

THEY CALL FOR HELP

by

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FADE IN

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Catchy eighties music plays from a modern two-story house. It fades as the wind picks up.

Through a window we see an empty kitchen-

A figure flashes by.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Bloody hands part curtains and peep into a shadowy, vine-covered archway. Glass doors slide open and a trembling female ventures outside.

A mad, breathy laugh greets her. A facially SCARRED TEEN rushes forward.

He slams her against the archway and touches her mouth. Stitches dig into her lips. Her face bears dark symbols, crudely etched into the skin.

SCARRED TEEN

So rude...we're not done yet.

Her mumbled words escalate into frantic pleas for help.

EXT. CRATER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

MAX, 22, holding a pizza box and a bag, slows his pace as muffled screams travel and die within the wind. He surveys his surroundings.

Disjointed music floats from the houses up and down the street. He resumes walking. Screams -clearer this time- halt him.

He retraces his steps to the Morgans. Lights are on inside but nothing seems amiss. Max turns to leave when a moan erupts. A passing car drowns out another.

MAX

Emily? Mrs Morgan? Hello?

He hears a vague sound of glass breaking.

GARBLED VOICE (O.S.)

Help...he-e-e-e-lp

There is a sudden movement behind the archway, followed by a high-pitched giggle. Max scoffs.

MAX

Hey brats! Don't be surprised if
that treat keeps ya on the toilet
tomorrow!

He moves closer, his expression changing.

A frightened eye, skin raw and bloody, stares through the vines. It swiftly disappears. A vague cackle and another moan for help float down.

EXT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A car pulls away from curb, honking. CONNOR, 22, and NORA, 23 wave.

NORA

Did Mrs Hawthorne look drunk to
you?

CONNOR

Yup. Remind me to lay it on Johnny
at an appropriate time. I feel like
he'd want to know.

NORA

Where are you coming from?

Max strolls up. He hands them the parcels.

NORA (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you made the entire
rounds just to avoid the patrols.

MAX

Nah, just wanted to see if they blocked off the cemetery. There's yellow tape and a sign. Someone smudged mud and blood over it.

CONNOR

How's the party? How come no one's delivering down here?

MAX

Too many orders, too little staff. Party's nothing special. Boring costumes. I commandeered some snacks though.

NORA

Lovely. I lifted a bottle of mom's wine.

They head for the veranda.

NORA (CONT'D)

Why bother going? A movie in our creepy old house is far better. Too much work to do anyway.

CONNOR

Yeah I can't spare time for frat brats this semester; I don't want to be painting this place at Christmas.

Max hesitates, looking at the Morgan House, visible past the curve of the street a short distance away.

MAX

Hey, you guys see or hear anything weird when I left?

CONNOR

Weird? Like the colour you painted your room?

MAX

Like...troublemakers? Scheming kids
or-

NORA

Kids? This is probably the one area
with no wandering kids tonight.
Johnny's parents came by. He'll
move in this weekend. Why?

MAX

Nothing, just... On my way back I
swear I heard someone call for
help. Sounded serious.

NORA

Oh, probably the teens who defaced
the police tape. I bet they were
counting on you to call the
patrols.

MAX

Could be but there was...I don't
know. Looked like a slashed face.
Bloody eyes, raw flesh. At the
Morgans' house.

They glance at it. It glows in the distance.

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

I think there was a fight inside.
Someone kept calling for help.
Sounded like a woman.

Connor and Nora exchange sceptical looks.

CONNOR

You didn't spend some time with ole
Mary Jane at the party, did you?

Nora snickers.

MAX

If I did I woulda stayed and let
you two starve. I'm serious. There
was something funny going on.

CONNOR

You know it could be a prank,
right? It is Halloween.

MAX

Yeah and it's a secluded, middle-
class area. Perfect for-

NORA

Hey look, that's them. Look alright
to me.

Two figures are stand at the Morgans' 1st floor window,
apparently in conversation. Downstairs, another shadowy
outline sits near a window.

MAX

That's the other thing. They were
there when I called out -I could
see them through the windows- and
nobody answered.

NORA

Maybe they didn't want to be
disturbed. Maybe they thought you
were a prankster.

CONNOR

Could we eat whilst we're gossiping
about the neighbours?

They turn and head for the house.

Behind them, the sitting figure at the Morgans turns his head
in their direction.

INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The trio enter the living room, which has containers of paint, brushes and related items lined up at the walls.

MAX

I was thinking about that couple who went missing a few years ago. Remember? Never turned up, then people saw them on Halloween the next year. They stayed in that house next door, you know.

Nora and Connor stare at him.

NORA

What? No.

MAX

Old Ridgeway confirmed. Only a few people in this area know it.

CONNOR

You sure? I thought they were shady tourists camping in the woods behind the cemetery.

MAX

Nope. They were house hunting, rented next door whilst the owners were away. Uncle Ridge was handling it for them.

NORA

Ooh yes...the couple always decked out in leather. They found blood but no bodies. Then people saw them wandering around with writing on their skin. Hmm. I'd forgotten about that.

MAX

Yeah remember the crazy things people were saying? Witchcraft and all that.

NORA

I remember some kid saw them. Said their mouths were sewn up and they tried to lure him into the woods.

CONNOR

Was that you, Max?

Max slaps him lightly on the head as they enter

THE KITCHEN

MAX

I think my parents said there's a lot of weird stories about this area.

They wash hands and gather dishes.

CONNOR

No that's the cemetery's reputation.
I thought the story was they were mafia people?
Probably staged their own disappearance.

MAX

Who knows what the hell happened.
But more than one person saw them and said they looked dead.

NORA

So that's why you're spooked.

MAX

I'm not, it just crossed my mind.
It did happen on Halloween.

CONNOR

Well, I won't be scared by the
black magic undead this Halloween,
only by our awesome slasher
collection. Then by Prof Donahue's
notes.

MAX

Speaking of which, I've got some to-
Oh no.
My bloody notes!

NORA

What? I thought you got all moved
in last week.

MAX

No, my keys! It's got my USB. I put
them down on the cemetery fountain.

He grabs the pockets of his jacket and jeans.

MAX (CONT'D)

Shit. I definitely left them there.
I'm going back. You brats go ahead
and eat.

As they exit Max glimpses rapid movement at a window. He
looks closer, blinking. A tip of a spiky claw hovers into
sight at the windowsill.

A cat leaps, paws at the glass and disappears.

As Max leaves a head appears at the window and enters the
light; Scarred Teen from the Morgans. He stares after them.

LIVING ROOM

Connor and Nora drop the eating utensils on a coffee table.

CONNOR

Well if anybody walks in here
tonight, dead or alive, we'll know
how they got in.

NORA

Ah it's probably still there.
I'll go with you, Max. I need some
fresh air after sniffing all that
paint today.

CONNOR

And to see if you spy drunken
classmates at the cemetery.

NORA

That too.

CONNOR

If you're not back in fifteen I'm
opening that box and having more
than my share.

Max looks back as he and Nora exit.

MAX

Make sure everything's locked up,
right?

EXT. CRATER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The night is quiet and deserted. Nora looks up at the house
next door as they walk past. It sits dimly lit by night
lamps.

NORA

I can't believe they never found
them.

MAX

Seems people are scared to mention
it.

NORA

Who lives there now? Saw a car a few times but I haven't seen anyone since we moved in.

MAX

I think the owners are away. That was probably a caretaker.

They encounter a few departing guests from a neighbouring house as they round the corner.

Lively music greets them at the Morgans.

MAX (CONT'D)

No patrols up here.

NORA

Nothing going on. They probably got their hands full downtown.

Two shadowy outlines, male and female, come into view in a window upstairs. The couple appear to speak animatedly.

They turn to look at Max and Nora, abruptly terminating their conversation. They stare until they are out of sight.

NORA (CONT'D)

What's up with them? Are they trying to be weird?

MAX

They did the same thing when I called...just stared.

INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Connor exits the kitchen with a drink and proceeds to lock the windows.

The house next door sits quietly, reflecting the dull moonlight.

As he glances a head flashes past a window, skin deeply marked and bloody. Connor frowns and peers closer. For many seconds there is nothing.

A mutilated hand SLAPS onto the window. It hovers there, then slowly swings back and forth.

EXT. CRATER STREET, BEHIND THE CEMETARY - MOMENTS LATER

Max heads for the fountain as Nora examines the police tape stretching across the exposed grounds.

MAX

Thank God.

He snatches his keys from the empty basin.

NORA

Lord, look at all this blood. You think it's from an animal?

A torn swatch of bloody leather lays on the ground nearby.

MAX (O.S.)

Could be. It doesn't look fake.
Look how it dried.

Rivulets of blood runs across the leather and seep into the dark earth.

NORA

Yeah let's get back. Too much weirdness on display tonight.

EXT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Connor examines the neighbour's house. The windows are vacant.

He gazes at the empty road. In the distance the Morgan house lights up against the night. Inside, a shadowy figure faces Connor. He raises an arm and waves.

EXT. CRATER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

With quickened steps Max and Nora approach the Morgan house as they head back.

A slow, persistent banging slices through the music. They halt. Then comes another sound, closer this time.

GARbled VOICE (O.S.)

Help. He-e-e-e-lp us.

MAX

You hear that? Sound fake to you?

NORA

I can't tell. Maybe we-

A movement at a window catches their attention. Enclosed by shadows, bloody female hands slam against the glass. They rapidly disappear, as if they were pulled backwards.

The music pauses momentarily, then resumes.

INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - LATER

Connor is perched against the stairwell munching candy and checking his watch when Max and Nora burst in.

CONNOR

Nice try guys. I almost fell for it.

Nora locks the door.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Good performance but kinda amateur setup. I wasn't convinced.

NORA

Quit it, Connor. Somebody broke into the Morgans. They're being attacked.

Connor looks back and forth between her and Max.

CONNOR
You're serious.

MAX
Why wouldn't we be?

He tosses his mobile phone on the table and goes for the landline.

MAX (CONT'D)
Why can't I get a signal here?

CONNOR
So who was that waving next door?
In the makeup? And the Morgans.

They walk away as Max makes the call.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Are you sure it's not a joke?

NORA
Wait. You saw somebody next door?

CONNOR
That's what I said. Looked like a
guy. Just standing in the window
looking at me. Weird. But who-

MAX
Alright they're coming.
I told you something was wrong.

CONNOR
Okay so it's no prank.
Who was that next door then?

MAX
Who'd it look like?

CONNOR
I don't know. It- I saw a hand.
Scrapes, bloody, nasty-looking.

He goes to the window and they follow him.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

So was his head. I couldn't see a face.

They gaze expectantly.

MAX

Maybe it's a gang.

NORA

What if they got to other houses?

EXT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - LATER

Connor watches an officer click a flashlight off as he approaches them.

CONNOR

I'm guessing you didn't find anything.

The officer shakes his head as another officer with a notepad joins them, shaking his head.

NOTEPAD OFFICER

Just the teens and their friends playing Halloween pranks. Got out of hand. I gave them a warning.

Nora scoffs. Max looks over at the Morgan house.

FLASHLIGHT OFFICER

(to Connor)

No sign of forced entry but there's a loose window latch. Maybe some prankster slipped in.

NOTEPAD OFFICER

It's good you called but the Morgans are fine. Sent their apologies by the way.

FLASHLIGHT OFFICER

You folks here by yourselves?

Max nods, turning to look at him.

MAX

We're cousins. Our uncle's letting us use the house to save dorm rent.

FLASHLIGHT OFFICER

Okay. You expect things like this at Halloween but you can't be too careful.

MAX

We thought it might be a gang.

NOTEPAD OFFICER

You could've been right. Here.

He removes a card from his shirt pocket and hands it to Max.

NOTEPAD OFFICER (CONT'D)

That's my number. We've had some commotion tonight so...

NORA

What kind?

NOTEPAD OFFICER

A little vandalism, a few fights.
(to Flashlight Officer)
Didn't someone call about a girl?

FLASHLIGHT OFFICER

Oh, yeah. Was supposed to show at the party. Friends can't find her, parents can't find her. Wearing a blue carnival mask. You see anyone up here like that?

The three shake their heads. Flashlight Officer shrugs.

FLASHLIGHT OFFICER (CONT'D)

She'll probably turn up in the morning. They usually do.

They follow the officers to their cruiser.

FLASHLIGHT OFFICER (CONT'D)

We'll drive down to the cemetery.
Tricksters probably got pig blood
from the butcher.

NOTEPAD OFFICER

You kids have a good, safe night.

They watch the cruiser as it drives past the Morgans.

MAX

Well. Bizarre but...we got pranked.
I don't know if I feel relieved or
stupid.

CONNOR

He called us 'kids'. They probably
think we're the latter.

NORA

Oh jesus look at that.

At the Morgans, someone is waving at a window downstairs.

NORA (CONT'D)

Max, you know Emily right? Call and
ask if they remember the police
warning.

They walk back to the house.

MAX

I don't have her number.

CONNOR

I find that hard to believe but I'm
all for tossing some laxative on
that pizza and taking it over
there. They can sit on the toilet
and wave.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Music plays.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Inside a study, the young woman with the sewn mouth lies on the floor, eyes unblinking and glassy. Her bare skin is etched with intricate black carvings.

A man's head moves over her, face covered by a blue Parisian mask. Charcoal eyes study her with curiosity.

A sharp finger claws another symbol on her thigh.

EXT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - LATER

Connor places two bags of garbage on the lawn's edge and does a double take.

INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max and Nora lay on the sofa munching on pizza. The TV plays Carpenter's HALLOWEEN.

Connor stalks in, clearing his throat.

CONNOR

You better come outside.

EXT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The three look at the Morgan's house in disbelief.

It is now completely dark, front door wide open. A police cruiser is parked haphazardly on the lawn, its doors ajar.

CONNOR

You, uh, think that's the same one?

MAX

Where the hell is everybody?

NORA

Call that cop, Max. Ask him what's going on.

CONNOR

No, call the station. They came
what, more than an hour ago? What
are they still doing here?

INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Max replaces the phone and looks at them grimly.

MAX

Station lines are busy. Cop's not
answering.

NORA

But why would they go back? The
Morgans said everything was fine.

MAX

Maybe it wasn't the Morgans they
talked to.

They stare at one another doubtfully.

MAX (CONT'D)

Maybe whoever was there pretended
to be them.

CONNOR

Come on, Max. You don't think they
would recognize them?

MAX

Not if they're new. Don't they look
young to you?

A faint sound interrupts them. It whimpers and grows louder.
A small shaky voice calls out indistinctly.

EXT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They halt at the curb, staring incredulously.

A small girl, ELSA, dressed in a nightgown walks towards
them, barefoot and clutching a stuffed toy.

MAX

Oh shit I think that's Emily's
sister.

CONNOR

What's she doing here?

Elsa stops as she sees them and looks back at the Morgans,
where a light blinks on upstairs. The house goes dark again.

Elsa turns and runs back.

MAX

Hey Elsa! Come here for a minute!

He looks at Connor.

CONNOR

Okay, okay. But if anything's off,
we get the station.

He runs back to the house.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Let them handle whatever the hell's
going on.

NORA

She went inside. I wonder if
anyone's there.

INT. NEXT DOOR HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Someone watches them. We see a mutilated hand hover at the
window, gripping the latch.

EXT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MAX

You stay here and try the station
again. Go down there if they don't
answer.

Connor returns with a crowbar and a steel rod.

NORA

I'll see if I can wake up one of
the neighbours.

CONNOR

Do that. 'Cause I don't think we're
gonna be much help.

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Max and Connor cautiously step around the cruiser, weapons
raised. The house looms still and dark. The wind slowly picks
up.

MAX

Emily! Mrs Morgan! Elsa?

Silence answers.

CONNOR

You really think announcing our
arrival is a good idea?

MAX

Try to radio the station.

Bangs erupt from above.

Upstairs, the dim face of a woman hovers above a window. She
bangs it with her head.

MRS. MORGAN

Please...please he-el-p-

She breathes harshly.

MRS. MORGAN (CONT'D)

Max...we're tied up. Elsa...

Max and Connor look around wildly.

CONNOR

Where are the cops?

Someone cries. After an agonizing pause they approach the house. They peer inside.

Elsa sits on the stairs, clutching her toy, crying.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MAX

Elsa? Elsa! Come here.

He enters and Connor follows him.

They suddenly notice that the darkness is punctuated by flickers of light from candles. Lots of candles.

CONNOR

Max...

Max tries to get Elsa but she scampers upstairs.

The front door slams shut. They spin around.

Scarred Teen creeps out from behind the stairs, swinging an eclectic knife. Connor frantically tugs at the door.

The teen leaps forward with frightening speed.

The knife slices at their faces and they tumble backward, dropping their weapons.

MAX

Connor!

Both scramble to retrieve weapons, barely dodging mad swipes of the knife.

Max manages to grab the crowbar. He lunges to his feet and delivers a blow to the teen's head as he grapples with Connor. The teen hits the wall, slows a bit.

He comes at Connor. But a heavy-framed painting is knocked loose and hits him in the head.

He falls to the floor, unconscious. Max peers closely at the figure.

Connor notices something at the door. His eyes widen.

CONNOR

Max...look at-

MAX

Aaron?

CONNOR

Max look at the door!

Max grabs him by the shoulders.

MAX

That's Emily's brother!

INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nora hangs up the phone with impatience. Her gaze wanders to the living room. Frowning, she nears the coffee table.

Tiny bags with pale powder spill out of Max's backpack. Needles and vials of dark liquid lay scattered on the table.

NORA

What the hell?

Behind her, someone unseen moves closer.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CONNOR

Her brother? Are you-

MAX

Emily! Mrs Morgan?

Connor tugs at Max's arm and points.

Across the front door, thin threads of blood silently scrawl themselves in complex patterns.

Max raises his arms. Blood from his wounds slowly disappears, moving and retreating into the skin. He looks at Connor's forehead and sees the same.

MAX (CONT'D)

God, he's gone crazy.

CONNOR

Who?!

MAX

Aaron. That's their son.

They glance at the still figure on the floor.

CONNOR

Not our problem.

He yanks at the door handle.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Bloody thing won't open.

Max grabs the steel rod and runs up the stairs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Max!

Cursing, Connor frantically digs out his phone. The shadow of a man hovers on the wall.

INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nora turns. She glimpses dark leather before a grotesque hand claps over her mouth, stifling her scream. A man pulls her close.

A bloodied, etched head, lips sewn, rushes forward.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the hall upstairs, Max hesitates. There comes a sound.

Soft gurgling. Maybe sucking. Raspy breathing.

He spies a door ajar and heads for it. A vague figure of lies on the floor.

MAX

Mrs Morgan?

DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Connor shoves the phone back into his pocket and goes into the study. He grabs a handset from a desk.

A hand clutches his ankle. He jumps, dropping the phone.

The young woman, now wearing the blue mask, crawls at him from the floor. Her skin is raw, body is covered with black carvings.

He backs away in silent horror as a man approaches from behind.

UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Max shoves the door open. He comes face to face with a tense EMILY.

MAX

Emily. What-

He moves past her and freezes.

DOWNSTAIRS

Large hands enclose Connor's neck and spins him around.

He stares at a horrific, carved face. Intelligent black eyes study him. He sputters.

CONNOR

M-Mr Morgan?

UPSTAIRS

Max stares at the woman on the floor. Clad in leather, her skin is ancient and bloody, bathed with intricate black etchings. She quivers.

Mrs Morgan bends over the woman. Carvings on her face glisten. Her eyes roll up at Max balefully. He turns to flee.

Something collides with his head. He crumbles to the floor.

DOWNSTAIRS - LATER

A clock in the hall strikes midnight.

Max opens his eyes to a candle-lit living room. He looks up to see the Morgans and their two eldest children, voices indistinct. He tries to move.

Mr Morgan turns around. We see a blur of black symbols and raw skin as he reaches for Max.

EXT/INT. RIDGEWAY HOUSE - MORNING

The police cruiser sits on the lawn. Front door to the house is ajar. Soft light falls on the veranda.

MAN (V.O.)

I want to know who else was
involved. See if they knew that
young girl.

Inside, partially obscured behind a paint tin on the floor, lies the blue Parisian mask.

INT. POLICE STATION - UNKNOWN TIME LATER

Max's eyes fly open. A man peers at him.

DETECTIVE ONE

Max? You still with us?

Max snaps alert. Confused, his eyes frantically search the room. A handful of men examine him with interest.

MAX

W-where are my cousins?!

DETECTIVE TWO

That's what we're trying to figure out, but you been drifting off since you walked in here.

MAX

What? I didn't-
They attacked us. The Morgans.
D-did you get them?

DETECTIVE ONE

Course we did. They called us right before you came here. You gave their boy a nasty bruise.

He stares at them in disbelief.

MAX

What? That's- They're lying! They pretended somebody broke in and then...I can't-

He clutches his head, stammering. The men glance at one another.

MAX (CONT'D)

The cops! We called. Two officers came. Talk to them.

DETECTIVE TWO

Jerry and Derek? You knocked them out with a crowbar, they said.

Max shakes his head slowly, eyes widening.

MAX

No... That's not-

DETECTIVE TWO

Morgans told them you were harassing them. Calling for help outside and taunting them from your house. We found some interesting party favours there.

And your cousins' blood.

Max breathes harshly.

MAX

No... They tricked us. Some kinda witchcraft or something. The missing tourist? They have her. Check their house!

DETECTIVE ONE

Witchcraft, eh?

He dangles an evidence bag in front of him. Inside is the knife Aaron used to attack Max and Connor.

DETECTIVE ONE (CONT'D)

You had this in your pocket. You use it to do that?

He points to Max's chest.

Max looks down. His shirt is open. His entire chest is covered by dozens of symbols carved into his skin.

DETECTIVE TWO

Let's get you to the hospital, Max. Do some bloodwork. Then we'll help you get your story straight.

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - LATER

Connor and Nora sit on the floor, backs straight. Their sewn lips become visible in the candlelight. Their faces bear black, intricate symbols. Eyes slowly open and translucent irises stare.

MRS. MORGAN (O.S.)

Hungry?

Mr Morgan crawls towards Nora and puts his mouth on her neck.

FADE OUT.