

DEMONS

Written by

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Based on a True Story

FADE IN:

INT. ST. PETE COMMUNITY CENTER CLASSROOM - DAY

High school students take a literacy test. Ms. DANIELLE HARKINS (35), light brown hair, wearing professional clothing, walks up and down the rows of students.

STEVEN CHANTALIMA (17), a tall, lanky boy with black hair, taps the table with his pencil, shakes his leg, and looks up at Ms. Harkins nervously.

Ms. Harkins leans into one student's ear a few rows in front of Steven and whispers something out of his earshot.

Steven looks confused and makes eye contact with Ms. Harkins as she continues walking. He quickly averts his eyes.

Ms. Harkins walks up to him and leans over his shoulder.

MS. HARKINS

Stay after class, Steven.

She continues walking backwards and does not make eye contact with him again. He looks concerned.

INT. STEVEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Steven walks through the front door quickly and shuts it behind him. He carries a bike helmet in his hand. STEVEN'S MOM (45) is in the kitchen.

STEVEN'S MOM (O.S.)

Steven?

STEVEN'S

Yeah mom.

She walks into the foyer wiping her flour-doused hands against her plaid apron.

STEVEN'S MOM (O.S.)

You're home so late.

Steven does not stop to talk. He walks quickly around the foyer grabbing a lighter, a jacket, and a water bottle.

STEVEN

Yeah, Ms. Harkins wanted us to stay after the test today.

STEVEN'S MOM

Steven! You got in trouble again?

STEVEN

No, no. It was about honor roll or something.

Steven's mom has a look of surprise.

STEVEN'S MOM

Oh! My son got on the honor roll, huh?

She gives him a hug and kiss as he squirms out of her arms.

STEVEN

Yeah, yeah, mom, it's whatever.

He runs towards the door.

STEVEN'S MOM

Wait, wait, where you going? I just made dinner! Chicken quesadillas! Your favorite!

STEVEN

Sorry mom, sleeping over at Jonathan's today.

STEVEN'S MOM

Oh okay, be safe.

STEVEN

Okay gotta go! He's waiting outside.

Steven opens the door.

EXT. STEVEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Steven walks down the steps of his porch towards JONATHAN SHEN (16), a short brunette boy wearing a bike helmet and standing next to his bike.

JONATHAN

Damn, what took you so long boy?

STEVEN

You know, my mom.

JONATHAN

I knew your mom last night.

STEVEN
Shut up, idiot.

JONATHAN
Just playing.

STEVEN
You really think we should go to this thing? Something about it just feels off. I've never seen Ms. Harkins outside of school.

JONATHAN
I mean, sounds like she wants to help us? She wants to get rid of our demons or something? I don't even know I could barely pay attention because of that tank top she was wearing.

STEVEN
You're an idiot.

JONATHAN
Did you bring the lighter like she said?

Steven holds up the lighter.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Good. Let's go play with spirits or whatever.

They snicker and jump on their bikes.

INT. STEVEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Steven's mom takes a tray of cookies out of the oven and places them on the stovetop. She pulls off her mitten and looks perturbed for a moment.

She pulls out her phone and calls JONATHAN'S MOM, placing the phone up to her ear. After a few moments, she picks up.

STEVEN'S MOM
Hey Cindy, how are you?
(beat)
Good, good, I'm actually calling to ask about Steven...
(beat)
Yeah he said he was sleeping over with Jonathan tonight?
(beat)
(MORE)

STEVEN'S MOM (CONT'D)

Bible study with Ms. Harkins?

(beat)

That's not at all what he said to me.

(beat)

Mhm mhm. Yeah, I think she only recently took interest in religion.

(beat)

Very odd...Cindy, let me call you back. I'm going to try to call Steven.

She hangs up the phone and calls Steven.

EXT. PARK NEAR ST. PETERSBURG PIER - NIGHT

Steven's phone buzzes and lights up in his cargo shorts pocket and he ignores it. He and Jonathan walk alongside their bikes on the grass into the park towards a small fire blazing in the distance.

They approach the fire where Ms. Harkins and 5 students (4 boys, 1 girl) are standing around and chanting in Latin. They all hold small books open with Christian crosses visible on the cover.

STUDENTS

Sancte Michael Archangele, defende nos in proelio; contra nequitiam et insidias diaboli esto praesidium.

Jonathan and Steven look at each other with wide eyes, concerned. Ms. Harkins looks up at the two new students.

MS. HARKINS

You're finally here! Grab a book.

She hands them each a small book.

MS. HARKINS (CONT'D)

Page 47. Read along.

STUDENTS

Imperet illi Deus, supplices deprecamur: tuque, Princeps militiae caelestis, in virtute Dei...

The five students and Ms. Harkins walk around the fire in a circle as they chant. They wave their arms in strange ways. Steven looks skeptical but follows suit.

They all stop moving and stare at the fire.

MS. HARKINS

Now...

She pulls a knife out of her satchel. She walks over to a boy across the fire from Steven.

MS. HARKINS (CONT'D)

Daniel. You have demons coursing through your veins. Everyone come look.

She points to his blue veins on his wrists, jumping to the rhythm of his heart beat.

MS. HARKINS (CONT'D)

You can see the demons pulsing. Feeling our presence. Screaming to get out.

(to Daniel)

Daniel, hold out your arm so we can release these evil spirits forever.

Daniel reluctantly holds out his arm and places it in her hand. With the knife-wielding hand, she slowly touches the tip of the blade to his forearm and drags down, releasing blood.

Daniel gasps in pain.

MS. HARKINS (CONT'D)

Shhh, Daniel. Let them go. Release your demons.

Daniel sheds a tear.

MS. HARKINS (CONT'D)

(to Steven)

Did you bring the lighter like I told you?

Steven slowly hands her the lighter. She places it under a house key and sets it on fire for a few seconds.

She slowly presses the key to Daniel's wound as he squirms and yells in pain.

MS. HARKINS (CONT'D)

Shhh. We're closing the entrance. They won't be able to get back in.

As Daniel yells, Steven looks away and the fire is reflected in his eyes.

INT. STEVEN'S MOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Steven's mom drives around town, craning her neck to search for Steven. She makes several turns and pulls into a gas station.

She looks dejected and upset, seeing the 10 calls on her phone that Steven has not picked up for the past hour. She eats a cookie - the ones she made earlier that night.

Suddenly, she sees black smoke above a rooftop.

EXT. STEVEN'S MOM'S CAR, GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

She gets out of her car and smells the air. She squints and sees a small glowing fire in the distance emitting this black smoke.

She gasps and immediately runs back to her car.

EXT. PARK NEAR ST. PETERSBURG PIER - NIGHT

The seven students and teacher still stand around the fire. Daniel clutches his arm where he was cut and burned. The other students look petrified.

Ms. Harkins walks around the fire within the circle of students, intently looking at each, searching for her next victim.

She holds out the knife to REBECCA, a ginger girl with freckles and bright green eyes.

MS. HARKINS
Rebecca. Cut Thomas.

REBECCA
What?

MS. HARKINS
Cut. Thomas.

Rebecca's hands tremble as she grabs onto the knife. She looks at THOMAS, a boy with blonde hair and blue eyes, who stands a couple students away from her.

Rebecca grabs Thomas's arm as he pulls away.

THOMAS
No, please.

MS. HARKINS

Thomas, you must. Give her your arm.

Thomas reaches out his arm once again. Rebecca pierces the skin on his forearm and looks away, teary eyed.

Thomas yells in pain. Blood dripps onto the ground, inches away from the fire.

MS. HARKINS (CONT'D)

Good, Rebecca.

(to Thomas)

I have something that will help.

She grabs a perfume bottle out of satchel and sprays Thomas's wound. He winces. She grabs the lighter and sets his wound aflame.

He yells in extreme agony. Rebecca screams in terror. Other students cry.

STEVEN

Stop! You're hurting him!

Ms. Harkins ignores the yells and instead holds the bloody knife to Steven.

MS. HARKINS

Everyone has a turn.

(beat)

Cut Jonathan.

Steven looks at Jonathan and stares him in the eyes, feeling hopeless. Both of their eyes are wide, and the fire reflects in their pupils.

Jonathan stretches out his left arm.

STEVEN

Are you all completely crazy?! I can't do that! Jonathan is my best friend.

MS. HARKINS

The longer you wait, the more the demons take over his body. Look at the fear in his eyes. The demons are coursing through him! Cut him now!

JONATHAN

Come on, Steven. Do it.

Steven lets out a tear.

STEVEN
Please, I can't, please...

Suddenly, a distant shriek sounds from the other side of the park.

STEVEN'S MOM
STEVEN!

Ms. Harkin's eyes go wide and her skin goes pale.

Steven's mom stands right outside of her car with the car door still open. She runs towards the group of students and Ms. Harkins.

STEVEN
Mom!

Jonathan drops the knife to the ground and runs towards his mom. They embrace in an emotional hug. They both cry.

STEVEN'S MOM
Steven! Oh my goodness, Steven.
What is going on?!

Ms. Harkins stomps out the fire and frantically shoves the knife and lighter into her satchel.

MS. HARKINS
(to students)
All of you, go home, NOW. Don't
tell your parents a single thing.

She takes off running through the park. Steven and his mom watch as she runs.

STEVEN
No! Don't let her get away!

Suddenly, sirens and police lights illuminate the park. Three police cars surround Ms. Harkins.

POLICE
Put your hands up where we can see
them!

She stands in front of the cars dumbfounded. The fire smolders behind her. The students cry and hold each other in fetal position. Steven and his mom embrace on the ground.

INT. AMBULANCE IN PARK PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Steven sits on the edge of the ambulance wearing a thermal blanket around his shoulders. Other students sit in other ambulances with bandages wrapped around their forearms. There are several police cars and sirens.

Steven shares a smile with Jonathan, who sits in an adjacent ambulance with a thermal blanket. Jonathan looks shaken up, but okay.

Steven's mom hugs Steven and kisses his forehead.

STEVEN

Mom, how'd you know?

STEVEN'S MOM

I always know.

STEVEN

But what tipped you off?

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Well, son. You've never gotten above a 70 on a test. Honor roll my ass.

Steven laughs and hugs his mom.

FADE OUT.