

Bird in the Attic

by

Michael Cornetto

INT. ATTIC - DAY

The attic is dusty and barren. A shaft of sunlight from a lone window illuminates a corner. In the corner rests a large trunk. It's open. A twisted-tangled clothesline rope hangs haphazardly from its side.

MADELINE, house-coated, blue-tinted, prunish and red-eyed, paces frantically across the floor. Past a trap-door then a short pause at the sight of the trunk. Her eyes widen, behind them lies a horrible memory.

She shuts her eyes tight, shakes her head.

TINK. TINK. TINK.

Toward the source of the sound, the window. A sharp intake of breath at the sight of a dark bird on the sill. It tilts its head as it stares at her with its black curious cabochon eyes. A song escapes its bright beak.

BIRD

Goway. Goway.

Hope springs from worried lines on Madeline's face, a stale anxious breath expels.

TINK. TINK. TINK.

Closer to the window, her head tilts in unison with the bird.

BIRD

Goway. Goway.

Her voice a shaky whisper.

MADELINE

I'm trying -- I'm trying.

TINK. TINK. TINK.

Her hand trembles toward the window.

BIRD

Goway. Goway.

MADELINE

How?

The bird flies away as she touches the glass.

MADELINE

How?!

Disappointment. Her palm slides toward the floor, her forehead lowers to the pane.

Then she sees it, out the window and across the street a LITTLE GIRL bounces a brightly colored ball.

Madeline bangs her hands against the window.

MADELINE

Help! I'm up here!

OUTSIDE

Madeline looks like a insane witch in the attic window. But the Little Girl isn't frightened, the Little Girl doesn't see Madeline. Bounce. Bounce.

INSIDE

Madeline pounds her fists against the window in a primitive frenzied dance as she sings her primal song of fear.

The pane rattles, shakes and then cracks into a spiderweb. Refracted beams of light scurry about the attic turning it into a disco - Madeline, the go-go geriatric - unaware of her own strength as one of her fists breaks through the window.

OUTSIDE

A burst of glass falls toward the ground like crystal rain and Madeline's loud pained scream catches the Little Girl's attention. Her ball rolls unattended into the street.

In awed confusion the Little Girl stares across the street and up at the attic witch. The witch shrieks holding her hands against her chest, her arms triangular, praying to some evil god no doubt.

Tears stream down the little girls face and she runs home.

CHILD

Mommy! Mommy!

INSIDE

Madeline holds her bloodied hand against her chest. Crying out with pain and frustration as she watches the Little Girl hurry away.

MADELINE

No! Help me! Please!

Her hand drips crimson as she reaches through the broken window toward the Little Girl. But the Little Girl is gone.

In her despair, Madeline shrinks to the attic floor. She sobs atop the heap she has become.

A dark shadow passes over her.

FLUTTER.

She raises her head.

FLUTTER.

The room is alive. Dark shadows dance on the walls.

FLUTTER. FLUTTER.

Her face twists into a painful grimace.

FLUTTER. FLUTTER.

She covers her ears and closes her eyes.

FLUTTER. FLUTTER. FLUTTER.

Her mouth opens into a horrific unvocalized scream.

FLUTTER. FLUTTER. FLUTTER.

SLAM! A car door.

Silence.

Madeline's face in rictus then...

Her eyes slowly open. She scans the dusty, barren attic. The dancing shadows have gone.

CRUNCH. Glass underfoot, outside.

An alarmed glance toward the broken window. Madeline hurriedly stands and moves into the sunlit shaft. She stares out of the smashed window to the shattered scene below.

OUTSIDE

A car is parked in the once empty driveway. PETER, middle aged, looks like Mr. Rodger's and stares at the sparking glass shards he stands amidst.

Then he looks up.

INSIDE

Madeline moves out of the sunlit shaft, out of sight. Breathing quickly, she peers one eyed from the edge.

OUTSIDE

Peter examines the broken window with a serious expression. Then he lowers his head and walks toward the house.

INSIDE

Madeline turns away from the window with anguish. Her bloodied hair sticks to a dark smear on her cheek.

She paces. She places her still bleeding hand into her other then winces. But she ignores the pain as she worries her hands together.

SLAM! A door downstairs. Madeline stops. She glances at the trap-door on the attic floor. Then a shivery glance at the trunk.

She rushes to the trunk and positions herself behind it. She checks the visual distance to the trap-door. She moves her hands toward one side of the trunk. And then she pulls her hands away.

She forces herself to touch the trunk this time. She places both hands firmly against the trunks side. She strains as she pushes it forward a small amount. Then again.

Another check of distance. Another push.

Then the trap-door shakes. Madeline panics. A frantic push.

BIRD

Goway! Goway!

The dark bird perches across the attic. It watches her with its beady black eyes. Tremulous, Madeline backs away from the bird until she pushes up against the attic wall.

And the trap-door pops opens.

THUNK! Madeline flinches as it flops over and hits the floor.

Peter's head peeks above the hole in the floor, scanning the attic as it rises. Peter sets his gaze on Madeline who trembles against the wall. She's a bloodied dishevelled mess.

PETER

Gran. You're bleeding.

Peter glances at the window.

PETER  
You should be more careful.

Peter walks the attic floor toward Madeline. Madeline shrinks even further into the wall. Peter extends his hand toward her.

PETER  
Here, let me see it.

Peter grabs at her hand but she isn't letting him hold it.

PETER  
Stop that Gran, I only want to...

MADELINE  
I'm not your Gran.

Peter lowers his head. And when he raises it again he is clearly controlling his temper. He snatches Madeline's hand and she gasps.

His stare petrifies her. He pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes around her wound.

PETER  
It hurts me when you say things like that Gran. But I know it's just the disease speaking.

MADELINE  
Please, let me go. I won't tell anyone.

Peter pushes down on the wound. Madeline shrieks.

PETER  
Hold still! There's nowhere for you to go. This is your home Gran.

MADELINE  
I'm not your Gran!

Peter's anger flares and he shoves the bloody handkerchief into Madeline's mouth.

PETER  
Stop saying that! I hate it when you say that. Each and every one of you!

Peter grabs the rope from the trunk behind him and hog-ties Madeline. She squirms and mumbles protests but much of the fight has left her.

PETER

You could have really caused problems wandering around like that. This trunk, it's a safe place. These ropes watch over you when I can't. I don't know how you escaped from them but for your own protection I'm going to make sure you'll never get out this time.

He ties the rope tightly. Then he lifts Madeline and places her into the trunk. Frightened tears flee her wide open eyes.

PETER

Good night Gran.

He kisses Madeline on the forehead and closes the trunk.

BLACK

BIRD (V.O.)

Goaway! Goaway!

PETER (V.O.)

And you let a bird in the house!  
(sing-song)  
Someone we know is going to die.