

# ARKHAM

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FIRST DRAFT

03 20, 2015

FADE IN:

**EXT. NORTHERN MASSACHUSETTS- DAY**

We soar fast almost skimming the surface of an endless forboding deep black-blue ocean.

DISSOLVE TO:

We fly above a shoreline and follow a car moving along a seaside cliff road.

A 1915 Pierce-Arrow Model 66-A ZOOMS towards us.

The car passes a road sign: Welcome to Essex County, Massachusetts.

Another signpost displays locations beyond. Kingsport 6, Arkham 12, Dunwich 20 and New Hampshire 27.

**SUPERIMPOSE: 1915**

**INT. MODEL 66-A -**

A family is chauffeured, HAROLD and LAURA PRINN both late 30's, sit in the back of the car. They face each other.

The Prinn's daughter, AMELIA, 11, plays in the front passenger seat. She half hangs out the window and HUMS a lullaby.

Wrapped around her hand is a long pink ribbon that whips in the wind.

Harold reads The Boston Evening Globe. Splashed on the front page: *Lusitania Sunk.*

Laura scans the headline.

LAURA  
Just awful. Truly awful.

Swaddled in Laura's arms is their new born son, WALTER.

HAROLD  
(cold and uninterested)  
Yes, the Germans sure know how to make a mess of things. But they're good for business.

Walter looks up wide-eyed at his mother. Her response is an empty stare. She places Walter on the seat and lets out an exasperated HUFF. Bothered, Harold peers over the newspaper.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
You didn't forget --

LAURA  
-- No. It's right here, Darling.

Laura reaches down by her feet and retrieves a small sable wooden box with hinges.

Amelia's pink ribbon flaps outside the backseat window in front of Laura.

LAURA  
Amelia sweetheart, be a lamb and  
don't lean too far out.

AMELIA  
Yes, Mummy.

Walter starts to fuss. Laura opens the box. A silver dagger lays inside on black velvet lining.

She looks to Walter.

Harold looks to the dagger with complacency then sinks his head back into the newspaper.

Trance like, Laura peers into Walter's eyes. Walter cracks a slobbery grin.

She cocks her head and studies Walter with a measuring stare.

She traces her finger along Walter's neck then down his torso as if dissecting him with a knife, then -- SCREEECH!!!!

**EXT. ROAD ALONG CLIFF -**

The CHAUFFEUR tries to swerve around SOMETHING huge and black in the middle of the road. He smashes into the black mass, causing the car to T-bone and spin out of control.

Amelia SCREAMS as the passenger door swings open. She tumbles out of the car and rolls then plummets off the cliff.

Harold and Laura CRASH headfirst through the back seat windows. The car flips onto its side and slides off the cliff into the ocean.

Thrown from the car, in bushes beside the road's edge, lies Walter unharmed and CRYING. The sable box lays next to him.

A massive BLACK BEAR lays dead on the road. Walter's CRIES bleed into the sounds of ROARING ocean waves.

The wind HOWLS like a banshee. Amelia's ribbon twists and flutters high through the sky.

MATCH CUT TO:

A crimson vicuna scarf snaps and trails off a MAN's neck.

**SUPERIMPOSE: 20 years later**

**EXT. SEASIDE CLIFF - DAY**

The man in the scarf stands deadly close to the edge of a cliff.

WALTER PRINN, 21, handsome, ebony hair, slight and tall. His clothes, pose and attitude plainly cry a man of means.

He peers out through horn-rimmed glasses.

A lonely man with many questions. He glances north along the shoreline then back to the ocean waves as they CRASH high against the cliff misting him.

He heads to his car, a 1935, silver Mercedes-Benz 540K two seater cabriolet, parked off the highway.

PRELAP: ENGINE ROAR!!!

Fats Waller's 1935 song *Truckin'* PLAYS.

**EXT. ROAD ALONG SEASIDE CLIFF -**

ZOOM!!! Walter speeds towards the road sign, Welcome to Essex County, Massachusetts.

**EXT. ARKHAM, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY - LATER**

Walter drives past the postcard town of Arkham.

A colonial town is laden with Puritan architecture.

A calm river winds through the town's landscape creating pockets of hidden marshes and valley bogs.

Mansions dot the sloping hillsides. Their gambrel roofs and Georgian balustrades brood in the dark canopy of towering American Elms that sprawl and stretch to the sky, even on the brightest day the town is cloistered in shadow.

Walter heads towards a mansion on a hill. In the distance, its gabled roof top peeks atop a coppice of Eastern Hemlocks that surround it.

**EXT. DANVERS MANOR - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Walter drives upon a stone wall and locked bronze patina gates over 20 feet tall.

Beyond its wall on a hill stands the Danvers Manor, a massive 18th century mansion hybrid of Georgian and Carolean architecture.

Walter riffles through a briefcase on the car seat. He pushes through real estate documents and the deed to Danvers Manor to find a ring of keys. One key is tagged with Front Gate.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY TO DANVERS MANOR - MOMENTS LATER**

Walter drives through the gateway and enters the Danvers grounds. Surrounding the manor are formal gardens and a series of avenues leading to follies within a larger wooded park on all sides.

The opulent estate brings a huge smile and wonderment to Walter.

Fats Waller's MUSIC FADES --

**EXT. DANVERS MANOR - MAIN FOYER - MOMENTS LATER**

Walter unlocks massive double doors. He enters and stands under dramatic Gothic arched doorways leading to a tall space containing huge gilded frames half covered with fallen sheets revealing portraits of the Danvers family.

A grin blooms across his face. His eyes widen with amazement.

**EXT. DANVERS MANOR - ESTABLISHING - DAY TO NIGHT TO MORNING****EXT. DANVERS MANOR - GARDEN - MORNING**

Walter explores the manor grounds. He spots a stone stairway leading down to a forest ravine. He hears RUSHING WATER.

**EXT. RIVER BEHIND DANVERS MANOR - CONTINUOUS**

Walter walks along a small winding river. He looks east. He can just make out the townscape of Arkham a few miles away.

Storm clouds flash with lightning in the distance.

A WHIPPOORWILL'S song gets his attention. Walter tries to pinpoint its location as he walks along the riverbank.

Inaudible VOICES are heard in the distance. Walter investigates.

**EXT. SMALL DOCK ON THE RIVERBANK -**

THREE BOYS, 12, push a smaller BLOND BOY, 9, into the ground. One boy holds the Blond Boy down.

They kick sand on him.

DARK HAIR BOY  
Stop coming around here!

A small canoe is tied to a dock behind the fray.

DARK HAIR BOY (CONT'D)  
Go back to where you belong Dunchy!

TALL BOY  
You're not welcome around here!

The Tall Boy kicks more sand. This time it lands in the Blond Boy's mouth. He starts to SPIT and COUGH as the other boys LAUGH. Walter emerges from the trees.

WALTER  
Hey! You stop that right now!

The older boys, shocked, stand in fear for a second.

They all look at each other then run down the riverbank and out of sight.

Walter rushes to the Blond Boy.

WALTER  
Are you alright? Are you hurt?

Walter helps the boy up. The boy gives Walter a frightened glance but remains silent.

Walter kneels down eye level to him.

WALTER  
(warmly)  
I detest bullies too.

Walter presents a friendly smile.

WALTER  
What is your name? I'm Walter.  
My friends call me Walt.

Walter puts out his hand. The boy darts away, runs to his canoe and unties it from the dock.

He pushes off as he jumps into the stern seat. He grabs a small oar and furiously starts to paddle.

He looks back at Walter coldly as he heads down the river to Arkham. Walter, perplexed, stares back at him.

EDGAR(O.S.)  
Mr. Prinn?! Is that you?!

A MAN comes from the Danvers's riverbank property line.

EDGAR COPELAND, 20, ginger hair, snow white skin, athletically built with admirable boyish features, approaches Walter with eagerness.

EDGAR  
You are Mr. Walter Prinn, I presume?

WALTER  
I am he... and who might you --

Edgar smiles and rushes to him with his hand out.

EDGAR  
-- I'm Edgar Copeland. I'm a reporter with the New Hampshire Gazette.

Walter just looks at his hand. Edgar, unaffected, carries on. He stands back and admires Walter for a second.

EDGAR  
You're the Bayside Cliff Baby... you're a legend. It's really you.

Walter looks away from Edgar with disappointment and heads back to Danvers Manor.

WALTER  
Just how did you find me, Mr. Copeland?

EDGAR  
Pays to be good friends with the Arkham City filing clerk. When the name Prinn appeared on the records for purchasing Danvers Manor... I was called... I had to make sure you were *the* Walter Prinn ... and, well, now I see that you are... and I --

WALTER

-- I'm afraid I have nothing really more to say on the subject of my childhood that has not already been covered, dragged and drudged through all the national papers and gossip rags.

Walter hurries from him. Flustered, Edgar follows.  
THUNDER RUMBLES.

EDGAR

Are you kidding me? Your past is tragic, Mr. Prinn. A real modern day Shakespearean tale. What have you been doing for the last twenty years? My readers will want to know. Hell, I want to know.

Walter stops and looks Edgar in the eye.

WALTER

(annoyed)  
Indeed.

Walter pulls away and continues to walk.

EDGAR

How does an millionaire orphan disappear into obscurity?

Walter smirks as if he has gotten away with something, well up until now.

WALTER

Skill.

EDGAR

Before the Lindbergh Baby, you were the biggest story since The Resurrection!

Walter stops on the stone steps that lead up to the Danvers Manor's property.

Walter

I'm afraid I must bid you a good day Mr. Copeland. If you follow me up these steps you will be officially trespassing on private property.

Lightening CRACKS as gray clouds roll over Arkham. It starts to pour. Walter and Edgar look up to the sky then to each other.

WALTER  
Just how did you arrive?

EDGAR  
I road a bicycle.

WALTER  
(more annoyed)  
Indeed.

Edgar looks to Walter for sympathy. Walter grimaces then nods for him to follow.

A WHIPPOORWILL watches Walter and Edgar make their way back to the manor.

It SINGS and jumps from its nest on the ground. It follows the men flying from low tree branch to branch.

Inside the Whippoorwill's nest we see the scavenged twine, leaves and twigs that built it. A dirty pink ribbon makes part of its construction.

**INT. DANVERS MANOR -DINNING HALL - NIGHT**

Walter and Edgar sit at a long dark oak table. A crystal decanter of Scotch and two glasses half full sit in front of them. A fire ROARS in a hearth nearby.

Edgar scribbles on a notepad. Walter stands and drinks.

EDGAR  
From what I read, a couple from Boston found you shortly after the car went off the cliff. They were just passing by on a Sunday drive when they came upon you.

Walter grabs the poker by the fire.

WALTER  
That's correct. Once the wreckage and... *bodies* were recovered... the authorities pieced together who I was...

EDGAR

Walter Prinn, the last living heir  
to the Prinn International Steel  
Company.

Walter shifts a log with the poker. Flames leap high.

WALTER

My Father built the company from  
the ground up. He was in the right  
business at the right time.

Walter's distracted eyes watch the tongues of the flames  
dance.

WALTER

War is kind to those it needs.  
Weapons and tanks would be needed  
by the hundreds of thousands and  
Prinn Steel would be there to  
provide everything.

Edgar reads the regret in Walter's voice. He stares at him in  
silence, waiting.

Walter listens and looks up to the ceiling with a smile.

WALTER

It's no longer raining, Mr  
Copeland.

Walter motions to the oil paintings along the walls and the  
sheet covered Victorian furniture in the room.

WALTER

The Danvers family owned this  
place. They had a gathering here in  
the Summer of 1915. Unfortunately,  
one of the guests attending brought  
Typhoid with them. The whole  
Danvers's lineage and guests  
suffered its effects. Massachusetts  
became the manor's benefactor. Not  
really knowing what to do with it,  
the State finally sold it at  
auction this year.

Edgar looks around.

EDGAR

This truly is an exceptional place.

WALTER

I got it for a song. Well, at least that's what my broker tells me. I bought it completely furnished, sight unseen. I haven't even explored the third floor yet. It has remained just as you see it. Frozen in time since 1915.

EDGAR

The year you were found only miles from here.

Walter grimaces, as if he never connected the fact.

WALTER

Yes, I suppose you're right.

Walter walks to a sheet covered chair and touches it.

EDGAR

Will you be living here?

WALTER

No. No, I will not.

Not the answer Edgar was expecting. He stops writing.

EDGAR

That's curious. May I ask why?

WALTER

With some reconstruction, I plan on developing this place into a research laboratory.

Walter stands near a wall and slides his hand across its surface.

WALTER

State of the art facilities for biochemical research. I want to attract businesses. Make this place an academic outpost for science-based entrepreneurs.

Edgar writes.

EDGAR

A scientist, huh.

Walter nods. Edgar picks up his Scotch and sips.

EDGAR  
Where did you attend?

WALTER  
Harvard.

Edgar smiles and toasts towards Walter.

EDGAR  
Brown.

Walter stands beside him. They CLINK glasses.

EDGAR  
Is that how you've stayed hidden  
all these years? You lived among  
your own? The privileged... the  
wealthy?

Walter sits across from Edgar.

WALTER  
They do love their secrets but they  
love knowing someone else's even more.

Edgar smirks and writes.

EDGAR  
What drew you to biochemistry?

Walter loses himself in the question. He stares past Edgar.  
He finally answers.

WALTER  
I want to find ways to improve the  
quality of peoples lives. Through  
science, I believe I can do that.  
My Father built our fortune on  
tools of destruction. I intend to  
do the complete opposite.

Edgar stares at Walter. Another answer not expected.

We slowly turn and pull away from Walter and Edgar as we POV  
our way through the dark long hallways of Danvers Manor.

Walter's and Edgar's conversation turns to inaudible murmurs.

**FIRST FLOOR- MAIN HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

We pass open doorways of rooms filled with sheet draped  
furniture.

**MAIN STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS**

We make our way up a grand staircase to the second floor and then the third.

**THIRD FLOOR - MAIN HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

We enter the darkest part of the house. A long hallway with closed doors. We HEAR a faint TAPPING. We glide our way through the hall to a door. We pass through it to --

**THIRD FLOOR - SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Moonlight illuminates the room from a high window of a gable.

TAP. TAP. TAP.

The Whippoorwill pecks the window glass from outside.

TAP. TAP. TAP

Framed photographs taken before the turn of the 20th century hang haphazardly along a wall.

A few of the photos are portraits, others are of Danvers Manor in states of construction throughout the years.

One photo stands out from the rest.

A sullen group of six men and six women stand in front of the Danvers Manor. A date at the bottom reads 1889.

An aristocratic Victorian society... *but a society of what nature?*

One man and one woman look familiar to us in the photo. Harold and Laura Prinn, Walter's parents in their 20's, stare at us with cold eyes.

TAP. TAP. TAP.

The Whippoorwill stops tapping. It's head twists and turns. It watches the room.

The floorboards in a dark corner of the room CREAK as someone walks on them.

A small SHADOW starts to creep out from the darkest part of the room.

A silhouette of a small hand reaches towards the photo of Walter's parents.

The frame starts to move slightly. The SHADOW hand presses a finger over the faces of Harold and Laura.

CRACK! The glass shatters sending the frame to the floor.

**EXT. RIVER BEHIND DANVERS MANOR - MORNING**

The Blond Boy rows to the bank. He ties his canoe to the dock. He HUMS a lullaby as he runs towards Danvers Manor.

**INT. DANVERS MANOR - SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM - MORNING**

Walter wakes. He gets up with a GROAN. He heads to a washroom.

A BOY'S LAUGHTER is heard outside the bedroom window.

Walter goes to the window and peers down into the garden. The Blond Boy sits on a stone wall. He appears to be talking to himself.

He recoils and LAUGHS again as if someone is tickling his side. He continues talking. Walter snickers and studies him.

**EXT. DANVERS MANOR - GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER**

Walter comes from the back door of the manor. The Blond Boy leaps from the stone wall and starts to run.

WALTER

Wait! Please don't run, Boy!

The boy heads to the stone steps. He is about to go down them but stops as if he's being told to go somewhere else.

The boy runs parallel to the steps eastward, deep into the thick grove of Hemlocks. Walter pursues.

**EXT. HEMLOCK WOODS - CONTINUOUS**

The Blond Boy darts around trees. The dense foliage blinds Walter's way as he chases the boy. Walter tries to keep up as he pushes branches from his face.

He comes to a clearing. He's lost the boy's location.

**EXT. RAVINE/MARSH - CONTINUOUS**

The Blond Boy races down a ravine. He runs onto what looks like flat ground. He falls forward into the peat laden marshy terrain.

SPLASH! He disappears under the mire.

Walter arrives at the edge of the ravine and YELLS.

WALTER

Boy?!

Nothing.

WALTER (CONT'D)

I'm not going to hurt you!

He spots the Blond Boy's tracks ending before the marsh.

Walter doesn't hesitate, he runs and jumps into the bog. He flails waist high through the water and grabs under.

Nothing.

A small bubble, to the side of him, comes to the surface and POPS. Walter instantly dives under. We hold on the calmness of the water for a beat.

SPLASH! Walter emerges with The Blond Boy over his shoulder.

Walter GASPS and HUFFS. He struggles to dry land.

He lays the boy on his side and raises the boy's arms above his head stretched out. The boy lies still and lifeless.

Walter rolls him to his stomach. He pushes with both hands on the side of the boy's back causing air and water to rush out of his lungs.

The boy COUGHS out marsh water as he slowly comes to. Walter's face fills with relief.

The boy staggers to his feet. He stands BREATHING hard. He slowly backs away from Walter and heads up the ravine.

WALTER (CONT'D)

No... wait. Where are you going?  
I need to get you to a doctor...

Walter lunges forward to grab the boy but his foot sinks deep into a muddy hole in the ground. It fills with water.

Walter tries to move but can't. He struggles to get loose. Walter falls back exhausted, collects his thoughts and sits up. He uses his weight to pull his leg free from the sinking earth.

The boy watches Walter for a beat then disappears into the woods. Walter gathers himself and heads back to the top of the ravine. The Blond Boy is gone.

**EXT. HEMLOCK WOODS -**

Walter notices something on the ground. Due to the recent rain, a flat stone pathway slightly reveals itself.

He eyes the path to a stone archway that slightly peeks out from a thicket of Birch trees up a distance hill.

Walter follows the path. The Whippoorwill flies to a bush. It watches him. The wind MURMURS through the trees.

**EXT. MONOLITH -**

Walter passes under archways with tall pillars into an ancient pavilion with a rune incised monolith at its center..

Each pillar is crowned with a different stone face of a grotesque creature. Their mouths are wide-open with tongue-tentacles that coil down the columns.

The Whippoorwill lands on top of one pillar and observes Walter inquisitively.

A four foot stone alter grows from the pavilion's floor. Thorny pink rose bushes crawl up its sides.

The alter's center is bowl-like and has collected rain water from the night before.

Walter takes it all in with awe. *What is this place?*

He reaches to touch a column when he notices his hands are scratched and bleeding from the rescue of The Boy.

He spots the water gathered at the alter. He approaches the basin and smiles at his reflection in the water.

He puts his wounded hands into the alter's depression.

His blood swirls and mixes with the water. He takes out his hands and flicks the residual wetness off.

He looks at the column creatures' faces with a quizzical frown. *What are they suppose to be?* He sticks out his tongue as to mock and copy its face.

He smirks at his behavior and looks around one last time as he pats one of the pillars. He heads back into the woods.

The alter's water settles. Walter's blood falls and seeps to the basin's bottom. WHISPERS are heard. We cut to each creature's face on the columns. Their tongues are now recoiled and their mouths shut.