

DOWNWARD

Written by

Sam Roen

EXT. HISTORIC HOME - NIGHT

Red brick paves the street on which a charming old Queen Anne Victorian home is sat. A half-dead weeping willow stands in direct disregard to the lush garden out front.

Somewhere in the distance, a raven CROAKS.

EL, 17, gothic cheerleader vibes, leans on the upper-deck railing, then does her best to mimic the bird's calling.

At the house's uppermost window, a shadow moves out of sight. It's hard to make out any discernible features, although it does appear there's a raven perched on the figure's shoulder.

EXT. HISTORIC HOME - UPPER PORCH - NIGHT

El scans the surrounding area, but can't find the songbird. She mimics the raven's call again. It doesn't croak back.

There's a chuckle behind El, as BARRET, 17, jock-lite boyfriend, comes into view and throws an arm around her.

HEL
(to the raven)
Enjoy the dark, black night.

BARRET
Are you talking to a bird?

After a moment's contemplation, she flashes a wicked smile.

EL
Yeah. She says you should let me
pick the movie tonight.

There's movement in the window behind them. Neither notice.

EL (CONT'D)
But, because I'm an awesome
girlfriend, I'll let you pick so
long as there aren't any...zombies.

The way she says zombies...there's a story there.

INT. HISTORIC HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

The inside of the house is much to be expected for such an old home. Lots of old patched with new. There are a smattering of family pictures on the wall, showing El through the years. There's no father figure present in any of them.

One picture, in particular, sticks out: A middle school picture day shot of El captioned, "El Laufey Jarson. 7th grade." In red ink, somebody's turned "El" into "Hel."

El and Barret are at the top of the hallway when she stops. She winces a beat and tenderly touches her right shoulder.

EL

You get everything set...I'm going to get some aspirin.

(off his concerned look)

A headache. Nothing to worry about.

By the way her countenance has changed, there's obviously something to worry about. But Barret's sated with the response and hurries down the stairs.

INT. HISTORIC HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

El flips the light switch and near jumps out of her skin as...at a glance it appears there's a person in the shower. She calms when it's clear the "person" is a wetsuit drying.

She does a once-over in the mirror to make sure she looks prime. Satisfied, she rolls up her right shirt sleeve. But stops right below the shoulder, looking unnerved.

BARRET (O.S.)

Everything good up there?

EL

I'll be down in a minute!

(then, quieter)

Just decaying rapidly here...

She, in a rip-the-bandaid-off way, pulls the sleeve up to reveal her shoulder, unlike the rest of her peach-colored skin, is mottled and grey. Pox-ridden, the skin decaying.

Too preoccupied with the skin condition, she doesn't notice as something hurries by the doorway. Then...

There's a BANG from down below.

EL (CONT'D)

Everything okay down there?

No answer. Solemn, she pulls her sleeve down and steals herself a glance in the mirror. She smiles fake as hell.

INT. HISTORIC HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

El exits the bathroom and heads to the stairs.

EL
Did something break?

Still nothing. Odd.

EL (CONT'D)
Barre --

El freezes at the top step. Shocked by what she sees below.

Barret lays crumpled and unconscious at the bottom step.

Without hesitation, she bounds down the stairs.

INT. HISTORIC HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

El's at Barret's side now. She looks over his injuries. Red oozes from his ear, bits of femur perforating his left leg. There's a beat of shock. She freezes, not knowing what to do.

She snaps out of it and pulls out her phone.

EL
C'mon, B...can you hear me?

No response. Dude is a corpse. She checks for a pulse. Finds one. A sigh of relief, there.

EL (CONT'D)
I promise it's going to be okay.

She doesn't look convinced herself.

She punches in 911 and is met with a no service signal.

EL (CONT'D)
What the hell?

A shadowy figure passes by one of the windows outside. The raven CROAKS, but El doesn't register it this time.

EL (CONT'D)
I'm going to find help. Just...stay
alive...please.

Her hand unsteady, she grabs his. Lingers there, then hops up and makes for the door. Once there, she stops. Abrupt.

On the door, an H is carved into the wood. She cocks her head and stares at it. By the look on her face...this is new. She moves in closer, transfixed. She traces the H with a nail.

Lightning strikes in the distance. For a snap, El's right eye turns cloudy. THUNDER CRACKS. And her eye's clear again.

Trance-like, she goes and kneels next to Barret. It's like she has a newfound knowledge of...something. She closes her eyes and puts a hand to his heart. Her hand vibrates. Not out of fear or angst. This looks deliberate.

One by one, Barret's wounds heal. Blood stops dripping from his ear and his leg SNAPS into place. At the same time...

El turns rotten. Flesh mottled with pox-filled cheeks and cataracts-ridden eyes. She looks like a dead-thing. A zombie.

She breathes deeply and opens her eyes. Dazed, she looks around. By the look of her, it seems she doesn't know where she is, but when her gaze lands on Barret recognition dawns.

EL (CONT'D)

I don't understand.

She spots her reflection in the window and lets out a gasp.

EL (CONT'D)

Is that...is that me?

El scrambles to the window and examines what she's become...horrified to find it is in fact her reflection.

EL (CONT'D)

Oh god.

A floorboard CREAKS behind her.

BARRET

Why am I on the floor? El?

Before he can see her, El limps past him and up the stairs.

EL

Everything's completely fine!

INT. HISTORIC HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

El's movement is panicked as she scans for a place to hide, but she doesn't have much time as Barret's not far behind.

BARRET

Can we stop messing around? I think
I blacked out, or something.

El limps toward a door leading to the upper porch

Barret hits the top step as she disappears out the door.

EXT. HISTORIC HOME - UPPER PORCH - NIGHT

El barricades the door with an outdoor love-seat. She goes to
the railing and looks down at the two-story drop.

EL

I can make it. Probably? Maybe...

There's a knock at the door.

BARRET (O.S.)

Please open up. I'm **very** confused.

El opens a window leading to a bedroom and shimmies through.

INT. HISTORIC HOME - EL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room looks like a fairly typical teenage girl's bedroom
who's obviously a fan of Elton John based on the posters.

El sneaks - the dead-leg making this difficult - to the
bedroom door and peaks around the corner toward Barret.

BARRET

C'mon, El. You're scaring me.

EL

(under her breath)
He might be able to help...

INT. HISTORIC HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

El makes it two steps toward Barret when she catches herself
in the hallway mirror. She shivers and turns on her heel.

EL

Nope...

She tiptoes to the bathroom. And does her best to shut the
door quietly. It creaks, tipping Barret off to her location

INT. HISTORIC HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

At the mirror, El examines her mottled state.

A KNOCK at the door.

BARRET (O.S.)
Did I do something wrong?

An interesting thought, but...

EL
I don't think so.

BARRET (O.S.)
I want to do the right thing, but
I'm not sure what that is...

El opens her mouth to respond, but a spider scurries out.

BARRET (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And I want to make sure you're
okay, because you're acting pretty
freaking odd...sorry.

She shrugs in a he-has-a-point sort of way.

She peels a small piece of rotting flesh from her cheek.

EL
Leave it up to the universe, El.
Puss-side up, I stay in here
forever. If it lands on the grey,
scale-y side, I tell him.

She coin-flips the skin. It lands on the grey-scale-y side.

EL (CONT'D)
Crap.

BARRET (O.S.)
Do you want me to go?

EL
No.
(into the mirror)
What would Elton do?
(nodding)
He'd say, "I'm still standing," and
face the situation head-on.
Granted, he probably never turned
into a corpse-like monster thing.

She flashes a smile at the mirror - creepier than intended.

EL (CONT'D)
Promise me you won't freak out.

She takes a deep breath, goes to the door and, with a putrid hand on the knob, she pulls it open.

Barret stands in front of her. Unperturbed. He shrugs.

She gestures at her non-zombified, normal looking self.

EL (CONT'D)
This isn't makeup, Barret.

BARRET
I'm pretty sure I see eyeliner.

El's dumbfounded.

EL
Dude, look at my face.

BARRET
I am. You look great.

Frustrated, she grabs his hand and pulls him to the mirror. She's startled to find she no longer looks hellish.

EL
Oh, good. Interesting. But good.
Still up for a movie?

INT. HISTORIC HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

El and Barret are sat close together on the couch, him still looking pretty darn confused at the goings-on of the night.

BARRET
You still down for something scary?

She snuggles into him and opens her mouth to respond, but something catches her eye. Scrawled on a nearby window are the words, "I'll be in touch, Hel, Queen of the Downward."