



Haunted

Carol B. Niskala

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Characters

- Kerry and Kacie: the sisters who tell the 2004 story in 2025
- Henrikki: Kerry's husband, 2025
- Cabhán, Cav for short: Kacie's boyfriend, 2025 (The Irish name Cabhan is pronounced "KAV-uhn," or "Kav-awn" in approximate phonetic terms, similar to the English county name Cavan.)
- Ruby, Angélique and Tarsila: Kerry's friends, 2025
- Tiana and Chiara: Kacie's friends, 2004
- Whoever is not here...was not supposed to be introduced this early!

Part 1

September 20th, 2025

Kacie and her boyfriend Cav are in the last leg of their long Euro trip. After passing through Amsterdam, Brugge, Liverpool and Edinburgh, their vacation ends in Helsinki. Most people don't really think of visiting Finland, to be honest, but Kacie is not like most people. A strong willed woman, she decided to include the road less traveled to Finland in their itinerary to see what the city in the Nordic country has to offer. A place that neither she nor Cav have been to, so that brings them both a sense of novelty and excitement in exploring an unknown city together, eyes fresh and minds open. Of course, visiting Kacie's sister Kerry and her husband Henrikki is another perk.

It has been a while since the sisters have met, so it is welcome news for Kerry to host her little sister in the town she has been living in for so long. Kerry makes a long itinerary, full of ideas only to cut something when patient and reasonable Henrikki points out she cannot overburden the guests with too many activities. Reluctantly, Kerry agrees with her husband. She is not the most patient person, sometimes half understanding that people need their own time to do things. Her stubborn and harsh personality is now milder, thanks to the good influence that Henrikki has on her.

Once the young couple arrives and is settled in the seaside neighborhood of Eira, Kerry comes up with a dinner out in an older part of the city center and invites three of

her friends to attend as well: Ruby, Angélique and Tarsila. Kacie agrees happily and so does Cav. He seems to be especially happy to see his girlfriend spending time with her sister. A good sports fan, he is soon engrossed in an animated conversation with Henrikki about a hockey match and some specialty beer they can have over the weekend, leaving the two sisters to talk about the trip so far and catch up. After some mandatory walk around the neighborhood, Kerry reminds them it is time to leave for dinner.

After a short tram ride, followed by a brisk walk in some cobblestoned streets, the sisters arrive at the Art Nouveau restaurant building, along with their significant others. Once they reach the restaurant entrance, Kerry sees that Ruby is already waiting for them. Organized and always on time, it is not a surprise that she is already there and with a broad smile on her face. Ruby is the reassuring presence in their group of friends, the one people can always count on to keep them in the right direction, even if all of them get lost together. Kerry rushes them all in after some brief introductions, so they don't lose their table.

Inside the restaurant, the hostess, for some reason that is not clear, put them in a sort of private room, protected from most of the hustling and bustling of the place. The sounds of birthday songs, the clacking of wine glasses and alcohol fueled conversations being damped by the enclosure of the alcove where their round table is placed. Right after they are seated, Angélique arrives, mezzo huffing & puffing, mezzo smiling. She throws her work backpack on the floor as she collapses on a chair, apologizing for being stuck at work on a late afternoon meeting and already asking what they will have for food. Angélique is the one friend who keeps the movement in the group, always with

some adventure and a half ready for everyone, usually all overlapping and keeping them super busy, in a good way. Soon Tarsila arrives, feeling a bit lost on how she was late if she was the first one who said was on her way in their group chat online. Tarsila is the artsy friend, the one that curates the best vibes for everyone and loves a good laugh as much as she loves a pastel flower print.

After some more introductions, exchange of pleasantries and drinks, the conversation flows and someone mentions today is the first night of Autumn and Halloween season is upon us. Tarsila, Ruby and Angélique comment they are, along with Kerry, preparing a Halloween party and it's such a shame Kacie won't be in town anymore. Cav asks what kind of activities they are going to have and after Angélique answers and explains all the concepts for the group costumes, activities galore and all that jazz...Cav questions why no one thought of maybe some scary story telling since there's two writers in the group, Tarsila and Kerry. Tarsila brushes it off saying she is not the biggest fan of those and she honestly scares easily. All eyes come back to Kerry, who is known for her love of mystery and macabre stories, having written some stuff of her own imagination and others also taking inspiration from classic masters like Stephen King and Edgar Allan Poe. Kerry also brushes it off, saying that whatever good scary story she had, it has been published already and she was not going to embarrass herself reading her own stories outside a work event.

Angélique then reminds Kerry, why doesn't she tell that story that she swore it was real, about the haunted house Kacie broke into? The one they spoke about in some detail once when they were engrossed over a podcast of real life bizarre stories.

Cav laughs and asks since when that happened and that they all must be pulling his leg, a surprise prank for the visitors to keep in with the spooky season. Cav is quite the non believer when it comes to this kind of story, especially if it includes both his girlfriend and her sister. He is laughing so much that he is spilling his red ale all over the table.

Kacie then fires back at her sister that she cannot believe Kerry told them, in sheer disbelief, her green eyes growing darker with an even darker mood. Much to Cav's surprise, apparently that story happened. Kerry rolls her eyes, knowing how to deal with her little sister's indignant moods towards her since the early 90s. She just shrugged it off, saying that her and Angélique were talking about scary podcasts and after a few glasses of white zinfandel, she was out of ideas to share, so she might have mentioned the story in passing

Trying to mend the situation, Henrikki interjects, saying it's just a story and that everyone knows someone with a good unbelievable haunted story... he is suddenly interrupted by Kacie, who is now very curious to know what is Kerry's excuse to have told the story once more without her permission. Kerry, looking more at ease now, just calmly explains that her and Henrikki have been married ten years, it was going to come out at some point, and he is an atheist and has teased her relentlessly that there was no story to ever scare him, even the claimed real ones. Now that Kacie is taking in what her sister said, Henrikki can finish what he was saying, agreeing with what his wife said but also adding that the story did the trick for him, though and scared the crap out of him, especially with the pictures.

Kacie is once again in complete disbelief, how can Kerry still have the pictures? She didn't have them and she is the one who took them. Kerry laughs with a mocking tone, after all the camera was hers and she is the one who uploaded them to their computer, then to her notebook, a portable hard drive and now is up in her cloud photo albums. Cav, Ruby, and Tarsila say in unison that they want to see the pictures, and then Angélique says she has seen them too, they are scary and weird, but provide good context for the story. Kerry has the pictures in her cloud, so she opens up the album on her phone and passes them around. Ruby is interested and zooms in all the details, looking for the nit and grit of the images. Angélique is pleased that she remembers them right, scary and strange. Tarsila is straight up impressed and does the sign of the cross every time she sees a new picture, being scared and interested at the same time. Cav seems amused, like he is looking at a comic book, Henrikki is just patting his wife Kerry on the back, saying lovingly it is not that bad, it's just a story.

Cav then suggests, much to appease Kacie's foul mood, to tell them the story, so at least it comes from her for the ones who already know it from her sister. They can compare the info and we get to decide who told the most, truest and scariest version. Kacie reluctantly accepts the idea after she looks at Kerry, as her older sister nods positively for her to go ahead.

Part 2

September 22nd, 2004

During a boring Math class in school. Kacie's friends, Tiana and Chiara, tell her about a weird house that has been empty in Tiana's neighborhood. Even though their long suffering and tired teacher keeps asking them to stop talking, the conversation goes through the end of the class all the way through recess and beyond the next class, where they have to draw some colorful bird for their wackadoodle art teacher. Having a chat in this class is easier, since the teacher is quite young and wants to foster their creativity through shared experiences. Kacie, curious as always, is getting "curiouser and curiouser" now, as she asks her friends more about the place and how safe it is to go there. Tiana says that no one ever saw the neighbors apart from when they moved in: a woman, a man and a small girl three years ago. Most likely family. They did not come out often and for some reason, they had lots of guests in the evenings. Those, of course, started adding up to the imagination of the neighbors. But since no one heard anything in those evenings, and the peace was kept in the neighborhood, people looked the other way and just ignored the strangeness of the new inhabitants of the house.

A month ago, though, Tiana and her parents, who lived across from the house, were awakened by a car that kept running the engine in the middle of the night, much later than the other cars that would come around. Tiana looked outside, through the corner of

a window and saw the family was out and about. Honestly, they were running out of the house in a great hurry. They had big bulky overcoats on, although it wasn't even cold yet for that kind of outfit. The little girl looked more grown, but she was still very little. The mom had a hat over her head, but the wind knocked it over and her light blond hair looked red now at its edges. There wasn't more time for Tiana to observe, because as soon as the family was in that car, they were gone. A trail of smoke from the car accelerating on the dry asphalt, the sound of the wheels in fast motion amplified by the stillness of the night.

No one has been seen ever since and recently, a sign was posted outside by a realtor informing the house was on sale. Tiana's mom is a realtor and even though she works for the same company, she says no one knows anything much about the family. Not even their full names, the real estate company only has a last name: Grendel, as in Grendel Family State. They left a lawyer in charge of selling the house, and he seems to only divulge the info that is necessary for the selling of the place.

There are many versions going around in the lips of the neighborhood gossip people as to why the Grendels left: mom got sick and went out for a medical trial; daughter is studying abroad; dad is bankrupt and needs to sell the place, and so on. The only thing that they seem to agree on is that the family was odd. The house was big and expensive from the outside: three floors, with tall, narrow windows, each with a wooden pediment that made them look ancient, something reminiscent of the 1800s. At the top, there was a steep roof with smaller windows and around the house, a wide plot of land with tall trees that looked as dead as they could be. The paint was peeling at places and it looks like the general state of the home has fallen into disrepair. There were some

scary gargoyles in the iron gate upfront, they looked down on you and definitely would have called the attention, in a bad way, from neighbors as much as they do now. Most likely a manor of yore, you had to be rich in the time to have a house like that. When a rich person is weird like this, others rush to call them quirky instead, society cuts them slack because of money and lets them get away with bizarre homes.

Kacie doesn't scare easily and her interest is definitely piqued after hearing her friends talking about the Grendel Estate. Tomorrow after school, around 3PM, they decide to see the house when Chiara guarantees it has been closed for a while now, with no one coming around, even the realtors with potential buyers. Kacie thinks they definitely need a camera to take pictures of the surroundings of the house, but Chiara reminds her that none of them has a camera that is good enough to take decent pictures. Kacie then says she knows how to get her hands on a good one and she says she can borrow her sister's camera. Both Chiara and Tiana look at each other in a suspicious way and ask Kacie at the same time if she is sure, since they are all scared of her grumpy older sister. Kacie is sure she can handle that, they are sisters after all.

In the evening after school, Kacie is having her dinner when her sister Kerry comes in from her internship. While Kacie is a freshman in high school, Kerry is already a freshman in college and has been studying PR and Advertisement, the reason why she has a good camera for her photography classes. Their dad would never pocket a fancy camera like that just for kicks, so because it is for college, he gladly bought Kerry one when she said she was taking a class. Kerry can be quite serious and grumpy, never showing much teeth when her younger sister's friends are around. Usually just giving them a dry hello and banging her bedroom door on their faces not even ten seconds

later. Kacie knows that today, unlike many days, Kerry is in a good mood and for two reasons: it's her internship pay day and also she has a big party to attend with the guy she has been seeing tomorrow night, so the moment is the best possible to ask her for something, even for her camera. But honesty won't take Kacie far, so she needs to have some believable lies in order to take full advantage of Kerry's newfound good mood. While Kerry sits down at the dinner table to get some of the pasta primavera their mom Meg has made, Kacie patiently lets her sister go through all the events of her day and show off to their proud dad, Jon, the fruits of her labor in the shape of her good grades and paycheck. Now that Kerry has a mouth full of pasta, Kacie decides to shoot her shot and asks her sister if she can borrow her camera for a school project she has tomorrow. Kerry looks up from her plate, swallows audibly loud, then looks at her parents in disbelief and scoffs back at her sister as to why she would even need a professional camera for just a high school project. Kacie doesn't even need to say anything, she just waits for their parents to do the hard work for her instead. Jon says there is no need for Kerry to diminish her little sister's interests in learning how to take good pictures. Meg jumps in to say that, although Kerry is partly right about the fact that a high schooler doesn't need a fancy camera like that, she sees no reason for not using it, especially because they gave her the camera for studying purposes. Kacie tries not to look too happy that she would set off a Kerry mood, as they call it, but she just says with a shy smile that she will bring the camera home before Kerry is out for the night. Having no other way than accepting defeat, Kerry shakes her head as she accepts the deal and lowers her head to finish eating. Jon then says that after dinner Kerry should give Kacie

some basic lessons on how to use the camera and, though Kerry rolls her eyes, she waves her hand while she eats, signaling she will do as he requested.

Post dinner, Kacie, being no fool, stays in the living room taking the photography lesson from Kerry. Their parents being in the room will protect her from being smacked by her angry older sister. It also buys her some credit with Jon and Meg for being interested in something they both judge valuable. The parents beam with pride to see their daughters working together towards a common interest, but Kerry is no fool either, she just leans in and whisper in Kacie's ear that it was well played and whatever the hell she is doing, because there is no chance this is for a school project, she wants her camera back before Jackson comes to pick her up for their party tomorrow. Kacie keeps her cool and quickly agrees, appeasing some of Kerry's grumpiness, who in return reacts to it with a yellow and insincere smile.

After the lesson is done, everyone retreats to their respective rooms for the night and Kacie calls her friends up on ICQ to confirm she got the camera for tomorrow. Soon enough, Kacie gets the familiar response to her message in the *OhOh* sound, the screen blinking with Chiara and Tiana's messages both calling her a "freaking awesome genius" and hoping that this good luck will extend to their excursion to Grendel House tomorrow.

Part 3

September 23rd, 2004

The next day, school time goes like a blur of boredom, more than the usual, as the three girls anxiously await for their adventure time. They already agreed that they will take pictures of the gargoyles at the gate, practicing their poses to yield the best shots. They will also canvass the plot, getting some dramatic pictures from the dilapidated façade and dead gardens to post on their MSN status along with some emo song lyrics.

After what it feels like an eternity, it is time to finish school. The three girls lied consistently to their families, telling them they were going to take pictures in Tiana's neighborhood for a biology project and that they were looking for native plants and macro shots, hence, the professional camera. All the parents seemed to believe them and to make sure that the lie is even more consistent, Kacie made sure to have Kerry teach her how to use the macro lens and she will take some pictures in a park greenhouse near the Grendel Estate that indeed is full of native plants. They think they are so slick, covering all their bases. They might even throw an A+ for their pretend project, just to make the parents happy. Kerry has made Kacie pinky promise her that she would be back home before dark, so she has time to change the memory card and charge the camera for her party later. Jackson will come around 9PM or so and they can stay out late because both of them have no class next morning, just some hours of

their internship post lunch. All is good and ready to go, now the three girls are on route to their adventure time.

The fake pictures are done for the made believe project and while Kacie snapped them in the greenhouse, Chiara and Tiana sat around the park to beautify themselves for their gloomy photoshoot, listening to The Used in a discman attached to a small speaker, applying copious amounts of black eyeliner all over their eyes and smudging it, giving them a certain racoon quality of sorts. When Kacie is back, they all squeak and exclaim in teenage delight that now is off to the haunted house.

Kacie looks at Grandel Estate and she is in awe of how her friends were not lying nor over-exaggerating about the creepiness of the place. It looks even more decrepit in person, maybe the sun that is slightly sleepy today gives it a more sinister glow. The dead trees along the side of the house, quietly swaying to the cold breeze that lingers in the air. The windows reflected the heavy grey clouds and nothing else. The entrance door is huge, almost like a medieval sort of heavy wooden gate that was made to keep out an army of enemies. When she comes closer, she realizes the windows have been painted black, completely obliterating whatever is inside. The gargoyles indeed look as creepy as stated the day before, like a couple of hell hounds that guard the entrance and descend to the pits of fiery hell. Kacie just shakes the imagery off, she has been listening too much to Kerry's musings about her Greek mythology books that she insists on reading, always finding a Discovery Channel documentary special about them to show her. Maybe now Kacie will have something more original and interesting to show to her older sister. But, is outside enough novelty to spark interest in people? Kacie thinks to herself as she snaps the shots of Chiara and Tiana around the property, one

sillier than the other. When her friends pause to reapply makeup and brush their hair, Kacie takes a picture of the house, standing alone on the corner of the picture, dead nature on the right side with its twiggy bare trees and black tinted windows. Even though this kind of shot will look especially good when edited to a gloomy black and white, anyone with a camera can take this kind of picture. What can she do that no one else has tried? Suddenly she realizes that they all need to go inside, take pictures of the house that no one has ever seen. Like a beast seen from within, guts and all, exposed bare for all to see.

Kacie shares her idea with Chiara and Tiana, and much to her chagrin, they both think she is completely out of her depth. That is a crime, it is breaking and entering and the house has been closed all over with padlocks and giant chains since the entrance gate has been kept open. Kacie is not convinced by her friends' pleas, and starts going around the house, looking for a way in. Tiana and Chiara just follow her, almost in disbelief that Kacie is actually not only entertaining this ridiculous idea but she is hellbound into finding a way in. Eventually, she finds a loose board on something that resembles an ancient air vent. She hands the camera to Tiana, with extra care, she is more afraid of Kerry than breaking and entering this place, afterall. Once the camera is secured in Tiana's hands, Kacie pulls the loose board, and another, until the space is big enough for her and her friends to come through. Chiara is biting her nails in nervousness, looking at her blue Nokia phone to check the time. Kacie asks her to hand her the phone, torch on, so she can survey the vent and see if it leads anywhere. Chiara hands her the phone, hands shaking and Kacie calls her a baby for being so nervous for this little. Looking through the long vent with the phone light, she sees that it leads

straight to some sort of room with steps. Must be a stairway and if she keeps the light on, it should be safe enough for them to come in and out for the pictures. Kacie makes it look simple with her casual bravado, but neither of her friends is entirely convinced of the simplicity of this newfound plan. Kacie mocks them, asking if they are a bunch of chickens, afterall it was all their idea to come and they kept inciting her to lie at the first place. Both Chiara and Tiana protest, saying that they have never enticed anyone to break the law, and that they are not chickens, they are just reasonable. Kacie rolls her eyes, just like she learned from Kerry, in a way that you swear that they are going to get stuck behind one's head. She promptly says she is going in, as she puts the camera back on her neck. Indeed Kacie does that and because she has Chiara's phone with her, her friend has to follow the leader. Tiana, not wanting to stay behind by herself, begrudgingly follows as well, not without saying a roll of profanities targeting Kacie, who seems to ignore her friends and just focuses on crawling her way into the house.

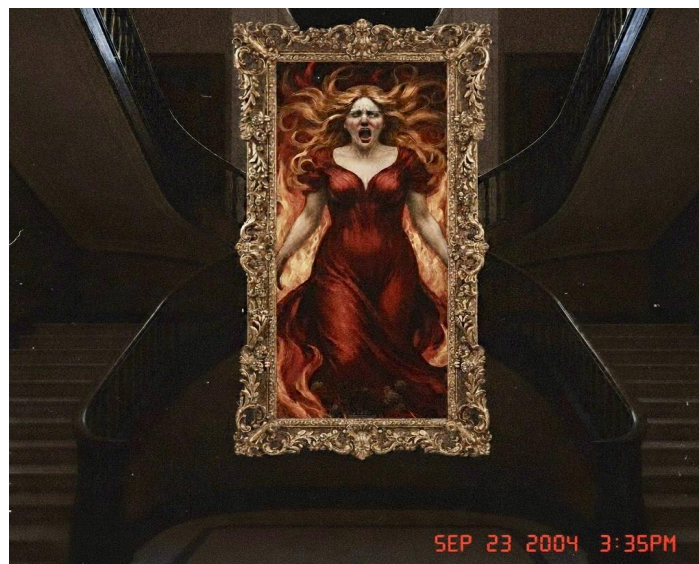
Once Kacie sees the end of the tunnel, she uses the phone's torch to see what is ahead of them. As she thought, they are in the living room, not too far from the entrance door. She crawls out and helps her friends to get out. What they witness is not short from any haunted house movie. Even though it is still daytime, the black tinted windows make it look like it is midnight. Without the light from the phone, it would look pitch black. Kacie hands Chiara's phone back and gets her own, putting its torch on as well, urging Tiana to do the same with her own phone. Now with more light, they can see the strange details that the darkness hid before. Next to the entrance door, there is a huge bolt sitting atop of the heavy wooden frame, giving an even creepier look. What looked like a medieval gate outside, now looks more like a bolt from a medieval prison to be

honest. Lost in thought, Kacie gets out of that mindset once Chiara touches her shoulder and points her to look at something that is next to the door. Honestly, what she sees when she points the light is again, nothing short of some sort of movie, as she sees a Grim Reaper statue, scyther and all. It reminded her of when she was little and Kerry explained the Death outfit when they watched Bill & Ted, and that it came from an old Swedish movie where a dude played games with Death as well. Except here no one seems to be playing any funny games. Why would anyone have this by the door? Kacie doubts the owners were movie aficionados like Kerry and had those stories in mind when decorating the place. She wants to go on top of the stairs to get a better view of the door and the scyther, when the light of the phone hits something even more sinister.



Atop of the stairs, in the middle of the passageway, there is a space where the stairs part, like an X shape, so you can go to either wing of the house. There, the ceiling is quite high, giving space for an enormous painting to sit on the wall. That by itself, isn't

much to bring home about, those old houses all had pictures like this. The trouble is the subject of the painting, actually. Kacie can hear her friends' teeth chattering as they are completely afraid of what they see in front of them. She asks them to point the lights toward the painting so she can snap her own picture of it. She wants to make sure they are not dreaming about it. Through the camera viewfinder, she sees it all and cannot believe it herself. In the painting, there is a woman dressed fully in red clothes. She looks like she is in hell or something similar, as there are flames behind her. She looks like she is screaming, in an expression of pain and suffering. She has long blond hair that flows into the flames, its ends getting mixed with the fire, not knowing where one starts and the other ends. Kacie snaps multiple pictures and when she checks them she sees something she missed before, that the woman also has red eyes!



She shows the pictures to the other girls and asks them if they think she is the blond woman Tiana saw from before, when the resident family moved out in the still of the night. Tiana, feeling a bit shaken up, has to agree the picture carries a strong

resemblance to the woman who used to live there. Chiara's teeth are still chattering and she says they saw enough and she wants out, only to have Tiana soundly agreeing to her. Kacie rolls her eyes again, calls them both chickens and that they can just go on to wait for her outside. She will finish surveying the house herself, take more pictures and soon join them back outside. Chiara and Tiana agreed so quickly that they did not even give Kacie a chance to change their minds, leaving just a trail of dust behind them as they went through the long tunnel again.

Kacie sighs and tells herself that those two are all talk and no game, so it is better if she moves along by herself before it is time to go back home to Kerry. She keeps going to the second floor. Going through the Red Woman picture, she feels a chill, but keeps going. On the steps of the next flight of stairs, she sees a statue of a golden eagle. From all the creepy stuff, this is the least strange so far. She wishes she could remember what eagles mean and that Kerry would have given her a lecture on it already if she was here.



On the second floor, there isn't much stuff left, not even a lot of furniture. There are lots of empty spaces and a lot of dust. The house smells of decay and old things, not like mold, but more like ancient dirt maybe? Kacie cannot pinpoint it, but it is something that is not triggering her allergies and yet, it makes her very uncomfortable being here. She keeps masking her own discomfort by taking more pictures, just trying to record as much as she can to go over later with her less courageous friends.



It sure is a big house for a family of only three people. Kacie wonders why they came here and then left, taking a road to nowhere according to anyone who knows (or claims to know) something. She gets to a bigger room that looks like it is the master suite. For

an old house, it is quite strange that they were able to install a freaking jacuzzi, of all things. Once Kacie gets closer, she sees that they left so many clothes inside the tub. Who would do that? Leaving without anything in the middle of the night, never coming back to pick it up. Who throws their stuff in a bathtub? This is making less and less sense.



She deliberately does not look through the clothes. God knows what's in there and honestly, they smell terribly bad. Funny enough, with all this filthy and old clothes, there is no sign of any pests in the house. Kacie is thankful for that, but she is puzzled as to how is that possible in such an old place that has been left unattended this long. Definitely she won't try to find out if there's rats or roaches under those clothes. The clothes smell so putrid that she even has to cover her nose while she darts back to the rest of the staircase that leads to the last floor.

The last floor is not really a floor, is more like an attic space, much lower ceiling and less grandiose than the rest of the place. Although it keeps in theme with the decrepit pit of despair she has witnessed so far. It is full of junk and in the center, there is a statue that stands out above everything else. She must have been a beauty back in her day, it looks as old as the painting and the other things, making Kacie wonder if they have been here long before the Grendels were. While she is lost in her own thoughts, as she looks closer to the statue, she starts to feel dizzy and slightly nauseated. She thinks it's better to take more pictures and start wrapping up downstairs, the girls outside must be getting restless. Kacie even wonders how come they haven't called for her nor tried to send her a text. She takes a picture of the attic and as she is checking the LCD to see if they are good enough, she sees that there's lots of blurs in the picture. Must be the dust. She cleans the lens with the back of her sleeve and shoots another time, only to no avail. Looks the same. There are flying orbs of dust and even some white strands in the picture. She tries one more time, and now it even looks worse. She gets huffy and thanks Kerry for the great camera, alright. She basically just gives up and thinks this will have to be done and anyways, she wants out of here and the sooner, the better.



Outside the Grendel house, Chiara and Tiana lost count on how many times they have tried to call Kacie on her phone, sent texts and even tried to call her up through the passageway. They cannot scream at the top of their lungs, risking the unnecessary attention to themselves. It is now past 5PM and they know Kacie has to be home no later than 6PM, otherwise Kerry will be fuming and it is only a matter of time Meg gets a whiff of that and starts calling their parents. They look at each other and after examining their choices they realize the least of all evils is only one; they need to call someone responsible, not an adult, but the next best thing: they need to call Kerry and it has to be now.

Meanwhile, Kacie heads back downstairs because she realizes she hasn't seen the kitchen yet. She feels the same cold chill again as she passes through the Red Woman picture and she stops for a minute to look at her. How would a person have red eyes? She knows no one does, so why was the artist's choice this bizarre? It gave the woman this inhuman characteristic, it is very unsettling. And what about the flames? Who wants to be thinking everyday as they go about their life, "Hey, look at me in a fiery pit in hell?"

Kerry at first did not pick up her phone, she had no idea who was calling and she thought maybe it was just an annoying telemarketer trying to sell her something. The little prick must be desperate because despite her not picking up, the call keeps coming. Frustrated that her phone cannot stop ringing, she decides to take the call and to say she was surprised to hear that it was Tiana and Chiara calling was not enough. They were supersonic, saying things that made zero sense, talking over each other and she basically put the phone away from her ears and kept telling them both to shush. Once they seemed to understand the memo, Kerry said she did not care about their

high-school crap and that they were on their own, having to bring her camera soon because she was already at home. Tiana, as a matter of fact said bluntly that if she needed her camera back, she had to meet them in the park nearby her house because Kacie got in trouble and she still had the camera on her. Kerry felt her face growing red and that she could just kill her sister right now, so she'd better hurry to get Kacie and give her the sisterly asskicking of a lifetime for messing up with their agreement.

While Kerry took her mom's car with the excuse of picking up some make up at the mall and then giving Kacie a ride, her little sister was still exploring the weird manor. Now she was in the kitchen and once more, thinking that nothing else could surprise her, she is face to face with something truly unusual, to say the least. In the kitchen, again, the barebones and general lack of things do not call the attention, but instead something that is in the ceiling: a huge chandelier, made of wood and full of pointy parts that remind her of something from a "Buffy The Vampire Slayer" episode. Why would anyone have something this hideous in a kitchen? Although you have to be honest, it goes with the rest. Something that puzzles her is also the fact that the chandelier is easily the size of a person, why would one hang a person upside down in a kitchen?



Kacie realizes when she looks at the picture stamp that she should start going back, and she shouts to Chiara and Tiana that she is about to go out, yet no one shouts back. She tries her phone, but there is no service. Those two spineless chickens must have left, and of course now she has no signal on her phone! She doesn't even wanna think of the fury of her older sister when she realizes that Kacie is not following through with her end of the deal by not being home at the agreed time. Little does she know that not only her friends have never left the plot, but Kerry has already arrived and has been shouting her name and calling her as well, to no avail all the same.

Kerry has her short fuse even shorter trying to make sense of what those three stupid girls were trying to do. Who do they think they are, The Goonies? Tiana tries again to explain, but Chiara just says that the house must be sound proof because no one can hear anything, they have been calling out for Kacie for over two hours and just stuck around in hopes that she would have taken enough pictures so they all could leave together. Asking the two scared and confused girls why didn't they just go back in to call Kacie, they look at each other, eyes wide with panic and lips quivering. In a small voice that made her sound like an overgrown toddler, Tiana says that there is no way she will go back inside, with Chiara agreeing instantaneously. Kerry is on the end of her teether with this bullshit and just tells the two girls to show her how to enter the house and beat it after, since they were both so afraid, they might just leave and stay out of her way. Chiara shows Kerry the same entrance they used and when Kerry looked up again from the loose wooden planks, she saw the girls running away, already making head to the sidewalk outside the gate.

Kerry wiggles her way through the opening, and as she is not as small and skinny as the high-schoolers, she feels that a splinter of wood gets through her leggings and makes a cut on her left leg. She bites her lips in frustration and just adds the ruined leggings to a mental list of items Kacie owns her. She is barely in the house, exiting the tunnel, and she is already giving Kacie an ear full of insults, saying this why she cannot be treated as an equal because she is a silly child, only to stop short on her tracks in front of the giant hideous painting by the staircase. Kacie has her back to the entrance and Kerry finds her sister taking pictures from the Red Woman. Visibly confused as to what and how Kerry is there, Kacie tries to make sense of the situation, only to realize that her sister's leg is bleeding. Kerry now is just muttering a lot of curse words as she looks around the room, also finding the Grim Reaper, the scyther and the eagle as well. Kacie tends to her sister's injury, seeing it is just a big splinter of wood and when she pulls it out, inadvertently she pricks her own finger, both their bloods mixing and dripping generously on the floor. Both sisters speak in hushed tones and over each other, when they suddenly hear a hum and a ringing in their ears. As they are covering their ears, they both face the painting of the Red Woman again and they can swear the flames behind her came alive and are moving. Kerry grabs Kacie and says it is time to leave and both of them rush back to the vent opening, still hearing the hum and feeling the ringing in their ears so strongly that they cannot hear themselves even inside their own heads. Once outside, the hum subsides and both of them cannot make any sense of what just happened. They just dart as quick as they can, away from the house, much the same as Chiara and Tiana did before.

The car drive back home was as quiet as a tomb. Kerry drove looking straightforward, not even acknowledging Kacie's existence. Kacie was very much the same, only ever moving to clutch her hands around the camera case that rested on her lap. Once at home, Kacie went straight to her room and turned on her computer in order to download the pictures from the camera. Kerry went to the bathroom to take a shower, first throwing her ripped leggings in the trash. Once out of the shower, she remembers to call Jackson. Instead of confirming the pick up time for their night out, she just cancels the whole thing right off the bat. The poor guy doesn't even have a chance to reason with her, since she claims she must be getting sick and will not enjoy the party at all. Maybe over the weekend she'll call him back for a movie or something. Before Jackson even fully agrees on the new plan, Kerry ends the call by audibly closing the flip silver phone, turning it off straight after, so she doesn't have to deal with more calls. When Kacie hears the sound of the shellcase phone closing, she knows she is in a world of trouble anytime soon.

Kacie can hear her sister's heavy footsteps coming to her room as the pictures are downloading. Kerry then jumps in the bed, arms crossed behind her head and a big bandage freshly applied to her shin. Kacie doesn't even look at her, eyes fixed on the progress of the download on the computer screen. They keep ignoring each other for a minute, Kacie eventually asking her sister to come and look at the pictures. They indeed look strange, Kerry asks what in the name of God is that place, having Kacie explaining each picture and all the strange events that followed. The picture of the statue calls Kerry's attention, when she gets closer to the screen and questions if the lenses were dirty or broken. Kacie says she thought so too, at first, but then she took other pictures

that looked fine after that one. Another quiet minute ensues and Kerry breaks the silence, asking if Kacie also saw the flames in the picture of the Red Woman moving, to which the little sister agrees that she has by just a purse on her lips and a nod on her head.

The evening goes quiet, the sisters eating dinner with their parents, just responding to their questions about the fake photo project. Kerry says as little as possible so she doesn't either implicate herself or rats out Kacie. The least they know, the best. Jon and Meg seem surprised that Kerry decides to stay in, but believe her when she says she is just tired between her university classes plus the internship hours, and she just needs the night off. After the girls take out the dinner dishes from the table, and help the parents organize the kitchen, they just park themselves on the sofa in the living room. Jon and Meg retire to their own den in order to watch a movie that no one under 50 years of age would be interested in, leaving Kerry and Kacie alone. In order to fill the weird silence between them, Kacie turns on the tv and puts in the Discovery Channel, knowing that Kerry would appreciate something like that to relax her head with some ancient civilization documentary special. The problem was that, either a coincidence or something else, the tv show Kacie put on is nothing as she expected, being actually about a ghost hunter that goes to haunted places. In this episode, he is explaining how to photograph ghosts and that not always they are visible as a human form in the images, appearing instead as orbs of light and streaks of smoke, mistakenly looking like a picture defect. An ice cold feeling goes through both sisters when they look at each other after what they just heard.

Part 4

September 20th, 2025

Once Kacie finishes the story, there is a dead silence on the restaurant table. Tarsila does the sign of the cross, then her hands move over her face and her mouth, as she is in shock. After a few seconds, she breaks the silence by saying that this is a no go for her, straight out of hell, nope. She needs to do some serious sage cleansing to clear all that boo bitch craft right out of her aura. Kerry is being hugged by Henrikki, who keeps saying, as before, that the scary parts get scarier with the photo evidence, his big blue eyes wide with nervousness, and that Kacie told very much the same story that his wife told him previously. Angélique enthusiastically agrees with him as the other person who got to hear the story twice, saying that both sisters tell a very compelling and similar scary story, kudos to both for leaving no detail out. Kerry now looks anxiously to the others, waiting for their impressions as well. Ruby is deep in thought, hand on her chin, processing what she wants to say. She sips some of her white wine, then asks to look at the pictures again, to which Kerry agrees to it, passing her the phone. Ruby then takes a deep breath, and smacks her lips before stating what she wants. She thinks the story should definitely be written for more people to enjoy it, as she really liked it, although she isn't the biggest horror story fan. She is sure it could be really good for Halloween week, making Angélique agree with what Cav said previously, that this makes a good story for a Halloween reading time! Tarsila could even bring her mini projector to show

the pictures in a big format, to help immersing people in the story. Tarsila interjects that it is a “not today, Satan” for her, there is no chance those pictures are making a home, albeit temporary, in her things. How can one sage a movie projector? Better not to risk it. The whole party of seven erupts in laughter, lighting up the mood for a bit, before Kacie asks Cav for his opinion. Her jaw is tense with anticipation, thinking what her beau will say of her little excursion to a haunted joint. Cav rearranges his glasses, looking at Kacie and Kerry both, and just blurts out that the tale is pretty wild and funny, definitely a good party trick and that Kerry might not be the only good storyteller in the family, immediately raising his glass of beer inviting the rest of the table to join him into toasting the sisters and their wild creativity. Kacie seems to be lighter with relief, Kerry holding out a hand to her as she mouths “I got you”.

Many drinks later, Ruby says that sadly is her time to go home because she is turning into a Halloween pumpkin, she still needs to pack for a trip to London the next early morning, even showing to a delighted Kerry she only had time to paint half of her nails, so she did not miss out on this dinner. Angélique also says she should get going, work was quite hectic earlier and she just wants to sink in her tub back home and then watch some tv, maybe something light, like a cute Dorama to cleanse her mind after that scary Red Woman. Tarsila then does the sign of the cross again, saying that she is in a pickle since her husband is out on a trip to Japan and that the company of her dog, Princess Peach, will have to do for protection. While everyone laughs again, she reminds them she was dead serious about all that sage mentioned before, maybe some incense too, just for good measure. Kerry and Kacie laugh out loud as they say they are sorry for scaring everyone, but it was fun to spend such a nice dinner with them all. Hugs and

goodbyes later, the friends take their trams and cars back home and the sisters and their partners decide to walk back home through the night lights in the foggy city center. Senate Square bathed in moon light, the white building of Helsinki Cathedral emerging from the thick wall of fog, looking more ominous than holy in the scene. The smell of fallen leaves and flowers that are decaying, filling the heavy air. Cav and Henrikki stay behind the sisters, still talking animatedly about the hockey game they will attend tomorrow, giving the women a chance to have a straight shooter kind of dialogue, almost a post mortem of the haunted place.

“So, are you relieved that I did not share the whole story?” inquiries Kerry, she is slightly tense, as they haven't discussed this in ages.

“I have to say that yes, it is good that everyone agrees our stories are the same.” replies Kacie, using a serious, yet relieved tone

“We agreed on that 21 years ago, what kind of idiot would you take me for if I told people otherwise?” Kerry replies in return, slightly indignant that her sister thinks she might be an airhead.

To which Kacie quickly replies, in a less serious tone, “I know, I am sorry for giving that impression, and I don't think you are an idiot, you know that the rest of the story would not go well for anyone other than you and I.”

Kerry thinks that, even though a bit insincere as it is, an apology is an apology, and she will take it, trying to sound reasonable. “Thanks for saying it, it isn't easy to live like we do ever since, I know.”

Part 5

September 29th, 2004

Ever since they came back from the “haunted”, as they started calling the Grandel Estate, Kerry keeps seeing the ghost of a man who cannot talk. He looks like he is dressed with tattered clothing, something reminiscent of a gentleman of the late 1800’s, he wears an outfit that might have been formerly fancy; narrow trousers that are ratty from the seams, a wool vest with a high collared white puffy shirt underneath that is left untied and is bloody where his normal neck used to be. His throat sliced across, his eyes are bloodshot, and his mustache points in all directions as much as his blond slicked hair that looks stiff with blood on his forehead. He is in the haunted house and he points to the Red Woman and shows Kerry the door of the Grim Reaper before the flames engulf them whole. Kerry cannot sleep, having seen the man basically every time she tried to close her eyes for resting, even when she tried taking Meg’s Valium.

Today she woke up tired. Scared and confused again, she decides to skip her early morning class saying to the family she is free and offering Kacie a ride to school if Meg lends her the car again. Her parents, pleasantly surprised, say that Kerry is more than welcome to give her baby sister a car ride. Of course Kacie smells bullshit in the air, since when Kerry does her any favors without asking for a soul in return? Once the parents are out of the picture on their way to work, Kerry tells Kacie that none of them are actually going to class today because something has been happening and it is time

to stop pretending that nothing happened to them. Kacie knew a ride was too good to be true and just slumped on the living room sofa in frustration of being right about all this. Kerry quickly calls Kacie's school pretending to be Meg, saying that sadly the high schooler is sick and cannot make it today, must be something she ate last night and she will be better tomorrow. Kacie gestures in protest while her sister is on the phone, and once the call is done, the teen protests that why couldn't Kerry say Kacie had a fever or something like that instead of saying she had some sort of shit problem. Kerry laughs at it and explains that a fever would yield a trip to the doctor and a follow up from school. While the shits are just temporary, no one will be the wiser and start asking more about it. Kacie accepts that her friends will make fun of her tomorrow and just asks Kerry what is so urgent that is taking them both out of class today. After taking a deep breath and going through in her mind that she might as well be losing her marbles, Kerry reveals she has seen the strange man in her dreams. Kacie intently listens to her, not blinking and even holding her breath until she blurts out that she has been seeing the very same man. So, those are not dreams, those are visions and if they are losing it, they are losing it together, at least. Kacie now recalls her visions, which are different in content from her sister's: she is tormented by what happened in the house last week; but she also saw him again last night in their own home, where he warns her in writing on a foggy window that the haunting is not over to them both. Kerry realizes then, the man cannot talk, but if he can write...could he "talk" to them through a message? The sisters decide to ask the spirit, as they have seen in movies, through an Ouija board. Kerry is sure she keeps a board from ages ago that she got as a party favor in some lame Halloween celebration. She laughs to herself as she finds the board in her junk chest

under her bed. Who is lame now? They assemble the board on the floor of Kerry's room, both of them tending to as many details to what they remember from any and every scary movie they have ever watched: clean the room with sage? Kerry had lemon grass & basil incense, that oughta do it. Coarse salt around the board so the spirits cannot cross the threshold? The smokey flavored coarse salt that their dad keeps for his weekend grilling is all they have. Some candles? Kacie's birthday cake scented Yankee Candle to the rescue. They both remember that you always start with a hello to invite the spirit in and never leave without saying goodbye. Both of them agreed that they got the nit and grit of the event covered as much as it was humanly possible and they have to get started. The candles are lit, the incense is burning and the salt makes a perfect circle on the floor. Funny how all those individual scents are great but combined they smell like someone forgot to take the garbage out. It's now or never and the sisters have to stop stalling and better start calling the Slaughtered Neck Man, as they decided to call him.

They start the process and call the Slaughtered Neck Man to join them. They feel nothing, Kacie, opening one eye to take a peek and seeing nothing. Kerry pokes her and says no one told her to close her eyes, just focus with intention on the task. They try again and now Kerry asks a simple yes or no question: is he there with them? Both girls put their hands over the cursor and suddenly the arrow moves. They both jump, feeling a cold jolt in their bellies, amazed that it is moving and guaranteeing to each other that they are not pulling the cursor themselves. The cursor then lands on the YES side. The sisters now have a mild panic in their eyes and they think they might as well ask what they need to know. Now Kacie is the one who asks the question: can he talk?

A little second later the cursor starts moving in the opposite direction, landing in the NO corner. Frustration doesn't last long because the cursor starts moving again, but faster. It looks like it is hitting the alphabet letters now. One by one. I, an S, followed by H, then O and a final stop on W. The air gets colder and the candle burns brighter, the incense smokes faster and they understand what it means: "I SHOW"! Kacie steps away from the board, in a jumpscare that opens up a hole into the salt circle. Kerry shouts for her sister to look out but there is no time. They both feel the touch of cold dead hands grabbing theirs, it is the Slaughtered Neck Man in front of them.

He came to show them, as he wrote. The two sisters now lay on the floor of the room, in a dream-like state where they cannot move and they will know everything that the Slaughtered Neck Man wants them to know, like a real life movie but passing inside their heads.

Over two hundred years ago, when the house was built, it was inhabited by a painter, Anton Lermontov, the man from their visions. Anton loved doing séances, a past time that was quite popular at the time with the upper class. In one of them, the Red Woman comes through and is painted by him, becoming his life's obsession. Through her painting, the Red Woman keeps her grip on Anton. Her wish is to find a body to inhabit Earth again so she can grant him unlimited power, money and everlasting life in return. All he had to do was to give her enough blood sacrifices to keep the portal they created open until her time came. He is the one who made the strange chandelier in the kitchen, using it to hang poor street people who got attracted to the promise of speaking to their loved ones in séances or to make some money. He would find them late at night, walking around the poorer areas of town, in bars and whore houses. Luring them in with

grapes, apples and sweet wine. After they were intoxicated enough, he would numb them further with laudanum and nail their bodies into the chandelier, cutting their necks, wrists and ankles open to exsanguinate them fully. He would then pull the chandelier up and get the thick, glossy, warm blood that gushed from their bodies into silver goblets. Once the bodies were dry, he would get the blood to feed the Red Woman. He would throw the contents of the goblets onto the picture, the blood soon trickling down her body and being absorbed fully, never leaving residues. The lifeless bodies left behind would be collected by one of Anton's friends, a doctor, who would use them in his anatomy classes for the School of Medicine where he taught. It was a situation where they trusted the other not to tell anything about this, both guilty of different sins. In one of Anton's séances, the Red Woman said her time was coming and that these meager offerings were not enough for her anymore, her being in need of her final human form. Intoxicated with her promises, Anton is convinced to give his wife, Tatiana, as the body for the Red Woman so they both could spend eternity together. He cannot tell Tatiana the truth though, as she is not as schooled in this situation as he was by the devilish spirit. Soon she was going to be back from a long trip where she was tending to her ill mother, who tragically ended up passing away. In the next moon, it would be the time for the last sacrifice, and all he needed to do was to bring Tatiana willingly to the séance, dressed in white and to bleed her now in front of the picture to make a way in for the Red Woman. Poor Anton was divided, but his greed and hunger for more made him follow through with the plan. The next moon, he brought his wife back home, with the excuse that they were going to call on her mother, who had been trying to send a message from beyond. Tatiana acquiesced to her husband's strange request, since this

pastime had brought him so much joy in her long absence from home. Tatiana got scared when she got into her home and faced herself with the bizarre painting that Anton had made central in their home. He agreed that it might have been too much, and that if they could take it to the attic and leave it there, he would find the right buyer for it soon, putting in its place a beautiful sculpture he did based on Tatiana's features. In the evening, Anton organizes the séance, calling his wife to the room once it is ready. He knew that now the Red Woman would be strong enough and that he had to follow her orders. As he did with previous victims, when Tatiana sat down in her place to start calling the spirits, he dosed her face with some laudanum, just enough to numb her down but not to take her out completely. He then proceeded to use his own blood to start calling the Red Woman, carefully this time because the objective was not exsanguination. He cuts his leg slightly on the shin and pricks Tatiana's finger, joining their bloods as one, the rich droplets falling by the foot of the enormous painting. They are immediately absorbed and soon the Red Woman spirit can be manifested, stronger than before, with the presence of a pure soul like Tatiana's. She then speaks in a monstrous voice, nothing that can be conceived as human or good, just pure evil. She instructs that both Anton and Tatiana must touch the painting and call her name, saying "*Ave, Lilith*" so she can come through and get into Tatiana's body. Anton obeys and tells his wife to do the same, both repeating "*Ave, Lilith*". The Red Woman then starts moving and exiting the picture, grabbing Tatiana's neck, coiling around her, like a serpent. In a final moment of sobriety, Tatiana screams out of her laudanum trance, and shouts to Anton that Lilith is a demon and he was tricked! Tatiana would know, as her father was a Lutheran Church pastor and schooled her in all his Bible knowledge before his passing.

Anton is now in a full panic and realizes it is too late to do anything, as Lillith is slowly consuming Tatiana's soul, using it as fuel to materialize herself as human. Before obliterating her soul, Tatiana makes a last desperate plea to Anton: "Do not let her live for I am gone and my body is just an empty shell" and just like that, she was gone and Lillith was whole, the painting lying empty, only the flames remaining. Now the demon was in full power and started berating Anton, saying that how can one person be so stupid, that she never had any intention to have such a low life next to her in her quest for power. Sadly Anton realizes that Tatiana was right, that it is her body but it is not her anymore ...now there is only one thing left to do. Anton takes the woman sculpture that he had done a while ago, that was in the corner of the attic, and uses that to hit Lillith repeatedly. The demon is surprised because she never thought Anton would be brave enough to kill her when she looked like his wife. She tries to trick him again, speaking like Tatiana, pleading for her life but all he can hear is his wife's last wish, "Do not let her live..." and he strikes Lillith again and again, until her body thuds, lifeless on the floor, a puddle of blood starting to form. He then quickly drags the picture and the blood starts going in, and soon the image of Lillith slowly is painted back, like it is from reverse, toes to head until she is whole again. He trapped and bound Lillith again in the picture he painted, only to die shortly after from a broken heart of having to kill his wife to free her from the demon's hands. Before this last act, he left all the events that happened through the year written in a book, along with what he did to trap the demon again. He tried to show it to a writer friend, who thought it was just madness from a tormented soul who was most likely schizophrenic. Hopeless and alone, Anton killed himself in the

house by cutting his throat and before that he hid the original book in a trapped space under the statue of an eagle.

The sisters wake up from the dazed state they found themselves in, and they try to get their bearings, sitting up on the floor and trying to make sense of what in the name of Jesus just happened. They only believe this is real, because it is happening to them at the same time and they lean on each other to stay sane, and also to stand up. They realize now that the Grendels were trying to do what Anton couldn't, but in the end they could not give their daughter as the sacrifice Lilith requested and ran away leaving everything behind. If they killed anyone that came to the house, they also had their best interest in running away from that as well. Now there is only one thing left to do: go on a wild hunt at the haunted house and find Anton's book and destroy it, along with the Lilith picture.

Once they were able to recover slightly from what it seems was a small spirit possession, Kerry and Kacie drove back to the Grendel State. While on route, they realized they must have seen the painting move because of the wooden splinter that cut Kerry's leg and pricked Kacie's finger. It was just about enough to make the painting flicker, its malevolent inhabitant trying to make a comeback. But unlike Anton, the sisters had neither power trips nor wild riches dreams, all they wanted was just to live their lives without being plagued by a haunted ghost, a haunted house and a haunted painting. No one would believe them even if they tried.

Again, here they are squeezing themselves into the house, when did they think this would ever happen to them, let alone another time ? But they know they have to stop

this, it is just a matter of time before someone else finds Anton's book and falls into Lilith's lies once more.

They squeeze themselves through the dark vent, Kerry being extra careful not to get nicked again and Kacie following right behind her. Now they don't have anyone who knows they are here, so they need to have each other's back. Kacie knows better where everything is, since she went through everywhere taking her pictures. Kerry, although she hasn't spent as much time in the house, trusts her sister to do the right thing. The girls are now in the main room downstairs, facing Lilith's painting. Without looking at her too much, they go to the stairs and move the eagle statue to find the book as seen on their wild ride visions gifted by Anton. But alas, the book is not there. Of course, the Grendels must have found the book when they moved in and were cleaning up the place. There was a small chance that it would have been in the same place. As Kerry looks around, puzzled and wondering where the book might be, Kacie sprints upstairs and shouts for her sister to follow her. In a bare house, almost empty, where one could hide something in plain sight? Somewhere most people would not look? The stinky jacuzzi! Kerry wrinkles her nose when she gets to the bathroom and finds Kacie elbow deep into the mess inside the tub. Before Kerry even has a chance to ask what is happening, Kacie bounces back and in her hand there it is, Anton's manuscript! It is mostly whole, being still readable in many parts - much like they remember from their vision. They flip through the pages and then in the end it says that both picture and book must be destroyed, making sure no one else will ever see them again. That whoever finds this book needs to have the courage and strength that Anton did not find in himself to finish what he had started. They see in their minds, the poor desperate

Anton, who took his own life for too much remorse over what he has done. They have to end this and they have to trust each other to be strong and see it through.

Now downstairs, they go to the kitchen and they help each other to rip off some stakes from the chandelier. In order to start ripping the picture, they need to be prepared mentally for whatever trick that demon must use on them, and get the job done. Before they move into the living room, they start ripping the manuscript, tearing it apart in tiny pieces and then soaking them in tap water from the sink, the old paper pieces melting away and going down the drain, never to be read again. They feel nothing, but that can be deceiving, since when they were doing the Ouija board they felt nothing at first and then seconds later, they were pulled into Anton's vision. Going towards the painting now, they both hold hands and Kerry starts saying that it will be alright if they both have faith in each other and the good they are doing. Kacie has tears in her eyes and just nods in agreement. Holding their hands tighter, they now stand in front of Lilith's painting. Each of them has a stake on their left hand, and although they are not killing vampires, this has to work. Kerry takes the first blow and to say it didn't go as planned is an understatement. What Anton failed to say in his book, was that there was some degree of evil protection in the canvas, making it almost a solid wall of sorts. Kacie remembers then how Anton got rid of Lilith the first time, and they rush to the attic to get the woman sculpture, and when they are back they start hammering that statue on the painting, making dents to it. The sound that came from the picture is horrible, like a wolf's howling that it is being mauled to death by a bear. Now they see that they are doing actual damage to the evil protection on the canvas is getting weaker. They get the stakes again, ripping holes and tearing the painting apart as much as they can now.

Lilith is finally starting to burn and being engulfed by the flames inside the picture, and the more they hit the canvas with the statue and poke it with the stakes, the worse for the wear the demon looks. The sisters get into a groove of destruction and they fail to pay attention to one small detail...they both get nipped by the stakes and have small skin injuries, cuts leaving a small amount of blood behind. Now the picture is destroyed and Lilith burned like a witch into a firepit...or is she?

Final Part

September 20th, 2025

While Cav and Henrikki stop to look at a store they wanna come back to tomorrow, since Cav liked a certain hat as a present for his dad, Kerry and Kacie look at themselves reflected in the dark window. That is not only what they see, they also see the reflection of Lilith and Anton as well.

“Do you think they’ll ever leave us?” Kacie asks her sister, a loud sigh following her question.

“No. If they could, they would have already. I think we are like the painting that trapped Lilith, they are here suspended in dusk for the time being. Must be that we did not say goodbye after the Ouija board, so Anton is here too. We are all bound by the blood we spilled. I don’t think Lilith can do anything without us surrendering voluntarily, nor do we have evil greed in us like Anton did.” Kerry sounds serene and yet solemn when she utters those statements.

“Did I tell you that the house was sold?” Kacie forgot to relay that info she had for a while to her sister.

Kerry is surprised but a little preoccupied, given the bad track record of the property and she asks more about it. “ No? To whom?”

“Just a normal family, from what I have seen. Seems pretty ordinary people to be honest. And no weird stuff in sight, I have been to every single open house event before it was sold.” Kacie says, with slight relief of the normalcy she found.

“Good. So we move on. There’s nothing that can be done unless you and I both go looking into asking the wrong things to the wrong people and that is not going to happen.”

“Yeah, I guess. It’s funny that people think the house is haunted, I don’t think they would ever think we are the real haunted!” Kacie says as she looks to Cav and Henrikki ahead of them.

“Let them believe what they need to believe.”

THE END

