

STRANGE CALLS

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TEASER

INT. SMALL TOWN CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

It's late and quiet. A 20 year old goofy stoner type STORE CLERK organizes racks of food, dutifully at work. A 40ish co-worker exits a small back room and waves goodbye as he heads out the back exit.

YOUNG STORE CLERK

Later, Sam.

As the back door closes, the young clerk watches it a moment, making sure the coast is clear... and then dives in to the free snack buffet. He rips open a bag of Doritos, grabs an ice cream bar, and pours a massive soda.

EXT. SMALL TOWN CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Outside, it's a still and quiet night. We soon hear something moving, then catch a glimpse of A STRANGE SHAPE CREEPING TOWARD THE STORE. In the darkness, we can only get a vague sense of it: it's maybe half the size of an adult man and moves in a way that ISN'T QUITE HUMAN. As it reaches the store entrance, we see a BIZARRE LOOKING HAND reach up to the handle and slowly pull open the door... WE INTERCUT TO:

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE BATHROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

IN A BATHROOM STALL, the young clerk sits on the can, sipping soda as he looks through a fitness magazine with a ripped female body-builder on the cover. Seeing a centerfold he likes, he nods his approval and turns the magazine sideways -

AT THE STORE ENTRANCE, there's a *DING!* as the door opens.

IN THE STALL, the clerk hears the ding and hurries to get up.

INT. SMALL TOWN CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

The clerk returns to the storefront. He doesn't see anyone.

STORE CLERK

Hello? Sam?

Suddenly, A SHELF IS PULLED DOWN. A second later, ANOTHER SHELF GOES DOWN, then ANOTHER. Food items start flying across the store, hurled by something unseen.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)  
Who's there?!

The movement suddenly stops. The store is silent.

The clerk timidly moves from one aisle to the next, peeking down each row to see who's in the store... with each step, his feet crunch on scattered chips, the only sound we hear. As he nervously approaches the last aisle, he steels himself, then turns the corner to see... no one. Just a huge mess.

As the clerk stands there, baffled, we shift angles, now WATCHING HIM from behind. We're in THE POV OF THE THING. It begins to SLOWLY CREEP TOWARD HIM. With his back turned, the clerk doesn't realize something is closing in on him from ten feet away. It steps on a chip and the clerk hears A TINY CRUNCH BEHIND HIM. Eyes wide, terrified, he slowly turns to look... and catches only a glimpse of THE BLACK MASS AS IT STRIKES. The clerk screams as THE THING LEAPS AND FLIES STRAIGHT FOR HIS FACE and we -

SMASH TO MAIN TITLES: STRANGE CALLS.

ACT ONE

EXT. SMALL, PACIFIC NORTHWEST ISLAND - DAY

OPEN ON establishing shots of a beautiful small island, a few miles off the coast of Washington state and the southwestern tip of Canada. It's scenic and stunning, a wild and largely untouched landscape of pristine forests and sparkling lakes.

A SMALL FERRY drifts toward a quiet port. As the ferry docks, only one passenger steps off. TOBY BANKS (20s, awkward but lovable, a Michael Cera type) carries a huge duffel bag over his shoulder. The old bag has faded lettering that reads "Property of Seattle P.D." Cell phone at his ear, Toby is mid-call. He speaks deferentially, not believing his own words, but simply trying to appease the person he's talking to:

TOBY

Yes Sir. I'll remember that: it's not a punishment, it's an opportunity to improve. And in terms of "temporary," any ballpark guess -

(he's cut off, then)

Great point. Progress is measured in stats, not days. Very true.

Okay, then. Talk soon, D... Chief.

Toby hangs up, frustrated. He scans the area, no idea where to go. And there's no one here to tell him. He spots a small shuttle bus, and as he starts to approach he hears a *SPLOOSH* - he looks down and sees he's standing in a deep, muddy puddle.

EXT. TOWN OF COOLUM - DAY

The bus stops near the center of town. Toby steps off and sees a carved wooden sign that reads "WELCOME TO COOLUM!" He has a sudden realization and shouts after the departing bus:

TOBY

Wait! I forgot my... shoes.

He starts to chase after it, but the bus picks up speed and is soon gone. Toby looks down to his muddy socks and sighs.

EXT. TOWN OF COOLUM - DAY

Now with cheap sandals over his socks, Toby walks into a small town so quaint and idyllic it feels not of this world. The locals also feel distinctly small town: simple, friendly looking people of all ages, everyone happy and carefree.

Toby looks in the window of SUZY'S DINER, a classic small-town spot. A beautiful girl (KATH, as we'll come to know her: 20s, cute, sweet, and much quicker than guys expect her to be, an Ellie Kemper type) exits. She smiles at Toby.

KATH  
Namaste.

TOBY  
Sorry?

KATH  
The sandals. Very cool.

TOBY  
I left my shoes on a bus.

KATH  
New town, may as well reinvent yourself. You don't look like a cop.

TOBY  
How did you -

KATH  
Got hit by lightning as a kid. I developed great psychic powers, but my arm hair was never the same. Also, it's a small town. Welcome to Coolum.

(as she walks off)  
If you need anything, I'm in that little white office, surrounded by animals.

TOBY  
Are you being sexually harassed?

KATH  
Some light humping, and yesterday I was peed on. Damn bunnies.

And she's gone. Outside the office she referenced, we can make out a small sign that reads "Coolum Veterinary Clinic." Toby is a little dumbstruck by her. Did she even say her name? He has no idea, but he's intrigued. Toby moves on and spots THREE POLICE CARS at a convenience store up ahead.

INT. SMALL TOWN CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

The door DINGS as Toby enters the store from teaser and sees local cops working a crime scene.

Toby talks with a cop, who walks him to SERGEANT LLOYD (20s, over-the-top macho and arrogant, a younger Ben Stiller type).

COP

Sergeant, this is Banks. Just in from the city. Starting today?

TOBY

Toby. We spoke on the phone earlier. You said someone would pick me up at the ferry station when I got in, but... no one did.

LLOYD

Are you calling me a liar?

TOBY

Oh, no sir. I just... nevermind.

LLOYD

I've got my hands full right now, as you can see. Last night a store clerk was savagely attacked.

Toby looks down to a huge puddle of slick red on the floor.

TOBY

Oh God! The attacker did that?

LLOYD

No, Davis did that. Fixed himself a slushy and forgot to turn off the machine.

We see an officer sheepishly mopping up by a slushy machine.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Then poor Rogers wasn't looking when he came in, and - bam.

(to a cop on a stretcher)

Hang in there, Rogers. We're all pulling for you.

Rogers gives a weak thumbs up as the stretcher is pushed out.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Damn shame. My best man.

TOBY

Terrible. And the attack victim?

We see the clerk from teaser - he's slightly scratched up and bruised, but seems largely okay as he talks with a police sketch artist. Toby follows as Lloyd approaches them.

STORE CLERK

...I heard the ding and came out  
from the back, and... it was chaos.

LLOYD

Let's have a look.

He shows his sketch: a bizarre, furry creature, fangs bared,  
arms stretched out, as if flying off the page. Toby flinches.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

What is that?

STORE CLERK

That's the thing that attacked me.  
I think it was like, a mutant  
sloth. Or a little Bigfoot.

LLOYD

A Littlefoot? No such thing.

STORE CLERK

No, a Bigfoot that's little. Still  
a Bigfoot. Just small.

LLOYD

A Smallfoot.

STORE CLERK

No, a Bigfoot scaled down. Like if  
you took a Bigfoot and shot him  
with a shrink ray, and he shrunk  
down small? Like that.

LLOYD

Are you on drugs?

STORE CLERK

Like, right now?

Lloyd shakes his head, then as he crosses back to the front:

LLOYD

This was clearly the work of a  
giant raccoon.

He stops at the glass storefront and looks out into town, as  
serious as David Caruso at the scene of a triple homicide:

LLOYD (CONT'D)

But he's got a taste for human  
blood now. So we'd better find  
him... *before he finds us.*

A beat, then, quietly from background:

TOBY  
How'd it get in?

LLOYD  
(slowly turns, furious)  
Come again?

TOBY  
If it was a raccoon, how'd it get  
in? The clerk said he heard a ding.  
The front door opened.

LLOYD  
Right. Because the raccoon pushed  
it open. With his nose.

TOBY  
(a little timid)  
That door pulls open.

LLOYD  
No it doesn't.

TOBY  
I'm pretty sure it does.

LLOYD  
Incorrect. It's a push.

The door DINGS as a customer pulls open the door from outside  
and casually enters. Lloyd stands there for a beat, then:

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
Guess it goes both ways.

He pulls the door to exit. It won't open. He pulls harder and  
it opens a crack, just enough for him to squeeze outside.

INT. POLICE JEEP - LATER

Lloyd drives, with Toby in the passenger seat.

LLOYD  
I don't know how you do things in  
the city, but in my department,  
every officer must wear shoes.

TOBY  
I told you, I left them on the bus -

LLOYD

Non-negotiable, Banks. Don't try and fight me on this. I bet this hothead attitude is what got you kicked off the force in Seattle.

TOBY

I wasn't kicked off. This is just a temporary transfer.

LLOYD

Well, your former Chief wanted you "transferred" so bad he phoned my Commissioner about his problem and that problem became my problem. The problem in that story is you, by the way. In case that wasn't clear.

TOBY

My Chief just wanted me to step back and brush up on fundamentals. Like a pro ball player doing a stint in the minor leagues.

(then, realizing)

This isn't the minor leagues. I didn't say that.

(as Lloyd glares)

So what's the annual rainfall h-

Lloyd slams on the brakes. Toby lunges forward in his seat.

LLOYD

Alright, we're here.

EXT. REMOTE EDGE OF COOLUM - MOMENTS LATER

Toby looks around, confused. This is a remote, wooded area, nothing in sight but an old, giant RV camper with no wheels.

TOBY

Sorry, where are we?

LLOYD

Your HQ.

TOBY

HQ? It's a trailer.

LLOYD

HQ trailer. This is the command post for Coolum's night desk. You're the new night desk officer.

TOBY

Why can't I work at the station?

LLOYD

And keep the power on all night?  
Don't be ridiculous.

TOBY

So what exactly do I do out here?

LLOYD

Do? Dammit, Banks, you're a cop.  
You protect the town. You're  
Coolum's only officer on duty at  
night, one could argue this is the  
most important job in the  
department. I wouldn't. But one  
could. They'd be wrong, of course.  
(reaches in his pocket)  
Your vehicle's around back. One of  
the tires may be a bit wonky.

He tosses Toby a set of keys and heads for his car to leave.

TOBY

Sir, wait - what if I need backup?

LLOYD

In Coolum? At night? Everyone's  
asleep. Just watch the desk and  
answer the phone. Almost forgot -  
the apartment you were promised...  
(reaches in his pocket...  
and grabs a toothpick)  
Not gonna work out. Turns out  
someone lives there. You'd think we  
would have realized that. Don't  
worry, I found another city  
property with no occupant. The  
address is... on that mailbox.

He points. Toby turns to see a mailbox outside the trailer.

TOBY

The HQ trailer?

LLOYD

Slash Toby's house. It'll be great.  
If anything goes wrong, call me.

As Lloyd heads for his car, not slowing to respond:

TOBY

I don't have your number.

LLOYD  
Try the station.

TOBY  
You said no one's there at night.

LLOYD  
Call the night desk.

TOBY  
I am the night desk.

LLOYD  
That's the spirit. Roll call at  
9AM. Don't be late.  
(about to drive off, then)  
Banks. The name of your Chief in  
Seattle - is that a coincidence? Or  
did you get run out of town by your  
own dad?

Off Toby's brief look of shame, Lloyd has the answer. He smirks as he drives away. Toby turns and looks to the weird trailer, feeling confused and alone.

INT. TRAILER - THAT NIGHT

Bored and annoyed, Toby sits by a phone at a fold-down desk. As it rings, he answers, lethargic:

TOBY  
Coolum Beach Police. Hello again,  
Mrs. Fitzgerald. Sorry, no leads on  
your missing garden gnome. Yes, it  
is my top priority. Yes, I do find  
them precious. Right, two G's in  
Bugglesby. Got it.

IN MONTAGE, we see Toby's night as he answers calls:

TOBY (CONT'D)  
So you've been getting harassing  
phone calls... from yourself.  
(then a new call)  
Your fish is a zombie. I'm sorry to  
hear that.  
(then a new call)  
You came home and found *what* dead?!  
Oh. Did you try plugging it in?  
Sometimes phones need a charge.

There's a knock on the door. Unsure who could be here this late, Toby slowly opens. A man stands with his back to Toby.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Yes?

The man turns, sees Toby - then punches him in the face.

INT. TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Toby sits and rubs his jaw. GREGOR (70s, energetic, white hair, think Donald Sutherland), opens a small refrigerator.

GREGOR

Sorry for the haymaker. You must have startled me.

TOBY

You knocked on my door.

GREGOR

Wasn't expecting anyone to answer.

Gregor gets two beers from the fridge, cracks one and sits. Toby reaches for the other, but Gregor puts it between his own legs. His next round.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

You should smile.

TOBY

Why?

A FLASH POPS as Gregor snaps a picture of Toby on his phone.

GREGOR

Need to show the new night desk man to my Twitter followers. I got ten.  
(proud, then, sees phone)  
Nine? Guess someone took offense to the nude pic.

TOBY

(dazed, rubbing eyes)  
You can't just flash someone.

GREGOR

I didn't, these were artistic.  
(then, looks Toby over)  
You don't look much like a cop. You should grow a mustache.

TOBY

I don't want a mustache.

GREGOR

Can't grow one, huh? I should have guessed, you've got sort of a pre-pubescent adult thing going on. It's contradictory and unnatural, yet somehow alluring. Like when a pretty girl plays Peter Pan.

TOBY

Okay, if I can cut in for a second - who are you, exactly?

GREGOR

Name's Gregor. I'm the town night watchman. I go around and lock up the public toilets and parks, generally keep an eye on things. It can get a little weird around here when the sun goes down. Someone has to be on the lookout for trouble.

TOBY

I agree. They're called police.

GREGOR

Ideally. But somewhere along the line, the cops in Coolum realized confronting a problem is harder than ignoring it, and things went downhill from there. These days they only keep this desk open as punishment when a cop steps out of line. So what did you do to land here, punch a judge? Bitch slap a Captain? Snog the mayor's wife?

TOBY

No. I underperformed. My monthly stats came in on the low end of expectations, so now I'm here.

GREGOR

(typing on phone)

Punched judge and snogged mayor's wife, and... tweet.

TOBY

I just don't know what to do here. This phone only rings with prank calls and crazy people. And from the look of these old call logs, it's been like that a while.

Toby grabs an old notebook from the top of a stack. Gregor grins and regards them knowingly. As Toby opens and reads a few items, Gregor has a reaction to each, remembering:

TOBY (CONT'D)

"My refrigerator tried to eat me."  
 "My dog flew away." I'll assume  
 that means on a plane.

Gregor chuckles and shakes his head "nope."

TOBY (CONT'D)

"It rains when I cry." "I can't  
 find my feet." And this one's fun:  
 "My cat and I swapped bodies... And  
 he won't let me swap back."

GREGOR

You seem like a decent guy, so I'll  
 give you some advice: if you want  
 to succeed here, it helps to keep  
 an open mind. Coolum isn't your  
 average town. I've been the last  
 person awake on this island for the  
 past thirty years. I've seen things  
 that could turn a man's hair white.

TOBY

(taking in Gregor's hair)  
 Have you?

GREGOR

When dark things rise, someone has  
 to put them down. I didn't ask to  
 be a hero, but if no one else will  
 wear the cape, dammit - I will.

TOBY

Was that a rehearsed speech?

GREGOR

(a beat, caught)  
 No.

The phone rings. Toby and Gregor reach for it at the same time. Off Toby's look, Gregor withdraws his hand.

TOBY

Coolum Beach Police. You heard an  
 altercation at your neighbor's  
 house? What address?  
 (scribbles it down, then)  
 I'm on my way!



TOBY

Alright.

(turns to face him, tough)

Gregor, go back to the car.

GREGOR

(a beat, then laughs)

That was adorable. You're like one of those cabbage patch kids.

Toby gives up and just walks to the door of the house. He knocks. Gregor steps up next to him as they wait in silence.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

I'd like to have sex with a black woman someday.

Before Toby can react, the door opens a crack. The man on the other side stays a step back, obscured in the darkness.

TOBY

Hi. Your neighbors heard shouting, things breaking - everything okay?

INT. MODEST HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gregor takes cell phone photos of a room that looks like it was hit by a tornado. Toby sits across from SAM PARKER, 40s. The shirt from his work uniform is unbuttoned and wide open, with a white t-shirt underneath. (*Discerning eyes may notice that Sam's work shirt looks somewhat familiar.*)

SAM

I was just coming home from work - I work two jobs, a lot of late nights - and right when I walk in, boom. It was nasty. Chasing me, punching and kicking, throwing things... this was pure rage.

Toby turns to look at the aggressor - a big stuffed monkey with shaggy, dark fur, sitting upright in a lounge chair.

TOBY

It seems to have calmed a bit.

SAM

I know it might sound crazy. And to be clear, I'm not saying a stuffed animal attacked me - I'm saying the stuffed animal *came to life* and attacked me. I don't know how. But this is the fifth time it happened.

Toby hesitates, unsure how to respond. Gregor suddenly jumps out from behind the chair and shouts at the monkey - nothing.

GREGOR

Interesting.

TOBY

Okay, Mr. Parker, how about you just throw it out and be rid of it.

SAM

I have. It comes back. Every time.

GREGOR

I never liked monkeys, myself. People think they're sweet and cuddly, but you catch a monkey on a bad day, he'll rip your dick off. The really mean ones will call a buddy over, start playing keep away. Nothing sweet about that.

A grumpy, distant 15 year old boy, MIKE, walks downstairs and crosses through to the kitchen without a word.

SAM

Mike. What are you still doing up? You have school tomorrow.

MIKE

No big deal.

SAM

It is a big deal when you keep getting crap grades.

MIKE

I'm not worried about it.

Mike heads back upstairs with a box of pizza. When he's gone:

SAM

Sorry. I keep pushing that kid to work hard so he turns out better than I did, but he won't listen. My youngest always listens, and he does great. But Mike...

GREGOR

(suddenly, excited)

Simon and Simon! That was the name of the show with Simon and Simon. I think it was on after the show with Scarecrow and Mrs. King...

TOBY

Well, I'm afraid I don't have quite enough to arrest the uh, monkey. But if you need anything else, be sure to give me a call.

He hands Sam a card with his number and moves to exit. Gregor follows, then sharply turns, lunging at the monkey - nothing.

GREGOR

He's good.

INT. GREGOR'S TRUCK - NIGHT

They drive down a long, dark road. Toby looks out the window.

TOBY

I hate this. It doesn't seem fair.

GREGOR

No it doesn't. No one should have to fight an evil stuffed animal.

TOBY

You can't actually believe that - I thought you were just humoring the guy. What's wrong with you?

GREGOR

I don't digest dairy so well. But I can't let that slow me down - someone has to protect this place.

TOBY

And why do you think it's your job to do it?

GREGOR

In a word? Duty. That's what Coolum would become if no one stood guard.

TOBY

(confused, then)  
Doody?

GREGOR

Grow up, Banks. It's like I told you, this isn't your average town. Coolum is surrounded by a strange energy that makes the impossible possible.

(MORE)

GREGOR (CONT'D)

The whole island is sort of a supernatural hotspot - one of a handful scattered around the globe. You've heard of Roswell? Transylvania? The Bermuda Triangle? Those are bullshit. This is real.

TOBY

Gregor, listen carefully: there is no hotspot, no strange energy, and stuffed animals are not scary.

GREGOR

They can be.

TOBY

No they can't.

GREGOR

Sure they can.

TOBY

No, they can't.

GREGOR

Sure they c-

TOBY

They can't! They're toys. They're not scary. Ever. End of story.

GREGOR

Fair enough. Say, what's that?

He nods out Toby's window. Toby turns and looks out but sees nothing. He turns back - and sees a FURRY HEAD AND TWO DEAD EYES inches from his face. Toby jumps, freaked.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Told you.

Gregor sets the stuffed monkey in Toby's lap. A beat.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Also, I stole the monkey.

END ACT ONE



WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Everything okay there?

He turns to see KATH, the beautiful girl from yesterday.

TOBY  
Hey! Hi. It's you.

KATH  
I hear that a lot. Is this a hobby  
of yours? Burrowing through hedges?

TOBY  
One of my shoes is in there.  
(as she sees he's missing  
both, explaining)  
A dog took the other one.  
(then, feeling dumb)  
I'm not weird.

KATH  
People who say that rarely are. So,  
have you fallen in love with our  
quaint little town yet? Or did you  
discover its terrible secret?

TOBY  
Do you mean -

KATH  
Limited dining choices, yes. Only  
one sushi place. But if you really  
love sushi, never go there.  
(then, walking away)  
Well, see you around.

TOBY  
Hey. Were you really hit by  
lightning as a kid?

KATH  
(turns back)  
Of course not. I got my psychic  
powers at a carnival. Bye, Toby.

She walks off. Toby watches her go, no idea if she's toying  
with him. And did he ever tell her his name? As Toby thinks,  
he suddenly remembers he's late and sprints off.

INT. POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

A dozen cops sit as Lloyd addresses the room. Toby runs in.

LLOYD  
And that will be -

TOBY  
Sorry! Sorry, everyone. I was at  
the trailer, and... wonky tire...  
sorry. Please continue.

LLOYD  
And that will be all. Thank you.

Toby sits at the exact moment everyone else stands to leave.  
As Lloyd exits, he calls back without looking:

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
Banks. My office.

INT. SUZY'S DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Lloyd and Toby sit across from each other at a table.

LLOYD  
My office is locked. And it appears  
the keys were stolen. Or possibly  
misplaced. But more likely: *stolen*.

TOBY  
Oh. Uh, sorry?

LLOYD  
Are you, now?

TOBY  
Well, it's always frustrating to -

LLOYD  
(slams his fist on table)  
Enough back-sass! If there's one  
thing I will not tolerate, it's  
sass. I'm onto you, Banks. You walk  
into my town with your big city  
swagger and think you can police it  
better than I can? Wrong. The crime  
rate's at an all time low thanks to  
me. And those people out there...

Lloyd gestures out the window as he rambles on. As Toby looks  
out the window, he spots Kath outside a small veterinary  
office. Toby can't take his eyes off her, he's totally -

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
What's this?

Toby realizes Lloyd is leaning in, almost cheek to cheek with him as he follows Toby's eyeline. Toby is flummoxed, caught, but to his surprise, Lloyd gives him a grin: "it's cool. I get it." It's almost a moment of camaraderie. Toby relaxes.

TOBY

Hard to miss her, right? She is -

LLOYD

My fiancée.

TOBY

Great! Wow. That is... super.

LLOYD

Yes it is. It is super.

As Lloyd stares Toby down for an uncomfortable beat, SUZY (the owner, 50s) sets a slice of pie in front of him. Lloyd somehow grabs his fork and takes a bite without breaking his gaze, chewing and glaring at Toby. Suzy looks down and sees:

SUZY

Where are your shoes?

Lloyd closes his eyes and exhales, as if about to explode...

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Toby sits at the desk, phone at his ear, looking half asleep, and even more miserable than his first night.

TOBY

No, Mrs. Fitzgerald. Still no sign of your gnome. Maybe you're right. Maybe he did run away. Sometimes I feel like running away...

Toby eyes drift shut. LATER - seconds, minutes? - they pop open. He hears noise outside. He looks out the window... A TERRIFYING FACE APPEARS. Toby jumps, freaked. Gregor, his face lit up by a flashlight under his chin, waves.

INT. TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Toby sits at the desk, which now has an active Monopoly game on it. Gregor grabs two beers from the fridge, cracks and sips one, then sits and sets the second between his legs.

GREGOR

Banks, I'm not normally one to pry, but I feel I have to address this: you have leaves in your hair.

TOBY

I got lost in a giant bush.

GREGOR

So you met Mrs. Fitzgerald. I can't say it's an exclusive club, but all the same - welcome aboard.

Gregor grins and holds out a fist bump. Toby doesn't meet it.

TOBY

Thanks, I think I'm okay.

GREGOR

Are you, Banks? *Are you?*

(then)

Seriously, I can't tell. I have that condition where it's hard to read facial cues without my glasses. I ordered contacts but they sent me colored lenses - a bold, piercing blue. When I put them in I can barely see through the crowd of chicks trying to jump my bones. But we play the hand we're dealt. Now let's hear it, Gilbert Grape. What's eating you?

TOBY

This. I hate this job. I hate this trailer. I hate this town. And my only way out is to prove I'm an effective policeman, which is impossible to do in a post with no police work. And I'm starting to think maybe that was the point. He chose this spot knowing I could never earn my way back.

GREGOR

He?

TOBY

My Dad. The great Terry Banks. A perfect cop, with a perfect record, and a son who managed to score the lowest arrest rate in the department - for the tenth month in a row. I'm an embarrassment.

(MORE)

TOBY (CONT'D)

So he shipped me off to a faraway island until I prove I'm tough enough to be a real cop. Or until I just give up and quit.

GREGOR

(takes this in, sincere)

That's a tough one. For what it's worth, Banks, I think you're a great cop. In Seattle, you may not have had the biggest grapes in the shower, but I'll bet my banana you had the biggest heart. Any idiot can rack up arrests. A real cop cares about people, treats them with respect, and even on his worst day, he hands out his card to say "I'm here if you need me." Coolum needs a cop like that. I think you could do great work here, Banks. Be the cop you were meant to be. And I think it could start with this:

Gregor pulls the stuffed monkey from a duffel bag.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it can only come to life at night.

(then, realizing)

Since it is night, we should hurry.

(reaching into his bag)

I checked the web for tips on cleansing an evil toy, and this particular spell had great reviews.

He holds up a legal pad covered in scribbled words. Toby looks at the pad, the monkey, and Gregor for a beat, then:

TOBY

Get out.

GREGOR

No, it's true. Scored four beards out of five on wizard-shiz dot com.

Calm but firm, Toby takes Gregor's pad and tears it in half.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

That'll make it tougher to read.

TOBY

Get. Out. And not "get out" as in "that's amazing." "Get out" as in "go away you crazy old man and take your crazy, made-up spook-stories with you before I shoot you in your crazy, hundred year old ass."

GREGOR

I'm 48.

TOBY

I'm getting a gun.

Toby turns and walks out of the trailer. Gregor calls after:

GREGOR

You're making a mistake, Banks!  
Everything you need is right here!

As Gregor watches from the doorway, SOMETHING STARTS TO MOVE BEHIND HIM - A DARK MASS RISES FROM THE TABLE, AWAKENING. Sensing something, Gregor slowly turns. His eyes go wide.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Holy shi-

EXT. AREA BEHIND THE TRAILER - SIMULTANEOUS

Toby tries to open an old wooden "Police Equipment" shed, but the door is stuck. His back to the trailer, Toby doesn't see what we see: glimpses of Gregor through the window as he's attacked by a very fast, very aggressive black mass. As Toby angrily tugs at the shed door, the trailer starts to violently shake. Toby finally hears and turns to look.

TOBY

Gregor?

He slowly approaches a trailer window. A BLACK MASS EXPLODES OUT IN A STORM OF GLASS, FLYING FOR TOBY'S FACE AND WE...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

DARKNESS. We hear a faint voice:

GREGOR (O.S.)  
Banks. Banks.

CLOSE UP on Toby's face, eyes closed. A stream of liquid suddenly hits him. Toby sits up, coughing and gasping. He looks around and realizes he's sitting in the dirt behind the trailer. Gregor stands over him with a beer.

GREGOR (CONT'D)  
Welcome back.

TOBY  
Gregor, what are you doing?! Why am I soaked and sitting in dirt?

GREGOR  
Monkey crashed through the window onto your face. Then I poured a few beers on you.

INT. TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Toby looks at the disaster inside the trailer.

TOBY  
What happened in here?!

GREGOR  
I'd love to sit and talk you through it again, but there's an evil stuffed primate on the loose. So call me crazy if you like, but I have to get out there and stop it.

As Gregor starts for the door, the phone rings.

GREGOR (CONT'D)  
Sam Parker. Tell him I'm on my way.

Toby lifts the phone to his ear. Before he can say a word, we hear the sound of a frantic, panicked caller on the other end. Toby listens, spooked, and turns to look at Gregor...

INT. GREGOR'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

The truck flies down the road. Gregor is behind the wheel, perfectly calm, just another night in Coolum. We then REVEAL Toby in the passenger seat, completely baffled.

GREGOR

Great to have you aboard, Son!

(pats Toby's knee, then)

When that monkey got out, it ran off quick. It had a clear shot to rip off your dick, but it didn't. It's after Sam. I think we're dealing with a possession - an evil force that jumped into a toy to do its dirty work. Like Chucky, that cute little doll who loved killing people. You ever see those movies? They were pretty good.

(a beat, then)

In the third one, there's a lady doll and they have sex. It's not as cool it sounds.

Toby just stares ahead. This is too much to process.

EXT. SAM'S HOME - NIGHT

The truck screeches to a stop in front of Sam's house. As Gregor opens the door to get out -

TOBY

Gregor. I don't believe in haunted toys. And I still think you're a nut. But there's a guy in there who needs help, and I can't ignore that. That's the reason I'm here.

GREGOR

Good enough for me. Partner.

INT. SAM'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Gregor enters, with Toby timidly following. The house is a mess. They hear a huge commotion coming from upstairs.

GREGOR

Looks like we found it.

INT. SAM'S HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Gregor and Toby reach the top of the stairs. To the immediate right of the stairs is an open door, dark and quiet. To their left, at the far end of the hall, is another open door - the light is on and we see Sam trying to fend off a dark mass.

GREGOR

Hang on, Sam! We're coming!

Gregor charges down the hall. From Toby's POV, we see Gregor step into the room, stop to look around - something FLIES AT HIM and drives him out of sight. The door SLAMS SHUT.

As the commotion inside grows louder, Toby unconsciously takes a few steps back, spooked. As he gets closer to the open door behind him, we realize SOMEONE IS IN THE DOORWAY. Toby backs into someone and spins, terrified - it's Sam's son Mike. He's frozen in place, staring wide-eyed in shock at the closed door at the far end of the hall.

TOBY

Mike? Are you okay? What happened?

GREGOR (O.S.)

*BANKS, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?! I'M GETTING MY ASS KICKED!*

Toby charges down the hall to help. He grabs the doorknob, but it won't turn.

WE INTERCUT - briefly, seeing only quick glimpses - to the other side of the door: IN A PLAYROOM, Sam cowers in the corner. Gregor stands in front of Sam, shielding him as a dark blur rampages around the room. Gregor fights back as it comes at him, swinging away with a child's tennis racket.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Okay, monkey. Time to die!

Gregor steels himself... then pulls out his torn legal pad. He clears his throat and holds the two halves together, fumbling and struggling to read:

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Vile creature, I hereby danish you... Danish? That can't be right.

Gregor looks up to see THE BLACK BLUR FLYING TOWARD HIM. BACK IN THE HALL, Toby hears Gregor yell. No idea what to do, Toby shouts back to Mike at the other end of the hall.

TOBY

Mike! Help me get in here! Mike!

IN THE PLAYROOM, Gregor flings the black mass across the room with his racket. Hearing Toby call Mike, Gregor thinks:

GREGOR

The kid...  
(then, calls out to Toby)  
(MORE)

GREGOR (CONT'D)

*Banks! I was wrong! The monkey  
isn't a Chucky! It's telekinetic!  
Like Carrie!*

TOBY

Like what?!

GREGOR

*Sissy Spacek! Bloody fire bitch who  
ruined prom! The kid's doing this  
with his mind! You gotta stop him,  
before he -*

Gregor lets out another pained yell and more angry swearing. Toby turns and nervously moves BACK TO THE OTHER END OF THE HALL, where Mike still stands, frozen in terror.

TOBY

Uh, Mike? Kind of a weird question,  
but - any chance you're doing this?

MIKE

(slowly, terrified)  
I saw it. It was a... *monkey*.

Mike looks Toby in the eye... then falls backward, fainting. Toby gets down and sees that Mike is okay, just out. He then notices the room he's in: THE BEDROOM OF A SEVEN YEAR OLD BOY. Asleep in bed, we see BEN, Sam's youngest son. His entire body is twitching, as if he's having a vivid, animated dream. Toby moves to him and gently shakes him:

TOBY

Hey, wake up. C'mon. Wake up.

As Toby shakes Ben, his twitching slows. At the same time, IN THE PLAYROOM, Gregor sees the black mass go limp, falling off a shelf and dropping behind a chair. IN BEN'S ROOM, Ben is still asleep but not twitching quite as much as a moment ago.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Hey, it's okay. Everything's fine.

IN THE PLAYROOM, SIMULTANEOUS, Gregor slowly approaches the chair and peeks behind it... the monkey lays there, limp and lifeless. BACK IN BEN'S ROOM, Toby tries making basic small talk, hoping to get Ben to fully calm.

TOBY (CONT'D)

I'm Toby, I'm a police officer. I met your Dad last night, and, uh... He talked about you. He says you're smart, and you listen. And that you work hard and get perfect grades...

At the mention of "work hard" and "perfect grades," Ben's breathing increases - he starts to twitch more and more aggressively. BACK IN THE PLAYROOM, Gregor picks up the monkey and looks at the limp, lifeless toy. He calls out:

GREGOR

*Monkey down, Banks! I think you did it!*

Gregor grins, unaware of FIVE NEW ANTHROPOMORPHIC TOYS RISING BEHIND HIM. WE CUT BACK AND FORTH FROM THE RISING TOYS TO BEN'S FACE, HIS BREATHING ELEVATED AND EYELIDS FLUTTERING - the toys are awakening as Ben slips back into his trance. As the toys (creepy clown, a robot, a huge Garfield, etc) stand, Gregor hears a noise and turns. His jaw drops. TOBY HEARS:

GREGOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Holy shit it's an army!*

IN BEN'S ROOM, Toby hears Gregor in trouble, but he can't get Ben to wake. As Toby looks around, helpless, he notices Ben's room: it's very organized for a kid's room, nothing out of place, no stray toys in sight. The focal point of the room is a desk. Ben's A-plus school papers hang on the wall alongside award ribbons for perfect attendance and spelling bee wins. He's a perfect little student in every way. As Toby pieces this together, he thinks back to Sam's work shirt from the previous night and realizes it's the same uniform the young convenience store clerk wore - the 40ish clerk who exited the store at beginning of teaser was Sam. Toby processes, then:

TOBY

You're a great student, aren't you?  
You have more A's at age 7 than I  
got my entire school career. You  
either have a very unnatural love  
of school... or someone is putting  
a little too much pressure on you.

Toby gets more sincere, and in response, Ben begins to calm:

TOBY (CONT'D)

I know what that's like. My Dad's  
the same way. He wants me to get  
the best scores, have the best  
rank, be the best guy in the room.  
And when I fall short, he treats me  
like a loser. And I start believing  
I am. But you know what I realized?  
Scores don't matter. All that  
matters is doing your best.

(MORE)

TOBY (CONT'D)

A grade doesn't mean anything if you didn't do your job right, or if you didn't really learn, or if you got so worried about proving yourself that you let it make you miserable. So let's make a deal: from now on, you and I won't try to be perfect. We'll just do our best and be happy with who we are.

(then, sticks out a hand)

It's not a deal until we shake on it, Ben. I'm waiting...

Toby looks and sees Ben growing stiller and calmer...

BACK IN THE PLAYROOM, we see only a glimpse of the action as everything goes quiet and the toys fall lifelessly to the ground. As if frozen mid-battle, we find Gregor choking a big clown that also has its hands on Gregor's neck. As the toy's hands slide off and hang in the air, Gregor looks at the harmless clown for a beat... then punches its head clean off.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - LATER

As the sun rises, Gregor stands at his truck, pleased as he watches Toby talk with Sam and Ben outside the house. Sam holds Ben in one arm and seems to take Toby's words to heart.

SAM

Thank you, Officer Banks.

TOBY

Toby. And if you ever need anything, big or small, give me a call. I'll be at the night desk.

EXT. SUZY'S DINER - MORNING

Looking worn-out but upbeat, Toby and Gregor exit the diner, eating pancakes out of to-go boxes as they walk through town.

GREGOR

After all that, seemed only fair to treat you to the best pancakes in town. Thanks for paying, by the way. I misplaced my wallet in 2004.

TOBY

I'm sure it'll turn up.  
(after a moment, shyly)  
Gregor, I wanted to tell you...  
thanks.

(MORE)

TOBY (CONT'D)

For believing in me, I mean. I'm not sure anyone ever has, and... I appreciate it.

GREGOR

I've got a keen eye for talent. And you had a keen eye to realize that kid was under so much pressure from his dad that he began taking subconscious telekinetic control of a monkey to lash out as he slept.

TOBY

I don't know anything about that. I just saw a kid with an issue and talked to him.

GREGOR

And in doing so, saved me from an angry clown, a pissed-off panda and a giant, hyper-violent Garfield - his love of lasagna was nothing compared to his thirst for blood.

TOBY

(considers, then)

It's probably easier if I just don't respond to that.

GREGOR

Don't get smug, you know what happened. You saw that monkey fly through a window into your face.

TOBY

I didn't see a thing. I just woke up to you drenching me in beer.

Still walking, Gregor looks at Toby, annoyed... then shoves him with one hand. Toby is pushed into a bike rack, topples over it and falls right into the path of an oncoming bike. The rider slams on the brakes, coming to a stop just inches from Toby's head. The driver looks down at him:

KATH

This feels like a cry for help.

GREGOR

(jogging over)

Sorry! My mistake. I accidentally bumped my friend into the path of a beautiful girl's bike with perfect and purely coincidental timing.

KATH

I'm sure you feel terrible, Gregor.

GREGOR

I did for a second. I'm past it. Kath, this is Banks. He's new and can't grow a mustache. Banks, Kath is a veterinarian and all around sweetheart who lets me use her medical equipment to conduct scientific research.

KATH

I don't "let him" so much as not get mad when he takes my stuff without asking.

TOBY

I could grow a mustache if I wanted one. I don't want one.

GREGOR

No one likes a liar, Banks.

TOBY

Nice to officially meet you, Kath. Oh, and congratulations.

KATH

For what?

ACROSS THE SQUARE, WE FIND Sergeant Lloyd talking to an unseen reporter who holds a small mike to his mouth.

LLOYD

Rest assured, I will end this reign of terror. Coolum will not succumb to unruly raccoons on my watch.

(then, frustrated)

Okay, where are the real reporters?

WE REVEAL the reporter: a cute, bookish 15 year old girl.

YOUNG JOURNALIST

I'm a real reporter.

LLOYD

No you're not.

YOUNG JOURNALIST

The Coolum High Beacon is a respected publication -

LLOYD  
 It's crap. Everyone hates it.  
 People tell me that all the time.  
 (then, seeing)  
 Kath! Good to see you.

Lloyd puts on his most charming face as Kath approaches.

KATH  
 Do you tell people we're engaged?

LLOYD  
 (a beat, guilty)  
 Don't recall doing that. No.

He then spots Toby and Gregor watching a short distance away. Gregor gives Lloyd a not-at-all-subtle obscene gesture.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
 I saw that, Gregor!  
 (off Kath's persistent  
 look, caves)  
 True or false: I asked you to marry  
 me, and you said yes.

KATH  
 We were eight.

LLOYD  
*True? Or false?*  
 (then, to young girl)  
 What are you doing? Don't write  
 that. I will confiscate that pad,  
 Tina.

YOUNG JOURNALIST  
 Sergeant Lloyd cracks down on first  
 amendment. Great headline.

As Lloyd argues with the young girl, Kath slips away, giving Toby a smile as she walks off. Toby smiles back and Gregor puts an arm around him as they watch her go.

GREGOR  
 That'll do, Banks. That'll do.  
 (a beat, then)  
 How soon you think you'll bang her?

As Toby reacts, bickering with Gregor, we PULL BACK TO AN AERIAL OF VIEW of the town square, and the strange, mysterious town of Coolum...

END ACT THREE

TAG

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

As Toby works, Gregor gets two beers, sits, and puts beer two between his legs - but then reconsiders and holds it out:

TOBY  
Your on-deck crotch beer?

GREGOR  
I'd like you to have it.

TOBY  
I'm touched and disturbed.

GREGOR  
Don't be so hard on yourself -  
you're no crazier than I am.

TOBY  
I actually meant... thanks.

Toby takes the beer. There's an unexpected KNOCK at the door. Toby gets up and opens it to SEE... no one. Odd. As Toby is about to close the door, he spots something on the doorstep: A GARDEN GNOME. It just sits there, smiling up at him, an ordinary gnome. No one else here. Seated, Gregor calls out:

GREGOR  
Who is it?

TOBY  
A, uh... gnome. Garden. By itself.

As Toby stares at it, confused, we hear Gregor in background:

GREGOR (O.S.)  
Someone probably left it there for  
you. It's not as if a garden gnome  
just walked here on its o-

THE GNOME IS FLATTENED FROM ABOVE. Toby turns to see Gregor holding a shovel, scowling like a vengeful Clint Eastwood.

GREGOR (CONT'D)  
I told you to let it go, Bugglesby.  
You brought this on yourself.

Gregor turns and heads back in. Toby looks down at the Bugglesby dust for a beat, then shrugs and closes the door.

END OF SHOW