THE HAIRY ONES

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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Clear sky. Full moon. Below, a campfire burns.

GIL (O.S.)
...so she ran back to the campfire fast as her legs could carry her.

IN CAMP

Three modest tents near the fire. SPORT (13) eats some flame heated stew as his uncle, GIL (40s), leans in close.

GIL
She sighed in relief, but as she got closer, something just wasn't right. But she blurted out everything that'd happened.

A rustle in the trees. SADIE, an energetic border collie, BARKS and bounds towards the tree line. ARCHIBALD (40s) reads a paper by firelight and marks it with a pen. He spies Sadie.

ARCHIBALD
Don't go too far, girl.

Gil's face dissolves to one of fear. His eyes dart around the campfire to a circle of imaginary friends.

GIL
But her friends just sat there, wrapped in their blankets around the campfire. And then, she saw it.

Sport braces himself.

GIL
Her friends were all dead. Their eyes ripped out by sharp talons. Sinister smiles carved from missing-ear-to-missing-ear. It all happened ten years ago, in these very woods.

SPORT
But not really though. Right?

Gil winks.

SPORT
Dad?

Archibald digs through his pack for something.

ARCHIBALD
You know everything that comes out of your uncle’s mouth is bullshit.

Sport studies his uncle’s stone face until they both laugh. Some bushes rustle nearby. A BARK. Sport hops up.

SPORT
Is she okay?

GIL
Oh, yeah. Probably just had to see a dog about a man.

Sport giggles. An alarm goes off on Archibald's watch.

Archibald approaches Sport with a small package and smiles.

ARCHIBALD
Well, it’s midnight.

Archibald hands the package respectfully to Sport.

ARCHIBALD
Happy birthday, son.

Sport lights up and tears into the paper. He finds an old leather case. He flips it open to reveal a knife, classic but rugged. A family crest, intricately carved on the ivory hilt.

SPORT
Granddad’s knife?

ARCHIBALD
He gave it to me when I turned thirteen. Thought it would honor him to carry on the tradition.

Sport’s surprised eyes dart from his dad, to his uncle, and back as they nearly well with tears. He throws his arms around Archibald. Archibald reluctantly returns the hug.

SPORT
Thanks, dad!

ARCHIBALD
You’re welcome. But remember, we’re men. No tears.

Sport pulls away from the hug, wipes tears, straightens up.

SPORT
Yes, sir.

Sport weaves his belt through the knife's leather sheath.

Sadie skips back to the fire, something clutched in her jaws.

ARCHIBALD
What'cha got, girl?

Archibald gives it a tug, but Sadie holds on tight.

ARCHIBALD
Hey, drop it.

Sadie releases a small geometric structure of twigs, hand tied together. Archibald examines every facet.

SPORT
What is it, dad?

ARCHIBALD
Not really sure... some kind of birdhouse or something.

Gil takes it. He ties it to dangle from his ear.

GIL
It looks like one of your first wife's earrings. Right, Arch?

Archibald snorts. Sport laughs. Archibald spies the dimming fire and tosses the sculpture inside. The blaze flashes a large green flame. Suddenly, a RUSTLING in the bushes.

Sadie BARKS, takes an offensive stance.

SPORT
Easy, girl.

Sadie charges into the woods.

SPORT
Sadie!

Sadie BARKS, then YELPS in the shadows. The three hunters freeze. Their eyes dart back-and-forth to each other in the deafening silence, save the sounds of the CRACKLING FIRE.

SPORT
(whispering)
... Dad?

Archibald raises a cautionary hand. An ANGRY CANINE GROWL, deep in the darkness.

ARCHIBALD
Sadie?

Gnashes of teeth, a PUP YELPS. Arch looks at Sport.

ARCHIBALD
Stay here, boy. Sadie!

Archibald runs into the trees. Gil, on his feet now.

ARCHIBALD (O.S.)
What the hell?

Archibald screams. Gil disappears in the tent and emerges holding a handgun. He sprints past Sport and into the woods.

GIL (O.S.)
Arch!

BANG. BANG. BANG.

Sport, frozen in fear. A beat.

Gil, covered in blood, re-enters the clearing. Archibald’s body, slung over Gil's shoulders. Archibald looks dead.

GIL
Run!

Gil runs as fast as he can while carrying a body. Sport, still frozen in place. Gil slaps Sport on the back!

GIL
Come on!

Gil runs, Sport follows. A bush moves of its own accord and trips Gil, who falls on his face and drops Archibald’s corpse. Gil, on all fours, pitches his keys to Sport.

GIL
Just run! Get the truck started!

Sport hesitates, then dashes away. He glances over his shoulder. Gil tries to pick Archibald’s body up, but fails.

Furry arms twice the length of a man's tackle Gil.

Sport runs for his life, trips over a rock, tumbles to the ground. He unsheathes his knife and wields it with a shaking hand, his other arm shielding his face. Gil shrieks in pain.

GIL
RUN!

Sport’s eyes burst open. With a clear shot to the truck, he staggers to the driver's side. He hops in, starts the engine. He floors it and skids to a stop next to Gil, mostly dead.

Sport opens the passenger door. Gil crawls into the seat.

CRASH!

A furry arm breaks through the driver's side window. Sport's eyes, glued to the monster. The rearview mirror reflects a giant hand shooting toward Sport. Sport raises the knife.

CUT TO BLACK:

HUMAN SCREAMS and OTHERWORLDLY GRUNTS echo through the woods.

TITLE CARD: “THE HAIRY ONES”

INT. OLD CREEPY MANSION - NIGHT

VIDEO CAMERA P.O.V., NIGHT VISION FILTER

MICAH GABEL (30s) leads a MALE and FEMALE GUEST through a dark hall. The house has clearly been uninhabited for years.

MICAH
I can’t explain, but I feel like...
like it’s urging us this way.

The spooked guests shine their flashlights in every direction, eyes wide and ears open.

MICAH
Yes... here. The child’s room.

THE BABY’S ROOM

Dark. Dank. Streaks of moonlight fall on old porcelain dolls and a weathered bassinet. Micah pulls out his Zippo and lights a candle on a stand near the door.

The Male Guest goes through old storybooks while the Female checks out an old doll house. Micah grabs his head.

MICAH
It’s strong. Angry. I don’t think
it wants us here. Can you feel it?

MALE GUEST
No.

FEMALE GUEST
Kind of? I mean, I think so.

MICAH
There's something it doesn't want us to find. Keep looking.

The Female Guest examines an old jack-in-the-box.

A CRASH in the distance. A doll has fallen to the ground as the candle flame goes out. The Guests scream.

We see a broken doll, head shattered on the hardwood floor.

MALE GUEST
Okay, that's it for me. I'm out.

Micah opens the door and examines an empty closet.

MICAH
Shh. You can't go. I need our collective energy. Gather around.

The cameraman and guests circle up with Micah.

MICAH
Picture an open doorway. And through it, there's a black, empty void to the beyond. Can you see it?

FEMALE GUEST
Yes.

MALE GUEST
I can see it.

MICAH
Good. Concentrate on that void. I'm going to push our unwelcome guest through that door. Focus, now.

Micah raises his hand and clenches his eyes shut. He grunts, and shakes as though suffering great pressure to the head.

MICAH
This one's a fighter. What was the child's name?

FEMALE GUEST
Why?

MICAH
Knowing a spirit's name is power.

FEMALE GUEST
But, wouldn't bringing her murder to justice put her spirit to rest?

Micah pulls a customized iron cigar case out of his jacket. He pops it open to reveal glass vials of spell components.

MICAH
I fear this one is what we call a revenant, and no, justice is not enough. Every time its legend is told, another link is forged, chaining it to this dark place. But, I think I can help her --

The Male Guest flips through a storybook. On the front page --

MALE GUEST
-- Jessica.

MICAH
I think I can help Jessica.

Micah empties dried herbs in a cross shape inside the circle.

The camera swings to the closet door, which very slightly starts to move... a little more... then, the image FREEZES.

INT. TV TALK SHOW STUDIO - DAY

The found footage shines on a TV monitor. Below the monitor, a fancy talk show set glows before a live studio audience.

The host, RHONDA JEAN (35) smiles sweetly to her audience.

RHONDA JEAN
And now, ladies and gentlemen, here to promote his latest Paranormal TV special, *Behind the Darkness*, please welcome Micah Gabel!

Micah exits through a curtain and waves to the cheering audience. He kisses Rhonda's hand and takes a seat.

RHONDA JEAN
Welcome back, Micah. It's been a few years.

MICAH
It has. The dead never take a day off, apparently.

The audience laughs.

RHONDA JEAN
Apparently! I have to tell you, the new special looks chilling, Micah. I got goosebumps when the door started to move. What happens next?

MICAH
I love you Rhonda, but you're just going to have to tune in to the special and see for yourself.

Micah winks at the camera. The audience laughs.

RHONDA JEAN
Ahh! You always do this to me.

Micah's eyes drift to DANIEL (30s), a handsome, well-dressed man in the audience who watches him with genuine sympathy.

MICAH
Guilty as charged. But you just keep bringing me back for more!

RHONDA JEAN
Always! So, tell me, in this special, will we finally learn about what's on the other side, *behind the darkness*, as you say.

MICAH
Not exactly. The truth is, I don't really know what's beyond the veil. I'm not meant to. Nobody is. I've caught glimpses since I was a child, but only glimpses.

RHONDA JEAN
Since you were a child? That must have been terrifying! I would've gone cray-cray by now!

MICAH
Who's to say I didn't?

The audience laughs. Daniel rolls his eyes, with a smirk.

RHONDA JEAN
Still, being a psychic at such a young age must've --

MICAH
Medium.

RHONDA JEAN
Pardon?

MICAH
I prefer the term medium. Psychic is more general, it includes people who see the future. That's not my gift. I hear what spirits tell me.

RHONDA JEAN
But still. Spending so much time -- how did the Irish say it? Where the world is thin? Isn't it dangerous?

MICAH
(nervous laugh)
Dangerous?

QUICK FLASH - OLD CREEPY MANSION - BABY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Micah nods to his cameraman, MATT (24), who throws a rock at a doll on the shelf, then leans over to blow out the candle.

BACK TO SCENE

Micah smiles, smugly.

MICAH
Well, I'll put it this way. I always feel like my guests and I are in good hands.

RHONDA JEAN
Clearly! After a successful show, a best-selling book, and TV specials, you're still going strong. So, what's next for Micah Gabel?

MICAH
Next? Well. I've had a great career, helping people with my gift, and I'm very proud of the work that I've done, but...

Micah looks back to Daniel in the audience. Daniel smiles.

RHONDA JEAN
Don't tell me you're stopping. Is this the end of an era?

Micah frowns, then snaps back to face the crowd, all smiles.

MICAH
Not a chance. There's still so many people who need my help. How can I slow down now?

The crowd cheers. Daniel glowers and shakes his head.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Micah sits opposite Daniel in a booth.

DANIEL
How can I slow down now?

MICAH
I know. Look, I know what that sounded like, but it's not for much longer. For real this time. And we both have demanding careers.

DANIEL
At least I don't work every holiday. We already missed my parents seder, and for what? Some dumb Mothman in Virginia?

MICAH
West Virginia. But, I have to go out on a high note. My agent's been looking for something appropriate; one last big score, as it were.

DANIEL
What is it?

MICAH
I don't know, she's supposed to call me today. But rest assured, it'll be successful, cement my legacy, and then I can be done.

DANIEL
And if it doesn't? Then what?

Micah stammers.

DANIEL
Case closed. You could be done now. Why's it always one more special?

MICAH
Have you seen the projections for my last one?
(MORE)

MICAH (CONT'D)
(laughs)
I'd do a reading at Ground Zero for what I stand to make.

DANIEL
This trip was going to be our first step to a fresh start. Your words.

Daniel is distracted by a middle-aged WITCH in heavy makeup with black flowing clothes and hair. She approaches the table, holding a book with Micah's face on the book jacket.

MICAH
Um. Hello.

WITCH
Hi. Sorry to interrupt, I'm Ruth. My friends and I watch your show all the time. It's... entertaining.

Ruth winks. Micah takes the pen and the book. An old one, 'Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry.'

MICAH
Thanks for watching. Oh, a classic. To Ruth, my fellow esoteric. Micah.

The Witch bows and returns to her table nearby, where other witches smile and giddily celebrate.

On the table, Micah's phone VIBRATES. Micah glances at the Caller ID and silences it. Daniel gestures to Micah's phone.

DANIEL
Is Matt working on the finale? That's it, isn't it. Here I was thinking I was your only secret.

MICAH
That's not fair! You're not a secret. And I told you I'm not working with Matt anymore.

DANIEL
I didn't even want to watch your last show because of... all that.

A WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS
Sorry about the wait. What can I get you?

DANIEL
How about some fucking honesty?

WAITRESS
Uh...

DANIEL
(sweetly)
Pardon. I'll have the avocado bagel, toasted please.

The Waitress averts her eyes, uncomfortably.

WAITRESS
For you?

MICAH
Just coffee, please.

WAITRESS
Coming up.

The Waitress gathers the menus and departs.

Micah's phone VIBRATES. Again. He silences it.

MICAH
You have every right to be angry. And I know I don't deserve it, but I need you to trust me.

Daniel studies Micah, then sighs.

DANIEL
What are we supposed to tell my parents? My dad's going to offer you that investigator position. It'll be a pretty awkward weekend together if you turn him down.

MICAH
Well, if you didn't all think my job was such a joke, you could just try telling them the truth.

DANIEL
Now who isn't being fair? I defended you even when --

MICAH
You want to have this conversation right now?

DANIEL
If not now, when? Hmm? I've sacrificed so much for us, blindly hoping that eventually --

MICAH
Eventually what? A white picket fence? A few puppies? And I'm what? A worker bee at daddy's firm? Eventually you picture me where?

DANIEL
Anywhere but selling snake oil!

Too loud, Dan shrinks as a few customers glance their way.

MICAH
So that's it. You think I'm a thief, huh? A cheater and a crook.

DANIEL
Micah.

MICAH
No, no, let's talk about this. A magician. Is a magician a fraud? No magician has ever sawed a woman in half. Or teleported across the auditorium. Is he a con-artist?

DANIEL
Wow.

MICAH
Yes or no?

Daniel clenches his jaw, fuming.

MICAH
No! Because he is an entertainer. Half the people who watch my shows don't believe in any of it. It's just fun. And the other half? Well, if it adds magic to their lives to think there's a murderous bunny man running around Kentucky, it's not my place to judge anymore than if they believe in Jesus. But hey, if you have a better case that I'm --

Micah's phone VIBRATES. A third call.

DANIEL
Just answer it for fuck sake!

Micah sighs and answers the phone.

MICAH
(on the phone)
Hey, Amy. Not a good time. Okay.

Micah spots Daniel's scowl and sighs.

MICAH
(on the phone)
Oh, no. That's a hard pass. You know how I feel about her, Amy. Find something else, or we'll have to hope the last one is good enough to be the capstone to my career.

Daniel's eyes bulge open. He looks hopeful.

MICAH
(on the phone)
Right. No, I don't care if it's shooting at the... wait. Where?

Daniel gives a "told you so" gesture; there it is.

MICAH
(on the phone)
No, no, look. We'll talk more later. But, I have to go.

Micah hangs up. Daniel, face blank, stares forward.

DANIEL
So...

MICAH
You still listening to that true crime podcast?

Daniel relaxes.

DANIEL
Yeah, they've started into this brand new case where --

MICAH
Speaking of, what do you think of when I say Nantahala Forest?

DANIEL
That's where everyone thinks that little girl Noel was buried. After her parents murdered her.

MICAH
Allegedly.

DANIEL
They were guilty as hell.

MICAH
They were acquitted.

DANIEL
My dad reviewed that case and he said he knows for a fact... Oh. My. G-d. Tell me this isn't for a job.

MICAH
Hey, I'm just --

DANIEL
It is! You're shooting in Nantahala Forest and you wanted to know if it's still a hot topic. Is that it?

MICAH
It's more complicated than that.

DANIEL
Everything is with you! I'm starting to think you wouldn't have it any other way.

The waitress approaches with coffee and pours a cup. Micah reaches for Daniel's hand, but he pulls away.

DANIEL
Can we just get the check?

EXT. STREETSIDE - DAWN

P.O.V. HANDICAM

A lens cap comes off of a Handicam to reveal Micah, holding luggage. A cabbie loads the trunk as Micah spots the camera.

EXT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Micah approaches JOSH (23), an athletic recent college grad with a nose ring who grins charmingly behind his camera.