

SKULDUGGERY

Episode 1

THE MAP

Written by
Matthew W. Davis, MFA

Fifth DRAFT

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UltraspectMedia@gmail.com

EXT. LOUISIANA BACKWATER - FOREST PATHWAY - TWILIGHT

Frogs and crickets cry out from the swamp. Lamplight illuminates a SKULL. The skull... MOVES.

We realize the skull is a *grease-painted face*: She opens her eyes with an emotionless, blank stare: ONE EYE GLAZED-OVER - an injury long ago unaddressed.

Draped in a blood-red cloak, the ghastly figure murmurs as she trudges along a decayed pathway beneath the trees:

MADAME LOUVIER - a Haitian-born Voodoo Queen emerges from the gnarled forest with her kerosene lamp. She stalls. Waiting. In the clearing ahead, she sees a meager home:

EXT. BACKWATER HOME - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Much like her faded summer dress, JENNY DURALDE's features are pretty, but spent. She appears 40ish, but is really much younger. She hands her son a ten-dollar bill.

JENNY

No need to hurry back...

JOHNNY "JD" DURALDE (13) notices his mom's hand *shaking*.

JENNY (CONT'D)

...I'll be fine.

Jenny stares out at the tree line, locating the skull-faced Voodoo Queen lurking at the edge of the forest.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Treat yourself to a soda, OK?

JD

Thanks, mom.

JD Pedals his ramshackle bike away. He pauses. *TAKES ONE LAST LOOK BACK AT HIS MOTHER...*

INT. BACKWATER HOME - HALLWAY - LATER

Talon-like fingernails dive into a crude burlap pouch adorned with dog fangs. They pluck out a VIAL OF ELIXIR.

FOLLOW Madame Louvier as she strides down the hallway.

INT. LOUISIANA BACKWATER HOME - DOOR/BEDROOM - NEXT

Jenny glances up. *Her chair is encircled by lit candles.*

MADAME LOUVIER opens the door – her skull-face gleaming under the cloak's hood. The Voodoo Queen approaches...

MADAME LOUVIER

Drink.

Madame Louvier *closes Jenny's hand around the ELIXIR* – gazing at her with that cursed eye. Jenny drinks. Winces.

JENNY

...thank you.

Jenny gags. Drops the empty elixir vial.

MADAME LOUVIER

You drink water of the dead. Now spirit
inside you. Spirit speak? I give oracle.

She cups Jenny's chin, pulling her eye-to-eye. Whispers:

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

...breathe ...out

As Jenny *exhales*, the Voodoo Queen *inhales* her breath – lips nearly touching: A BLUE VAPOR passing between them.

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

I see no hope. *Sans vie*. No life. *Restait plus rien*. Nothing left. Nothing for boy.

JENNY

No... Johnny... is my world.

MADAME LOUVIER

You not care. No. You reject boy.

In tears, Jenny grips the arms of her chair – woozy from the elixir. She wretches, *throwing up bile*. Eyes twitch:

JENNY'S POV – BOTH SIGHT AND SOUND ARE WARPED: Madame Louvier *drops her cloak*, revealing a FIVE-FOOT BOA CONSTRICTOR draped around her neck – flicking its tongue.

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

Papa Damballa. Rada Loa. Papa Damballa...

The Voodoo Queen chants as she unsheathes her CEREMONIAL DAGGER. She slices a strip of fabric from Jenny's dress.

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

Jenny. You... Me... Connected.

WE WATCH AS: She PRICKS JENNY'S NECK with the blade.

Madame Louvier wipes Jenny's blood with the fabric strip. She wraps the strip around a VOODOO DOLL EFFIGY.

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

Notre voyage entrelacé. Our journey entwined, Jenny. Two sides. Same coin.

JENNY'S WARPED POV: Madame Louvier glares at her dagger. It ERUPTS WITH BLUE FLAMES. She stares at the candles around Jenny's chair. They also BURST FORTH A FIERY BLUE.

A SWIRL OF BLUE SPECULAR VAPOR spills out of the candles - its sinews twist around Jenny like a slow-motion tornado.

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

Our journey entwined with Lafitte.

JENNY

Lafitte?

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

LAFFITE. Pirate Jean Laffite!

JENNY (CONT'D)

I need you...to help me...

MADAME LOUVIER (CONT'D)

Where is MAP?! The MAP!!

WE WATCH: Madame Louvier open a Mason jar. The blue vapor pours inside it - *like a genie returning to its bottle.*

JENNY (CONT'D)

There is...no map...no map.

MADAME LOUVIER BRINGS THE DAGGER TO JENNY'S WRIST.

MADAME LOUVIER

Dit mon la verité! The TRUTH! It will appear as... SUICIDE. Jenny DIE BY OWN HAND. Dit mon la verité!! The MAP!

JENNY

...I saw it once...as a child.

SERIES OF SHOTS - FRACTURED SCENES FLASHING IN HER MIND: