Horror audiobook scripts

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The North Bedroom

Gothic · Adult (25-40) · Neutral British · 90 seconds

There were eleven bedrooms at Thornmere Hall, and on my first night Mrs. Garrow showed me ten of them.

She walked ahead of me with the lamp, naming each door the way one might name the dead. The Blue Room. The Admiral's Room. The nursery, where I was to sleep beside my pupil. At the end of the north corridor she stopped before a door painted the same grey as the wall, as though someone had hoped it might be overlooked.

"And this one?" I asked.

"That one is not in use, Miss Vane."

"Is it damp?"

"It is not in use." She turned the lamp away, and the door went back into the dark. "The master asks very little of his staff. He asks that the fires are lit by six, that the child is kept to her lessons, and that nobody goes into the north bedroom. I have kept this house for thirty years on those three rules."

"And if the child should go in?"

Mrs. Garrow looked at me then, properly, for the first time since the carriage.

"The child," she said, "has more sense than to try."

I ought to have asked what she meant. Instead I thanked her, and went to bed, and lay awake listening to the house settle around me like something making itself comfortable.

A little after two, from the far end of the north corridor, I heard a door being unlocked. Not opened. Unlocked. From the inside.

Nothing Wrong with the House

Psychological, unreliable narrator · Adult (40–55) · Neutral American · 1 minute

I want to be clear that there is nothing wrong with the house. My wife will tell you otherwise, but my wife has not been sleeping.

It is a good house. Solid. I check it every night, the way any responsible man would. Front door, back door, cellar door. Then the windows, all fourteen. Then the doors again, because a lock can slip.

"Daniel," she said this morning. "You were up until four."

"I was making sure."

"Of what?"

"That we're alone in here."

She set her coffee down very carefully. "And are we?"

I laughed, because it was such a strange thing to ask. Of course we are. I have counted. Two of us, fourteen windows, three doors.

Four doors.

There were three doors when we moved in. I am almost certain of that. But I checked four last night, and the fourth one was warm.

The Stairs Have Thirteen

Haunted house · Any · Neutral American · 45 seconds

Every night Posy counted the stairs on her way up to bed, and every night there were twelve. Tonight there were thirteen.

She stood at the top in her socks and looked back down.

"Mom? How many stairs do we have?"

"Twelve, sweetheart. Teeth, please."

"I counted thirteen."

"Then you counted one twice."

Posy did not think so. She was seven, and extremely good at counting. She went down again, one hand on the rail. One. Two. Three. All the way to twelve, and the hallway floor.

Then she turned around and counted going up.

Thirteen.

The new one was near the middle. It was a little darker than the others. And when she stepped on it, very gently, it breathed in.

Harvest Home at Cold Ashby

Folk horror · Adult (30-45) · Neutral British · 90 seconds

They were so kind to me in Cold Ashby that it took me three days to notice nobody had asked how long I was staying.

I had come to photograph the church. That was all. A week's work, a room above the pub, home by Sunday. But the landlady brought my breakfast herself, and the butcher would not take my money, and on the third morning a girl of about nine handed me a crown made of barley over the garden wall.

"That's for you," she said. "For Saturday."

"What happens on Saturday?"

"Harvest Home." She looked at me as if I were slow. "You're the guest."

I asked the landlady about it that evening. She was polishing glasses, and she did not stop.

"Oh, it's only a bit of fun, my love. A supper, a walk up to the top field. We've done it since before the church."

"And there's always a guest?"

"Every year."

"Who was it last year?"

Her cloth went round the glass once, twice, three times.

"A gentleman from the city," she said. "Lovely manners. He was writing a book about

hedgerows."

"Did he finish it?"

She held the glass to the light, found it clean, and smiled at me with real warmth, which was the worst part.

"Eat your supper while it's hot," she said. "We like our guests well fed."

I went up to pack. My car keys were not where I had left them. The barley crown was. Someone had set it on my pillow.

The Survey of Trench Nine

Cosmic horror · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

On the fourth day of the survey, the sonar found a wall at the bottom of the trench. On the fifth day, the wall had moved.

"It's drift," Okafor said. "The instrument's drifting."

"By two hundred meters?"

"Then it's a rock face and we mapped it wrong yesterday."

I put both scans on the screen, side by side. Same shape. Same long curve, smooth as the inside of a bowl. Same seam running down the middle.

Only today the seam was wider.

Okafor leaned in. I watched him work it out, the way I had worked it out an hour before, alone, with my coffee going cold.

"That's not a wall," he said.

"No."

"Walls don't have a seam like that."

"No."

He sat down slowly. Six miles of black water under the hull, and neither of us said the word.

It was Okafor who finally asked the practical question.

"Which way," he said, "is it looking?"

Something Under the Dock

Creature · Mature (55+) · Southern US · 1 minute

Folks around Bayou Tallis will tell you there is nothing under the Pruitt dock but mud and catfish. Folks around here are very polite.

The new deputy came by on a Thursday, notebook out, real earnest.

"Mr. Landry, I've got three boats reported missing off this dock since June."

"Four," I said. "Hollis never reported his."

"You know what's taking them?"

"I know what I'd do. I'd quit tying boats to it."

He walked out to the end of the planks anyway. Young men do. The water was flat and brown and still as a plate.

"Looks peaceful," he said.

"It is. That's how you know. You hear any frogs, son?"

He listened. I watched his face change.

"No, sir."

"Any crickets? Birds?"

"No, sir."

"Forty years I've lived here, and everything with legs learned to keep quiet by that dock." I held out my hand. "Now come on back. Slow. It likes a hurry."

Welcome to Marrow Creek

Small-town · Young adult (18-25) · Midwestern US · 1 minute

The sign said Welcome to Marrow Creek, population 412, and somebody had painted over the last number so many times the paint stood out like a scab.

I only stopped for coffee. The diner was full, and every single person in it looked up when the bell rang, and every single one of them smiled.

"Sit anywhere, hon," the waitress said. "You passing through?"

"Just till my car cools down."

"Oh, they all say that." She poured without asking. "Cream?"

"Please. What's with the sign? The population?"

"We like to keep it accurate." She set the pot down. "Somebody comes, we add one. Somebody goes, well. Nobody goes."

I laughed. She didn't.

Behind her, a man in a seed cap got up from the counter, walked out to the road with a little can of white paint, and stood looking at my car.

"Four thirteen," the waitress said softly. "Has a nice ring to it."

Letters from Skerra

Epistolary, letters · Adult (25-40) · Scottish · 1 minute

Dear Morag. I have been on Skerra a month now, and I must tell you something about the children, though I know how it will sound.

There are nine pupils in my schoolroom. I have a register with nine names in it. I have nine slates, and nine pegs for nine coats.

Every morning I count ten heads.

I count again and there are nine, and nobody has moved. The children do not seem troubled. When I asked wee Isla who sits at the end of the back bench, she said, "Nobody, miss," in the careful voice of a child who has been told what to say.

I know you will write back that I am tired, and that it is the wind, and the dark coming in at three. I have told myself the same.

But I set out ten slates this morning, Morag, just to see.

And at four o'clock, all ten had been written on.

Day Nine on the Ridge

Survival · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

On day nine, Wren stopped asking how far it was to the road and started asking how long the thing behind us had been keeping pace.

"Since the river," I said.

"You knew?"

"I didn't want to scare you."

"I'm scared now, so good job." She tightened her pack. "Is it a bear?"

"Bears don't stop when we stop."

We both listened. Wind in the pines. Our own breathing. And far back, a branch settling under a weight that was being very careful.

"Okay," Wren said. "New rule. We don't run, we don't split up, and we keep the fire going all night."

"We have four matches."

"Then we have four nights," she said, and started walking.

The Woman on the Back Stairs

Ghost story · Mature (55+) · Irish · 1 minute

My grandmother had one rule about the back stairs, and it was not the rule you would expect. She never told us to stay off them. She told us to say good evening.

"To who, Nana?"

"To herself. The woman who stands on the turn."

"There's no woman on the turn."

"There is, pet. You're only not looking right." She went on buttering bread, calm as you like. "She was here before the house was ours and she'll be here after. She does no harm. But she was a housekeeper once, and she minds her manners, and she likes them minded back."

"And if I forget?"

"Then she'll follow you up to remind you."

I laughed at her, of course. I was ten, and I knew everything.

That night I ran up the back stairs without a word.

At the top I heard it. One step on the bare wood behind me. Then another. Patient as a clock.

"Good evening," I whispered.

It stopped.

My Roommate Is Probably a Vampire

Horror-comedy · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 1 minute

I'm not saying my new roommate is a vampire. I'm saying the listing said "night owl, quiet, no garlic in shared spaces," and I should have asked a follow-up question.

"Corvin," I say. "House meeting."

"It is two in the afternoon." His voice comes from under the door. "I am indisposed."

"There's a coffin in the hall closet."

"It is a storage solution."

"It has a pillow in it."

"For the storage."

"You don't show up in the bathroom mirror, Corvin."

A long pause. "That mirror is very old."

"I bought it Tuesday."

Another pause. I hear him sigh, the sigh of a man who has been having this conversation for four hundred years.

"I pay rent on time," he says. "I do not touch your groceries. I have never once brought anyone home."

Honestly? Best roommate I've ever had.

"Fine," I say. "But we're splitting the electric, and you're on dishes."

"I do not eat."

"You're on dishes, Corvin."

The Orchard in August

Quiet literary horror · Mature (55+) · Neutral American · 90 seconds

Every August my husband walks out to the orchard at dusk to check the trees, and every August I let him. He has been dead for six years.

I do not mean that I see a ghost. I want to be exact about this. A ghost would be pale, I think, or cold. Walter does none of that. He comes around the side of the barn in his brown jacket with the torn pocket, and he walks the rows the way he always did, one hand out, touching each trunk as he passes.

He never turns toward the house.

The first year, I ran out to him. I am not ashamed of that. I ran in my slippers across the wet grass, and when I reached the first row there was nobody there, only the apples and the smell of them.

So now I sit on the porch and I watch. It lasts about as long as it takes the light to go.

I used to think he came back because he missed the orchard. Then I thought, perhaps he missed me.

This year I counted the rows as he walked them. There are fourteen. He walked fifteen.

And at the end of the fifteenth, where there has never been a tree, he stopped, and for the first time in six years my husband turned and looked at the house.

He was not looking at me. He was looking at the window above me.

The Tenant Before You

Psychological · Any · Neutral American · 30 seconds

The tenant before you left three things in the apartment. A lamp, a kettle, and a note taped inside the bedroom closet.

You only find the note in the second week. It is in pencil, small and neat.

It says: It only knocks if you answer. Do not answer.

You laugh. You show it to nobody. You put it in a drawer.

That night, a little after one, something taps politely on the inside of the closet door.

And you hear yourself say, "Hello?"

The Voice in the Well

Folk horror · Adult (40–55) · Irish · 45 seconds

There is a well on my uncle's farm that will answer you, and the first thing he taught me was never to ask it a question.

"You can say hello to it," he said. "You can tell it the weather. It likes the weather."

"And what if I ask it something?"

"Then it'll tell you. That's the trouble."

"Tell me what?"

"The truth, Declan. Every time. And you'd be surprised how little of that a man can stand."

I was twelve. I waited until he had gone in for his tea. Then I leaned over the cold stone and asked the only thing I wanted to know.

The well took its time.

Then, in my own voice, it told me a date.

The Night Watchman's Log

Epistolary, diary · Mature (55+) · Neutral British · 45 seconds

Night log, Harrow Street Museum. Tuesday. All quiet. Gallery Four lights left on again. Switched off.

Wednesday. All quiet. Gallery Four lights on. Switched off. Have spoken to the cleaners.

Thursday. The cleaners do not go into Gallery Four. Nobody has told me why.

Friday. Lights on. Also, the figure in the diving suit has been moved nearer the door. I assume by day staff. Have left a note.

Saturday. Day staff say nobody has touched it since 1974.

Sunday. It is at the door now. I have locked Gallery Four and I am writing this at the front desk, where I can see the whole corridor.

Monday. Lights on in the corridor.

I did not switch them on.

The Star That Wasn't on the Chart

Cosmic horror · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

At 2:14 in the morning, a star appeared where there had never been a star, and by 2:20 Dr. Imani Reyes had worked out that it was not getting brighter. It was getting closer.

"Run it again," said Halvorsen.

"I ran it four times."

"Then the software is wrong."

"The software is fine. Look at the others."

He looked. Around the new light, the old stars were going out. Not fading. Going out, one by one, in a neat ring, like candles being covered.

"Something's in front of them," he said.

"Yes."

"Something big."

"Yes."

Halvorsen took off his glasses. He had waited his whole life to find something.

"Imani," he said quietly. "Turn the telescope off. I don't think we should be seen looking."

Room Nine Is Not for Rent

Haunted house · Adult (40-55) · Southern US · 1 minute

I have run the Magnolia Rest for twenty-two years, and I will rent you any room in it but number nine. Don't take it personal. Nine is already occupied.

"By who?" the man at my desk wants to know. He's got a convention badge and a wet umbrella, and every other bed in the county is taken.

"By Miss Odalie."

"Can I speak to her? Maybe she'd share."

"Sugar, she passed in 1958."

He laughs. They always laugh. "Ma'am, I don't believe in ghosts."

"That's fine. She doesn't much believe in salesmen." I slide the register back toward me. "She keeps it tidy, she pays me no mind, and twice she's shut a window ahead of a storm. I've had worse guests with a pulse."

"I'll pay double."

"The last fella paid triple."

"And?"

"And he checked out at two in the morning in his socks." I hand him a pillow. "The lobby sofa's real comfortable. She never comes down here."

The Straw Bride

Folk horror · Adult (30-45) · Scottish · 1 minute

On the last night of harvest, the women of Glen Varrich dressed a figure of straw in a wedding veil and stood her at the edge of the barley. By morning, she was always facing the village.

"The wind turns her," said the minister, who was new.

"Aye," said old Tam Rennie. "Every year. The same wind."

"You don't believe that."

"I believe we set her looking at the hill, Mr. Soutar, and we find her looking at us. I believe that, because I've seen it sixty times."

"And what is she looking for?"

Tam filled his pipe. He took a long while about it.

"She's a bride," he said. "What d'you think she's looking for?"

The minister laughed, and walked home, and locked his door, which he had never done before.

In the morning the straw bride stood in the lane outside the manse. Her veil was wet with dew. She had her back to the village now.

She was facing his door.

Tracks in the Flour

Creature · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

My grandfather's trick was to sprinkle flour on the cellar steps, so you could see what came up in the night.

For thirty years it was mice. Sometimes a raccoon.

I did it once myself, the winter after he died, mostly to feel close to him.

In the morning there were tracks on every step. They were long, and narrow, and they had too many toes.

And they only went one way.

Up.

Nobody Leaves Wirra Flat

Small-town · Adult (25-40) · Australian · 1 minute

The bloke at the roadhouse filled my tank, checked my oil, and told me very pleasantly that I would not be leaving Wirra Flat tonight.

"Road's closed, mate."

"There's no sign."

"Don't need one. Everyone knows."

"Closed for what? Flood? Fire?"

"Dusk." He hung up the nozzle. "Nobody drives the flat road after dusk. Not for sixty years."

"Why not?"

He looked out at the highway, dead straight to the horizon and going pink at the edges.

"Because it's longer at night."

I laughed. He let me. Then he walked me round to the back wall, where somebody had nailed up number plates, dozens of them, three and four deep, from every state in the country.

"They all laughed," he said. "Pub's got a bed. Stew's on at six."

I drove out anyway. I am not proud of it.

That was eleven hours ago. The roadhouse is still in my mirror.

The Portrait Is Smiling

Gothic · Adult (40–55) · Neutral British · 45 seconds

I inherited the house, the debts, and the portrait of my great-aunt Cordelia, who had never smiled in her life and was most certainly smiling now.

"Fenwick," I said. "Has someone cleaned the painting?"

"No, sir."

"Retouched it?"

"No, sir. It does that."

"It does what?"

"Smiles, sir. When there is to be a death in the family." My butler adjusted a candlestick by half an inch. "It smiled the spring your uncle went. And for your father."

I stared up at her. Thin lips, curved like a hook.

"Fenwick. I am the last of the family."

"Yes, sir," he said gently. "I had noticed that. Will you be wanting dinner?"

A Poltergeist's Guide to Roommates

Horror-comedy · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

I have haunted this house for ninety years, and I would like it noted that I was very good at it until the Hendersons moved in.

I started small. I always do. Cold spot on the stairs.

"Ooh," said the wife. "Feel that? We'll save a fortune on air conditioning."

Fine. I slammed every door on the second floor at midnight.

"Draft," said the husband, and went back to sleep.

I wrote GET OUT on the bathroom mirror, in the steam, in my best dripping capitals.

"Honey?" she called. "The ghost can spell. That's a good school district."

I am not proud of what I did next. I appeared. Full figure, top of the stairs, hollow eyes, the works.

Their teenager looked up from her phone.

"Oh, hey," she said. "Are you the one who keeps closing my door? Thank you. Nobody else in this house knocks."

Ninety years. And that, I am sorry to say, is how I got a best friend.

Cold Spot

Ghost story · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

There is a cold spot in my kitchen, about the size of a person, and it stands by the stove every morning.

I have stopped being afraid of it. You can get used to anything.

I walk around it. I say excuse me. Once, feeling silly, I poured two cups of coffee and left one out.

When I came back, the cup was still full.

But it was cold all the way through, and it had been turned so the handle faced the other way.

Forty Below

Survival · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 90 seconds

The rule at Corrie Ridge Station was simple. In a whiteout you do not open the outer door for anyone, because everyone who is supposed to be inside already is.

There were six of us that winter. I counted six in the mess. Then the radio crackled.

"Base, this is Petrov. I'm at the door. Let me in."

I looked across the table. Petrov was sitting right there, spoon halfway to his mouth.

It was Lindqvist who picked up the handset, because Lindqvist never rattled.

"Say again?"

"It's Petrov. I'm at the outer door. It's forty below out here, Anna, come on."

"Petrov is in the mess."

A pause. Wind on the line.

"No," the voice said. "I'm not."

We all looked at him then. The man at our table. He set the spoon down very slowly.

"That isn't me," he said. "You know that isn't me. I've been here all night."

"Has he?" Lindqvist asked the room. "Did anyone actually see him come in?"

I tried to remember. I remembered the door banging, the cold, somebody stamping snow off their boots. I did not remember a face.

Outside, something knocked three times on the steel. Patient. Almost polite.

"Anna," said the radio. "Please."

"Anna," said the man at the table, in exactly the same voice. "Don't."

Lindqvist looked at the door. She looked at him. Then she took the key off its hook and put it in her pocket.

"Nobody opens anything," she said. "And nobody sleeps."

My Sister's Voice

Psychological · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 1 minute

My sister called me at midnight to say she was scared, which would have been fine, except my sister was asleep on my couch.

I could see her from the kitchen. Blanket, one sock, mouth open.

"Jo?" I whispered into the phone.

"Mel, thank God. Where are you?"

"Home. Where are you?"

"Outside your building. I've been buzzing for ten minutes. Why won't you let me in?"

On the couch, my sister rolled over.

"Jo, you got here at eight. We had pasta. You fell asleep during the movie."

Silence. Then, very small: "Mel. I just got off the train."

"That's not funny."

"I'm not being funny. Who's in your apartment?"

I didn't answer. The breathing from the couch had stopped, the way breathing stops when someone is listening.

"Mel?" said the phone.

"Mel?" said the couch.

Same voice. Same worried little rise at the end.

I had about one second to decide which one I believed.

The Quiet Neighbour

Psychological, suburban · Adult (40-55) · Neutral British · 1 minute

Mr. Pell from number six had lived on Larch Close for nineteen years, and in all that time nobody could remember him raising his voice. That, Diane would say afterwards, was what should have warned them.

"Lovely evening," she said over the hedge.

"Yes."

"We've been meaning to ask. You haven't seen our post, have you? Only three parcels have gone astray."

"No."

"And someone has been in the shed. Moved things about. Silly, really."

Mr. Pell went on clipping. Snip. Snip.

"Your husband works nights," he said. "Tuesdays and Thursdays. He leaves at ten to nine."

Diane laughed, a little too high. "Goodness. You are observant."

"The back door sticks. You have to lift it." He closed the shears and looked at her at last, mild as milk. "You should have that seen to, Mrs. Hart. Anybody could get in."

"Yes," she said. "Yes, I will."

"No hurry," said Mr. Pell. "I'm in no hurry at all."

The Staircase at Low Water

Quiet literary horror · Adult (40–55) · Neutral British · 1 minute

The tide at Morrow Sands went out a little further every day that autumn, and nobody mentioned it, the way nobody mentions a neighbour's drinking.

I kept a notebook. I am that sort of man. On the first of October the water stopped at the old breakwater. By the tenth it had left the wreck of the fishing boat dry for the first time in my life. By the twentieth I could walk for half an hour over wet sand and still not reach the sea.

It came back in each evening, of course. Only not quite all the way.

On the last day of the month I walked out at dawn, further than I had ever been, and found steps. Stone steps, cut square, going down into the sand. They were worn in the middle, as steps are when they have been used for a very long time.

There was no weed on them. That is what I keep returning to.

Something had been keeping them clean.

Tilly's New Friend

Ghost story · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

My daughter was five when she told me her new friend lived in the wall, and I said that was nice, because that is what you say.

"His name is Mr. Button," Tilly said. "He's old."

"Old like Grandpa?"

"Older. He says the house used to have a different kitchen."

It did, actually. We had the plans. I had never shown them to her.

"What else does Mr. Button say?"

"He says I'm his favorite. He says the last little girl grew up and it was very rude." She colored for a while, tongue between her teeth. "He doesn't like you, though."

"Me? Why not?"

"You painted over his door."

"Honey, there's no door in your room."

"Not anymore." She held up her drawing. A tall thin shape, and beside it a small one, holding hands. "It's okay, Mommy. He says he made a new one."

She pointed, with her purple crayon, at the wall behind my chair.

The Thing in the Grain Elevator

Creature · Adult (25-40) · Midwestern US · 1 minute

There's a rule at the Hadley Co-op that you do not go up the old elevator after dark, and I had always figured it was about insurance.

"It's not insurance," Gus said.

"Then what is it?"

"You ever notice we got no pigeons?"

I thought about it. Every elevator in the county was white with pigeons. Ours was clean as a church.

"So we got a hawk."

"Sure. A hawk." Gus zipped his coat. "A hawk that took a forty-pound sack of feed up a ladder last March. I found the sack on the top catwalk, Cal. Opened real neat. Like with fingers."

"Raccoons have fingers."

"Raccoons don't put the sack back on the pallet when they're done."

We stood there in the yard. The wind dropped. Way up in the dark, something shifted its weight, and a little thread of grain dust came sifting down between us.

Gus didn't look up.

"See, that's the thing," he said. "It's tidy."

Voicemail, 3:07 A.M.

Epistolary, voicemail · Any · Neutral American · 30 seconds

You have one new message. Received today at 3:07 a.m.

Hey, it's me. Sorry, I know it's late. I'm standing outside your house and all your lights are on, so I figured you were up.

Weird thing, though. I can see you in the kitchen window. You're waving.

And you just texted me that you're out of town until Friday.

So I'm going to stay in the car. And you should probably call me back. And maybe don't come home.

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