

A white skeleton is positioned on the right side of the frame, standing upright. The background is a dark blue color with a complex, wavy, rippling texture that resembles water or a distorted surface. The skeleton is rendered in a simple, clean white style, contrasting sharply with the dark, textured background.

SPINE TINGLES

a short screenplay by
Josh Havelka

EXT. CITY STREETS - RUN DOWN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Windy. Electricity in the air. Storm's approaching.

We push in to a young woman, visibly nervous.

She looks at an address on her phone, then back at the building in front of her. She buzzes the door with a shaky finger. Nothing. She tries the door, opens it, and enters.

INT. DISHEVELED OFFICE - DAY

The blinds obscure most daylight. A makeshift waiting room has been sectioned off - divider walls, fake plants and chrome chairs with plastic seats.

She sits down and waits. Faint murmuring can be heard. She goes to the sounds.

OFFICE ALCOVE

Peering around the corner - from afar, she sees a middle aged woman, eyes fiercer than fire, sitting across from a young boy and probably his dad. In front of the woman is a stack of paper. Drawings... and strange psycho-therapeutic instruments. A professional yet tenebrous atmosphere.

SLOWMO: we see her lift the images to the child slowly. Each one has a nightmarish entity drawn like a criminal sketch. The child shakes his head at each one like a witness identifying the suspect.

He freezes, a grimace forms initially followed by tears of fear. He nods to the woman who holds a viciously scary demon.

Still peering around the corner, the young woman holds a captivated stare. She looks down at her feet and...

END SLOWMO.

A SCREAM fills the office. She turns to see it's... a cat. She closes her eyes in embarrassment while turning back to the three across the room.

The fierce-eyed woman glares back.

MAIN OFFICE

Three bottles of pills are placed on the far side of a particle board desk. The father, Mr. Hamley, takes them.

FIERCE EYED WOMAN

Class three parasomnia, mostly acute sleep paralysis.

(puts a pill bottle down)

This is for bad ones. Use sparingly.

(another bottle)

Mornings after.

(a third bottle)

And this is preventative. Three times a day for five weeks.

MR. HAMLEY

Thank you doctor. What do you say son?

Son holds his head down, still traumatized.

DR. MALISON

Good to meet you Audrey. You handled that very well. In fact, better than some adults.

(her gaze meets the young woman)

The young woman stands in the corner. She frowns at the insult.

Audrey and Mr. Hamley leave.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)

You are...

SIERRA

Here for the assistant researcher position. Sierra Hexton.

DR. MALISON

I'm doctor Malison.

SIERRA

It's... an honour to meet you.

DR. MALISON

No, the honour is mine.

Sierra's face beams.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)
 You see, I just treated that little boy who didn't have an appointment. Thanks to your irreverent display of time management I didn't have to turn him away and now he's one step closer to healing.

Sierra's smile evaporates.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)
 Secondly, a brief psychological profile reveals your fear sensitivity is rather high, case in point: Kaiser
 (she nods to the cat)
 In conclusion your *talents* are best suited elsewhere.

SIERRA
 We're already done?

DR. MALISON
 We never started.

Beat. The awkward silence is suddenly pierced by:

VOICE (O.S.)
 Help! Doctor... please help...

Dr. Malison rushes out the door and into the lobby of the office.

DR. MALISON
 (to herself)
 Does no one follow appointments anymore?

OFFICE LOBBY

Sierra follows her and sees an old woman in baggy clothes, barely standing on two legs. Eyeballs rolling around in their sockets.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)
 Ms. Parmalee?

MS. PARMALEE
 It's Wesley... oh God ... doctor, he needs you...

INT. KITCHEN ALCOVE - OFFICE - SOON AFTER

From the POV of Sierra we see Dr. Malison give MS. PARMALEE a steaming mug. She's calmed, her speech high and fast, Dr. Malison's slow and reassuring. Sierra can't quite hear what they're saying.

Ms. Parmalee starts to cry. Dr. Malison gets up and starts packing a bag with her psycho-therapeutic tools.

DR. MALISON
Can you start now?

Sierra's face contorts as if witnessing a car accident.

SIERRA
Um, no. I'm sorry, that's impossible.
Tonight's my four year anniversary.

DR. MALISON
Listen. If what she said is true,
this is extremely serious and I need
someone's help.

SIERRA
What did she say?

DR. MALISON
Do you want the job or not?

SIERRA
She said that?

DR. MALISON
Oh for God's sake.

Dr. Malison turns with two black duffle bags, then leaves the office. Sierra looks over to Ms. Parmalee, tears still streaming down her cheeks. Sierra's brow furls in conflict.

EXT. DODGE CHARGER - STREET MONTAGE - DUSK

The vehicle rolls through city roads.

SIERRA O.S.
.... I'm so sorry honey, I know....
it's fine, I'm fine.... yeah I'm
happy too... okay love you. Love you
too. Bye.

INT. DODGE CHARGER - LEATHER SEATS - LATER

Beep. She puts the phone on the car dash.

SIERRA

(to Dr. Malison)

Thanks for this job. I really needed it. I'm getting married next month and it's probably like the worst timing but my Mom's in the hospital... everything's so expensive.

DR. MALISON

The only thing truly expensive is time.

Dr. Malison glances at Sierra's gold wrist watch.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)

Your fiance give that to you?

SIERRA

For my birthday. He says whenever I'm missing him, I just listen to my watch and as sure as time itself he'll be with me.

DR. MALISON

If this gets bad remember that.

SIERRA

If what gets bad.

The shadows on Dr. Malison's face grow longer.

DR. MALISON

I treated Wesley last month. Class one case. Recurring demonic archetype. Very resilient. He was the first where my treatment was completely ineffective.

Sierra has her trademark captivated stare.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)

Last week the boy's behaviour changed... his parasomnia worsened and he developed some sort of hyperthyroidism, the thermostat was always off, even screamed at Ms Parmalee when she tried to open his blinds.

SIERRA
Photophobia...?

DR. MALISON
Eventually she wouldn't open his door
at all... The voice on the other
side... was higher pitched.

Sierra nervously becomes lost in thought.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)
It gets worse. Last night, Ms.
Parmalee finally gets the courage to
check on him. He'd been missing weeks
of school. She opened his door...

SIERRA
What? What did she see?

DR. MALISON
All she could say was "your drawing".

SIERRA
Your drawing...

DR. MALISON
If we hurry we might still be able to
save the boy.

SIERRA
We're going there now?!

DR. MALISON
Yes. Now listen up. I have to cram
three months of training into half an
hour...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Charger grumbles along the narrow road. Scarlet
taillights are swallowed by shadow like molasses.

INT. DEEP PURPLE DODGE CHARGER - LEATHER SEATS

A POV from inside the car looks forward to a break in the
roadside brush. Dr. Malison turns right. The gravel crunches
loudly, a long winding driveway is interspersed with naked
apple trees, like skeletal hands of some enormous beast
below ground.

The house comes into view. A colonial mansion. Entirely white. High, single pane windows without a photon of light emanating from the interior.

Dr. Malison grips the steering wheel tighter, her leather gloves creak from the friction. Sierra's eye's squint to the view.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION

POV from inside the mansion looking out, a peep in the curtain. A dark shadow in the foreground. Black hair strands.

INSERT: the thermostat is turned all the way down.

EXT. DRIVEWAY COLONIAL MANSION - NIGHT

Dr. Malison parks the car parallel the front door, opens the trunk.

Sierra edges her way to Dr. Malison, not turning her back to the mansion as if it were a stalking lion.

EXT. COLONIAL MANSION - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

They ascend steps to the old growth timber door. Sierra is rubbing the cross on her necklace. Dr. Malison kneels to retrieve keys from a duffle bag. Sierra is out of view behind her.

DR. MALISON

He's locked in his room. We have to enter quietly in order to--

A sonorous old bell rings three times very loudly.

Dr. Malison turns to see Sierra frozen, still hovering her finger over the door bell with an embarrassed expression.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - LOBBY - NIGHT

A spindly moon beam casts through the opening door, impaling the darkness. Sierra reaches immediately for a light switch. *Twink* - the old circuitry jolts the lobby into illumination. Immediately ahead is a staircase. Wooden rails with impeccable craftsmanship of a bygone era. Left is the living room. Normal furnishings.

There's something covering parts of the floor that look like... She kneels to pick it up but suddenly grimaces in shock. Very long black hair. Perhaps three feet. Tufts of it everywhere.

DR. MALISON
(from lobby)
His room's upstairs.

SIERRA
(still looking at
hair)
I think he got out of his room...

She turns back to Dr. Malison, visibly shook but still managing composure.

The stairs creak even louder than they look. Sierra can't help the noise, somehow Dr. Malison's steps are quieter.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They round the corner through the hallway. Family portraits on the walls. Close-up of Ms. Parmalee with her nephew and his parents, a young boy in a cute sailors uniform at the beach. All smiling.

Bedroom door is locked. Dr. Malison rummages through her pockets.

DR. MALISON
Wesley? This is Dr. Malison.

Sierra turns to peer over her shoulder. Through the banister. Even with the lights on the house seems... dark.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)
I know you're in pain Wesley ...I
know how it feels to lose your
parents...

The door is opened. Dr. Malison reaches for the switch but nothing happens. The light bulbs have been removed.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - WESLEY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DR. MALISON
Wesley?

The room is bare, it looks nothing like an eight-year-old boy's room. A closet with a bed, only lightly disheveled.

One would say it was neat if it weren't for the hair, the same black hair. Everywhere. It covers every surface. The smell alone could knock you out.

Sierra covers her mouth with her sweater.

SIERRA

Oh my God.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLONIAL MANSION DRIVEWAY - CHARGER - NIGHT

Sierra's phone on the dash. It rings with caller I.D. "Spenny". He leaves a message which we hear through headphones.

SPENNY (O.S.)

Hi babe. Wanted to see if you're alright. Are you sure about this job? I was reading about Dr. Malison. Both her parents vanished in the seventies... and she was a suspect... uh, well, call me back okay. Love you. Bye.

As we listen, we boom down to one of the tires of the car. A noise. Whistling air. The air cap has been removed and what looks like a finger, but longer and bone white, presses the release valve.

BACK:

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sierra's heaving on a decrepit door in the kitchen, it's locked from the inside.

SIERRA

Dr. Malison?

Dr. Malison enters, and inspects it.

EXT. COLONIAL MANSION - BASEMENT FIRE ESCAPE LATCH - NIGHT

With flashlights, the two reach a door angled 45 degrees on the side of the mansion. Dr. Malison kneels to the handles, pulls it open. Blackness.

SIERRA
I'm not sure about this....

Dr. Malison goes inside and descends a couple stairs.

SIERRA (cont'd)
Wesley's not in there Malison.

DR. MALISON
(barking)
That's *doctor* Malison.

She ascends back up the stairs.

DR. MALISON (cont'd)
And another thing. This whole operation might've been squandered just now thanks to your childish antics. I was better off bringing Kaiser for god's sake.

Emotion finally overwhelms Sierra.

SIERRA
...to think I was actually fan-girling over you! When in reality, you.. you just draw pictures.

DR. MALISON
I'm not drawing imaginary demons... don't you get it? They're real. Trying to get out. When the mind is traumatized, sometimes they do.

SIERRA
...you must really think I'm stupid.

Sierra goes to the car.

Dr. Malison turns and enters the cellar.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - CELLAR - NIGHT

Weak shafts of moonlight cascade from high windows into the cellar. Old chests, shelves, antique items and moving boxes with scratched out labels are strewn on the concrete floor. A clothes dryer hums in the background. Dr. Malison quietly shuffles through. Flips on a light. It's orange glow makes everything even creepier somehow.

We DOLLY in to the drier. With a *dinging* it ends its cycle. Silence. And then.

Breathing.

Not human breathing, and very laboured on the inhale. It echoes making it's location indiscernible. Gravity triples on Dr. Malison's face. She removes her revolver. Cocks the action. From behind her, not in focus, a bone white spindly cluster of fingers rise to the orange light. The bulb shatters onto the ground. Dr. Malison twists and raises her weapon at the shadows.

The breathing has stopped. Silence is deafening. Dr. Malison sees a white foot around a stack of boxes. She approaches it slowly. Rounds the corner and nearly fires a round... at a mannequin.

Get out. Her face no longer hides the blinding fear. Get out now.

She runs to the nearest set of stairs and reaches the top, desperately retrieving Ms. Parmalee's ring of dozens of keys, trying each one on the lock.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLONIAL MANSION - DRIVEWAY - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Sierra's on her phone by the car. We can hear it ringing but no one is picking up on the other end.

Her eyes catch something. Her mouth hangs ajar.

SIERRA
.... oh my god....

We see each of the tires of the car deflated. She looks to the mansion, more imposing than ever.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - CELLAR - NIGHT

Dr. Malison tries another key. Her other hand aims her gun down the stairs as if holding the darkness hostage.

DR. MALISON
(whispering)
Fuck...fuck...fuck....

The last key doesn't work. She bangs on the door.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - KITCHEN

The other side of the door shifts on its hinges with each knocking.

DR. MALISON O.S.
Sierra?! Help!

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - CELLAR

A noise from below makes Dr. Malison twist violently towards the cellar. Her former professional facade is done. *(this conversation can be inter-cut between both sides of the door)*

SIERRA O.S.
Dr. Malison?

DR. MALISON
Sierra?! Open it. Please god, let me out!

SIERRA O.S.
Did you find Wesley?

DR. MALISON
I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

SIERRA O.S.
What?

DR. MALISON
(desperately)
I lied. I lied, I'm sorry! My treatment didn't fail. I was afraid of him. I've seen this demon before! It's back!

SIERRA O.S.
Stay calm. I'll think of something.

CREAK. Another noise from below. Dr. Malison's attention turns back to the cellar. She swings her flashlight to the bottom of the stairs. As the light pans we see one frame of the creature's bulging eyed, slat nosed, black haired face. The light stops at the bottom of the stairs for a beat, then swings back to the place where the creature was, nothing... Then down. And.

There she is. Closer now. Staring up at us, her eyes vibrating, black hair standing on end.

Teeth glistening in the moonlight. A distorted nightmare of a woman. White hot pure sudden terror in visual form.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - KITCHEN

GUNSHOTS ring out. Screams that you didn't know humans could make pierce through the old wooden walls. Sierra is frozen looking at the cellar door.

The atrocious commotion subsides too suddenly. Silence again.

SIERRA
(under her breath)
Dr. Malison?

Sierra snaps out of her trance. Tears streaming down her cheeks. She runs up the stairs towards Wesley's room.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

SIERRA
Wesley, Wesley?! We gotta get you out
of here!

SMASH. Sierra turns to the end of the hallway where one of the light bulbs has fallen to the ground. She goes to it. Behind her, out of focus, spindly white fingers reach up to another light bulb. *SMASH.* She sprints to the nearest room without looking back...

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

...And dives into a closet by a king size bed.

CLOSET

Sierra desperately tries to hold her breathing. Tick-tick-tick. She almost lets out a sob, but slams her right hand over her mouth. Tick-tick-tick. Her heaving chest steadies slightly. Tick-tick-tick. She notices the sound of her watch now. "as sure as time itself, he'll be with me". She looks at her watch...

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIGHT WHITE BEACH - FLASHBACK

A montage of Spenny and Sierra on their vacation. He retrieves a coconut from a tree, he breaks it open and proposes with the ring he put inside. Sierra has tears of joy. We end the montage with an insert of her watch. Then match cut with:

BACK TO:

CLOSET

... her watch. Sierra composes herself and a new look of determination washes over her face. She searches an old bin of shoe polishing items next to her and finds a lighter... then an aerosol can.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

All the lights are broken now. The night has flooded in. Sierra holds the lighter and spray can in front of her like an assault rifle, firing off bursts to see her way down the stairs.

INT. COLONIAL MANSION - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

She reaches the last stair, and pauses. A sound.

Laboured breathing. Edging toward the front door she turns side to side attempting to locate the source of the noise.

She holds back a shriek. Her eyes wide as dinner plates.

A crumpled ragdoll of bones and blood sits in a heap by the front door... Dr. Malison's remains....

Sierra turns back around. Panic consuming her, she listens. There's no breathing. From behind her the shadows move, something white, black and hairy seems to slither towards her.

Sierra turns and is instantly bombarded by visual stimuli more frightening than her entire human experience combined. We see the *thing* clearer than before: The poor boy Wesley, fully transformed by the sorrow of his lost mother. A freakish demon faced creature with long black hair, and a nasal canal looking more like two black gashes... and then those eyes. The bulging swollen inhuman eyes. Barely coordinated by whatever brain is left in that scull.

Sierra screams and actuates the spray can without letting go. The creature lunges out at Sierra and its hair catches fire in a blaze of the aerosol-spray-flame-thrower. It caterwauls in... pain? The flames keep shooting and catch other tufts of hair in the living room. The house is soon engulfed in smoke.

Sierra's eyes turn desperate as she empties the canister into the thing, her mouth ajar in a silent scream.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLONIAL MANSION ON FIRE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

A VW Jetta roars down the driveway, stopping next to the Mustang with a skid. Spenny gets out of the car and is taken aback by what he sees.

Reveal: The colonial mansion is on fire. The neighbouring trees in the distance catch it's monstrous orange glow and smoke billows into the night air. More surprising is a lone figure, standing silhouetted to the flames. It has long hair.

Long hair... Spenny approaches the silhouette. It turns.

He is shocked to see Sierra standing there with tears brimming in her eyes and soot covering her person. A complete disheveled mess despite the wholesome smile she manages to exude with the sight of her love Spenny. Spenny nearly knocks her over as he goes to hug her, placing both hands on the sides of her head in reassurance and confusion.

Sierra hugs him deeper.

We push into Sierra like the first shot of the film. Covered in soot, unshakable determination in her eyes.

Long shot: The two silhouetted against the house burning down. The morning light begins to appear in the background. The darkness passes.

End.

CREDITS.