

SCARECROW

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EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A bright midday sky over a classic suburban neighborhood. Quiet tree-lined street, big lawns that back up onto a wooded field. Not a park, just wild land, trees, underbrush.

Out of the woods walks a six year old little girl, PATRICE, a raven-haired tomboy in overalls, clutching a fistful of wildflowers.

Up to the back door of the nearest house, and enters.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

At the table, her mother, DEBBIE (40s), flowing red hair, lost in thought. She seems sad.

Patrice enters, sits next to her.

PATRICE

Hi, momma.

Debbie smiles weakly.

DEBBIE

Hi, Punkin.

Patrice watches her momma for a moment in silence.

Then thrusts the flowers at her.

PATRICE (CONT'D)

These are for you.

Debbie takes the flowers, forces a big smile.

DEBBIE

Oh, they're beautiful, honey.
Thank you.

Patrice smiles sweetly. She's an angel.

PATRICE

They're from Scarecrow.

DEBBIE

Ah.

She considers the flowers in her hand.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

This is your friend who lives in a tree?

PATRICE

Yup!

DEBBIE

Honey, you know we've talked about Scarecrow.

PATRICE

Scarecrow talks about you too. She says you have a pretty smile.

DEBBIE

Honey, Scarecrow isn't a real person. You know that, right?

PATRICE

Of course she is, silly! How else would she know about your pretty smile?

That gets a pretty smile from Debbie. She relents.

DEBBIE

Well. Tell Scarecrow thank you.

PATRICE

I will. Can I have a cookie?

DEBBIE

Sure.

She stands, gets Patrice a cookie.

PATRICE

Can I have one for Scarecrow?

DEBBIE

You can share.

She kisses Patrice on the forehead.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Don't go too far.

Patrice slips the cookie in the pocket on the front of her overalls, and heads out the kitchen door.

Debbie sits again, lays her head on the table, closes her eyes.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Patrice skips down a narrow path, arrives at a dry creekbed. Looks back the way she came, then cautiously climbs down, and follows the creekbed.

At a sharp turn in the bed, a huge tree stump, branches and logs piled against it from some long ago winter storm.

She clambers up and over the pile of branches. Behind, a child-sized hollow in the stump. She ducks into the hole.

INT. DEBBIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Debbie is desperately rifling through her dresser.

A man steps in. Patrice's daddy, KEVIN (40's).

KEVIN

You okay?

DEBBIE

It's not here!

KEVIN

What's not here?

DEBBIE

The necklace... our necklace. Oh, god, not today. Not today. Where can it be?

She's frantic, shaking. She plops on the bed, clutches the covers. She's fighting tears.

He sits beside her, embraces her.

She breaks down, weeping deeply into his shoulder.

A tear runs down the man's face.

INT. TREE - DAY

Patrice settles onto her bottom. Pulls the cookie out.

PATRICE

Momma gave us a cookie.

She breaks the cookie in two.

She places half the cookie into a bruise-black hand, wrinkled, cracked yellow nails. A vague sheen to the hard leathery skin.

PATRICE (CONT'D)
We have to share.

She reaches back into the pocket.

PATRICE (CONT'D)
But I brought you the necklace.

She reveals a necklace. Gold, with two hearts, and diamonds.

PATRICE (CONT'D)
Momma doesn't even never wear it,
anyway.

She reaches out, and drapes the necklace around the mummified neck of a little girl, SCARECROW, eyes empty, skin blackened and stretched across tiny cheekbones, toothy grin missing two front teeth. Wispy red hair straggles from under a knit cap.

Scarecrow is folded between shattered branches pressed into the hollow of the tree by the force of winter waters, her arms outspread. Her clothes hang from her in tatters.

Around her, an arrangement of trinkets: colored bottles, dolls, toy ponies, story books.

Patrice sits back and looks at the necklace around Scarecrow's neck.

PATRICE (CONT'D)
It's the right one, right? Good.

She gathers up the story books.

PATRICE (CONT'D)
What story do you want?
(pause)
That one's my favorite, too.

She chooses a book, and settles back to read.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrice at the counter with her daddy. They lift their grilled cheese sandwiches and "clink" them like glasses.

KEVIN
How was your day, honey?

PATRICE
Fine, thank you.

KEVIN

How polite. And what did you do?

PATRICE

I read books with Scarecrow.

Kevin stares at his sandwich.

KEVIN

We've talked about Scarecrow,
honey.

PATRICE

Scarecrow talks about you, too.
She says your beard is scratchy.
But she likes it.

She looks at a third plate in front of an empty chair.

PATRICE (CONT'D)

Where's Momma?

KEVIN

Momma's resting, honey. Momma's
resting.

INT. DEBBIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Debbie on the bed, flipping through a scrapbook.

Pictures of Debbie very pregnant, in Kevin's arms. She
traces her fingertips across it. Flips the pages.

More pictures. An infant, sparkling blue eyes, wispy red
hair.

The red-haired girl, older, progressing through years, at
the park, the beach, blowing out a birthday cake with a SIX
candle.

Then: Newspaper articles.

YOUNG GIRL DISAPPEARS DURING FREAK SPRING STORM

FLASH FLOOD TAKES YOUNG VICTIM

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR NATALIE HARRISON

SEARCH FOR MISSING CHILD SUSPENDED

She stares at the papers.

Kevin enters, gently slips onto the bed beside her.

KEVIN

I finally got her to bed.

Debbie stares at the book.

DEBBIE

Eight years.

KEVIN

I know.

DEBBIE

I never got to say goodbye.

He closes the book, sets it aside.

KEVIN

I know. But we have another wonderful little girl right here. And she needs you.

DEBBIE

I wish she could have known her. Do you think it's time to tell her?

He leans his head on hers.

KEVIN

We'll know when it's time.

She closes her eyes. The room goes dark.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

It's a beautiful sunny morning. Debbie is in better shape. She's pruning roses.

Patrice appears beside her. Three dolls in her arms.

PATRICE

I'm going to see Scarecrow, Momma. Wanna come?

She holds out a doll.

PATRICE (CONT'D)

I brought you a doll.

Debbie starts with a stern look, then smiles. She bends down, takes Patrice's face in her hands.

DEBBIE

You know what? I'd love to! It's about time we all spent a little time together.

She stands, clips three perfect roses.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

One for each of us.

They cross the yard, and head into the woods.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

I think you and I and Scarecrow are going to be good friends.

FADE OUT