. The plants are gray, and so is the sky. The sun is cold and lifeless. A few gawkers stand across the street, and they all appear gaunt and lifeless.

A lone, beautiful, colorful jack-o-lantern fly WARBLER past, briefly casting a rainbow on Flora's face.

FLORA
This isn't right.

Flora breaks free from her mother's grip and rushes back into the house, past the paramedics, who are on their way out the door with her father.

MOTHER
Flora!

Flora's mother starts back towards the house, but a paramedic stops her.

PARAMEDIC
Ma'am, if you're going to ride with
is, we're leaving now.

INT. FLORA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Flora runs into her bedroom, slamming the door behind her. She sprawls down on her bed and squeezes her eyes shut.

FLORA
(whispering to herself)
One, one thousand... two, one
thousand... three, one thousand...
four, one thousand...

Flora leaps to her feet, throws open her door, and flies through.

EXT. TREE

Flora immediately sees the tree, and runs towards it. John, his back turned, continues to demolish the trunk. It looks almost as though someone has been working on it with an ax, and the entire weight of the tree is now balanced on an impossibly-small pinpoint.

Nearby is a mound of loose dirt with a shovel resting on top, apparently Dulass' shallow grave.

FLORA
Stop!

John doesn't respond.

Flora has now reached John and the tree

FLORA
You have to stop!

John still ignores her. She walks around him to address him to his face, only to find that he has no face--only NUMBERS.

Horrified, Flora backs up against the tree.

John's faceless body still claws at the tree. Flora can feel it beginning to sway dangerously.

FLORA
Stop!
(screaming)
STOP!!!

John does not stop. The tree MOANS.

Flora brains him with the shovel. He freezes, rigid, statuesque--and falls onto his side, where he turns to stone.

Dinah comes running up to Flora

DINAH
What are you going to do?

Flora thinks, but only for a moment.

FLORA
I'm going to fix it.

She climbs into the void in the tree trunk made by John's clawing. She fits perfectly. She looks at Dinah.

FLORA
You're a tiger.

Dinah is indeed an imposing TIGER.

FLORA
Don't let anyone get close.

TIGER
Ok.

Flora tucks her head in and holds perfectly still. Her fingers become twigs. Her limbs become... limbs (heh), and begin to expand. Her skin is covered with bark, which merges with that of the tree. The tree is being repaired.

As the last void in the trunk is filled, an electric pulse BURSTS between the old bark and the new bark.

INT. AMBULANCE - MORNING

Defibrillator paddles on Flora's father's chest have just discharged. His eyes (normal sized) pop open, and he gasps for breath.

EXT. TREE

The tiger paces around the base of the tree, swishing her tail.

A jack-o-lantern fly buzzes past Dulass' grave.

All is still.

INT. TELEVISION ROOM - NIGHT

The camera pulls back to reveal that the scene at the base of the tree is being shown on a television screen, which is being watched by BRENDA.

Brenda's father enters. He stands between Brenda and the TV. He looks at Brenda, then back at the screen, then back at Brenda.

BRENDA'S FATHER
That's funny...

BRENDA
What?

BRENDA'S FATHER
That tree looks just like you!

Brenda smiles.

BRENDA'S FATHER
Come on. It's time for bed.

Brenda's father turns off the TV. The picture on the screen irises down to a tiny white dot.

FADE TO BLACK

END