

DARK NOISE

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FADE IN:

EXT. DARK FOREST - NIGHT

A full moon breaks through low-hanging clouds, casts long shadows over the dense forest.

TIGHT ON: A weathered doll, half-buried under pine debris. The doll's dangling eye stares off toward a nearby highway. WHOOSH! A dark sedan speeds by.

I/E. LATE MODEL SEDAN, MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

No headlights in pitch darkness, the sedan careens around a hairpin curve on the two-lane highway.

The driver, DAD, male, 40s, squints at the road with haunted eyes, SCREECHES around a turn. He checks the rearview mirror.

POV MIRROR: VERONICA, female, 14, sits up from the backseat.

VERONICA

Dad?

DAD

Get down, Veronica. We're not out yet.

VERONICA

What about Mom? We can't just leave her back there.

Conflicted, Dad presses his lips together, punches the gas.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Dad, c'mon!

DAD

We can't risk it.

A strange hypnotic THRUM fills the cab. Veronica whips her head in the direction of the sound. Her breath quickens.

DAD (CONT'D)

What? Is it that noise?!

The THRUM evolves into a guttural DARK NOISE, both primal and electronic. Veronica pulls her 49ers BEANIE over her ears.

VERONICA

Hurry, Dad. It's getting louder.

Dad CHIRPS around a corner. The forest shadows blur by until the Dark Noise subsides.

Around the next bend, a sign reads, **YOU ARE NOW LEAVING RAVEN FALLS**. Still cautious, Dad eases off the accelerator.

DAD

Are you hearing anything now?

Veronica shakes her head. Dad breathes a sigh of relief. Calmer now, he turns on his headlights, gives Veronica a reassuring smile. Another sign appears as if from nowhere. **WELCOME TO RAVEN FALLS**.

DAD (CONT'D)

What the hell?

Veronica quickly points past him.

VERONICA

Watch out!

A **SUNKEN-EYED GIRL**, 4, drags a tattered blanket into the road. Dad hesitates, then grips the steering wheel and punches it. The kid holds up a hand to block the blaring headlights.

Dad slams into the **Sunken-Eyed Girl**. **BAM!** The impact sends the vehicle flying off the road into the dark forest.

ANGLE ON: The tilted sedan. Veronica sprawled against the door. The **Dark Noise**, though faint, remains under the sound of a **CLUNKING** engine.

In the front seat, Dad is pinned between the steering wheel and the door. He tries to pull himself free, can't.

DAD

(weak)

Veronica? Are you hurt?

Dazed, Veronica touches a gash in her forehead, winces.

VERONICA

I'm okay, I think.

Dad struggles against the metal chard that has impaled his stomach. Blood pours freely.

DAD

(labored)

Listen, honey. You need to make a run for it.

VERONICA

No, I can't leave you.

DAD

Don't argue. You need to get help --

--A twig SNAPS in the brush outside.

DAD (CONT'D)
 (whispers)
 Go now-now-now.

Reluctantly, Veronica pulls herself from the wreck, staggers toward the road. The Dark Noise SCREECHES. Veronica clutches her head, collapses. She looks up.

The Sunken-Eyed Girl steps into Veronica's path, not a scratch on her. With unearthly speed, the girl leaps forward, snatches Veronica away. Her CRIES morph into...

INT. WINTERS FAMILY HOME, IZZY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

...A child SCREAMS over darkness.

In the dim room, IZZY WINTERS, male, 7, darts up in bed, stares at his open closet door where the Dark Noise echoes.

Izzy digs between his mattress and box spring, snatches an X-ACTO BLADE. Then he scrambles over his comforter, shrouds himself in a *Harry Potter* INVISIBILITY CLOAK. He peeks through a slit in his protective cloth.

ANGLE ON: The closet bathed in inky darkness. With each PULSE of the Dark Noise, shadows breathe, grow closer to Izzy.

MAYA WINTERS, female, 38, SLAMS open the door, sees Izzy cowering under his cloak. She races over to him.

MAYA
 I'm right here, Izzy. It's okay.

Maya pulls Izzy's cloak aside. He tucks the X-Acto knife underneath a grimy rabbit stuffed hand puppet, FLOPS. She pulls Izzy into a hug.

MAYA (CONT'D)
 Shhh. It was just a bad dream,
 baby. It wasn't real.

SAMIRA WINTERS, a sixteen year old, hair-dyed, nose-pierced version of Maya enters. Her long-sleeved pajamas and ISOTONER GLOVES cover her arms and hands.

MAYA (CONT'D)
 I've got it, Samira. Go back to
 sleep.

Samira turns away.

SAMIRA

(mutters)

I don't see how that's possible in
this house.

OFF MAYA...

INT. MAYA'S BATHROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON: Maya's eyes magnified in a makeup mirror. The view unapologetically emphasizes her dark circles.

BROADER VIEW: Maya rears back from the smaller mirror, stands before a disheveled vanity. She pulls a piece of toast from her mouth, and sets it on top of a hairspray bottle cap. She quickly dabs several dots of concealer over the dark circles.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Izzy eats cereal at the kitchen table, reads a book that's far too thick for a seven-year old. Flops sits on the chair next to him with a bowl of cereal in front of it as well.

On the TV, a NEWSCASTER speaks.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

In other news, seven people are
dead after ingesting what police
believe to be Fentanyl at a house
party in the valley...

Maya enters in hospital scrubs, throws her hair up into a messy bun as the newscaster DRONES on. A series of body bags appear onscreen. Maya CLICKS off the TV.

MAYA

Mornin' Izzy.

Maya casually pours her coffee, checks the milk carton in front of Izzy. Empty. She grabs his bowl, pours some of his remnant milk into her mug, plucks out a *Froot Loop*.

MAYA (CONT'D)

That was a pretty bad dream you had
last night. Wanna talk about it?

Izzy stares intently at his book, grips it tighter.

MAYA (CONT'D)

C'mon, baby. Please don't shut me
out. I know the dreams are scary,
but it's better if you talk about
them.

IZZY
 What does...
 (sounds it out)
 Eee-vih-ser-aaah-tee mean?

Maya realizes he's not going to budge. She takes his book, looks for what word he's sounding out.

ON BOOK: The graphic shows an inverted crucified knight. Several CREATURES suck the life from him. The picture's definition reads: *CRANIUM COMEDENTI: (Skull-Eater)*

MAYA
 (reads)
To EVISCERATE a Skull-Eater, first sever its bulb of blue fire.

The side margins are filled with manic red scribbled writing. *THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. NEVER REACT.*

MAYA (CONT'D)
 Good god. Where did you get this?

IZZY
 From Daddy's stuff.

MAYA
 No wonder you're having nightmares.

Maya SNAPS the *DEMONOLOGY BOOK* shut.

IZZY
 Give it back. I need that so I can fight the Skull-Eaters.

MAYA
 Izzy, we've talked about this.

IZZY
 But my book --

MAYA
 -- It's *completely* inappropriate.

Maya kisses his head, sets the book on the counter.

IZZY
 That's not fair! You say you want me to tell you the truth, but when I do, you never believe me.

Maya's about to respond, when...

SAMIRA (O.C.)
 (shouts)
 Mom, where did you put my backpack?

Maya takes a cleansing breath, turns her attention to...

SAMIRA'S ROOM

Frustrated, Samira searches under a pile of dirty clothes, finds her backpack. She digs through it, pulls out a Ziplock bag with three blue pills and a note, *NIGHTY NIGHT*.

SAMIRA

Thank god. Could've used you last night.

KITCHEN

Samira enters, pours herself coffee.

Maya looks over her daughter's hooded jacket, boots, and purple gloves. Her gaze come to rest on Samira's cut-off jean shorts that reveal too much cheek.

MAYA

Isn't your outfit a little thin, Samira?

SAMIRA

What? I'm wearing a hoodie.

MAYA

I'm talking about your shorts.

Izzy uses the distraction to sneak back the Demonology book.

SAMIRA

It's October in L.A. It's gonna be, like, eighty degrees.

IZZY

(imitates Maya)
Well, it's *completely* inappropriate.

Maya motions to Izzy, *exactly*..

SAMIRA

Yeah, you wanna know what's *really* inappropriate at 2am?

MAYA

Samira...?

Samira acquiesces. Maya glances at her phone.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Shit, I'm gonna be late.

IZZY
You mean shoot, Mom.

MAYA
Samira, I need you to walk Izzy to school.

Samira GROANS.

SAMIRA
What else is new? Come on, traitor.

Samira and Izzy head for the front door. Maya grabs her coat, shuffles out behind them.

IZZY
Wait!

Izzy rushes back in and grabs Flops, crams him into his bag.

EXT. GARDEN SPRINGS SENIOR CARE - DAY

Maya parks, kills the engine, but her car CLATTERS for a few seconds after. She points at the dashboard.

MAYA
Don't you dare, you little shit.

INT. GARDEN SPRINGS SENIOR CARE - DAY

Emaciated ELDERLY PATIENTS with various stages of Alzheimer's and other age-related diseases sit in wheelchairs, some in catatonic states. A few meander the halls on walkers.

Maya goes about her typical day, dispensing pills, helping patients with physical therapy, and taking vitals.

INT. CARE CENTER HALLWAY - LATER

As Maya approaches a room, she hears muffled yelling.

FRED (O.S.)
...No, fuck that!

MELANIE (O.S.)
Dad, stop it.

Maya enters to find three people. FRED ELLINGTON, male, 80s, in his hospital bed. Visiting him, are his daughter, MELANIE, 40s, and his granddaughter, EMMA, 15.

Fred aggressively points at Emma, whose porcelain skin is made more doll-like by her perfect pink-lipped smile.

Emma approaches Fred with a glass of water. He smacks the glass from her hand. It flies across the room, SHATTERS. She doesn't react.

MAYA

Whoa-whoa-whoa. Fred, calm down. I think you may be confused again.

FRED

Oh, bullshit. I'm as sharp as I ever was. You people are the ones who are clueless.

Fred points aggressively at Melanie.

FRED (CONT'D)

And I'm too goddamn old to pretend anymore.

(to Emma)

I'm gonna tell everyone what you are.

Maya presses an emergency button.

MELANIE

(cries)

Dad, that's Emma. She's your granddaughter.

FRED

I don't know who that is, but it ain't my Emma.

Unbeknownst to Maya and Melanie, Emma shoots Fred an ominous smirk. Fred lunges at Emma.

Maya shoves the girl back, attempts to stop him, but gets hit in the face.

Two ORDERLIES rush in, subdue Fred.

INT. MAYA'S CAR - DAY

Maya sits in her driver's seat, head down, icepack pressed to her cheek. Her phone dings. She checks her voicemail.

MISS VARGAS (V.O.)

...This is Miss Vargas with McNair Elementary. There's been an incident with Izzy.

Maya attempts to call back. Phone's dead.

MAYA
I swear to God, if one more thing
goes wrong today.

Maya tries to start her car. Nothing. Not even a turn of the engine.

EXT. MAYA'S CAR - SAME TIME

A PEDESTRIAN hurries away from the muffled sound as Maya SCREAMS out her frustration inside her car.

INT. MCNAIR ELEMENTARY COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Maya hurries into the office. MR. WILLIAMS, 40s, a soft male sporting a thin combover, sits at his desk.

MAYA
I'm sorry I'm late. My car broke
down, and my phone died.

Maya glances around.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Where's Izzy?

MR. WILLIAMS
He's using the restroom, which is
good because we need to talk.

MAYA
Is he hurt?

MR. WILLIAMS
Not as much as the boy he picked a
fight with.

Maya gives Mr. Williams a look, *that can't be true.*

MAYA
We are talking about Isaiah
Winters, right?

EXT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Izzy exits the bathroom into to the hallway, dries his hands on his pants.

The CRONE, female, 80s, sits behind Izzy on a hall bench, unnoticed. She watches him intently with predatory black chips for eyes as he heads toward the counselor's office.

MR. WILLIAMS (O.C.)
(muffled)
...Unfortunately, this isn't the
first time Izzy's acted out in
school.

Izzy pauses outside the door, listens.

INT. MCNAIR ELEMENTARY COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Mr. Williams reaches into his desk, hands Maya a drawing that depicts five adults, who surround a terrified boy. Each adult's face has been blacked out.

MAYA
I'll talk to him about this.

MR. WILLIAMS
It's not just the pictures. Last
week, Izzy told Sophie Miller that
demons were gonna eat her brain,
and not even her mother would care.

MAYA
(barely audible)
God, Izzy...

MR. WILLIAMS
Listen, we're not insensitive to
all your son has been through, but
we also have a no-tolerance policy
when it comes to violence.

MAYA
Wait. Are you kicking Izzy out of
school?

MR. WILLIAMS
No, we're only suspending him for
three days, but if it happens
again...

MAYA
It won't.

MR. WILLIAMS
Maya, I think Izzy might need help
beyond what we're qualified to
give.

Mr. Williams hands Maya a business card which reads: **JOEL
ELLIOT, CHILD PSYCHIATRIST.**

MR. WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
I've worked with Joel for years,
and he's had amazing results with
kids like Izzy.

MAYA
Kids like Izzy? There's nothing
wrong with my son. He's just got a
big imagination.

MR. WILLIAMS
That may be, but we can't keep
having these outbursts. We've got
other students to consider.

INT. MCNAIR ELEMENTARY, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Maya exits the counselor's office. Izzy sits on a plastic
stack chair. He picks at his fingernails.

MAYA
Hey, kiddo.

Maya scruffs Izzy's head.

MR. WILLIAMS
Please, just think about what I
said. My door is always open.

MAYA
Thank you.

Maya hurries Izzy away from the counselor's office.

Mr. Williams steps out into the hallway, spots the Crone. He
nervously nods in Maya's direction. The old woman stands,
calmly follows them.

INT. LOS ANGELES CITY BUS - DAY

Maya and Izzy pay, then walk down the aisle past mindless
passengers that zone out on their phones, sleep. Maya grabs
an empty seat in front of a GRIZZLED MAN, 50s, who hums
quietly to himself. She plugs her cell into the bus port.

The Crone boards the bus, sits a few rows behind Maya. Next
to Maya, a somber Izzy sits.

MAYA
So, you wanna tell me what happened
today?

Izzy slumps.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Spill it, kiddo.

IZZY
Everyone laughed at me because
Blake said that I was a weirdo
dumpster baby and then he pushed
me, so I pushed him back, but I
didn't mean to hurt him.

Maya considers this information.

MAYA
Why didn't you tell Miss Vargas
that?

IZZY
I tried, but she wouldn't listen.
Blake didn't even get in trouble.
She said she didn't want to hear it
from me again.

MAYA
(pissed)
You know what? Screw Miss Vargas
and her brain-dead princess logic.

Izzy perks up. Maya's outburst causes several passengers to
shoot her disapproving looks, so she tones it down.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Listen, honey. All you need to
know, is that you're perfect just
the way you are.
(beat)
You might wanna tone down your
drawings while you're at school
though.

Izzy agrees. Maya wraps an arm around him. From behind, the
Crone studies them.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Well, you've got three days off.
I'm gonna call your Aunt Chelsea to
see if she can hang out with you
while you're in prison.

IZZY
Yes!

Maya dials Chelsea as the bus slows to stop.

The Crone stands, glides down the aisle, deliberately drops a
magazine near Maya, who retrieves it. Izzy looks up at the
old woman, flinches back.

POV IZZY: The Crone's face cracks, as if her skin is made of porcelain. CHIP. CRUNCH. Beneath her facial ruptures, something dark slithers. Izzy shrinks down and subtly shields his eyes.

Oblivious, Maya hands the magazine back to the Crone.

When Izzy glances back, the Crone smiles innocently, normal again. She casually exits the bus.

MAYA
 (into phone)
 ...No, it's just gonna be for a few
 days...

As Maya continues her conversation, the Grizzled Man leans over the seat, privately engages Izzy.

GRIZZLED MAN
 Hey, boy. You saw that, didn't you?

IZZY
 What do they want?

GRIZZLED MAN
 (Shrugs)
 All I know, is only a few of us can
 hear 'em. Even fewer can see.

IZZY
 What if you can do both?

The Grizzled Man is pensive, worried.

GRIZZLED MAN
Never let them know that, or
 they're really gonna want you.

IZZY
 What if they already know?

Grizzled Man taps his forehead at the *third eye*.

GRIZZLED MAN
 Then you gotta fight.

IZZY
 How? Nobody believes me.

GRIZZLED MAN
 Make 'em believe. Wake 'em up,
 anyway you can.

Maya shoots the Grizzled Man a look to back off.

MAYA
(into phone)
Hold on, Chelsea.
(to Grizzled Man)
Is there a problem?

Grizzled Man sits back casually.

GRIZZLED MAN
No problems here. Just look around.
It's all rainbows and sunshine.

MAYA
Please don't speak to my son.

The bus reaches Maya's stop. She and Izzy stand to exit. The Grizzled Man grabs Izzy's hand.

GRIZZLED MAN
(whispers)
You're stronger than you think,
boy. Don't go down like a punk.

Maya rushes Izzy out onto the sidewalk. He and the Grizzled Man lock eyes as the bus pulls away. Maya hurries Izzy away.

----- END SAMPLE -----