




SPOOKEASY

by

Nick Tierce

nick@nicktierce.com
951.816.1074

 {  [goo.gl/KWrAjL](https://www.spotify.com/track/1234567890)
 [goo.gl/CBg9q2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1234567890)

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

A headstone sits undisturbed.

SMASH. A beer bottle SHATTERS against the aged stele, its last unsipped drops creeping into weathered crevices that were once an inscription.

VOICE (O.S.)
Time to lift our spirits!

The gravestone's top slab becomes a makeshift bartop as a sacrament cup is SLAMMED down. Amber liquid fills it from a glass bottle sloppily poured by a teenage REVELER. He hands the cup to a TIPSY GIRLFRIEND draped over him.

TIPSY
Why you hafta say it like that?

REVELER
You're the one that dragged us out here, necro.

He punctuates his statement by taking a swig directly from the bottle. Winces.

REVELER
God, this tastes like death.

She swats him with her clutch as he tosses the half-full bottle over his shoulder. It leaves a shimmering trail arcing onto the grassy lump behind them.

TIPSY
I thought it would be romantic.

He picks up a bouquet of dead flowers from the foot of the headstone. Presents them to her with a grin.

REVELER
It is.

She smiles amorously and accepts the flowers, only to mimic him by tossing them over her shoulder. Before he can react, she jumps into his arms and presses her face into his.

They roll back into the spotty grass of the graveyard.

Behind them, in the distance, a quaint antebellum house on the church grounds bursts with the incongruous colored LIGHTS and BOOMING MUSIC of a party in progress.

INT. DELACROIX HOUSE - NIGHT

The party is in full swing.

Energetic TEENAGERS mingle amid stunted TWENTY-SOMETHINGS in the house's too-cramped hallways.

The meticulously displayed souvenirs of a devout life are displaced by aimlessly discarded plastic cups and empty takeout boxes.

A gaggle of SORORITY GIRLS slam down a round of shots on the kitchen counter. A blonde in a costume TIARA wipes dribbles with her arm.

TIARA

Where the hell is Jo?!

The group turns to look across crowded room, spotting her:

JO DELACROIX, 21, bright eyes dancing off her dark complexion. An angel among bros. She reaches across an entwined couple to pick up empties, readjusting a picture frame they've knocked over in their fervor.

JO

Don't mind me.

She continues across the living room, amassing a stack of trash as she tries to tidy nudged possessions.

Tiara shakes her head and looks back to the group. An idea.

TIARA

Oh, Jo!

She saunters over to a nearby crucifix statue on a pedestal. Once she sees Jo turn to her, she TIPS it over.

The heirloom careens towards the floor only to be SCOOPED up inches before impact. Jo replaces in on the pedestal and shoots a scowl at Tiara, who shoves a shot into her hand.

JO

Thanks a lot.

TIARA

This little attempt at rebellion has failed if you're not willing to let some of your mom's junk get broken.

JO

Can't rebel if I'm dead.

TIARA
 Whatever. Your castle, your party,
 Princess Delacroix.

Tiara takes off her plastic namesake and plops it on Jo's perfectly coiffed head. Undoubtedly it suits her better.

Jo holds up the shot to her mouth, but stops as she hears a CREAK from above.

JO
 What was that?

TIARA
 Aren't you a little old to have
 skipped THAT conversation?

She moves to get a look at the staircase around the corner: A collapsible doggie-barrier has been pushed aside.

JO
 Gah, I told everyone not to go up
 there.

Jo sets down her shot and bounds upstairs. Tiara yells after her ...

TIARA
 Check the doorknobs first!

INT. DELACROIX HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Shut doors line a dark hallway.

The unsettling dim is infected by the sterile light of a cell phone screen.

The device is palmed by a hunched figure: This is MORT WINCHESTER, the grimmest 18-year-old you've ever seen. Taunts of "goth" and "macabre" scarcely do him justice. A tangleweed of black hair hangs over half of his pale face.

His dark eyes flit down to his phone.

On the screen, a painfully amateur, overstuffed display of readings and signals show an absolute lack of activity. Every indicator zeroed out, inert.

His frown slouches deeper than what must be a resting pout.

He creeps slowly down the hallway, each careful step threatening a creak. He holds his phone out at arm's length, sweeping it in a "scanning" motion.

CREAK. He takes a hasty step back in recoil as the cold shine of his phone light reveals a bizarre sight:

The final door on the right side of the hallway is adorned with a series of crucifixes that have been roughly arranged to form the six-pointed Seal of Solomon.

MORT

What the hell ... ?

Tentatively, he grasps the door knob. Locked.

JO

Exactly.

Terrified, Mort pivots on his heel, spinning around to face Jo. She's looming down the hall, flashing lights from the party below casting her in intermittent silhouette.

MORT

Uh, hey! I was, um, looking for --

JO

Need an app to find the bathroom?

Her eyes indicate Mort's glowing phone. He tucks it away.

MORT

I was just, uh, lighting my way.

JO

You wanted to sneak around a "haunted" house. I get it.

MORT

Can you blame me, Your Majesty? This is the only locked door up here --

He points to the desecration on the door.

JO

Would you want a bunch of drunk teenagers in your room? Wait, don't answer that.

His brow furrows. Looks at the star. Back at her.

MORT

Your room?

She takes a few steps toward him.

JO
That's right. And it's staying
locked.

MORT
Not even a peek?

JO
Will you tell me what you were doing
on your phone?

He squints for emphasis.

MORT
Secrets.

She smiles and nods.

JO
Same.

SLAM. The sound of a door shutting downstairs. They both
turn, curious. The shrill voice of MOTHER DELACROIX echos
through the house.

MOTHER DELACROIX (O.S.)
Joanne Elizabeth Delacroix!!!

Jo turns to Mort.

JO
Run.

MORT
See you on the other side.

Mort GULPS, dashes to open the nearest unlocked door,
JUMPING through an open window into the backyard.

JO
Wait, what's your name?!

MORT (O.S.)
(wounded)
... Mort ...

Jo shakes her head and runs downstairs.

INT. DELACROIX HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A furious Mother Delacroix stands in the middle of the room, dressed in religious vestments. Crowds of kids part around her as they stream out the front door.

Pulled by the rest of the sorority girls, Tiara reaches back to say her goodbye to Jo.

TIARA

Don't take it personally, Jo, but I think we've outgrown this venue.

Jo takes the tiara off of her head and offers it back.

TIARA

Keep it.

(mock whispers)

You're in for a royal pain!

Tiara disappears with the last of the party-goers.

The dust settles. Jo faces her mother, who takes her time with each step as she closes the gap between them.

MOTHER DELACROIX

You are too old for this.

She swats the tiara out of Jo's hands.

JO

But too young to live on my own?

MOTHER DELACROIX

Not this again. You know what those dorms are like. This is your home.

JO

No, this is your house.

MOTHER DELACROIX

I suppose you would like to start paying your own way, then?

JO

If you hadn't insisted I go to Loyola, maybe I could afford to.

Mother Delacroix sits on the couch, eyes clenched. She pinches the bridge of her nose.

MOTHER DELACROIX
I thought it would straighten you
out. Offer you a path.

JO
Your path.

Mother Delacroix clutches the cross hanging around her
neck. She fills the room with a patience-seeking breath.

MOTHER DELACROIX
Considering the imminence of your
graduation ... perhaps there was no
helping you.

JO
You know where I stand.

MOTHER DELACROIX
Judging by the state of your room,
far more apposed to me -- and
everything I hoped to give you --
than I will ever care to know.

JO
I'll make sure you do.

Mother Delacroix pushes off of her knees to stand.

MOTHER DELACROIX
Very well. When the semester is out,
so are you. Until then ...

She SNAPS the tiara in her hand.

MOTHER DELACROIX (CONT'D)
No socializing.

CREAK. Jo and her mother look over to the back window. They
catch the last of a peeping Mort dipping out of frame.

MOTHER DELACROIX
Please tell me the rumors about this
house have not come true, and that's
just a very white friend of yours.

JO
I'm not ruling anything out.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Mort crawls away from the house to avoid detection. As he realizes he's crossing a graveyard, he stands upright, brushing off his hands.

He takes a moment to survey the landscape. He stands up tall, looking more at home here than he did at the party.

BEEP.

Mort looks confused. A light shines through his jeans.

Hands shaking, he whips out his phone and swipes to unlock. His previously unresponsive app shows signs of life. Numbers begin populating, flat-lined charts begin to slope.

A high SCRAPE grows across the grass toward him. Something passes over his foot and he JUMPS.

Taking shelter behind a headstone, Mort peeks up to observe what had crossed him: The bottle previously discarded by the amorous couple, rolling itself across the grass.

No time to think, he fumbles to his feet and follows it.

Weaving through headstones and over grave hills, the bottle makes a beeline for the swamp just beyond church property.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Mort emerges from the brush, teetering on the edge of the swamp. He holds his phone out in front of him, agog.

The bottle gains speed as it PLOPS into the murky water.

MORT

This is it! It works --

Mid-self-congratulation, Mort loses his balance and falls face-first into the swamp.

His entire body is submerged, save his phone hand which pokes above the surface like a periscope. Mort's head slowly appears above the waterline.

Mort's mouth BUBBLES with an unintelligible mutter.

He watches as the bottle bobs up and down, making its way across the water, heading straight for the city.

INT. DELACROIX HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jo makes her way back to her room. The steam from her cup of tea billows behind her in a locomotive trail.

A chill trembles her as she approaches her door.

She turns to see the door Mort escaped through still open. As she goes to close it, a glint of moonlight bounces off something on the floor that catches her eye.

She walks over and scoops it up, holding it closer to the light to examine the item:

A snapped rope necklace, with a small vial attached. Inside, an unmarked capsule. She considers it, slowly rising to return to her room.

JO

Who are you, Morty?

She closes the door behind her.

INT. JO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jo's room is a haven of arrested development. Childhood trappings pushed aside, but still encroaching on the workspace she's attempted to craft for herself.

Jo kicks off her shoes and sits down at her lightbulb-rimmed vanity. The incandescent glow flatters her.

She sets the necklace down next to her saucer.

Taking a sip of her tea, she pulls out a makeup remover wipe to wash her face. Her eyes linger on the vial. She crumples the wipe and tosses it into a wastebasket.

She shoots a tired look at the wall clock. 1:30. Sigh.

JO

Fine.

She grabs an innocuous looking makeup box from her vanity and slings it over to her bed. Necklace in tow, she jumps face-first into bed, kicking her feet up.

There, surrounded by the frills expected of a southern belle, Jo unlatches the wooden box and reveals not makeup, but a full apothecary kit.

Its compartments spring open into a multi-leveled display.

Jo selects a jeweler's loupe and places it to her eye, examining the capsule.

She uncorks the vial and removes the pill to get a closer look. No markings of any kind. She spots an overlapped seam, twisting it to separate the halves.

JO
I wonder ...

Spilling some of the white powder onto her fingertip, she brings it carefully to her nose.

Nothing.

Unsatisfied, she licks the smallest portion of granules possible, SPITTING it out immediately.

JO
Oh, god!

She sits up, crossing her legs beneath her while shutting the apothecary kit. Its compartments retract into itself with a satisfying CLICK.

Jo considers the necklace, worry overtaking her face.

JO
Sorry I asked, Morty.

She shakes it off, placing the necklace on her bedside table. She returns the box to her vanity, pulling open the desk drawer beneath it.

Clearing the contents with a single swipe, she pulls a tab on the backing that releases a hidden compartment.

JO
Just enough time to make mother
proud before bedtime.

From the compartment, she pulls an aged tome with the red Seal of Solomon emblazoned on its cover. The reference of the desecration on display outside her door.

She turns off the lights and jumps into bed with the book.

Setting the mood, she strikes a match and lights a candle on her bedside table.

The flickering heat licks the crimson seal.

INT. MORT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mort examines a cruder representation of the same Seal of Solomon reproduced in the scanned line art of a Wikipedia page on a tablet screen.

MORT

(sotto)

... attributed to King Solomon ...
later also in occultism ... hmm ...

He unzips his soaked hoodie and tosses it across the room. Far less subtle than the influences on Jo's room, Mort's is a painfully obvious extension of him.

The room would be dark even if the device's glow wasn't the only light source.

He pulls his phone out of his pocket and drops it into a plastic Tupperware of uncooked rice. Hopping sideways into the armchair at his desk, he boots up his computer.

Pulling a USB cord out from the tangle of cables attached to his computer, he plugs in his phone while still submerged in the rice.

MORT

Let's see what we got ...

As he waits, his hand wanders to his neck. After a few empty grasps, he looks and realizes his necklace is gone.

He sits up at attention, pulling out a small Ziploc of supplies. He takes two empty capsule halves, refills with the white powder, and twists them together.

A BEEP brings his attention back up to see:

The data collected on his phone app appears on the computer screen in front of him. A cold blue-green glow inches over his face. He nods. A small victory fist-pump in the air.

Mort hops out of his chair with renewed energy. He taps the head of a dangling, life-size skeleton model.

MORT

Time to suit up, Kenny.

Drying his hair with a black shirt from his laundry hamper, Mort makes his way to the closet.

A Simon & Garfunkel poster sweeps past him as he slides the door open to reveal an armory of grayscale garments.

He reaches far into the back of the closet and produces a black utility vest. ZIP. He fills the pockets with gear: His dried phone. Night-vision specs. Bluetooth microphone.

With a theatrical final flourish, he pulls up his hood, peeking just behind it toward the skeleton.

MORT
Wish me luck, buddy. I think
tonight's the night.

He picks up the capsule he'd prepared and pockets it.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SWAMP BANK - NIGHT

Mort walks down a street the runs along the swamp bank. A sleeping Downtown New Orleans looms behind him. He speaks into the microphone he has pinned to his collar.

MORT
(hushed)
This is Mort Winchester. It's
approximately ...

He checks his phone.

MORT (CONT'D)
3AM on Saturday, October Twelfth.
I've got a few hours before sunrise,
and I'm walking down Route Ninety,
the last observed destination of the
unidentified phenomenon tentatively
designated ... "Phantom Bottle."

He holds his phone out in front of him as he walks.

MORT (CONT'D)
No readings that match previous
samples, or ... any readings.

He moves the phone through the air, his arms outstretched in bizarre yoga positions.

MORT (CONT'D)
Reminder: reassess app. Beginning to
suspect initial readings may have
been a false positive.

Frustrated, his phone hand drops to his side.

MORT (CONT'D)
Visual inspection ... unproductive.

He steps on a crumpled newspaper, which catches his attention: it's soaked in something other than swamp.

MORT (CONT'D)

Correction: there appears to be a --
(sniffs)
Alcohol-soaked paper near the bank.
Olfactory inspection ... stale.

He kneels to wave his phone in front of the paper. Nothing.

MORT (CONT'D)

Object unresponsive.

He drops his head in defeat. His excitement has drained. He looks up, bleary-eyed. Across the swamp, he sees:

The church, and Jo's house just beyond. A flickering highlight her window. He takes a deep breath.

MORT

Investigation stalled. Status of
"Operation Herse" ... postponed.

INT. JO'S ROOM - DAY

Jo lays sprawled out in her bed, legs tangled in her sheets. Her book lies conspicuously on display beside her.

Mother Delacroix BARGES in, waking her.

MOTHER DELACROIX

Get up. While you're under this
roof, you'll attend service.

She SEIZES Jo's book off the bed without comment and exits.

JO

Good morning, Mother.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Dressed in their Sunday best, a dozen congregants sit sprinkled throughout rows of pews built for many more.

Mother Delacroix stands behind a pulpit in the front of the room, her oratory shrieks filling the chambers.

MOTHER DELACROIX

The paths of glory lead but to the
grave. Nor you --

She's mid-sermon when Jo enters from a back exit, in full view of the congregation, wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with a Renaissance painting of a demon.

Jo takes a seat in the front row. Her mother doesn't look at her. Someone lets out an uncomfortable COUGH.

MOTHER DELACROIX

As we read from Paul, God cannot be mocked. A man -- or woman, I'll add -- reaps what she sows.

She finally shoots daggers at Jo with a single look.

MOTHER DELACROIX

The one who sows to please her sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

One soft "Amen" from the back of the room.

MOTHER DELACROIX

Let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

JO

A question, Mother Delacroix.

Jo raises her hand as if in class. Someone GASPS.

Mother squeezes the sides of the pulpit like a stress ball. She turns to Jo, eye twitching in rage.

JO

If Paul was never referenced as an apostle by anyone but himself, does that mean calling yourself something makes it true? Like, say, a woman who calls herself a priest?

Mother shuts her bible. Lets the silence linger.

MOTHER DELACROIX

We shall dismiss early today. Without psalm. Without song. To allow us all to think on our sins.

Jo stands before everyone else and walks down the center row to exit. Mother watches her go.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Jo walks from the church, pleased with herself. She stops at the border of her backyard as she sees:

Mort, perched on a branch of the tree next to her window. He's squinting through a pair of mini binoculars. She suppresses a laugh and tiptoes over to the tree.

She looks up as Mort fumbles, unaware he's being watched.

JO
Cat rescue or bird watch?

He JUMPS, dropping a ceramic jug he had tucked into his jacket. It falls onto the grass, SMASHING into shards that reveal its contents: needles, pins, and some kind of herb.

Mort rolls over the branch, dangling by his arms.

MORT
Ignore that.

She laughs.

JO
Come inside, you creep.

He looks up at the branch and down at the grass, judging the distance. Attempting to swing, he overshoots his jump and lands on his face.

INT. JO'S ROOM - DAY

Jo opens the door and lets Mort inside. He's holding an ice pack to his face. They sit down on the edge of the bed.

JO
I wasn't planning on letting you in here, but since you're clearly onto me ...

MORT
What makes you say that?

JO
Did you or did you not try to make a Bellarmine bottle?

MORT
Was I right to?

JO
What are you trying to ask me?

He puts down the ice pack.

MORT
Aren't you a ...
(drops to a whisper)
... a witch?

She laughs.

JO
Say it as loud as you want! I'd love
for Mother Delacroix to hear that.

He's confused.

MORT
So ... you're not?

JO
Of course not! I'd hate to be the
one to break this to you, Morty, but
witches don't exist.

MORT
You don't know that.

JO
Are you clownin' me right now? Look,
I picked it up to get under my mom's
skin. And what better way?

MORT
I have to say, I'm relieved.

JO
Weren't you the one poking around my
house for ghosts? How's a guy like
you afraid of witches?

MORT
Witches live. I don't fear death.

Jo turns to her sidetable and picks up his necklace.

JO
Speaking of which, I think this
belongs to you.

She tosses it to him. He realizes, and looks ashamed.

JO (CONT'D)

It's an arsenic capsule. Romantic,
but you'd be better off with tried-
and-true cyanide.

He looks up, impressed. Tucks the necklace away.

MORT

You sure you're not a witch?

JO

Even faking it, you pick up a few
things.

MORT

You really shouldn't mess with that
stuff.

She steps toward him, consoling.

JO

Neither should you.

He gulps.

MORT

So ... this house really isn't
haunted then?

JO

The only thing haunting this house
gave birth to me.

MORT

Then I really should go.

He stands and heads for the door.

JO

Wait a minute, you really came here
for a ghost and not me?

Mort feels sheepish.

MORT

Look, I mean no insult. If my focus
wasn't so sharp on what it is, it'd
no doubt be right on you, princess.
Just like everyone else.

JO

But, why? What are you looking for?

He pauses for a moment. Considers telling her.

MORT
 Something that can't be found.

He leaves, dejected.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The sun flirts with the horizon as Mort crosses the bridge.

He pulls his microphone out from a pocket on his utility vest. Pins it to his collar. He pulls back his hood, looking out at the sunset.

MORT
 This is Mort Winchester. Final entry, from one of my favorite spots. The old Marques Road bridge.

Soggy with wood rot, it's a depressing bridge. He tries to maintain his composure, but quickly fails.

MORT (CONT'D)
 "Operation Herse" is officially a failure. This was my last shot. Years of dead ends and wishful thinking finally caught up with me. In the end, it was only postponing the inevitable. I can admit that now.

(beat)
 I thought I needed answers. To know what happened to them. It was my fault for daring to ask the question. If curiosity doesn't kill the cat ... then the cat has to do it himself.

He pulls the newly prepared capsule from his pocket. Rolls it in his hand. He cries into his palm.

Through his puffy eyes, she looks up at one last sunset.

The sun is gone beneath the horizon. Darkness falls.

He closes his eyes and puts the capsule up to his lips. He takes a deep breath in. As he breathes out, a strong wind tousles his hair.

He hesitates with a shiver. He opens his eyes and looks in the direction of the breeze:

On the river bank, in the darkness between streetlamps, a glowing apparition stalks down the pier, dragging a wooden crate from a docked tugboat toward the street.

It is, unquestionably, a GHOST.

MORT

My god ...

Mort stands himself up, agog. He leans over the edge of the bridge to get a better look.

The figure emanates a sour colored aura. Waves of translucency and opacity cascade in muted blues and greens across its weathered form.

Though he himself exudes a ghoulish lack of physical substance, the crate it drags appears solidly real.

Without thinking, Mort drops the pill in his hand.

It bounces off the lip of the bridge and into the river. Shaken from his trance, he looks down at what he's done.

MORT

Damnit.

He looks back up, just in time to see the ghost turn a street corner and disappear from view.

Mort's eyes widen with urgency.

He BOUNDS to the edge of the bridge, making his way to the street to follow the specter.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The ghost weaves through a rough neighborhood into a forgotten part of town.

Mort trails behind, staying back just far enough to remain undetected. He takes extra pains to be silent in his stride, pussyfooting like a peacock. His fervor restored.

He slides against a brick wall and peeks around the corner.

The ghost begins to gain speed as it approaches a wall of greenery at the end of the street.

It passes through with no problem, into an adjacent district sectioned off by a circle of trees. Mort can just see the building tops obscured behind them.

EXT. THE BLIND PIG - NIGHT

Mort throws himself with abandon through the bushes and into the street, emerging riddled with thorns.

He shakes leaves out of his hair and brushes himself off.

Bearings restored, Mort looks up to find himself standing at the end of a cul-de-sac, facing the only building on its block: a dilapidated pub named "The Blind Pig."

He spots the final turn of the ghost's ethereal trail as it passes through a literal hole in the wall, BREAKING it larger as the crate is dragged through.

Mort's body lunges forward to follow, but a wave of fear freezes him in his tracks.

He looks around. This is not a place to be alone.

Fidgeting through his pockets, he retrieves his phone. Sliding to open the dialer, he notices a push notification.

Selecting it, his app opens up: It's overflowing with data, every possible field jammed to capacity. Charts spill into neighboring cells, obscuring even more information.

Mort's eyes light up.

INT. MORT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mort paces back and forth, excited. He can barely contain himself, hands shaking expressively.

MORT

I forgot, I had my phone on silent,
so that I wouldn't be --

(shakes it off)

Anyway, my app was running in the
background, and LOOK at all these
readings!

He turns to his skeleton model.

MORT

Don't you get it, Kenny?

(beat)

I was right!

The data from his phone is now displayed on his computer monitor. He surveys it with pride oozing out every pore.

The populating data slows to to a stop and a message BLINKS onto the screen:

U P L O A D C O M P L E T E

Mort sits on the edge of his armchair and begins to scroll through the data. Green blinds of light move across his uncharacteristically pleased face.

He's not quite smiling, but lack of a frown says enough.

MORT

(sotto)

I can't believe this. It's bigger than I could have imagined.

He stops scrolling at a cluster of charts.

MORT

Wait a minute. I've seen this before. But where? How could I have?

(something clicks)

Oh my god. This can't be.

Nodding in realization, he continues scrolling.

Hitting the bottom of the data chain, he slumps back in his chair. Reveling in the moment.

MORT

No time to lose.

He jumps out of his chair and suits up in his utility vest with lightning speed. He slows for a moment, remembering an empty pocket. Fiddles the flap in his fingers.

Mort turns to look at the capsule necklace on his desk.

He reaches to grab the strand, but his skeleton model's hand gets caught on his sleeve, stopping him.

Mort laughs at the apparent gesture.

MORT

You're right, Kenny. Maybe I shouldn't go this one alone.

An idea!

He looks over to his tablet. The illustration of the Seal of Solomon is still on display.

INT. DELACROIX HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jo sits on the couch reading a new occult book.

Mother Delacroix enters and sits in the armchair next to the couch. She removes her glasses.

MOTHER DELACROIX

You need to stop all this.

Jo turns a page, ignoring her.

MOTHER DELACROIX (CONT'D)

You've got too much school work to waste your time trying to convince me you're something you're not.

Jo gulps. Tries not to flinch. Keeps her eyes on the book.

JO

I'm sure you'd like for that to be the case.

MOTHER DELACROIX

Don't insult me.

JO

Huh, I thought I already did a pretty good job of that on Sunday.

Mother leans back in her chair.

MOTHER DELACROIX

I'll admit, I've come expect a certain level of outburst, but bringing it out of the house is a new one for you.

JO

Well, get ready, because that was only the beginning.

Jo taps her book and forces a smile.

MOTHER DELACROIX

I'm a woman of faith, but I'm not a fool. Don't treat me like one.

Jo closes her book and turns mockingly to Mother.

JO

I'm just surprised you don't fear for my "mortal soul."

MOTHER DELACROIX
I'm not afraid for you, Jo, because
what you're faking was never real.
It was just another myth invented to
keep women in their place.

She grabs the book from Jo.

MOTHER DELACROIX (CONT'D)
This book is about as offensive to
me as a cereal box.

JO
I don't believe you.

MOTHER DELACROIX
We don't agree, but have I ever lied
to you, Jo?

JO
I think there's nowhere you won't
turn when backed into a corner.

Mother takes a breath, remaining calm.

MOTHER DELACROIX
I understand that we don't see eye
to eye. No matter how much I pray,
he hasn't shown me how to fix it.

JO
Maybe there was never anything to
fix. You ever think of that? And how
can you possibly believe in God but
not the other side?

MOTHER DELACROIX
Because I've felt it.

Mother takes Jo's hand. Jo is taken aback.

MOTHER DELACROIX (CONT'D)
Ever since you were born. I felt the
light, and it was real to me.
(beat)
But darkness?

She lets out a weary scoff.

MOTHER DELACROIX (CONT'D)
That's only ever been men.

INT. JO'S ROOM - DAY

Jo tosses her book in a box, along with a sampling of other witching paraphernalia: apothecary jars of questionable content, various colored candles, and a voodoo doll.

She plops down on her bed, frustrated.

Reluctantly, she reaches for a massive Chemistry textbook just as:

WHAM. A pebble hits her window.

JO
You've got to be kidding me.

She pulls herself out of bed and faces the window. Mort is clinging to the branch again. He waves to her.

Jo pulls the window open.

JO
You're allowed to use the front door, you know.

Mort clambers inside, happy to be on solid ground.

MORT
Your mother terrifies me.

JO
Welcome to the club.

MORT
Caught the Queen's temper?

JO
Less than I'd hoped, it turns out.

She gestures to her box of discarded stuff.

MORT
Considering the lengths you've gone to fake it, how would you like to give her a real reason to panic?

JO
I'm listening.

He's excited to say it.

MORT
I found one.

JO
What? A Wiccan? They're not rare
around here.

MORT
Gross. No. A ghost.

She raises a sassy eyebrow.

JO
You try one of those pills of yours?

Mort tucks his repaired necklace into his shirt.

MORT
This isn't a joke.
(beat)
I. Saw. A. Ghost.

Jo squints.

JO
Where?

MORT
At a pier next to the Marques Road
bridge.

JO
Ugh, what were you doing out there?
Pulling a George Bailey and praying
for death?

MORT
You sure you aren't a witch? Anyway,
doesn't matter -- THIS does.

He holds up his phone, his app fired up.

JO
What's that supposed to be?

MORT
Proof.

He moves next to her, showing off his information.

JO
You've been scanning for ghosts with
your PHONE?!

She gives him a worried look. Is this guy nuts?

MORT

Even unmodified, they can do a lot more than people realize. But I've added a few things ...

He turns over his phone, showing her the back case. It's a tightly arranged block of cobbled components retrofitted on onto the stock device.

JO

How are these numbers going to help you find one again?

MORT

Turns out they exist on a similar frequency to SHF radio bands --

JO

Pump the breaks. Are you telling me ghosts are living in the Wi-Fi?

MORT

Not exactly. They share a --

Mother Delacroix bellows from downstairs.

MOTHER DELACROIX (O.S.)

Jo?

Mort turns to Jo.

MORT

So, what do you say? Come with me?

Jo thinks on this. Savors the idea.

JO

You know what, even if you're wrong, this is just the sort of thing that could really stick in her craw.

MORT

IF I'm wrong? Meaning I COULD be right? Sounds to me like you're in.

She smiles. He's got her.

JO

Come with me.

INT. DELACROIX HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mother Delacroix is preparing lunch, a sandwich spread taking form on the counter top. She stops blending a smoothie when Jo enters with Mort.

JO
Mom, this is Morty --

MORT
Mort.

JO
He's the ghost boy from the other night, and he's taking me to meet all of his dead friends.

Jo about-faces out of the kitchen, dragging Mort behind her. They leave through the front door with a SLAM.

Mother stands alone, unblinking, her hand on the blender.

MOTHER DELACROIX
Maybe it's just drugs.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Jo and Mort sit on the porch of a cafe on Bourbon Street. Against the parade of effervescence passing by them, Jo looks quite at home. Mort, decidedly not.

JO
So, how this going to go down?

MORT
We wait. At nightfall, we'll head over to The Blind Pig.

JO
Why does it have to be at night?

MORT
You ever hear of a ghost sighting in daylight? Plus, I don't want to attract attention. Even out here, I feel like people are looking at me.

JO
Well then maybe you shouldn't dress like you were colored-in by a kid who only has a black crayon.

EXT. THE BLIND PIG - NIGHT

Mort and Jo stand outside the pub, beneath its hanging sign. Jo looks unimpressed.

JO
This place is dank.

MORT
Wouldn't it be?

Mort pulls out his phone and fires up his app.

His shoulder is brushed by a stumbling, but very human DRUNKARD, who enters through the pub's front door.

DRUNKARD
'Skuse me, ma'am.

Jo looks at Mort.

JO
I thought you said this place was abandoned?

Mort shrugs.

MORT
I assumed it was. Look at it.

JO
Don't get mad at me for asking this, but are you sure you didn't follow a drunk guy covered in glow paint?

Mort stares at his phone, adjusting the settings.

MORT
Sorry, didn't catch that. Let's check around back.

JO
You don't want to go inside for some liquid courage first?

He thinks about it.

MORT
No, we'll need our wits about us.

JO
Right.

INT. THE BLIND PIG - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Mort crouches through the hole in the wall that the ghost had dragged his crate through. He turns around and kicks the opening wider for Jo to come through.

JO
What a gentleman.

Jo steps through. The back room is crumbling.

Mort takes a minute to assess the space. On the floor, he spots a scraped trail in the dust. It leads to a stairwell that beckons them down.

MORT
Alright. There's no telling exactly what we'll see down there.

Mort turns on a flashlight, casting beams in the dusty air.

JO
You got one of those for me?

MORT
No, but you can wear this.

He hands her a head-mounted GoPro camera rig. She balks.

JO
Oh, I'm not wearing this. But I will hold it because, you know, I'm not a bad photographer.

She holds the camera out in front of her with both hands, letting the head straps dangle.

INT. THE BLIND PIG - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Jo and Mort begin their descent.

Mort leads the charge with his flashlight outstretched. He keeps his phone screen close to his chest.

With each step, the ancient stairwell creaks beneath their feet. Finally enough clearance to look down, they see the downward sprawl of its spiral.

They huff down what seems like an impossible number of switchbacks. Mort peeks over the edge.

JO
That smell! Do you hear something?

They stop. The sound of an empty wind that greeted Mort at the pier envelopes them. They turn to each other.

MORT
I think we're almost there.

The staircase ends at a square room with a single wooden door. A sliding peephole slot faces them.

JO
Do we knock?

MORT
Let's see if it's locked.

Mort slowly reaches out for the oxidized brass doorknob, and just as he's about to touch it ...

SLAM -- the peephole slot SLIDES itself violently open!

Jo and Mort JUMP back. The ghoulish blue-green glow spills faintly from the opening, filling the room.

JO
Oh my god ...

Jo is drawn to the light, taking a few steps to the door.

MORT
What do you see?

She turns back to him. Gulps. Gently as she can manage, she opens the door to reveal:

A female ghost -- ANNIE, dressed in Victorian attire -- floats legless at the end of a hallway. She's positioned just to the left of another door, holding a picket sign that reads "Lips That Touch Liquor Shall Not Touch Ours."

JO
(whispers)
I think she's a ... suffragette.

Mort walks up to join Jo and take a look for himself.

JO (CONT'D)
They joined the Temperance Movement back during prohibition.

Jo takes a look around the hallway, focusing in on the door at the opposite end.

JO (CONT'D)

Yeah ...
 (too loud)
 ... this was a speakeasy!

Mort cups his hand over Jo's mouth, but it's too late.

ANNIE

POISON! Enter not this house of sin!
 POISON! Keep this country dry!

Releasing Jo, Mort clicks off his flashlight, but keeps his phone open at his side. He takes the lead again.

MORT

Stay behind me.

Jo keeps close to his back.

Inching their way past Annie, the ghost looks right through them, lost in her own world. In her own time.

ANNIE

Beware the horrors that lie beyond
 this threshold!

Mort raises his fist to knock on the entrance door. Jo stops him with a grab of his shoulder.

JO

This doesn't feel right.

MORT

It's your first ghost, I get it.

JO

Not that. Something else.

He puts his hand on top of hers.

MORT

Don't worry. I've got a backup.

She moves her hand off of his shoulder and he turns back to knock on the door. KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

The air is sucked out of the room as another slide peephole RATCHETS open, exposing a pair of ghostly eyes for a second before SLAMMING shut again. Seconds later, the door slowly creeps open to reveal ...

INT. SPOOKEASY - NIGHT

A massive BOUNCER GHOST in a black vest ushers Mort in.

BOUNCER GHOST

Welcome, traveler, to the one-and-only SPOOKEASY!

The decrepit speakeasy bar is filled with DOZENS OF GHOSTS of all shapes and sizes. The paleness of their collective glow contrasts the warm flames of gas lamps adorning the walls. Their reveling simmers to dead silence --

Every spook inside turns to LOOK AT MORT, who freezes. He GULPS, and turns back to see that JO ISN'T BEHIND HIM.

A bowler-topped bartender ghost, XAVIER, cuts the silence:

XAVIER

Looks like we got ourselves a fresh one! So what'll it be, stranger?

Mort opens his trembling mouth, but nothing comes out.

Two barfly ghosts, MARC and CLAUDE, pipe up from their stools at the back L-curve counter of the main bar.

MARC

Cat got your tongue, kid?

CLAUDE

This one's so young, he probably never had a lick while he was alive!

Marc, the fat one, laughs and leans over the bar at Mort.

MARC

Is that right, boy? You die before you had your first drink?

Mort raises an eyebrow.

MORT

Die? Oh --

CLAUDE

Better for you, the only swill we can taste is the turned stock!

Marc and Claude clink their glasses together and take a swig, the liquid pouring through their translucent bodies onto the floor. Mort notices an extensive drain system.

XAVIER

Don't worry son, you'll learn to savor the vapor.

MARC

Dang right. Those stale fumes are keeping my rest mighty peaceful!

An elder ghost hostess, HARRIET, swoops in next to Mort.

HARRIET

Leave the poor thing alone, will you? He obviously hasn't come to terms yet.

She guides Mort over to an open stool at the bar.

CLAUDE

Don't worry, son, I wandered my Momma's yard for a year 'fore I woke up to it.

HARRIET

We could use a busboy around here, if you're looking to stay a spell.

MARC

Wathel, get that music goin' again!

A sourceless shadow silhouetted upon the piano gives an "okay" gesture and starts playing a ragtime tune as his ghost fingers dance across the keys.

Xavier pours Mort a smoldering shot.

XAVIER

A first drink deserves the best the afterlife can offer. Owner kept this one in a crystal decanter too long.

Mort picks up the shot. The entire room raises their glasses to him.

MARC

A ghost toast, to our new friend!

Everyone, save Mort, takes a drink. The sips all splatter on the floor at once, sprinkling Mort in their backwash.

XAVIER

So, how'd you join the great beyond?

Mort puffs out his cheeks, searching for an answer. Finally, he opens his mouth, and the MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS. The room goes silent again. Mort panics.

Xavier stares right through him.

MARC
Looks like you had a mortal on your
tail, stranger.

CLAUDE
A pretty one at that.

Mort spins around on his stool -- Jo stands in the doorway.

JO
... Hi.

She gives a little wave, and the entire room turns back to look at Mort. He gestures with each attempted response.

MORT
I didn't say I was dead.

A plantation owner ghost, BILL, in a corner booth offers:

BILL
Doggonit, we got tricked by an
albino again!

The magician ghost, HARVEY, at Bill's table responds:

HARVEY
More likely an Englishman.

XAVIER
Quiet, both of you! Now what're we
going to do about these two mortals?

MARC
They can't be here. It's not done!
It's against the ghost code.

CLAUDE
You know there's no such thing. And
they don't look very scared to me.

Mort leans to Harriet.

MORT
That job offer still open?

Harriet raises her eyes to Xavier for a response.

XAVIER
You'll have to take it up with her.

JO
Her?

Everyone in the bar lowers their heads and gets back to their own business.

MORT
Yeah, her? Who's "her"?

HARRIET
Unlike the current patrons of this smuggler's house, our host is not, in fact, a ghost.

Mort and Jo turn to each other, then back to Harriet.

JO
Who is she?

HARRIET
Come with me.

INT. SPOOKEASY - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Harriet guides Jo and Mort down a hall in the back corner of the bar, into an attached chamber.

She passes effortlessly through a curtain of beads that Mort and Jo must part. Once inside, the curtain clatters closed behind them. They stare at the sight before them:

A striking woman of indeterminate age sits behind a seance table, her sharply manicured hands resting on its crimson velvet cloth. She wears a burnt lace dress.

This is MISTRESS LEE.

HARRIET
Mortals, allow me to introduce ...
Mistress Lee.

Harriet floats out.

Mort is transfixed by the mysterious woman seated across from him. Jo considers her suspiciously.

MISTRESS LEE
Welcome. It is refreshing to look upon another living face.

JO
Are there no mirrors here at the
Spookeasy?

Lee breaks her gaze with Mort and turns abruptly to Jo.

MISTRESS LEE
I never cared for that name.

MORT
What should we call it, Mistress?

She appreciates his address.

MISTRESS LEE
Most of our patrons are lucky enough
to call this place home, but their
thirst for puns is unquenchable.

JO
Then what do YOU call it?

MISTRESS LEE
A halfway house. A temporary
residence. Nothing more.

MORT
These ghosts are not here by choice?

MISTRESS LEE
Most of them have nowhere else to
turn. They have been cast out. So
... I took them in.

JO
And how did you come to own a
prohibition-era speakeasy?

Mistress Lee is perfectly content to let silence linger.

MISTRESS LEE
Why are you here?

Jo gears up to throw some sass, but Mort intercepts.

MORT
The same reason they are.

JO
(under her breath)
Speak for yourself.

Lee ignores Jo and considers Mort. Deeply.

MISTRESS LEE
Stay the night. Enjoy yourselves.

She casts some shade at Jo.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)
If you can.

MORT
Thank you, Mistress Lee. We will.

Lee smiles a crooked smile.

MISTRESS LEE
Gordon! To my chambers.

From the shadows beyond the reach of the stained glass lamp hanging in the center of the room, a gangster ghost, GORDON, appears. He grabs the sides of Lee's chair.

Pulling the chair out, and Lee along with it, Mort and Jo see that she is sitting in an antique WHEELCHAIR.

Gordon wheels her through a door at the back of the room.

MORT
Whoa.

JO
Well. That was fun.

They pull back the beads to exit and a gaggle of eavesdropping GHOSTS are caught in the act.

Sheepish, they WHOOSH back to their seats in the bar.

INT. SPOOKEASY - NIGHT

Jo and Mort reenter the bar.

Claude is attempting to get Marc to drink from a spittoon as Xavier notices their entrance.

XAVIER
Well! You're still here.

MORT
Don't sound so surprised.

XAVIER
How'd you find the Mistress?

JO
Frigid.

MORT
Fascinating.

They both look at each other. Really?

MARC
Considering she didn't eat your
souls, may I assume you'll be
joining in our evening revel?

Xavier indicates two open bar stools. They sit.

MORT
Souls?

JO
That her drink of choice?

XAVIER
Don't mind Marc. Just a little
gallows humor.

MARC
It wouldn't surprise me. Not that
we'd know, one way or the other.

CLAUDE
She never leaves that hole 'a hers.

MARC
Like she's waiting for something.

MORT
Isn't that what all of you are
doing?

They all stare down Mort, suspicious of his knowledge.

XAVIER
What'd she tell you?

Jo steps in for a frazzled Mort.

JO
That you were, well, "cast out."

MORT
Is that true? Are you all ...
refugees? From your, uh, ... haunted
... homes?

MARC

We see all manner of ghoulies come through this establishment.

CLAUDE

Heck, we even got ourselves a forgotten founding father!

Claude points across the room where the ghost of NOAH WEBSTER, in full 19th century garb, sits alone in a booth. He sends them a limp wave.

Jo's eyes widen.

JO

Is that the ghost of Noah Webster?!

WEBSTER

None other, dear lady, and should you be so familiar as to recognize my countenance on sight, you will doubtless agree that the only decorous response to your cadaverous companion's query thusly states my sole place of residence be 'neath the noble awning of my lexicon.

Mort leans in to Jo.

MORT

I think it might be.

XAVIER

Truth be told, we are in something of a predicament.

JO

What happened? Haunted houses all filled up this time of year?

MARC

Not hous-ES.

MORT

Wait a minute ... you've all come from the same place?

XAVIER

Most of us. Yes.

MORT

... what happened?

Jo hops off her stool and grabs Mort by the arm.

JO
Would you excuse us for a minute?

MARC
We know this is a lot to wrap your heads around. Do take your time.

CLAUDE
We'll be here till ... ever.

Marc and Claude laugh like couple of hyenas.

Jo forces a smile and pulls Mort back out the door and into the stairwell. The bouncer tips his bowler to them.

INT. THE BLIND PIG - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Annie cries silently onto her picket sign, ignoring Jo and Mort as they enter. The ghostly revel continues through the frame of the open door behind them.

MORT
What is it? I thought we were all getting along great.

JO
I had a bad feeling from the minute we got here, and it's only gotten worse. Something's very wrong.

MORT
I'm sorry, I thought you were looking for this kind of trouble.

She puts her hand to her forehead.

JO
I don't know what I'm looking for. But it's not this.

Mort grasps his hands in front of his face expressively.

MORT
GHOSTS, Jo! Real, live -- well, not alive -- but, actual SPIRITS!

JO
Yes, and now we've seen them. I assume you've got a pocket full of scans. What else do you need?

Mort sighs. Takes a second.

MORT
I wouldn't expect you to understand.
Your parent's still here. And unlike
you, I actually do know what I've
been looking for.

JO
And it looks like this?

Mort's soggy eyes look deeply into hers.

MORT
You knew what you were getting into.

Her pursed lips tremble.

JO
Guess I thought I could change it.

MISTRESS LEE (O.S.)
Where are our guests?

They JUMP at the interruption.

INT. SPOOKEASY - NIGHT

Mort and Jo inch cautiously back into the bar. The entire room has gone silent, sucked even of its ambiance.

Mistress Lee sits in her chair, overlooking the crowd from the hallway threshold. Gordon floats in the shadows behind, his faint glow back-lighting her.

XAVIER
Mistress Lee. Can I pour you
something?

She doesn't look at him.

MISTRESS LEE
Libations will not be necessary,
Xavier.

MORT
We're here, Mistress.

Mort and Jo enter far enough to be seen. Lee considers them as the residents of the bar watch with bated breath.

MISTRESS LEE
 If you should like to stay on ...
 I have decided that you may.

Mort's eyes widen.

MORT
 Thank you, Mistress Lee!

MISTRESS LEE
 But you must earn your keep.

JO
 What would you have us do?

MISTRESS LEE
 There are some tasks better suited
 to mortal hands.

JO
 Unless I'm mistaken, you've got two.

MISTRESS LEE
 These tasks are now beyond my reach.
 (beat)
 Elect to be welcomed into the fold,
 and I sense great fortune for you in
 your new home.

Lee casts a cold glance at Jo.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)
 Should you flee, you would do well
 to not return. Choose wisely.

Lee grins, beckoning Gordon remove her with a head turn. He pulls her back, and they disappear into the shadows.

Jo grabs Mort's hand. Turns to him. Close.

JO
 Mort, you can't do this.

MORT
 Jo ... I have to.

His hand is pulled out of hers as a mob of ghosts HOISTS him over their heads in celebration.

Pain across her face, Jo skips out without looking back.

Mort watches her go, but is shaken back by the celebratory howls of the spirits that lift him.

EXT. THE BLIND PIG - NIGHT

Jo runs out of The Blind Pig. She looks distraught, frazzled, and a little surprised by just how much.

She stops in the middle of the road to look back once more at the site of the evening's horrors.

Something sparks an idea that ignites her expression.

INT. SPOOKEASY - DAY

Pinholes of daylight seep through the ceiling.

The strings of light cut through the resting spirits spread across the bar. The wisps of light render the portions of their ghost bodies they touch entirely invisible.

Mort, wearing a dusty old apron, pushes a wooden mop across the soaked floor. He YAWNS.

CLAUDE

Quiet there, boy!

Claude is grasping his head, which throbs with an almost fleshy hue against his blue-green body.

MORT

I didn't know ghosts could have a hangover.

Marc wakes, pulling his similarly discolored head up from the bartop next to Claude.

MARC

Close as we can get.

Xavier floats in from the back hallway, stretching.

XAVIER

We were pushing boundaries when we found out we could feast on the fumes of spoiled spirits. Bound to be a cost. "The Angel's Share".

MARC

To be honest, I didn't know booze could go bad, either.

XAVIER

Given the right, er, wrong conditions --

MARC
Everything spoils.

Mort takes this to heart.

MORT
Learn something new every day.

CLAUDE
Even when you're dead!

Early-rising Webster SCOFFS at Claude from his booth.

WEBSTER
What, pray tell, have YOU learned?
In the past HUNDRED fortnights?

Claude blinks, thinking.

CLAUDE
... not to drink with the living!

MORT
Hey now!

MARC
Don't take it personally, Mortimus.

MORT
That's not my name.

MARC
You're just the most ... interested
mortal we've encountered.

XAVIER
Not that we go out of our way.

WEBSTER
Hardly worth the hassle. They adorn
"rest in peace" 'pon our graves, but
scarcely allow us to fulfill it when
confronted, by chance or sport.

Mort folds his arms and rests them over the end of the mop.

MORT
It's true. Ever since -- well, let's
just say death fascinates me.

CLAUDE
You don't say!

MORT
So much so, I've been thinking about
making my stay here a little more
... permanent.

The still-sleeping ghosts around the bar wake to join the
rest in STARING down Mort with ominous glares.

XAVIER
You can't be doing that, son.

Mort looks embarrassed.

MORT
Why not?

MARC
There aren't many rules, but this
much is true --

XAVIER
Those who die by their own hand will
not join us in the end.

Realization dawns on Mort. He's crushed.

MORT
Oh. So, then, none of you ...

He looks around. Some shake their heads.

XAVIER
No.

CLAUDE
I got crushed by an anchor!

A sad silence as Mort takes this in, undercut by --

GORDON (O.S.)
Mortals!

Mort spins around to see Gordon floating out of the hall.

MORT
You rang?

GORDON
You are being summoned.

INT. SPOOKEASY - BACK ROOM - DAY

Gordon ushers Mort through the beaded curtain.

Behind the seance table in the middle of the room, Mistress Lee sits in her wheelchair facing the darkness, back to Mort. Gordon floats to face her.

MISTRESS LEE

The girl?

Mort clears his throat.

MORT

Gone, Mistress Lee.

She twitches for Gordon to spin her around to face Mort. He does so, and she smiles.

MISTRESS LEE

Unsurprising. It was clear that you were the one that bore a special connection with the spirit realm.

MORT

Well, I'm glad to be here. Thank you, again, for your gracious offer.

MISTRESS LEE

Before your stay begins in proper, I must ask something of you.

Mort steps up.

MORT

Anything.

MISTRESS LEE

Good. There is an item of personal property that has gone missing from these walls. I need you to retrieve it, and return it to me.

MORT

When was it taken?

Gordon wheels Lee closer to Mort for emphasis.

MISTRESS LEE

Last night.

She turns to indicate the CRYSTAL BALL on the table. Mort looks sure he hadn't noticed it there before.

INT. JO'S ROOM - DAY

MISTRESS LEE (V.O.)
 And I think you know who has it.

Jo sits up in her bed. She's cradling an antique BOOK, which looks like a much larger, much older, much more sinister version of her own book.

She caresses the embossed leather cover, worn though the centuries. Among an ornate floral pattern, she identifies the subtle outline of that very same six-pointed star: the Seal of Solomon.

JO
 I know you.

She heaves open the cover of the book. The leather binding SQUEAKS in resistance.

Jo runs her finger across the title page. Latin.

The paper is a crumpled vellum. The heavy pages THUD as she fans through the volume. She stops as a clump of pages falls beneath the rest.

Demarcating this spot, Jo pulls out an old tintype photograph that had been used as a bookmark. Its subject:

A fair BRIDE in a pure white lace gown -- her face SCRATCHED OUT of the picture.

Jo looks unsettled, and sets the photograph aside.

On the page she had retrieved it from, a hyper-detailed piece of line art depicts a ritual beheading.

Disturbed, Jo goes to close the book, but her shifting hand reveals something in the margins. She takes note of a series of hand-written runes:

Jo takes out her phone to snap a picture of the symbols.

Her camera FLASHES --

-- the book THROWS ITSELF across the room, SLAMMING SHUT.

MORT (PRE-LAP)
 But why?

MISTRESS LEE (PRE-LAP)
 Don't you see it?

INT. SPOOKEASY - BACK ROOM - DAY

MISTRESS LEE
Jealously, my dear. Of course.

Mort takes a half step back.

MORT
Of you? Or me?

MISTRESS LEE
Lost girls of her age always cower
in the face of maturity. Especially
to those gifted in the supernatural.

MORT
And that's you?

Lee's chair begins to roll forward without Gordon's aid.

MISTRESS LEE
She may condemn your resolve, but
she envies it. As you do her.

MORT
You know what I want?

MISTRESS LEE
I have seen into both of your minds.

Mort holds out his hand to stop her approach.

MORT
The others. They said if I take it
for myself ... I wouldn't join them.

Lee breathes a controlled breath and looks over her nose.

MISTRESS LEE
True, you would not end up like
them, if you willingly forfeit the
most precious gift of all ...

She roll herself within inches of him.

MISTRESS LEE
... but if you help me, I could
change that.

MORT
Tell me what to do.

EXT. THE BLIND PIG - DAY

MISTRESS LEE (V.O.)

I need you to help me regain what I
have lost.

Jo stomps down the street with purpose, wearing a long coat, sunglasses, and a backpack.

She passes the hole in the wall they had entered through before, instead making her way around the back of the building. She slides through a line of trash bins.

At the bottom of the back wall, she notices a sunken window to a lower level, with bars covering it.

Pressing her feet against the wall, she leverages her weight and PULLS on the bars. It buckles under the pressure and the rusted bolts BREAK free.

Jo falls on her ass and curses under her breath.

She sets down the bars as quietly as she can, crawling over to the newly exposed window.

INT. MISTRESS LEE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Cat-like, Jo leaps into Mistress Lee's chambers.

Decorated similarly to her seance room, this space is also painted with broad strokes of darkness. Jo pulls the chain on an overhead stained-glass lamp and looks around.

There's no bed. No dresser. Just a series of tables and desks at various heights around the room, each home to a single occult object.

After sweeping the room Jo's eyes are drawn to a portrait of Mistress Lee herself. Vanity without a vanity.

Jo slides the painting aside to reveal an inset SAFE.

She removes the painting entirely and sets it gently on the floor. This is no ordinary safe. A series of six interconnected dials face her.

Taking out her phone, she pulls up the photo of the runes.

Sure enough, the safe dials have corresponding runes engraved throughout. She rotates each in order, referencing her phone. CLICK.

Jo grabs the safe handle with her free hand, but before she opens it, she closes the photo on her phone and begins recording video.

She slides the phone in her jacket pocket, camera lens poking just over the edge.

Jo takes a deep breath, and opens the door to find ...

A SEVERED HEAD with a BURNT VEIL covering the face.

Jo recoils, cupping her hands over her mouth to suppress a SCREAM. She's mostly successful.

Recomposing herself, she moves back toward the safe, extending her hand out in front of her. Using only her index finger and thumb, she PULLS BACK the veil.

The BRIDE's eyes SHOCK open.

BRIDE
She's doomed them all ...

Jo's eyes BUG out, but she leans in to hear more, angling her pocket toward the safe.

BRIDE (CONT'D)
... cursed ... the lot of them ...
... never to cross the threshold
again ... she's responsible ...

The Bride's eyes look down, trying to see her own neck.

JO
(whispering)
Mistress Lee?

BRIDE
... for him ... for his deeds ...

JO
Who?

The bride opens her mouth once more, but only DUST emerges.

BRIDE
... his deed ...

The bride LOOKS UP as if she heard something and SHUTS HER MOUTH, teeth CRUSHING together.

Jo PANICS and SLAMS the safe shut.

INT. SPOOKEASY - BACK ROOM - DAY

Lee sits still in front of a standing Mort.

She CRANES HER NECK further than it should be able to go.

MORT

What is it?

Lee SNAPS her neck back toward Mort, head wobbling.

MISTRESS LEE

It is too late.

Her chair begins to roll toward him.

MORT

But I haven't begun --

MISTRESS LEE

You know too much.

The wheels of her chair TRAMPLE his feet, he STUMBLES back.

MORT

I don't know anything ... !

MISTRESS LEE

At least you can admit it, but --

Her chair STOPS abruptly.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)

-- you will.

The black lace wrap around Lee's neck begins to rapidly UNTIE ITSELF.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)

So why prolong the inevitable?

MORT

What's happening? I thought we --

The lace falls to reveal a line of SCARS through her neck.

MISTRESS LEE

You thought wrong.

Mistress Lee's head SEPARATES FROM HER BODY, and begins to FLOAT ACROSS THE ROOM toward Mort. He continues to stumble backward, frantically heading for the door.

INT. JO'S ROOM - DAY

Jo lays with her body splayed across her bed. Mort does the same on the floor next to her.

The both stare unblinking at the ceiling.

MORT

I'm sorry.

JO

Don't be. I shouldn't have left you there. I knew something was up.

Mort sits up, resting his back against the bed.

MORT

How?

JO

I don't know. Just a feeling.

MORT

Like ... a vision?

She props herself up.

JO

No. Something in my gut. From the moment we got near that place.

MORT

And I thought I'd found a new home.

Mort slaps his hands against his forehead. Jo slumps her head over the edge of the bed next to him.

JO

Can I ask you about that?

MORT

(softly)

Sure. Why not. We've faced death together, at this point.

JO

That's just it. Why's everything death with you?

Mort pulls his head out of his hands looks back at her.

MORT

Why'd you fake being a witch?

She swings her feet over the bed next to him, and puts her hand on his shoulder.

JO

Just because the person that gave you life gave up on you, doesn't mean you have to give up on life.

MORT

It's not as simple as that. I wouldn't expect you to understand.

JO

Help me to.

MORT

Your gut feeling's not giving you anything right now?

Jo shakes her head.

JO

You're entitled to let the past go.

MORT

We just made merry with a band of ghosts, Jo. The past will always haunt us. Nothing we can do.

JO

If you're so convinced, then what are you waiting for?

MORT

Excuse me?

She pops off the bed, standing over him.

JO

You heard me. If life's all that bad, then why keep it up? I mean, something's keeping you around.

Mort looks up at Jo, wishing there was another answer.

MORT

Curiosity.

Jo slumps onto the edge of the bed.

JO

How's that?

MORT

I've never been able to commit to anything without knowing all the angles. Following every possibility and weighing the outcomes.

JO

You thought those ghosts would have some answers for you?

MORT

I did.

JO

And how'd that go?

Mort jumps off the floor to face her.

MORT

What about you? Playing with fire to convince your mother you're not like her? If that's it, then maybe you should join me when the time comes.

She's hurt. Her head tenses with repressed rage. Shrugs.

JO

So that's it then.

MORT

It's the goal. But I can't commit ... until I understand.

(beat)

Death is a reward.

She nods. Okay.

JO

So you won't pull the plug until you've answered a question that's got no answer. You'll forgive me for thinking that's a load of bull.

(beat)

This isn't really what you want.

MORT

If YOU'VE got some answers, princess, I'm all ears.

JO

As a matter of fact, I do.

She grabs her backpack and holds it up to him.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Jo and Mort sit alone at a table in a cavernous library.

She has Mistress Lee's book open to the ritual beheading while Mort examines the tintype photograph among stacks of newspaper archive volumes.

JO

I can't find a single reference to this book. Here, or online.

MORT

You sure it's not your Latin?

JO

My Latin might not be great, but Google-Translate's is perfect.

MORT

Without a face, this picture's not getting me anywhere.

Mort tosses the picture on the stack of newspapers.

JO

Maybe this will help.

Jo takes out a pair of headphones, puts one earbud in and pops the other into Mort's ear. She plugs them into her phone and pulls up the video she took in Lee's chamber.

MORT

(muttering)

... responsible for his deeds ...

JO

It's not very clear.

MORT

There's some kind of interference.

JO

If you can trace them with a phone, it makes sense that they can jam it.

MORT

If only we could hear more.

Jo bristles with reluctance, looking over her shoulder.

JO

We might be able to.

EXT. LIBRARY GARDEN - DAY

Mort and Jo sit on a stone bench behind a secluded hedge.

JO

You sure you're ready for this?

He nods. She slides on a leather glove and reaches into her bag. Slowly, as if handling an explosive, she removes the Bride's head. Mort FLIPS OUT.

He HOPS off the bench and does a little creeped-out dance.

MORT

Good god!

JO

You know, for a guy that's obsessed with death, you sure do spook easy.

Mort tilts his head at her. Really?

MORT

You did not just say that.

JO

So, how do we ... wake it up?

MORT

You're the would-be occult-ess!
How'd you do it before?

JO

I didn't! I just opened the safe --

MORT

Wait a minute. That might be it.
Hold on, be right back.

Mort skips around the hedge and back into the library.

Jo turns back to the Bride's head just as her EYES BLAST OPEN, filled with an otherworldly GLOW.

Mistress Lee's voice speaks through the head:

MISTRESS LEE (O.S.)

Clearly you do not respect the
magnitude of losing your head.

Jo hurriedly sets the head down on the bench, stands up and backs away from it.

MISTRESS LEE (O.S.)
Return my property to me, and I may
consider forgiving your
transgressions.

Jo looks back to see if Mort is coming.

MISTRESS LEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Fail to do so ... and your fate
cannot be guaranteed.

The glow falls out of the Bride's eyes, which slowly creep
shut again. Jo returns the inert head to her bag,
collapsing onto the bench, out of breath.

Mort rounds the corner carrying a volume of newspapers.

He stops in his tracks when he looks up to see her.

MORT
What is it? Something happened.

Mort sits next to her and takes her hands.

JO
She spoke through the bride.

MORT
Mistress Lee?

JO
Yes, I'm sure it was her voice.

Mort shakes his head, confused.

MORT
How is that possible?!

Jo pulls her hands out of Mort's incredulously.

JO
You've got no problem with these
ghosts, but magic is where you draw
the line?

MORT
With ghosts, I guess it's ...
aspirational.

She lets out a breath, trying to find the words.

JO
Has it ever occurred to you that
magic is the reason ghosts exist?
(beat)
And there's nothing magical about
what you're doing.

Mort's eyes dart around. He lands on her. Pressing on.

MORT
What'd she say?

JO
That she wants us "to return her
property" to her. Or else.

MORT
The book?

JO
It did fly out of my hands when I
first opened it. It must be a
powerful object.

Mort looks at Jo suspiciously.

MORT
Must be.

JO
We can't trust her. What do we do?

Mort puts his hands on his knees and takes a deep breath.
He turns to Jo.

MORT
We've got to go back.

EXT. THE BLIND PIG - DAY

Jo and Mort scoot along the side wall of The Blind Pig.
They're both suited up, Mort in his utility vest, and Jo in
her long coat.

Mort stops moving when Jo grabs his arm.

MORT
What is it? A feeling?

JO
That's just it. Nothing.

INT. SPOOKEASY - DAY

Jo walks confidently into the bar. Mort follows, a little more cautiously.

It's totally DESERTED. The lamps sit unlit. Beams of daylight enter unimpeded. It's as if the life of the entire place had been sucked out.

MORT

Slow down.

JO

It's okay. She's not here.

Mort watches Jo make her way around the bar. He's uneasy.

MORT

Seems so ... empty.

JO

Now who's got a feeling?

MORT

How dare you.

She waves her hands and drops into a Scottish accent.

JO

YOU'RE A WIZARD, MORTY!

MORT

That's not funny.

He pushes past her, looking behind the bar.

JO

Just because you SUPPOSEDLY want to be dead doesn't mean you have to be such a drag while you're alive.

MORT

I found something.

Jo joins him behind the bar. She kneels down to examine a pile of POWDER. She pokes a bit and touches it to her tongue. Her eyebrows pop up.

JO

Pretty sure that's powdered sugar.

MORT

We've got our trail.

JO
 Unless you know something about
 ghost beignets I don't --

He taps her and points across the floor.

MORT
 No, look ...

A literal trail of powdered sugar leads around the bar.
 They crawl to follow it. The path thins as it approaches
 the door to the stairwell.

JO
 This can't be what I think it is.

MORT
 Only one way to find out.

INT. THE BLIND PIG - DAY

Jo and Mort walk into The Blind Pig. It looks like your
 typical city pub, just as typically sparse in the
 afternoon. Two LOCALS nurse pints in the corner.

Behind the bar, a BARTENDER has his back to them, collar
 popped up to cover his face. An uncharacteristic boater hat
 tops his head.

He speaks in a put-on GRUFF voice.

BARTENDER
 What can I get ya, strangers?

Jo tries not to laugh as she and Mort sit down on a couple
 of stools at the bar.

JO
 Hmmm, let's see ...

MORT
 You got any oxidized booze we can
 feast on its spoiled vapors?

Tensing up, the "Bartender" WHIPS around toward them:

It's XAVIER, covered in powdered sugar and a mop wig to
 obscure his translucency. He looks ridiculous.

XAVIER
 What the -- you two!

JO
This is not a good look for you.

MORT
What'd you do with the real
Bartender?

XAVIER
Hey, now!

MORT
Sorry -- the living bartender.

Xavier looks sheepish through his powdered face.

XAVIER
I gave him the day off.

MORT
Is that ghostspeak for "kill"?

JO
Yeah, were you actually the ex-
assassin ghost at that haunted house
of yours?

MORT
Oh, yeah, every ghost-squad has one
of those.

Xavier shuts their riffing down.

XAVIER
No! I just scared him off.
(lower)
Also, I was the butler.

Jo and Mort both bust out LAUGHING.

MORT
Man, you've been dead a long time.

Xavier bristles.

XAVIER
No need to get insulting.

JO
No, but seriously. You need to get
with the times, man. This is
considered mortal-face, and I find
it incredibly offensive.

INT. SPOOKEASY - LATER

Jo and Mort SPLASH Xavier with a bucket of water, washing away the last absurd traces of powdered sugar.

JO
You know, you two aren't so different.

Mort and Xavier look at each other.

XAVIER
How's that?

JO
He's a dead guy dressed up like he's not, and you got mistaken for dead in a room full of actual ghosts.

MORT
Knock it off.

JO
It's a shame you guys can't switch places!

XAVIER
I'd have you not speak of such sorcery, thank you!

Mort turns to Xavier.

MORT
Wait, that's a thing? Because --

JO
Yeah, he'd TOTALLY be down for a trade.

Jo juts out her hand to hide her face from Mort, mouthing to Xavier "NOT REALLY".

XAVIER
I'd think you'd realize. There is no longer such power in these walls.

JO
Bingo. Which brings us to the reason we're here. The woman of the hour.

MORT
Mistress Lee. Where is she?

Xavier looks grim.

XAVIER
Looking for you.

Jo and Mort shift in their seats.

JO
You know something.

MORT
Tell us, Xavier. Please.

XAVIER
It wouldn't be wise for me to say.

JO
What has she got over you?

XAVIER
The same thing she has over all of us. Power beyond imagination. Reaching all the way from your world, to mine. Being of neither, she draws from both.

MORT
How?

XAVIER
That's a long, painful story.

JO
We've heard some of it. From a certain headless bride.

XAVIER
Then you know only the prologue.

MORT
Tell us the rest.

XAVIER
I know only pieces. She saw to that. Whispers heard through cursed walls. But flip to the end, and you can change the final chapter.

MORT
What do you mean?

JO
We can kill her.

Mort turns between Jo and Xavier.

MORT
Is that right?

XAVIER.
Her body. Find it. Then --

JO
Let me guess. Stab the heart.

XAVIER
No. You must DESTROY her heart. Her
mind weakens without the body. The
body without the heart. If the organ
still exists ... destroy it.

MORT
And if it's not there?

A horror washes over Xavier's face.

XAVIER
Then she has perverted nature
further than ever before. And
nothing can stop her.

JO
Where is it?

XAVIER
There's the rub.

MORT
Did she hide it? Or was it hidden
from her?

XAVIER
Some of my compatriots believe it
rests on the property of the home we
were cast out of. Else one of us
would have done the deed ourselves.

MORT
Can you show us?

Xavier has a pained look behind his eyes.

XAVIER
Yes.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Behind an iron gate that encircles the property sits a massive plantation mansion. Vines cover its pillared facade, the yard overgrown with a century's neglect.

MORT
It's gorgeous.

JO
You would think so.

MORT
What, you don't?

JO
I'll give you, it was probably a sight to see, back in its day.

Mort grasps the gate bars and presses his face between.

MORT
I like it just the way it is.

CLANG.

A broken lock falls to the floor. Mort looks over to see Jo proudly smile above a pair of bolt cutters.

She pulls open one half of the gate with a deafening CREAK.

XAVIER
This is as far as I can go.

MORT
What happens if you try to enter?

XAVIER
Eternal void, preceded by a spiritual pain beyond the constant torment we already endure.

Mort thinks on this.

MORT
It hurts being a ghost?

XAVIER
Why do you think we went to such pains to find a way to drink?

As Jo and Mort step through the gate, a massive wind ENVELOPES THEM, kicking up a tornado of dead leaves.

They both skip back outside the line of the gate, safely behind the threshold.

JO
What was that? It felt like it was taking over my entire body.

MORT
Someone must be here.

They turn to Xavier.

JO
I thought you said everyone was cursed? Cast out of this place?

XAVIER
It's true. The most powerful of all curses was placed on this property. No ghost can pass through its walls.

JO
Should we call for backup?

Xavier urges them forward.

XAVIER
You won't need anyone else --

JO
No, something is protecting this house. We need help.

Mort stops them.

MORT
She's right. We can't do this alone.

They both spin around to Xavier. He gives them a "who, me?" look in response.

JO
Your friends.

MORT
Any idea where they might have fled?

Xavier cracks a little smile.

XAVIER
I have a few hunches.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

The Library is dark. The moon through the tall windows casts the entire room in monochromatic blues.

An elder LIBRARIAN escorts Jo and Mort through the aisles.

LIBRARIAN

I don't know what could possibly be a "dictionary-related emergency"

MORT

It's for our ... mother.

Jo widens her eyes at Mort.

JO

Yes. She has this bizarre affliction where she can't bare to not understand something.

LIBRARIAN

Here's the lot of them.

The Librarian huffs away, muttering to herself.

Mort walks the length of dictionaries, stroking his chin as if deciding which one to choose. From one of the shelves, an old Webster's Dictionary SCOOTs out eagerly.

Jo PULLS DOWN the entire row of books, revealing the glowing ghost of Noah Webster peeking behind the shelf!

MORT

Gotcha.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Jo and Mort slide in through the stage door of a theater.

In the center of the stage, a single bulb on a stand illuminates the vast space. They look to the floor:

In the dust, SHOE PRINTS appear, skuffling about as if in performance. Jo smiles at Mort and reaches over to PULL the chain, snuffing out the light.

In the pitch blackness, the magician ghost Harvey reappears. He purses his lips in mischievous surprise.

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

A dozen beds line the wall of the orphanage's infirmary.

Down the length of them, the ghost hostess Harriet floats down, watching over sickly children.

She smiles, humming a soothing lullaby as she passes.

WHOOSH. Doubling back to confirm that she saw what she thought she saw, Harriet looks shocked to observe Jo and Mort laying in the final bed!

They wave to her from beneath the sheets.

INT. THE BLIND PIG - NIGHT

Jo and Mort saunter through the front door of the pub.

The same two locals from before sit in the exact same position Jo and Mort saw them last.

Jo raises an eyebrow at Mort, who reaches down and SPINS their stools around --

-- it's MARC AND CLAUDE!

They're wearing oversized trench coats with the collars popped and costume fedoras.

MORT

C'mon, you guys didn't even bother with the powdered sugar?!

JO

No, no, I appreciate that.

MARC

I told Xavier that was in poor taste.

CLAUDE

And I told him to do it, but I didn't think he actually would!

Jo and Mort grab the coats and hats off in a huff and bid them follow.

INT. SPOOKEASY - NIGHT

The entire ghostly crew has reassembled in the bar. Harriet lights the lamps and tightens all the shutters.

Mort and Jo stand behind the bar, addressing the assembly, who have huddled all of their stools in a semicircle before them. Xavier passes out drinks from a tray.

Mort clears his throat to get everyone's attention.

MORT

Thank you all for returning tonight.

CLAUDE

My pleasure! I missed this place.

MARC

We weren't gone more than a day, Claude. You missed the booze.

CLAUDE

It lessens my pains!

HARRIET

It's not just those tricks. You know what I'd forgotten?

HARVEY

Everything. Hm? Nobody else?

HARRIET

The more of us together, the less the pain.

Everybody nods in solemn agreement, except Claude:

CLAUDE

Eh, that's your imagination. It's definitely the spirits.

Claude raises his glass and swigs. Nobody joins him.

WEBSTER

Our dearest Harriet is quite right. Why, even this small assembly has lessened considerably the perpetual agony with which we find ourselves afflicted post-corpis.

MARC

Misery loves company, and we did have so much company, once.

MORT

That is why we've asked you here.
How would you all like to go home?

Everyone sits down their drinks and looks incredulous.

CLAUDE

Ya'll sure this guy's not dead?

MARC

Brain dead, I'm beginning to
suspect.

HARRIET

Honey, much as we'd love to, we
can't go back.

MORT

What if there was a way?

HARVEY

Sounds like you've a plan up your
sleeve!

CLAUDE

Does this kid know about the CURSE?

MARC

Sorry, Mort, but while that curse
still stands, our beloved home is
off limits.

WEBSTER

I have never understood why the lot
of you hold that dilapidated
dwelling in such high regard.

Everyone in the stool-circle turns around to Webster's
booth and begs him stop talking.

MARC

Never having been a resident, you
wouldn't understand, Webster.

CLAUDE

Yeah, zip-it, you thesaur-ass! The
place was perfect!

HARRIET

Almost like it was built to be
haunted.

XAVIER
I never felt more at home.

EVERYONE
Aye!

Everyone raises their glasses and takes a swig, the booze falling through their bodies and SPLASHING on the floor.

Mort wipes the spray off of his face.

MORT
Now you can have it back.

CLAUDE
Has this kid been listening?!

MARC
Lovely as it is to be with you all again, this nonsense isn't worth waiting around for another head to roll --

MORT
We're going to break the curse!

HARRIET
How do you plan on doing that?

JO
We're going to end the one who cast it.

The assembly looks at each other, confused. Then at Mort.

CLAUDE
But ... he took the coward's way.

A moment's silence among the ghosts.

JO
He?

MARC
The house's owner. A spell that powerful can only be cast at great ... personal cost.

JO
Is that what she told you?

HARRIET
Mistress Lee? You don't mean ...

Everyone turns to Xavier.

XAVIER
It's true. She lied to us.

CLAUDE
You mean LEE cast us out?!

Marc looks disgusted, even for a ghost.

MARC
Then invited us all here to keep us
under her thumb.

HARRIET
I wouldn't have believe it, if she
hadn't gone all Anne Boleyn on us.

HARVEY
She emanated power. As if I'd be
vanished on the spot.

WEBSTER
Even I shall admit, that was rather
disturbing, indeed.

CLAUDE
Shut up, Webster! Alright you two,
what do need from us?

JO
A diversion.

MORT
Something else is guarding that
house, pushing out even the living.

JO
We need all of you to distract it
while we ... do the deed.

CLAUDE
Oh, we can handle that!

HARRIET
Spooks! It's time to bring the party
back home!

CHEERS from the assembly. Spirits are high, but Xavier only
lets out an unconvincing howl of support as everyone spills
out of the bar.

EXT. THE BLIND PIG - NIGHT

The ghosts fly out of the back of The Blind Pig with gleeful abandon.

Jo and Mort stumble out of the hole in the wall trying to keep up with them. Xavier floats out behind them, raising his hands to rally the unruly spirits.

XAVIER

Settle, spirits! Have you all lost your senses?

The gaggle of ghost STOP halfway through the streets and turn to him.

CLAUDE

We owe no debt to be silent!

MARC

Tonight, we celebrate!

HARRIET

Spirits on parade!

Everyone ROARS in agreement, arranging in a single file line to "march" proudly down the road.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

As they pass sleeping storefronts, the occasional ONLOOKER ghost will pop out of an abandoned space to see what all the ruckus is about.

The flying group beckons them to join in.

As they make their way down the street, their procession grows longer with repressed spirits who appear liberated to gather out in the open.

Jo and Mort bring up the rear, fascinated by each addition.

MORT

The more the merrier!

JO

Nice, isn't it?

A spectral parade of the liveliest order!

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

The group approaches the mansion from behind, entering through the open graveyard just beyond the property gates.

Mort leans over to Jo.

MORT
Remind you of home?

JO
Maybe a little too much.

Harriet floats to the head of the group.

HARRIET
Alright, my fellow ghoulies, do your worst!

Harriet nods to a GHOST JAZZ BAND that joined them in the parade, who beings playing a soulful refrain.

The crowd GOES NUTS.

Mort and Jo sidle off to the gate, but take their time to observe the madness:

Ghosts weave between crumbling headstones. Raucous games of tag, hide-and-go-seek, and peek-a-boo. A dead patch of grass has become an impromptu dance floor.

Marc and Claude BURST from an underground wine cellar, each holding two casks of alcohol.

MORT
Those two are going to start some trouble.

JO
Let's hope so.

As if in response, the spectral WINDS kick up again. This time, they don't slow the revelers down one bit. Leaves toss, branches fly, but nobody seems to care.

The rubble passes right through them.

This phenomena ushers the arrival of a SQUAD OF GANGSTER GHOSTS, lead by GORDON. One by one, the ghosts STOP what they're doing and turn to them. Xavier flies to the front.

MORT
That's our cue to exit.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - MAUSOLEUM ROW - NIGHT

Jo and Mort slip deeper into the graveyard.

Surrounded by mausoleums, Mort pulls out his flashlight, lights it up and starts looking around.

MORT
You don't realize how much light
those guys kick off.

JO
This could be like finding a needle
in a haystack.

MORT
Well then, let's start diving.

Mort pulls out his phone and fires up his scanning app.

THUD ... THUD ... THUD ...

JO
What's that?

MORT
It's called a phone.

JO
No, that sound.

Mort stops and listens for a second.

MORT
Wind, I guess.

JO
No. Follow me.

She takes the lead and turns down a row of mausoleums.

Jo leads them confidently through the stone edifices, as if making her way through a memorized hedge maze.

She stops at one particularly vine-cover chamber.

MORT
Looks like this one is actually
attached to the house.

He shines his light to the back. It is connected.

Louder than before -- THUD ... THUD ... THUD ...

JO
That heartbeat. Can't you hear it?

Mort turns his light suspiciously toward Jo.

MORT
No. And I didn't hear Lee speak
through the head, either.

JO
What's that supposed to mean?

MORT
What if ... it's calling to YOU, Jo.

JO
Why me? You're the dead-head.

MORT
How long were you faking that dive
into witchcraft? Stuff rubs off.

Jo looses it.

JO
Look, everyone experiments in
college! I didn't expect it to WORK.

Mort puts his hands up in a peace offering.

MORT
Alright. Let's focus on the task at
hand. Where to?

She closes her eyes to listen more intently. She follows
the sway of her body around the mausoleum, checking its
volume from various angles.

She opens her eyes.

JO
It's right behind this door.

MORT
You sure?

She nods. Mort shines his light on the door. It's been
broken off its hinges. He grabs it on either side with both
hands and HEAVES it aside to reveal:

The headless body of Mistress Lee.

Its exposed neck lays directly in line with the door frame, as if decapitated by a closing door. The body is clothed in flowing gypsy robes, cinched at the waist.

Mort and Jo recoil at the sight of it.

JO
Pull the body out.

MORT
WHAT?!

JO
I can't go in there.

MORT
Why not?!

JO
Just trust me.

Mort HUFFS over to the body, and reaches past the threshold to grasp it by the shoulders. Rocking back on his heels, he SLIDES the body out into the overgrown grass.

He stands and joins Jo looking down at it.

MORT
What are you waiting for?

JO
Didn't you bring ... something?

He pulls out a pocket lighter.

MORT
Figured we'd kill it with fire.

Jo rolls her eyes and walks over to the discarded door.

JO
Here, let's get a stake.

MORT
She's not a vampire, Jo.

Jo RIPS a wooden shard off the crumbling door.

JO
Consider it kindling.

She kneels over the body, stake in hand. She raises the wooden spike over her head in preparation to strike as --

MISTRESS LEE
Don't. You. Dare.

Jo SCREAMS and stumbles back, Mort goes to her and both look up to see:

Mistress Lee's head FLOATING TOWARD THEM. Shockwaves of power emanate from her, illuminating the stone structures that surround them.

A stray beam ELECTRIFIES Mort's phone, CRACKING THE SCREEN.

MISTRESS LEE
Thank you ever so much for
retrieving my body. I never could
have managed it on my own.

MORT
This is what you wanted?

MISTRESS LEE
You see, when that fool ended his
life and cast the spell on this
place, he ensured none but mortal
hands could cross its threshold.

Jo looks at Mort with a realization. Then to Lee, angry.

JO
So Xavier lied for you. All to get
your body back.

MISTRESS LEE
Neither dead nor alive, I could not
touch it. But now ...

Lee looks down to her body, which BEGINS TO MOVE. The limp carcass floats off the ground, into a standing position in front of Mort and Jo.

Floating across the gap between them --

-- Mistress Lee's head reunites with her body.

MISTRESS LEE
... I can return to my full power.

Waves of power cascade from her head, down her horribly scarred neck and into her body.

The limbs begin to reanimate, twitching at first, then her arms rise and her slender fingers touch her cheeks. She lets out a disturbing SIGH of pleasure.

Lee's eyes closed in a moment of relish, Mort leans to Jo:

MORT
 (whispers)
 Do you remember any spells?

JO
 Mort, I'M NOT A WITCH.

MORT
 Can you remember anything from back
 when you were FAKING it? ANYTHING?

Jo thinks, and then stands slowly to face Lee.

The Mistress's eyes BLAST open.

MISTRESS LEE
 What have we here?

Jo raises her wooden stake like a wand, aiming it at Lee.
 Her trembling lips manage to utter:

JO
 Sanguinis Occidere ...

To everyone's surprise, a small spout of red-hot energy
 SHOOTS from the end of her spike.

The blast BOUNCES off of the chest of Mistress Lee, who
 CACKLES at the attempt.

MISTRESS LEE
 And to think I ever feared your
 power ...

Lee raises her hand. Jo's spike FLIES out of her grasp and
 into Lee's. The Mistress CRUSHES it and begins to approach
 the duo.

Jo and Mort step away from her.

Mistress Lee stretches out both of her hands in a grasping
 motion and JO LIFTS OFF THE GROUND, grasping her own neck.

Mort tries desperately to pull her down, but Lee tosses Jo
 aside with a discarding gesture. Jo falls out of sight
 between two mausoleums.

MISTRESS LEE
 Now, young Mort, it is time for us
 to have a little chat ...

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Xavier and Gordon face off, surrounded by the rest of the ghosts in a cheering circle.

GORDON

How long you gonna keep this up, X?

XAVIER

As long as it takes.

Xavier takes a SWING at Gordon, who floats out of its path.

The Gangsters CHEER, the other ghosts BOO, but Marc and Claude just look disinterested.

MARC

I forgot how boring Ghost Boxing is.

CLAUDE

I know how we can settle this!

MARC

I think I know where you're going with this ...

Claude SWOOPS across a line of gravestones, leering at them as if searching for a book on a shelf.

CLAUDE

Ah, ha!

Satisfied, Claude dives through the lump of grass beneath the stone. With a RUMBLE, he reemerges, pulling a wooden box that BREAKS through the earth behind him.

Marc watches Claude approach, grinning in recognition.

Claude hands one side of the box to Marc, and they float to the center of the circle, breaking up Xavier and Gordon.

CLAUDE

Hey, now! Settle! SETTLE!

MARC

Fellow undead, lend me your ears!
Are we brutes? No! We are not
zombies! We must settle this quarrel
like the men -- and women -- we
once were.

They open the box: a pair of DUELING PISTOLS.

The crowd "oohs" and "ahhs" as the weapons are flown around the circle on display.

CLAUDE

Pried from the dead hands of our
absent friend, Colonel Toombs.

As Marc speaks, Claude loads the pistols with chipped off pieces of gravestone he finds scattered on the ground.

MARC

Since neither of you can die, again,
this is to be a gentleman's dual.
Ten pace draw.

CLAUDE

First to strike head or torso wins.

MARC

Do the parties agree?

Xavier and Gordon nod. Marc hands them each a pistol.

Harriet swoops in and turns them both around, backs facing each other. Gordon angles his head to Xavier, whispering through the side of his mouth:

GORDON

Throw this or I tell the boss.

MARC

Ready!

Pistols up, they each take a pace as the number is called:

CLAUDE

One! ... Two! ... Three! ...

The circle of onlookers spreads out as the duelers pace out further into the graveyard.

From where he now stands, Xavier can see Mistress Lee approach Mort by the mausoleums. He notes Jo's absence.

CLAUDE

... Eight! ... Nine! ... Ten! DRAW!

They both WHIP around to face each other, but Xavier aims his pistol at the sky as Gordon FIRES a shot at him.

The shard projectile rips right through Xavier's head, and the crowds goes WILD. In the ensuing ruckus, Xavier manages to sneak off toward the mausoleums ...

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - MAUSOLEUM ROW

Mistress Lee stalks toward the mansion's back doors. Mort looks painfully in the direction Jo was tossed.

MISTRESS LEE
 Forget about that impish little witch. Gordon's gang will soon take care of her.

She extends her hand to Mort.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)
 Take my hand, and escort me through the threshold, won't you, mortal?

MORT
 You already fooled me into getting your body. Why should I help you?

Lee smiles. Her eyes light up. Mort is drawn in.

MISTRESS LEE
 Remember that feeling, the first moment you walked into the bar?

Mort nods.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)
 That hole felt like home. And it was nothing, compared to this place. You're not like other boys, Mort. And this home could be yours.

MORT
 How?

MISTRESS LEE
 Let me show you.

She extends her hand again.

MORT
 I make no promises, but if you call your goons off Jo, I'll hear what you have to say.

MISTRESS LEE
 Consider it done.

Lee's smile grows. Mort takes her hand, squirming at its coldness. He leads her through the back doors ...

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Once through the tall back doors of the mansion, Mistress Lee lets go of Mort's hand and takes a deep breath in.

The main hall is massive. Its interior lives up to the promise of the building's face. The ultimate Gothic palace. Rich woods and fanciful wallpaper frame immaculate decor.

MORT

Wow. This place is incredible.

MISTRESS LEE

Allow me to show you around.

She guides him past the conservatory, whose glass has been scorched. Blacked out.

MORT

In here ... it feels like the world falls away.

MISTRESS LEE

Don't you love it? Like a death waltz while still alive.

MORT

I've dreamt of a place, but never like this.

MISTRESS LEE

You feel more at home, now that all hope is lost. Yes, I can feel the comfort of your desperation. You cling to it like a child's blanket.

MORT

I can't deny. Just being here seems to bring back my focus.

MISTRESS LEE

Come with me, there is something I must show you.

Mort hesitates.

MORT

What is it?

MISTRESS LEE

The heart of this house.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - MAUSOLEUM ROW - NIGHT

Jo lays unconscious between two mausoleums.

She's awoken with a SPLASH of dirty water. She shakes herself off in shock and looks up to see:

Xavier, floating before her, holding a rusty bucket.

JO

Thanks a lot, traitor.

He sets down his bucket floats to her.

XAVIER

I made a mistake. One I'm trying to make right.

JO

I appreciate that, but why'd you turn in the first place?

XAVIER

You've no idea the power she wields.

Jo rubs her aching head.

JO

I've got some idea.

XAVIER

Let me help you up.

Jo waves him off and pushes herself to her feet.

JO

Where's Mort?

XAVIER

He escorted Mistress Lee inside.

JO

Why does she need him?

XAVIER

Once inside, she doesn't.

Jo stops dead in her tracks.

XAVIER (CONT'D)

She needs the deed.

Realization dawns across her face.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - SEANCE ROOM - NIGHT

Lee shows Mort into the heart of the house: a dark seance room, lit only by a single candelabra on the center table. Next to it sits a CRYSTAL BALL.

Mort looks around, impressed.

MISTRESS LEE

The owner did not know of this room.

Curiosity bubbling over, he can't help but inquire:

MORT

Why did he cast the spell? Couldn't he just move? Why end it all just to get rid of some ghosts?

MISTRESS LEE

It wasn't ghosts. He actually liked having them here, believe it or not.

Mort nods. His kind of guy.

MORT

Then what was it?

MISTRESS LEE

Me.

MORT

Why would he want to cast you out?

MISTRESS LEE

We owned this house together.

He tries to be delicate.

MORT

Oh, uh, you and he ...

MISTRESS LEE

He ... found another.

Mort looks to the floor, embarrassed.

MORT

... Oh. I'm sorry.

MISTRESS LEE

He tried to be rid of me, but I had protected myself: the deed to this house is no ordinary contract.

Mort perks up, interested.

MORT
Like a spell? A magical contract?

MISTRESS LEE
It is bound to this property as I am
bound to it.

Mort looks to her, nods, taking particular note of this.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)
Not only did it ensure my ownership,
it has sustained me throughout my
disembodiment.

MORT
But that didn't stop him.

MISTRESS LEE
Clever as he was, he still found a
way to cast me out, even if he had
to give up everything to do it.

MORT
I can understand that.

Mort rests his hand on the table in the center of the room.

MISTRESS LEE
You have a question. I can feel it.
Ask. You deserve to know, if this
place is to be yours.

Mort nods, building up the courage to ask:

MORT
The deed. How were you bound to it?

MISTRESS LEE
No mortal nor magical being alone
can take possession.

Bingo. Mort blinks through his "ah-ha!" moment.

MORT
Which is why you need me.

MISTRESS LEE
Very good. And in exchange for that
simple signature, I am willing to
give you what you've always wanted.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - LAIR - NIGHT

Jo enters a dark lair holding a flaming candelabra.

She spots another portrait of Mistress Lee, this time with a man whose face has been TORN OUT. She looks happy.

JO
Looking good. I barely recognized.

This room makes Lee's chambers at the Spookeasy look like a cobbled mess --

Neatly arranged artifacts of the occult. An entire wall of apothecary vials. Gold furniture with velvet upholstery. Stained glass over every lamp.

Jo stops at a table-sized book on a pedestal.

She thumbs through the pages, each flashing a horrific illustration as it passes.

She lands on a page of SPELLS.

JO
(under her breath)
... Nutrix Dominus ... Vellum
Rigidum ... Manducare Stercore ...

Impressed, she returns the the book to the page it was on.

JO
Could be useful, but not exactly
travel sized.

She continues through the room.

Running her fingers along dusty shelves, her attention rests on a chest prominently sat on a desk of its own.

JO
Aren't you special ...

A steel frame enclosing crimson-stained veneer, the chest is hinged with no lock.

Carefully, Jo opens the lid. Her eyes widen in awe of what she sees inside. She bites her lip, thinking to herself. Inspiration! She closes the lid and runs back to the book.

Flipping back to the page of spells, Jo begins to read ...

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - SEANCE ROOM - NIGHT

Mistress Lee's hand contorts in claw-like positions over her crystal ball. The fog inside the hollow sphere clears, revealing THE DEED floating inside.

MISTRESS LEE

A living name must replace the deceased ...

She produces a silver DAGGER from beneath her robes and, without warning, PRICKS Mort's right index finger.

Mort GASPS, choking the bloody finger with his other hand.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)

Place your finger upon the crystal, and sign your name.

MORT

And in return?

MISTRESS LEE

We both know what you really want. Take it for yourself, and that's it. The end. But if I do it for you ...

She moves the the blade against his neck.

MISTRESS LEE (CONT'D)

... you can revel with your new friends. Forever.

The glint of the blade bounces in Mort's eyes.

His breath begins to quicken. He looks down to crystal, then back to Lee.

MORT

You've offered me everything I've ever wanted ...

He places his hand upon the crystal. Her eyes widen.

MISTRESS LEE

All this and more.

MORT

More the anything, the last few days have made clear ... I don't really know what that is.

Lee's smile begins to wilt.

MORT
 And a friend showed me, I don't have
 to know what I want ...

Lee's grip tightens on the dagger.

MORT
 ... to give myself a chance to find
 it.

Mort DIPS, positioning her blade underneath the necklace he
 still wears around his neck. With one PULL of his shoulder,
 the rope SNAPS, sending it plummeting to the floor.

Crouched beneath her reach, he PUSHES Lee back.

MISTRESS LEE
 You fool!

MORT
 I was a fool.

CRUNCH. Mort shatters the fallen vial, and the capsule
 within, underneath his boot.

MISTRESS LEE
 I had my hopes for you, but no
 matter. This signature need not be
 given willingly!

Lee LUNGES at Mort with her dagger, only to be BLOWN BACK
 by a SEARING RED LIGHT that knocks the weapon from her
 hand. She HOWLS in pain.

MISTRESS LEE
 What?! Who could have -- ?

They both turn to see JO STANDING IN THE DOORWAY, holding a
 PROPER MAGIC WAND. Smoke escapes from its tip.

JO
 Hope you don't mind, I helped
 myself.

Lee's nostrils flare with each furious breath.

MISTRESS LEE
 You ...

Wand outstretched, Jo moves next to Mort.

JO
 Us.

Lee's posture arches in an animalistic rage.

MISTRESS LEE

You're no better than those fools I
took in.

MORT

I pity you. They're dead. I'm alive.
But you're neither. You have
nothing.

Lee CHARGES them, her arms emitting bolts of silver energy.

Jo DEFLECTS Lee's attacks, using the wand to REBOUND them
back at her. SPARKS light the room in a chaotic flicker.

MISTRESS LEE

You cannot stop me! So long as that
deed bears my name ...

Mort uses their supernatural showdown as cover to GRAB the
crystal ball with both hands.

He LIFTS the orb high and SMASHES IT OVER LEE'S HEAD.

The Deed is freed, falling to the ground.

Lee CONVULSES in pain, the broken shards of the crystal
TEARING into the scars on her neck.

The force of her wailing RIPS HER HEAD FROM HER BODY.

Lee's encapsulated head FALLS TO THE GROUND, bouncing into
the darkness of the hall as her severed body traipses about
like a beheaded chicken.

Jo aims her wand at the Deed.

JO

Vellum Rigidum.

The names at the bottom of the contract DISAPPEAR.

Lee's wandering body begins to DETERIORATE, taking on in a
matter of seconds the postponed aging of many decades. Now
a dusty corpse, Lee's body falls to the ground, limp.

The unseen WAILS of her wayward head fade to silence.

Letting the silence settle for a moment, Jo and Mort catch
their breath. Finally, they turn to each other, satisfied.

MORT
I'm going to take back some of the
things I said about witches --

Jo silences Mort by GRABBING his lapels and pulling his
face to hers for a rugged KISS.

Eyes POPPED in shock, Mort gives in to the moment and
returns her embrace. She lets him go with a SMACK of her
lips. He's grinning like an idiot.

JO
You're allowed to shut up, you know.

MORT
Good tip.

RUMBLE. The ground begins to shake.

Jo draws her wand, Mort scoops up the deed, and they RUN
OUT into the main hall.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jo and Mort STUMBLE to a stop in the main hall.

Looking up, the structure of the house itself begins to
BREAK APART, sending beams of debris CRASHING around them.

JO
What do we do?!

Mort thinks. Remembers.

MORT
The deed. The house is bound to it.

JO
I erased it to defeat her.

Mort pulls out the deed.

MORT
Give me your hand.

Mort uses the glass of his shattered phone screen to cut
the tips of their fingers.

He places his on the dotted line. She does the same.

JO
Together.

They sign their names.

The deed BEGINS TO GLOW, soaking in their blood like a sponge. With a SURGE of energy, the RUMBLING STOPS, and the house begins to settle.

Jo and Mort look around, in absolute awe.

Dust LIFTS off everything in sight. The shutters OPEN THEMSELVES, letting the first light of day spill through the tinted windows.

The place shines, still undeniably a Gothic palace.

JO

I guess this makes us homeowners.

MORT

I feel we should discuss this seismic leap in our relationship.

They walk toward the back door, hand in hand.

JO

You better behave, or I'm gonna cast a spell on this place.

MORT

Too soon.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - GRAVEYARD - DAY

The sun peeks over the horizon.

Groups of ghosts hide beneath the shade of gravestones under the watchful eye of Lee's gangsters.

BOOM. Jo and Mort open the back door of the mansion. With them comes a WHOOSH of cleansing energy that passes over the graveyard.

Confused, the gangsters turn to see Jo, strutting toward them with her wand drawn.

GORDON

Where's Lee?!

MORT

It was all too much for her. She lost her head.

Jo raises her wand, aiming it square at Gordon.

GORDON
 Alright gang, retreat!

The gangsters COWER, flying out of the graveyard, disappearing in their retreat as they pass into the sunlight. The remaining ghosts CHEER on their liberators.

Jo and Mort wave their friends over.

JO
 Welcome home!

Looking incredulously at each other, the group floats toward the back door.

Xavier inches out in front of the group, testing the waters. He looks back at everyone before finally DIVING through the threshold with his eyes closed.

Seeing him successfully pass through, the entire group WALLS with joy and spills into the house.

Jo and Mort smile, shutting the door behind them.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - DAY

The ghosts stream throughout the house, delighted to be back home. Whirling around posts, sliding up banisters, and dangling from chandeliers, they are in rare form.

MORT
 Isn't it amazing what you can do
 when you drop the ironic detachment?

JO
 You've got no place to talk. You
 fell for a ... whatever she was.

MORT
 There is one last thing I need to do
 before her influence fades
 completely.

JO
 Oh, really?

MORT
 It might not apply to me anymore,
 but there are some for whom death
 would still be a reward.

INT. SPOOKEASY - DAY

Xavier joins Mort in the abandoned bar.

Emptyer than ever before, the elements have taken over. The walls peel. The floor boards crack. The stool pads rot.

XAVIER

I don't think I'll miss it.

MORT

That's the thing. It was never the place. It was the people.

XAVIER

The dead people.

Mort smiles smiles at Xavier.

MORT

The best people.

INT. SPOOKEASY - BACK ROOM - DAY

Mort enters the back room, sliding a backpack onto the floor. He strides to the center of the room.

The Bride's body still sits in Lee's wheelchair.

Mort opens the backpack and gently removes the Bride's veiled head. Tenderly as he can, he places the head back on its neck, reuniting the Bride with her body.

A GUST of life reawakens the Bride, for a moment.

As her entire body begins to rapidly deteriorate in the same displaced aging that overtook Mistress Lee, the Bride looks up to Mort.

BRIDE

... thank you ...

The well-manicured hand that was once Mistress Lee's reaches up and touches Mort's cheek. It falls as the final energies of life drain from the Bride. Her eyes empty.

Mort lingers, closing her eyelids.

He cradles her for a moment before retrieving his bag. He slings the backpack over his shoulder, and steps out of the Spookeasy for the last time.

INT. MORT'S ROOM - DAY

Mort's room has been stripped of its macabre lining.

The blank walls surround Mort as he packs up the last of his few kept belongings. Several trash bags of crumpled posters and other refuse sit by the door.

Lugging a small cardboard box into his arms, he takes one more look around the room.

Before heading out, he pulls one last thing from his box.

Mort tenderly places an envelope on his bed, on which he has hand-written "UNCLE WALT".

EXT. DELACROIX HOUSE - NIGHT

Jo walks down the sidewalk, stopping in front of her old house. She takes it in for a moment before crossing the lawn to the front door.

Nervous, she KNOCKS quickly on the door.

She bobs up and down on her heels, waiting. She looks down to her hands, where she holds an envelope of her own.

SWISH. The front door opens to reveal Mother Delacroix.

Overcome with emotion, she GRABS Jo and pulls her in close for a big hug. Jo pats her on the back, consoling. Mother releases her, and Jo presents her with the envelope.

MOTHER DELACROIX

What's this?

JO

An invitation.

MOTHER DELACROIX

Oh Lord. Are you getting married?

JO

What?! No! It's a house-warming party.

Mother sighs in relief until she looks up from the invitation to see a GAGGLE OF GHOSTS appear behind Jo, at which point she FAINTS and FALLS INTO JO'S ARMS.

Her knees buckle under her mother's weight.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - SEANCE ROOM - DAY

Lee's dark space has been repurposed into a lively meeting room, sconces lighting the previously unseen walls of the hexagonal room.

Harriet leads a group of ghosts that float above a circle of chairs, approximating "sitting".

CLAUDE

Do we hafta do this?!

Jo responds from across the room, leaning in the doorway.

JO

Yes. You don't live in a bar anymore.

MARC

She's right, Claude. Go ahead.

Claude reluctantly stands and greets the circle.

CLAUDE

Ya'll know, my name is Claude.

EVERYONE

Hi Claude.

CLAUDE

And even though I've been dead for more'n a century ... I have a drinkin' problem.

Claude "sits", floating down to his chair.

HARRIET

Thank you for sharing that, Claude.

WEBSTER

As if anyone among us were not previously privy to said information!

HARRIET

Noah, please. We'll get to you.

Marc "stands", floating out of his chair.

MARC

My name is Marc, and I'm an enabler.

Jo laughs, shaking her head as she turns to to leave.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Jo joins Mort, who is taking inventory in the foyer.

Departing from his previously desaturated ensembles, he's decked out in a red T-shirt and bluejeans. His hair swept back, he's still himself, but he looks ... alive.

He takes stock of items on display, jotting them down on a notepad as Jo approaches him. He smiles at her.

MORT

Have you decided which wing you want to claim?

JO

The one on the opposite end of yours should keep us out of trouble.

MORT

Hey, now. I'm a gentleman.

He pulls a bouquet of silk flowers out of a nearby vase. Dust flies off of them in his rapid presentation to her.

JO

Thank you, but I've come to distrust things that never die.

MORT

Point taken.

He tosses the flowers back into the vase.

JO

I've been thinking, now that we're essentially running a boarding house for ghosts --

Mort interrupts her, holding his hands up to frame an imaginary sign:

MORT

"Mort and Jo's Home for Ghost Boarding and Rehabilitation".

JO

"Mort" then "Jo", huh?

He concedes, flopping his arms back down.

MORT

We can figure out what makes for the best acronym later --

JO

Anyway, I thought we could start considering some outreach ...

MORT

Spectral recruitment, eh?

Jo turns away from him, taking in the foyer.

JO

Thought it'd be right up your alley. Use this place to the fullest.

She looks back to him and JUMPS IN SHOCK.

Mort's holding a spherical lamp cover in front of his head, pulling spooky, contorted faces from behind it.

Jo SMACKS him in the arm. He lowers the glass, laughing.

MORT

You know, for a witch, you sure do spook easy.

She rolls her eyes. He puts his arm around her, and they walk together through the front doors of the house.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - DAY

Jo and Mort walk the length of their property, the mansion looming behind them. Beneath their feet, the golden Louisiana sun casts a quilt of shadows through the trees.

With each savored step, two young wanderers bask in the comfort of a space that's their own.

THE END.