

A Haunting in Brooklyn

Written by

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FILM DIATRIBE

FADE IN:

INT. WILLOWBROOK CONDOS - ROOM 413 - NIGHT

The dining room is dimly lit with a cluster of candles at the center of a table. Five hands are seen, interlocked, and their faces are obscured by flickering candlelight.

ZAINAB (40s), her large black-hooded velvet cloak illuminated by the candles, recites an incantation.

ZAINAB
Spirit, come forth now and reveal
yourself to us.

JACK (20s), a young man dressed in a poorly tailored suit steps through a wall into the dining room, his head bent unnaturally in a ninety-degree angle.

JACK
Well, here I am. Whaddya want?

Jack is ignored by the four of the five living beings, unable to hear him. Zainab snaps her head to the left, locking eyes with Jack. She gasps.

ZAINAB
He's here!

PAUL (early 30s), leans his curly-haired head close to the candles and squints his eyes as he scans the dark room.

PAUL
(sarcastically)
Yeah, I'm sure he's staring right at
us, asking us, "Why doth thou
desturbeth me at thine witching hour"

He feigns a yawn, breaking his hands from the circle. RENEE (early 30s), slaps Paul's shoulder. Jack starts to fade away. Renee leans in, the light reflects off her large glasses. She scans the room.

RENEE
Why would he talk like some guy in a
Shakespeare play? He's probably from
Brooklyn, too.

ZAINAB
SILENCE! I need to focus, I'm losing
him.

ALLEN (30s), leans in, his gaunt face and bags under his eyes lit by candlelight.

ALLEN
Please Paul, try, for me?

ZAINAB
Aston is right. Let me focus.

ALLEN
(whispering)
It's actually All-

ZAINAB
Silence!

Zainab closes her eyes, and mumbles to herself. Jack begins to fade back in.

JACK
Hey lady, you're a bonafide psychic.

Zainab looks at Jack again.

ZAINAB
What is your name, spirit??

JACK
Jack O'Malley. I offered myself, to answer your next question.

STEPHEN (early 30s), leans into the center of the table, blowing a long strand of hair out of his face, careful to keep his hands locked with his friends.

STEPHEN
(whispering)
Oh my God... I knew it! There really is a spirit here!

Zainab stares daggers into Stephen, he retreats to the darkness.

ZAINAB
Why, Jack, do you torture poor Alton at night? Why do you scare him with Rodney Dangerfield specials at 3 AM?

JACK
It's not meant to be scary. Dangerfield's funny. And I haven't slept in, oh I don't know, forty years and change.

ZAINAB

Why not move on? Why are you still here forty years after your suicide?

PAUL

Forty years? Yikes, get a life, dude.

The fire from the several candles merge together, forming a **GIANT BLUE FLAME** directed at Paul. He nearly falls backwards out of his chair, he's held up by his friends.

JACK

Whaddya think about that, pretty bitchin' right?

ZAINAB

Very funny Joel -

JACK

(sneering)

Jack.

ZAINAB

Of course, Jack. Now, please answer my question.

Jack crosses his arms.

JACK

Look, I'll tell ya, but I don't wanna play this game of telephone. Lemme do some possessing.

ZAINAB

Fine, you may commune through me. But-

JACK

Thanks for the offer, but I don't think I wanna possess a lady. Too... distracting.

Jack floats towards the group and places a hand on Allen.

ZAINAB

Nononono. Wait Jack!

Jack fades away and Allen **SLAMS** his head down on the table.

STEPHEN

ALLEN!

Stephen runs over and grabs Allen.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

He's cold!

PAUL

What did you do Zainab?

(To Allen)

Allen? Wake up!

Allen **SNAPS** upright, except for his head, which is now at a near-ninety degree angle. His skin is **PALE**, his eyes **BLACK**, and his veins are **BULGING** out of his face. He creaks his bent head over to Stephen.

JACK/ALLEN

Allen's not here right now, leave a message after the beep!

Stephen jumps back, knocking over his chair.

Renee runs over to the light switch and turns on the lights, revealing a large white open-space condo with new appliances and abstract artwork on the walls.

ZAINAB

Everyone, let's calm down. The spirit inhabited Allen's body. He just needs to move on to the afterlife. Let's-

JACK/ALLEN

Let's get this over with. I'm tired of haunting and wanna move on. To do that, I gotta wrap up some unfinished business...

Jack/Allen cracks his neck and smiles a fiendish grin. Stephen, Paul and Renee cower behind Zainab.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

My standup!

Jack/Allen stands up unnaturally fast and grips the back of his chair.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

Woah, been a while since I had actual legs. I'm a little woozy, like when you've been sittin' on the toilet too long and your legs fall asleep?

Beat.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

Just me? C'mon.

Jack/Allen waves everyone over to the living room.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack/Allen grabs a stool, sets it along the floor-to-ceiling window and pulls the red curtains shut. He snaps, the room darkens and a spotlight appears around him from seemingly nowhere. Zainab, Paul, and Renee all slowly get up and walk to the couch opposite of Jack/Allen. Stephen is frozen behind his chair, unblinking, wide-eyed.

RENEE
 (smiling, through
 clenched teeth)
 C'mon Stephen, we don't wanna upset
 the ghost.

Stephen shakily stands up and forces himself to walk over, joining the others on the white bouclé couch. Jack/Allen clears his throat.

JACK/ALLEN
 Thank you all for comin' out tonight!
 How's everyone doin'?

Silence. Jack/Allen nervously plays with the edge of his shirt.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)
 Alright, let's get into it. I like to
 think of myself as a progressive guy,
 so I went to this sushi place -

Zainab covers her face with her hand.

ZAINAB
 (muttering)
 Oh God...

JACK/ALLEN
 (forcing a smile,
 annoyed)
 Just wait! This is gonna be good.

Beat. Jack/Allen resets himself.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)
 Anyways I was at a sushi joint, and
 when the waiter brought me my food, I
 looked at it, looked at him, and told
 him, "I think it's a little raw"

The silence is palpable.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Jack/Allen is sweating under the hot spotlight, eyes wide. Paul is asleep, Stephen is shaking, Renee is covering her ears.

JACK/ALLEN

And what is up with those oversized toothpicks? Have you people ever heard of a fork?

Jack/Allen desperately holds his hands out and pauses for laughter. The lights **PULSE** with Jack/Allen's breath.

ZAINAB

Okay Jack, you tried, it didn't work. Now leave Allen's body. We can find another way for you to -

JACK/ALLEN

And what is up with those oversized toothpicks? Have those people ever heard of a fork?

Jack desperately holds his hands out and pauses for laughter. His smile turns to a grimace, he's sweating. The lights glow brighter.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

C'MON! THIS IS MY BEST MATERIAL!
THIS. IS. FUNNY.

Zainab walks up to Jack/Allen and puts a hand on his shoulder. A lightbulb **POPS**. Stephen is biting his nails.

ZAINAB

Please, you're scaring them. Just stop!

Jack/Allen stares angrily at Zainab.

JACK/ALLEN

SHUT. UP!

Zainab grabs her head. Her nose starts to bleed and she lets out a guttural scream. Her head **BLOWS OPEN** like a ripe tomato, coating the walls and the guests in her blood. Everyone is frozen in place for several moments.

Zainab's body collapses on the couch and a shot of blood shoots from her stump across to Stephen, who lets out a high-pitched scream. Paul turns pale and Renee grabs her two friends and runs with them.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)
 Wait! I just wanted to shut her up!
 How was I supposed to know that'd
 happen!

Jack/Allen wipes Grey matter off of his face.

LAUNDRY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen, Allen, and Renee are all cowering behind Allen's dryer. Stephen is wiping away the blood with Allen's monogrammed towel. They whisper together.

STEPHEN
 I-It was nice knowing you guys.

RENEE
 C'mon Stephen, we're going to get out of here. If I remember *The Conjuring* right, he won't be able to leave the condo. We just have to make it out the doors and-

PAUL
 That was a fucking movie!

Stephen whimpers.

RENEE
 Based on real case files!
 (sarcastically)
 I'd love to hear your idea Paul!

PAUL
 I say we offer Stephen as a sacrifice
 Since he already said his goodbye!

STEPHEN
 Well I'm sorry Paul! I've never seen
 anyone's head explode!

RENEE
 Shush! Did you hear that?

The three listen intently to plodding footsteps approaching the closed laundry door. They hear a "Shave and a Haircut" knock on the door.

JACK/ALLEN (O.S.)

Uh, guys? I'm sorry about Zainab. I still don't know how that happened. I'm really not a bad guy. I just can't stand hecklers. I've got all-new material, ready for set two?

Stephen looks at Renee, slowly shaking his head. Renee holds a finger up, silencing her friends.

RENEE

Yeah, absolutely! You get set up and we'll be right out!

JACK/ALLEN (O.S.)

Oh really? Awesome! You guys are gonna love my second set! I've got an impression that'll Blow. You. Away. Metaphorically, of course. Poor choice of words. My bad.

Jack/Allen's footsteps disappear in the distance. Paul groans.

PAUL

(whispering)
Hopefully he'll pop my head next.

RENEE

(whispering)
Here's the plan: we walk out towards the living room and, on my signal, we sprint for the door. Got it?

Stephen and Paul both nod. The three stand up and walk in one huddled mass out of the laundry room.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The huddled mass of friends slowly walk towards the living room. Jack/Allen is distracted and nervously talking through his set. Renee breaks off and sprints to the door.

PAUL

What the fuck, Renee! Where's the signal!?

Paul and Stephen frantically follow behind her. They stop at the door, boarded shut with two-by-fours.

RENEE

WHERE THE FUCK DID HE GET THE
BOARDS?!?

Renee frantically pulls at the boards to no avail. Stephen starts pulling at his hair. Paul dejectedly walks to the couch.

JACK/ALLEN

What can I say? Every comedian loves a captive audience. C'mon, sit down!

Renee and Stephen join Paul on the splattered couch. Jack/Allen snaps his spotlight back on.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

Thanks for comin' back for my second set, everybody. Sorry, I couldn't get the stains out. Who's ready to laugh??

Silence.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: ANOTHER THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Jack/Allen is holding a rubber chicken. Paul is staring at Zainab's corpse. Renee is staring intently at an open window.

JACK/ALLEN

O-okay, I thought it'd be funny if I explained to you who Gorbachev was, I was wrong. Gimme one last joke.

Jack/Allen wipes the sweat from his forehead.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

I was at this sushi joint the other day and I thought, "What would happen if Michael Jackson was eatin' sushi?" Well, I think it'd go a little somethin' like this.

Jack/Allen turns away from his audience to get into character. Stephen comes out of his daze, sits up, and clears his throat.

STEPHEN

Um, Mr. Jack?

Jack/Allen spins around, he's in the middle of blotching cocoa powder on his face.

JACK/ALLEN
Kid, you don't just interrupt
someone's set. Especially when he's
getting into character.

STEPHEN
I'm sorry, but I just wanted to know
what happened to you, like, how you
died...

JACK/ALLEN
Oh. Really? I had this whole bit
where Michael Jackson sends the sushi
back, and he moon walks to the
kitchen-

RENEE
Yeah, we just... want to know more
about you!

Renee elbows Paul.

PAUL
It'll help us understand your sense
of humor better... or whatever.

JACK/ALLEN
I mean, it's not really a funny
story, but alright. I quit my
bullshit 9 to 5 job to be a standup.
It wasn't goin' so great, I never
even got a single laugh. One night, I
came home to find an eviction notice
on my door. So I grabbed an extension
cord, tied it to my ceiling fan and
the other end to my neck...

As Jack explains this his body floats in the air and he
mimes his actions.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)
Then BAM!

Jack/Allen falls to the ground with a harsh **THUD**.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)
The whole fuckin' thing comes right
outta the ceiling and hits me in the
head on my way down.

Paul lets out a guffaw, Jack/Allen shoots him an angry look.

PAUL
Sorry...

Jack/Allen stands back up and straightens his clothes.

JACK/ALLEN

So then I try the toaster in the bathtub bit.

Jack/Allen mimes dropping a toaster and **SHAKES** violently. Renee lets out a chuckle.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

All that did was blow a fuse. And the damndest thing, as I was steppin' outta the tub to reset the fusebox, I slipped on the wet floor and CRACK-

Jack/Allen does a huge pratfall. His neck unnaturally **SNAPS** backwards. Paul laughs.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

Snapped my own damn neck right in that bathroom on my old tub. I couldn't even kill myself right!

Stephen joins in on the laughter. Jack/Allen perks up when he sees everyone laughing.

JACK/ALLEN (cont'd)

Jeez you all are some sick fucks, you know that? I give you my best material and get nothin', but when I talk about snappin' my neck, you go crazy. You all are goin' to hell. Might not be tonight, but you're on your way. Trust me!

Everyone laughs harder. Jack/Allen starts to **GLOW**, light emanates from his mouth, eyes, and ears. Everyone slowly stops. JACK'S SPIRIT separates itself from Allen and floats towards a **WHITE LIGHT**. Allen crumples to the floor.

JACK

Holy shit! It's happening! Is this heaven? It's so beautiful-

The white light fades and SHADOW FIGURES stretch out from the ground. They grab at the spirit, **RIPPING** at parts of it.

JACK (cont'd)

Wait wait, NO! This wasn't supposed to happen! Was it cuz I killed that lady? It was an accident! Guys, you can vouch for me, right? PLEASE!

The shadow figures **TEAR** the spirit to shreds and fade away. Renee, Stephen, and Paul sit motionless for a moment, wide eyed.

PAUL
So hell exists? A-and so does heaven?

RENEE
And *Ghost* was right? That's what happens when you go to hell?

Paul snaps his fingers and gasps.

PAUL
That's why it all felt so familiar!
"You're dead, Willie!"

Stephen snaps out of it and kneels down to Allen.

STEPHEN
Wake up, Allen! Please don't be dead too!

Allen sits up with the help of Stephen, rubbing his neck.

ALLEN
What happened? Is the spirit gone?

STEPHEN
Yeah. And a couple of things: heaven and hell are real, Jack should've gotten into physical comedy rather than standup,

Renee and Paul nod emphatically.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
and...
(really fast)
Zainab's head exploded all over the place.

Allen snaps out of his daze and looks around his living room and the corpse next to him.

ALLEN
Oh my God!

Beat.

ALLEN (cont'd)
My couch!

END