

UNICORN BLOOD

Written by Ruby Stephenson

EXT. HORNED HILL - DAY

Mist swathes the hills. Sunlight glows dimly through the grey. A black dot breaks the horizon.

It draws nearer, becoming a girl painted fully black with blood-stained chiffon robes. She pumps her legs with animality. Her eyes are strained, about to burst.

An invisible track pulls her, but it is unclear if it is towards or from something.

INT. ROBYN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Clothes drip from a line into the bathtub. ROBYN (18) sits in the water below. Her face is drawn sharply over her cheekbones; her undereyes purple, bloated and slick.

She gets out the bath slowly. Her room consists of a half shielded bathroom, a curtained single bed, kitchenette, full-length mirror, skinny wooden wardrobe and a shelf with a few books, statues, a CD player and tubes of lipstick.

Through curtains over her bed is a slightly disconcerting painting of a girl with large eyes. The room is painfully white.

She trails her hand inside the wardrobe. Picks a silky cream blouse and a floral skirt. On each finger she places silver rings with animal heads, swirls and silver clumps.

She dabs concealer on her under eyes. Pink eye shadow gently over her lids and brown mascara over the few lashes she hasn't pulled out.

The rings clink while she brushes her teeth. She seems to get lost in it. Until she spits. Blood mixed with foamy white spatters the sink. Robyn looks into the mirror, inspects the source of the blood with her tongue and smiles.

In the mirror, a painting of a river makes her smile drops. She removes her makeup, and puts on a giant army jacket. She grabs a packed bag and rushes out the door.

EXT. OLD MAE'S HOUSE - DAY

Robyn speeds up the side of an old Queenslander. Old Mae's (84) thin frizzy blue-white hair waves out a chipped wooden window.

OLD MAE
Where are you off to?

ROBYN

Out.

OLD MAE

Okay well, Rachel called.

ROBYN

Rachel as in my mother?

OLD MAE

Yes, I suppose so. She said to tell you he's in Groves again.

Robyn sighs.

ROBYN

Since when?

OLD MAE

Last week. You don't have to visit him.

ROBYN

If she didn't want me to she wouldn't have called. It's not like she calls for anything else.

OLD MAE

Don't speak bad of her. Young people, these days. Flaming cunts.

Mae wanders off. Robyn storms up the driveway.

EXT. HORNED HILL ROAD - DAY

Sun shines on tall waving trees. Robyn's feet follow the line of the road's edge. One foot after another.

A black Audi drives past being tail-gated by a beat-up red ute. Speckled kids yell from the windows until they finally overtake it, fifty over the limit.

ROBYN (V.O.)

Horned hill road has been the site of three attempted kidnappings, two fatal crashes and five stolen cars since I moved to Old Mae's shed.

Robyn crosses the road to a bus stop. All the people look up at her. A pudgy middle-aged man stares, trailing his eyes over her. His wife sucks her teeth.

The bus arrives and Robyn gets on last.

INT. BUS - DAY

Robyn stands in the bus's crowded middle. Accidentally making eye contact with a man, she flicks her eyes outside.

ROBYN (V.O.)

My father used to say a person can break in two ways. Physically and mentally. After he came back from the army, he said he only believed in anatomy. Decomposition. How many bits a person's body can become. For my grandfather, it was fifteen.

The bus stops.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Robyn stumbles out before a giant cathedral with 'University' plastered across its front. She squints as the sun appears from behind its turrets and walks away.

ROBYN (V.O.)

During the summer break I took myself on a campus tour to see what I'm choosing to miss.

Robyn walks through an arched corridor.

ROBYN (V.O.)

I discovered a path around behind the library to a garden.

A vine-covered metal gate holds a broken lock. Robyn checks around her before opening it.

EXT. CAMPUS GARDEN - DAY

Inside, rows of planter boxes sit raised from the shaded earth. Robyn walks through them to another gate at the end of the garden. She tries to open it but it doesn't budge.

A chicken coup sits against the wall a bit further down. Two chickens run out squawking as she nears.

Robyn reaches in and chooses an egg. Bounces it from hand to hand. One hand lags behind. The egg falls. Cracks.

Instead of a sunny yolk and clear jelly white, a weird homogeneous brown goop spatters across the grass.

Robyn's face is the picture of shock, horror. Only a slight twitch of her nose breaks the still decay.

A rotten egg.

EXT. UNIVERSITY BUS STOP - DAY

Students talk and move in slow-motion around Robyn sitting alone on the bus stop bench. She watches sunlight coming through a tree over the shelter.

ROBYN (V.O.)

The question of, chicken or egg, is about the nature of being. But what it misses is the nature of things that are. To be, is not the question, but how. Look inside the chicken; look inside the egg. Which one is cleaner?

The bus arrives. Robyn gets a window seat this time and stares out.

INT. BUS - DAY

The bus stops at a crowded station. Through the window Robyn accidentally makes eyes contact with MICHAEL (mid 40s). His jaw recedes so far back he may as well be chinless.

A beer-swollen belly swallows the belt holding his tight beige chinos, although, they likely have no problem staying up. Michael smiles without his eyes at her. A suburban simulacra.

He pretends to crane his neck to the back. Really Michael has planned to sit near the bus back door since being told he could finish work at 2:50pm.

The bus arrives at a school's stop. Michael readjusts his legs, stretching his thighs even wider across the squashed bus seat.

Two GIRLS (13) with eyeliner and skirts rolled up three inches too high hiding vapes in their double A cup bras stand near the doorway of the bus in matching uniforms. Skirts.

One of the girls, MARY, pretty in a dead-end town sort of way, moves closer to him to face her friend. Michael angles his phone upwards, his wallet covering the screen.

Robyn focuses on the little red symbol at the base of his phone. It's a square.

ROBYN
(in disbelief)
You're recording.

MICHAEL
What?

Michael moves his head closer to Robyn's.

ROBYN
You were recording up her skirt. I
saw it.

MICHAEL
I wasn't recording.

ROBYN
Show me your camera roll.

MICHAEL
I don't have to do that.

ROBYN
Show me.

MICHAEL
No.

Michael flashes his lock screen. It's a picture of two baby girls with an edited blank space behind them. Robyn turns away grimacing. She sits as close to the bus wall as she can.

The bus stops at a popular suburban bus stop and the two girls get off along with Michael.

Robyn watches him speed walk away in the opposite direction of the girls. She closes her eyes and leans back.

INT. OLD MAE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Robyn paces back and forth on the home phone. Old Mae sings an offkey version of Don't Stand so Close to Me by The Police that gets lost in the whir of her ancient standmixer.

ROBYN
(into phone)
Hi, yes, I'd like to report an
incident. It happened around four pm.
On a council bus, number 453.
(MORE)

ROBYN (cont'd)
Yes, Shoreditch Greater Area. The man
next to me tried to film up a girls
skirt.

Robyn stands tensed. She taps in time to the clock.

ROBYN (cont'd)
A recording. No, I didn't record it.
I don't usually bring mine with me.

Beat.

Can't you check the bus footage
though? It's obvious what he's doing.

Beat.

Well, he was sitting in the outer
seat. I see. But-- Right. I know
which way he went. I could try and
find where he lives? No? Not to do
that. Well what will you do?

INT. MICHAEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Michael's hands open a jar of baby food and tip it into a
pink-eared bowl. He places the bowl on the tray of a
highchair where small pudgy hands dive into the food.

REMI (2) shoves a mouthful of slop into her mouth. Her curly
blonde hair looks completely different to Michael's dull
brown flecked with grey, punctuated by a bald spot.

The kitchen's chipwood floors and fake marble counters are
doused in a dim yellow glow that flickers occasionally. A
moth hurls itself at it, again, and again. A game show
drones from the TV.

DIAMOND (33) marches through the front door. Her hair is
dyed black and her makeup doesn't quite do the trick. She
moves like she's scared of a shadow that isn't hers.

DIAMOND
You got Lucy's dinner ready hon?

MICHAEL
Yes, yes it's coming.

LUCY (8), with brown pigtails and a cleft palate scar,
trails in behind her. She absentmindedly shuts the door.
Strains on her tiptoes to lock it.

DIAMOND
Did you go to the bottle shop for me?

MICHAEL
Didn't have time.

Lucy shuffles into the kitchen.

LUCY
Daddy, where's my dinner?

MICHAEL
Here, darling.

He places a plate of scrambled eggs on the table.

DIAMOND
You get home from work early Fridays.
It takes five minutes. Five minutes.

MICHAEL
If it takes five minutes, why don't
you go now.

DIAMOND
I guess I will.

Diamond stomps out and slams the door.

LUCY
Why is Mummy angry?

MICHAEL
Mummy doesn't have her wine. Mummy is
being a bitch.

LUCY
What's bitch?

MICHAEL
Don't worry about it Sweetie. Eat
your eggs.

Michael opens his phone to the video. He watches it back and tries to zoom in but all he can see is the hem of Mary's skirt. He huffs and deletes the video then deletes it from permanently deleted.

EXT. HORNEHILL BUS STOP - NIGHT

Streetlights flicker along Hornehill Road. Michael stands in the street and closes his eyes.

He envisions Mary riding a bike in slow-motion down the road. She wobbles slightly.

Her hands roll back and forth over the handlebars and the underpants built into her skirt flash in and out of view as she pedals.

She's smiling at Michael. Her teeth are sharp and small like a cats. Michael's heavy slow breathing reverberates through the night. The hills are silent.

Mary skids the bike to a stop. It crashes to the ground and dissipates into glitter. Splattered like blood on the road.

Mary smiles and holds a thumb to her lower lip. She starts to look a little lopsided. Her left eye droops down. Her mouth slackens. Her nose falls clean off. Like pitch, she drops into a black puddle on the road.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Michael jolts awake to the sound of his alarm. It beeps in a fast staccato. He looks up to the ceiling's yellow-tinged wallpaper.

DIAMOND (O.S.)

Bye Honey.

INT. BUS - DAY

The word honey echoes through Michael's head growing in pitch. Michael looks around.

Turning behind him, he sees a group of girls in uniforms. He checks his watch. They're late for school.

One of them catches him staring and elbows her friends. They stare back. Michael scoffs and puts sunglasses on.

The bus passes a number of billboards:

A girl sitting on a donut near the text 'don't fall in', advertising a mortgage broker.

Three glammed up models holding a phallic shaped perfume bottle with the text 'vitality. youth. seduction.'

'Baby-smooth', a woman's razor claiming to eliminate all traces of body hair.

INT. BACK OF IT SHOP (MICHAEL'S WORK) - DAY

Pop-up advertisements from malware showing prostitutes, drugs and lucky win sites flash one after another.

Michael sits behind a desk framed by metal shelves covered with devices in zip lock bags. SHANNON (41) who definitely has cankles and LAWTON (26) whose off-set jaw keeps his glasses permanently skewed, sit at the same kind of desks with the same clutter.

A bell rings.

SHANNON

Michael. Customer.

Michael looks up from a laptop as pop-ups continue to flare on screen. He pulls himself up and heads to the front of the shop.

INT. FRONT OF IT SHOP - DAY

A stringy, pimply PAUL (19), shifts from foot to foot.

MICHAEL

Hi, what can I do for you?

The boy can't look Michael in the eye.

PAUL

I have, uh, a Malware issue.

MICHAEL

Pop ups?

Paul nods.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Did you click on something?

PAUL

Look man, I don't know what you're getting at. I didn't click on anything it just, I think it was from like a movie site. After I watched Terminator 3, it just...

MICHAEL

Won't stop?

Paul nods, believing that Michael has accepted his bluff.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

How long have you been feeling this way Paul?

PAUL

Um.

MICHAEL

Were you on a walk through the park?
Did you hear a rusty swingset?
Children playing? What did you
imagine? Where did your mind go?

Paul stares gobsmacked at Michael.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Do you have a younger sister? A
brother? Do you peek through the door
when they're having play dates or
you trap yourself in your room and
blast music to drown out the noise.
Chinking teacups. Dancing, laughing.
The musicality only a child can
create. The same one you've probably
ejaculated to on this very laptop.

PAUL

(abruptly)

Will you fix it?

MICHAEL

Some advice: don't use an unsecure
device next time.

The bell rings again.

Michael watches Paul rush to his car through a window. The
boy puts his head against his steering wheel and cries. It
looks more like hes performing autofellatio.

Michael chuckles, self-satisfied, and returns to his desk.

SHANNON

More malware?

MICHAEL

Yeah, kids got more pop-ups than
pimples.

SHANNON

(giggly)

Michael, be nice.

Michael mock rolls his eyes and chuckles.

SHANNON (cont'd)

There's so much of it around these
days. Viruses are everywhere.

MICHAEL

I don't know about you but I feel fine.

SHANNON

Oh, stop it Michael.

Lawton puts a pair of headphones in. Michael feigns shushing to Shannon and they both return to their work.

INT. ROBYN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Robyn is sprawled on her bed, watching a fly circle the curtains.

ROBYN

(muttering)

Have you seen this man? Man hungry for teen girls.

There's a rap at the door. Robyn looks up through the side window.

It's him.

She creeps over to the door. One hand hovering over the handle, the other clutching a glass ball from her side table. Heavy breathing comes through the crack.

Robyn twists the handle. The door swings back.

Old Mae's giant made-up face fills the doorway.

Robyn yelps.

OLD MAE

Don't act like you've never seen an old lady before.

ROBYN

Sorry Mae. Where are you off to?

OLD MAE

They're announcing who won the raffle at Town Square.

ROBYN

Raffle?

OLD MAE

They gave out tickets in the paper. Anyway, I'll be out for an hour or so.

ROBYN

But--

Old Mae is already hobbling up the hill.

INT. OLD MAE'S HOUSE - DAY

Robyn kicks around the house; lying on the couch, opening and closing the fridge.

Statues are scattered all through Old Mae's house. Vintage toys, dolls, McDonald's prizes. There's a painting in the same style as the one behind her bed. A garden gate, a foot leaving the right hand side and a shadow covering the left.

Robyn paces back and forth past a door at the end of the hall. Old Mae's room. She opens the door.

INT. OLD MAE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dusty curtains choke any light from coming in. Robyn looks at herself in the mirror for a beat. The room seems to hang around her, like a crown of stars.

She inspects her bags and tuts to herself. Then reaches under the vanity for a box.

ROBYN (V.O.)

Old Mae did makeup for the circus back when running away to the circus was the only rebellious path a woman could take. She did it all. Clowns, princesses, monsters. But when she came back, pregnant and poor, she destroyed it all. Except for this box.

The box is full of tubes and powders. Robyn begins rifling through them.

ROBYN (V.O)

When my Dad joined the military and my mother was got too drunk or too sick to speak, I would stay at Mae's. Sometimes in the night, Old Mae would sleepwalk, her nightgown trailing the floor like a wedding veil. She would paint her face and go back to bed.

A bright blue eyeshadow catches Robyn's attention. She pats it into her eyelids.

ROBYN (V.O.)

If I cannot be anything, I would like
to be useful in some way. In a dance.
A terror.

Robyn studies herself in the mirror; holding her eyes open wide. She rubs off the blue eyeshadow and takes out black body and face paint.

She puts on a long flowy black dress from Old Mae's wardrobe. From a box labeled Rachel, she digs out a bundle of pale pink chiffon scarves. Braids her long brown hair and pins each braid up to the other side.

A brush in the black paint. One stroke, two. Robyn covers every visible piece of skin and hair then drapes the scarves over her head.

EXT. MICHAEL'S BUS STOP - NIGHT

Robyn stands near the bus stop in some bushes. Lights of a bus shine in the distance.

Michael can be seen inside. As it stops, he lets a woman and her child get off before him, smiling kindly as they thank him. An apex predator at work.

He starts walking home. Robyn follows close behind.