

'HORROR'

Script for art samples

Originally written for the Oni Press talent search
@ Comic-Con San Diego 2005

by

Antony Johnston

Draft 1 - 2005-06-08

© Antony Johnston. All rights reserved. This script may be used freely to draw personal comic art samples for submission and portfolio purposes only. Permission is granted to copy solely on that basis. All artwork so produced remains the copyright of the artist. All other use and/or reproduction is prohibited.

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a five-page scene from a non-existent horror comic.

The dimensions and scale of the artwork are entirely up to you. The script is written for a standard comic page (roughly 10.25" x 6.75"), but if you want to draw it as a trade digest (6" x 9") or even manga size (5" x 7.5") that's fine. So long as everything is on the page and legible, it doesn't matter. Along the same lines, remember to leave enough space for the dialogue balloons and text.

Remember that this is a HORROR script, and horror is as visual as it is conceptual. I'm not going to be overly specific about how it should look - that's your personal style - but when an editor looks at your samples, they should be able to tell immediately that this is a horror story.

(A note on script format: I use a scriptwriting program called Scrivener to write, and the result looks quite similar to a screenplay. This script may therefore look very different to others you've seen - there's no standard format for comic scripts, and every writer's style is different. Editors will expect you to be able to work from any format given to you. So don't panic, just follow it logically.)

Okay, here we go. Good luck!

CHARACTERS

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

Female, mid-30s. Susan is a doctor of psychology, working in a psychiatric hospital. She is skeptical about the supernatural and occult, believing there is a rational and scientific explanation for everything. She is tall and slim, with long dark hair tied back in a ponytail. Susan is wearing a dark trouser suit and light blouse, with low-heeled shoes.

VICTOR KING

Male, mid-40s. Victor is a self-proclaimed psychic and medium, offering his services to the public. He is no charlatan, being a firm believer in the supernatural and well educated in the occult. Victor is short and overweight, clean-shaven with grey balding hair and small, round spectacles. He wears a light, open-necked shirt with a dark waistcoat, denim jeans and sturdy boots.

JACK MCKAY

Male, mid-30s. Jack is an accountant, a very normal man and a Christian. However, Jack is currently committed to the psychiatric hospital where Dr. Collins works, and is her patient. He is of average build, with short dark hair.

SETUP

Susan is investigating allegations by Jack of weird phenomena in an old gothic church somewhere in New England. Her investigations have also led her to recruit Victor, and together they are visiting the church in question. Jack, meanwhile, is in his room at the hospital.

PAGE 1

PANEL 1

Establishing shot of the CHURCH, with its high gothic towers, arched windows and nightmarish gargoyles. Nestled on the rise of a small hill, the church is several hundred years old, its stone blackened with age.

It's night, and the moon shines full and bright in the sky, casting deep shadows over the church's baroque decoration.

VOICE OFF

How come you know so much about this place, anyway?

PANEL 2

CUT TO a view from inside the church, looking toward the doorway as SUSAN opens the door. She and VICTOR, who stands beside her, are silhouetted in the doorway, tiny figures in a vast opening. Victor is also carrying a shoulder bag.

The church is pitch dark inside, with only the moonlight from outside giving any illumination. Susan and Victor cast long shadows down the length of the flagstone aisle.

VICTOR KING

Are you kidding? Every child in town grows up hearing about the "Cursed Church".

PANEL 3

ON Susan and Victor as they step into the church and look around, into the darkness. Susan holds a torch in one hand, shining light up into the dark recesses of the high church roof. She smiles, joking with Victor. Bats flap and skitter through the rafters.

VICTOR KING

We used to creep in here at night, looking for ghosts and stuff. I don't know if kids still do that.

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

No, just adults who should know better.

PANEL 4

CLOSE ON a stone gargoyle, one of a line in recessed arches high up in the side wall. The light from Susan's torch is harsh, bringing the gargoyle's demonic features into sharp relief of light and shadow.

DR. SUSAN COLLINS (OFF)
So why isn't it used any more? The
architecture's beautiful.

PANEL 5

CUT TO JACK, in his room of the psychiatric hospital. It's not quite a cell - the bed is comfortable, the walls are painted - but it's not far off. Everything is fixed down, there's little in it Jack could use to harm himself, and Jack himself wears a loose, hospital-style smock. The only light comes from outside, through the small pane of toughened safety glass in the door.

The walls of Jack's room are covered with occult scrawls - sigils, magickal symbols, zodiacal signs, pentagrams and sketches of winged demonic creatures. Given that it's so dark in here, with only the light coming through the door, don't worry about making these blatant in this first panel. We'll see more of them in a moment. Be subtle.

Jack sits, framed by the shaft of light, on the corner of his bed. He is huddled against the wall, hugging his knees to his chest. His face is pressed against his arms, curling himself up as tight as he can go.

But now Jack hears, or senses, something. He lifts his head just a little, peering over his knees with wide, red-rimmed eyes full of fear. His hair is rough and unkempt, he has a weeks' worth of beard growth, and there are large bags under his eyes.

JACK MCKAY (SMALL)
nnnnnn

PAGE 2

PANEL 1

BACK TO Susan and Victor. Susan walks down the cold, empty aisle, her torch shining over the friezes and statues, the ornately carved columns and stark wooden pews. Victor approaches the stone fount, at one side of the altar.

VICTOR KING

The Red Priest.

(cont)

You know, Satanist guy? Ritual killings? Don't tell me you've never heard that one, either.

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

You're the expert, Mr King. I'm just a shrink.

PANEL 2

CLOSE ON the fount, looking into the murky water from Victor's POV. His face is reflected in it, scarred and stained by the water's filth.

VICTOR KING (OFF)

Hmm.

(cont)

Well, it was mainly children. Most of them here in the fount.

PANEL 3

ON Susan. She faces the altar, shining her torch up at the large stone crucifixion statue above it.

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

And what, he cursed the place?

PANEL 4

As Susan illuminates the crucifixion statue, Victor dips his hands in the fount water, letting the stagnant liquid run back through the gaps in his fingers.

VICTOR KING

Nothing so ordinary.

(cont)

He was killed by a lynch mob. They say
his spirit entered the walls, and turned
it into an outpost of hell.

PANEL 5

CUT TO Jack again. His eyes are still wide with fear. He presses
his hands to his ears, trying to shut out a terrible noise.
Behind him, the sigils and scrawls on his walls begin to glow
with a weird, magickal light...

JACK MCKAY

NNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOO

PAGE 3

PANEL 1

BACK TO the church. CLOSE ON the face of the crucifixion statue, its face thrown into sharp relief and deep shadows by the light of Susan's torch. But something is different - tears of blood run from the statue's cold stone eyes, down its cheeks...

DR. SUSAN COLLINS (OFF)

Hard to --

(cont)

oh

PANEL 2

CLOSE ON Susan, looking up at the statue. She cries out in fear, her eyes wide and her mouth open in shock.

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

Mr King... Victor...

(cont)

What is that?

PANEL 3

CLOSE ON the gargoyle from page 1, panel 4. Susan's light is no longer on it, but the gargoyle is still visible in the dim ambient light...

VICTOR KING (OFF)

Oh, Christ.

(cont)

That, Dr Collins, is a sign...

PANEL 4

CUT TO Jack, in the hospital. He falls from his bed to the floor, crying out in pain, his ears still pressed to the side of his head, his mouth open to scream. The sigils and markings on his walls are now glowing bright and harsh, bathing Jack in an ominous light.

JACK MCKAY

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

PANEL 5

REPEAT PANEL 3, but with one difference - the gargoyle's eyes are no longer stone. Instead, they are the eyes of a demonic animal, glowing with fiery anger...

VICTOR KING (OFF)

...A sign that we should get the hell
out of here.

PAGE 4

PANEL 1

SPLASH PAGE!

All around the church, the gargoyles are alive. They swoop down from their high stone recesses, gliding on their heavy stone wings, their mouths open to screech and eyes blazing hellfire. Twenty of them, filling the air with lichen-covered death. Disturbed bats fly around and inbetween the gargoyles, blackening the air further.

The tears of blood from the crucifixion statue become a torrent, pooling out from the base of the altar like a crimson lake.

Susan and Victor cry out, crouching and throwing their arms up to shield them from the demonic assault.

SFX

SKREEEEEEEE SKREEEEEEEE

PAGE 5

PANEL 1

A gargoyle swoops down at Susan, but Victor grabs her arm and pulls her away. The gargoyle's sharp stone jaws snap at empty space.

SFX

SKREEEEEE!

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

AAAH!

VICTOR KING

COME ON!

PANEL 2

Susan and Victor run back toward the entrance, splashing over the blood-soaked floor. They run at a crouch, ducking to avoid the snapping claws and jaws of chittering gargoyles.

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

What about your talisman?

VICTOR KING

Forget it! I wasn't expecting --

PANEL 3

SMALL PANEL. CLOSE ON Victor's shoulder as a swooping gargoyle's claws cut through his shoulder, gouging out three parallel wounds. Blood spatters from the wounds.

VICTOR KING (OFF)

--NNNH!

PANEL 4

Victor falls to the bloody floor, clutching his wounds. Susan reaches for him as he falls...

DR. SUSAN COLLINS

Victor!

PANEL 5

SMALL PANEL. Susan crouches by Victor's side, searching through his shoulder bag, looking for something...

DR. SUSAN COLLINS
Come on, come on...

PANEL 6

...And pulls out a HUMAN SKULL, bleached and stripped of flesh. Still crouching, she turns and holds it up, brandishing it like a talisman. Blinding magical light radiates out from the skull, illuminating the church.

NO DIALOGUE

// ENDS