

Peggy And The Goth

by  
Timothy X Atack

FADE IN:

INT. THE GOTH'S ROOM - DAY

The GOTH: a tall, pale young man, dressed in black from head to toe, stands in the middle of a completely black room.

Sparsely furnished: mattress on the floor, black sheets; a wooden table (also black) upon which sit various black objects of indeterminate nature.

Black curtains, drawn. The light bulb hanging from the ceiling fails to illuminate the room in any noticeable way.

The GOTH is stooped as though the world weighs heavy upon his shoulders: white pan-sticked face set in a pissed-off frown. He is not a modern Goth. He reeks of the early 1980s, the Cure and Siouxsie Sioux.

There is a commotion somewhere beyond the room. The GOTH looks at the door, ill at ease, and then at the curtained window: as if contemplating a daring escape.

Too late. The door rattles and opens narrowly, striking a black brick placed strategically on the floor. PEGGY, a ten-year-old schoolgirl wearing primary colours, forces her head through the gap.

PEGGY

Ice cream! Let's go to the docks  
and get ice cream!

The GOTH does not respond.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Oh, come on! ICE CREAM! Ice cream  
in a cone!

She squeezes into the room and drags the GOTH out by his hand. On her T-shirt there is a big picture of a puppy.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

... with raspberry sauce!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DOCKS - DAY

There is an ice cream van parked on the dockside for no discernable reason. It sits obtrusively amidst the rusty shipping cranes, empty warehouses and dull, murky water.

PEGGY is receiving her ice cream, chin resting on the counter. The GOTH is deliberately standing thirty paces behind her, looking miserable.

PEGGY

What ice cream do you want?

GOTH

I'm thinking.

PEGGY

Are you thinking about ice cream?

GOTH

No. I'm thinking about this... tree...  
in hell... where all the aborted  
foetuses hang... dripping blood...

PEGGY

Don't talk like that. What flavour  
are you going to have? I've got  
enough money for you to have a big  
one!

The ICE CREAM SELLER is revealed as a jovial, sideburned man, holding a laminated selection card which pictures a variety of frozen treats. All the ice creams have insane names.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Do you want a Sparklefox? Or a  
Elsinore? Oh look, this one's  
called The Gondoliers!

SELLER

Is he your brother?

PEGGY

Oh no, not my brother, no.

She turns to watch the GOTH: attempting to kick a stone into the river. Instead it bounces back at him off a crane.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

No, I found him.  
(Apologetically)  
I wouldn't be surprised if he  
doesn't want an ice cream. He  
doesn't eat much.

The SELLER grins and waves away her apology.

SELLER

Oh, the world is full of people who don't like ice cream, of late.

PEGGY

Really?

The SELLER leans towards her conspiratorially.

SELLER

Slimmers, killjoys, and sensitive types.

PEGGY

(Mouth full)

Sounds horrible. I love ice cream.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCKSIDE - DAY

PEGGY and the GOTH sit within the cage of the crane tower, watching the sluggish water. The GOTH has an ice cream (huge, with vermicelli and sauce) but pays it little attention.

PEGGY

You're silly, Goth. I can't imagine ever not wanting an ice cream. Or a choc ice.

GOTH

You'll understand. One day you'll go through puberty and everything will become like a big... cracked... mirror.

PEGGY

Is that what happened to you?

Witheringly, the GOTH runs a finger through the top of his ice cream, leaving a thick smear in the sauce.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

What happens at puberty? Is it like an exam?

GOTH

It certainly tests your patience.

PEGGY

Before you had your puberty, what were you like?

GOTH  
Foolishly optimistic.

PEGGY thinks for a moment.

PEGGY  
My friends are called Geeta  
Mishram, Tina Davies, Anthea Miller  
and Isobel Welch. And I like Sarah  
Jameson but I don't like Sarah  
Wyatt.

The GOTH rolls his eyes. He takes a bite out of his ice cream  
and immediately winces, putting a hand to his teeth.

PEGGY (CONT'D)  
Who are your friends?

GOTH  
(Suddenly annoyed)  
Friends! With humans, human BEINGS,  
you're essentially talking about...  
moveable... combinations... of chemical  
elements, phosphorous, iron,  
carbon, lots of carbon, and  
something like... eighty per cent...  
WATER. And YOU SAY you like one or  
two of these random.. MUSHY...  
PUPPETS... more than some other?  
WHAT'S THE POINT?

He throws his cone into the river. They watch it sink.

PEGGY  
That was really silly.

GOTH  
Do you construct these inanities  
systematically, so as to break my  
spirit?

PEGGY  
No. But we can go to the park if  
you want.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK PLAY AREA - DAY

PEGGY and the GOTH sit on a seesaw, but thanks to the unequal distribution of weight PEGGY's end is permanently up in the air, and the GOTH is practically on the floor, his voluminous coat pooled around him.

He moves the seesaw up and down with minimal effort, half-hearted, producing an erratic little wobble that does no-one any favours.

PEGGY

You know those pictures you draw with the black biros I buy for you? Where you keep drawing over things you've drawn before until the whole page is black?

The GOTH might just be smirking a bit.

GOTH

Yes.

PEGGY

Before you draw over the things, what are the things that you draw?

GOTH

(Sighs)

They're just... inexorable.

PEGGY

When you draw, is "inexorable" a bit like perspective?

The GOTH groans.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

I'm learning about perspective. On Fridays I learn about perspective in my art lesson, and then at three o'clock I have euphonium practice.

The GOTH puts a hand to his head as if trying to stop his brain crawling out.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

I'm going to take you, and your pictures, to school tomorrow, and we'll have fun.

GOTH  
(Mortified)  
You can't take me to school.

PEGGY  
Yes I can now. They've changed the  
rules. I can take you to school,  
I'm just not allowed to take you  
into the classroom, or swap you.

On the GOTH: a little bit scared.

GOTH  
...Swap me?

PEGGY  
Isobel Welch has got a Punk Rocker  
she wants to swap. And they're much  
more fun than Goths. Everyone likes  
Punks.

GOTH  
You wouldn't swap me.

PEGGY  
I might. If you didn't stop being  
such a sad bum face.

Pause.

PEGGY (CONT'D)  
You could at least smile every now  
and then. Go on. Give a big smile!

The GOTH gives the single most unconvincing smile ever seen  
in a motion picture.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MORNING

A primary school playground. Midway through morning break,  
loud and bustling.

Like Peggy and her Goth, most of the kids here are  
accompanied by stereotypical representatives of various  
subcultures. In a series of shots around the playground:

A) A girl sitting on a bench flanked by two stick thin BALLET  
DANCERS. The dancers are in tutus and leggings, smoking fags.

B) Two tiny twin girls with a TEDDY BOY. The girls are playing pat-a-cake, the teddy boy is dancing in a "cooler-than-thou" fashion.

C) A boy playing a spirited game of tag with an ANGLICAN BISHOP in full regalia.

D) A group of children watching a SAMURAI WARRIOR. The SAMURAI gives a war cry and lunges out with his sword. The children scream and scatter.

E) Beneath the basketball hoops, a clutch of five 1980s YUPPIES, striped shirts, huge out-dated cellphones, clustered together and shouting into their handsets. A girl stands just outside of their circle, gazing out upon the playground with a proprietary air. She wears an expensive winter coat and her hair is cut in an immaculate blonde bob. Her name is SARAH WYATT and she is a jumped-up little monster.

F) IAN JOHNSON, a ginger haired boy eating crisps with a huge, yeti-like HIPPY.

PEGGY is standing by the school railings with an uneasy GOTH. She points towards IAN JOHNSON.

PEGGY

That's Ian Johnson and his Hippy.  
The Hippy hasn't washed since 1968.  
Ian's mum doesn't let it go in the  
house. It lives in the shed.

GOTH

Your point being...?

PEGGY

My mum doesn't make you live in the  
shed. Aren't you lucky?

GOTH

I'm only lucky in that death  
eventually comes to us all.

PEGGY

Yeah, well you say that.

She points at SARAH WYATT.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

That's Sarah Wyatt, she sits at my  
table in class. All those people  
with her are yuppies. Sarah's Dad  
buys her a new yuppie every  
birthday.

Medium close-up on the YUPPIES.

YUPPIES

(Mass of chatter)

YAH / YUP / YAH / YOU'RE BREAKING  
UP / YAH / WHAT? / SELL 4000 AT 221  
/ YAH / YUP / WELL GET ME SOMEONE  
WHO HAS SOME BLOODY AUTHORITY -

PEGGY

Come on, come and meet my friends.

GOTH

Oh god...

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - END OF MORNING BREAK

A boy is showing off a CLUB DJ to some unconvinced mates. The DJ has headphones and an unconnected vinyl deck on the playground floor.

Kneeling over the deck, he silently lines up a record, sets it spinning, holds his hands in the air as if receiving crowd approval -- the boy's mates look nonplussed: one folds his arms and shakes his head.

PEGGY is talking to a girl of similar age: GEETA, who has brought her 1920s FLAPPER to school. The FLAPPER wears a short, slinky dress and holds a complicated looking cocktail.

GEETA

This is my Flapper, she's from 1926. She's called a flapper 'cos of the way she dances.

PEGGY

Where did you get her?

GEETA

She belonged to my grandma. And then to my mum. And then to me.

PEGGY

Is your Flapper happy?

GEETA looks at the FLAPPER, who grins and nods excitedly.

GEETA

Yes she is.

IAN JOHNSON appears in the background. He's accompanied by his HIPPIE and another boy who has an American CHEERLEADER in tow. Both boys are eating crisps.

IAN  
Hey, Peggy, is that a goth?

PEGGY  
Yeah!

IAN  
Heh. Right.

The two boys laugh, turn away. Unsure of herself, PEGGY scans the playground in various directions. A few other children seem to be looking at the GOTH. PEGGY frowns.

The school bell rings. The children and their diverse charges file towards classrooms. But at the main door, all the pet adults grind to a halt, not moving any further inside.

Just before crossing the threshold: PEGGY turns and waves cheerily at the GOTH. The GOTH shrugs and turns away.

With all the kids gone, a vaguely despondent crowd of cultural stereotypes is left hanging around by the school building, not entirely sure what to do.

The YUPPIES continue bawling into their cellphones. The GOTH looks at them warily.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

An airy classroom at ground level of the school building, a long window looking out onto the playground. Most of the class are up by the window, waving at the pet adults outside.

The class is led by MR FRAME, mid 20s with a pleasant air. Soft-spoken for the most part. He perches himself on the edge of his desk.

MR FRAME  
OK, come on, away from the window -

Not much reaction from the children. A few do as they're told.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)  
Right, listen up. This is important. Back to your seats.

The rest of the class shuffle into place.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)

Now a lot of teachers here did not want you to bring your special friends to school at all...

There are boos from the class.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)

Yeeees, exactly, booooo. So it's important that you don't give the school ANY REASON to take away that privilege. No looking out of the windows. No getting distracted. Does that make sense to everyone?

CLASS

(Together)

Yes, Mister Frame.

MR FRAME

Good stuff. And it's out with your English exercise books, please, we'll carry on with the work set yesterday.

PEGGY takes out her English notebook. It is covered in multi-coloured stickers, gleeful cartoon characters and copious amounts of fancy glitter.

She opens it on half a page of writing entitled *why i like THE GOTH*. The word "Goth" is surrounded by little stars and kisses, plus one single black spider.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)

Remember, I want three things that you like about your special friend. So for example Mark -

Close up of a startled MARK.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)

Mark is writing about his DJ. He might mention that he likes the way his DJ really gets a crowd going, has lots and lots of records, and always does very smooth... smooth, what is it, Mark?

MARK

SMOOTH CROSSFADES.

MR FRAME

Smooth crossfades, that's what Mark is writing about. Geeta is writing about her Flapper -

GEETA

- YAY!

MR FRAME

- and Peggy is writing about her Goth.

There is a quiet little ripple of laughter. PEGGY looks uncertainly around.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)

Alright, alright. I want this piece finished, in best, by lunch, so let's get to work.

PEGGY looks out of the window. Across on the other side of the playground, she can see the GOTH, sitting in a big black pool of his own coat.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

The GOTH has produced a small jet black lump of some kind of tactile, moldable material.

He proceeds to manipulate, sculpt and shape it. The lump starts to take the form of a monstrous thing, a glowering, looming demon from your worst nightmares.

It develops a set of swooping, cracked wings a single withered limb reaches from its twisted trunk. With a toothpick the GOTH gives his creation two hollow eyes.

Upon an open palm, he lifts the finished atrocity close to his face to inspect it.

He sighs, and crushes the thing back into a ball again.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

MR FRAME is kneeling down by PEGGY, casting an eye over her work.

MR FRAME

This is good, Peggy. Just a couple of things: You spell "depths" with a T... H... like that. And "inconsolable" has an O, just there, not a U.

PEGGY nods.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)

So what exactly is your Goth inconsolable about?

PEGGY

I dunno. He just always says he's inconsolable.

MR FRAME

OK, and the last thing is: well, you look and see if you can tell me. You've used the word "I" a lot in this writing, haven't you? Which is what we call the first person. Can you tell me what you do with "I"?

PEGGY

Yeah, you put it in capital letters.

MR FRAME

Yep, that's right, and all your "I"s here are dotted, in what we call lower case. "I like..." "I love..." you need to put these in capitals.

PEGGY

But doing it in small letters is the Goth way of doing it.

MR FRAME

Well that's fine for the Goth way. Unfortunately it won't help much in your SATS, so I think you'll have to change them into capitals. For now?

SARAH WYATT, sat at the same table, interrupts.

SARAH

Mr Frame, if we write "I" in capitals, when we write the word "Me" should we also write that in capitals?

MR FRAME

No Sarah, "Me" is small just like any other word.

SARAH

Why is it not in capitals?

MR FRAME

To be honest I'm not sure. It's just the way we do it.

He smiles and moves to another table.

SARAH

Fool.

PEGGY

(Whispers)

Sarah! You'll get done!

SARAH

Pffft. Just let him try. My lawyers would eat him for breakfast.

As PEGGY returns to her work, SARAH quietly watches her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I must say I admire your long-term strategy. You've invested a lot in that Goth, haven't you? You're a risk taker. How long have you had him?

PEGGY

Since I was eight.

SARAH

Two years. Impressive.

A pause. SARAH takes an expensive looking notebook from her black leather satchel. She opens it at a page which contains a big list of yuppy phrases:

*Increase your productivity*  
*Bench mark your core investment*  
*Get all your ducks in a row*  
*The best practice is result-driven*

*Think outside the box*  
*Dead in the water*

SARAH leans closer to PEGGY.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Now you know Peggy, everyone's saying your Goth is very gloomy. And also, a bit doomy. But this needn't be a business critical issue. As long as you think outside the box, you needn't end up dead in the water.

She smiles sweetly.

PEGGY

Y'what?

SARAH

I could help increase your Goth's overall productivity. It's not rocket science. Maybe we could turn him into a Goth with a more positive outlook. A Goth who is sassy and perhaps also fun.

PEGGY

He doesn't have a lot of friends.

SARAH nods: oodles of false sympathy.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

He says his only real friends are dirt, pain and the night. But I think he could have more actual friends if he tried.

SARAH lays a hand on PEGGY's arm.

SARAH

We can make that our mission statement.

PEGGY

We can?

SARAH

It won't take long. We just need to take your Goth and... well... add value. For instance, maybe he could have a funny catchphrase. Or a cool way of walking.

PEGGY frowns.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Think about it, Peggy. It's a win-win situation.

PEGGY  
Ookay...

SARAH  
Excellent. Shall we do lunch?

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - LUNCHTIME

Some girls swan across the playground accompanied by a couple of GLAM ROCKERS, all spangly lycra and hair teased to heaven.

A boy is playing at being Pirates, with a PIRATE. They sit on a big cask of rum.

In their usual spot beneath the basketball hoops, the YUPPIES are on their phones, pacing back and forth in a loose group.

YUPPIES  
(Together)  
YAH / ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT WE'VE  
GOT A SITUATION? / 500 AT 750 / HMM  
YAH / A TABLE FOR TWO AT EIGHT /  
NEEDLESS TO SAY, I'M BLOODY LIVID

A few metres away, the GOTH is looming awkwardly, hands deep in coat pockets, regarding the YUPPIES with suspicion. He turns to PEGGY, who stands some distance away with SARAH.

PEGGY smiles, waves the GOTH towards the YUPPIES. But he just stands there and frowns at her.

SARAH  
Peggy, your people don't seem to be talking to my people.

She snaps her fingers, and gesticulates at the YUPPIES. As one, they move a few steps closer to the GOTH. Almost exactly in unison: the GOTH takes a few steps backwards.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Oh, Pegg-ee, sorr-ee, this just isn't working -

She suddenly breaks into a purposeful march towards the GOTH. PEGGY follows.

The YUPPIES hang up their phones in rapid succession and surround the GOTH in a semi-circle. SARAH produces her expensive notebook and addresses the GOTH.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I have some catchphrases you should try out. They're all very good, and free of charge. Say after me:

(Reads from notebook)

"I'm a twenty-first century TV death freak."

The GOTH can barely conceal his contempt.

PEGGY

Try it, Goth, it might be fun.

SARAH

Hmm. Moving on. Try this: "Inject mercury into my heart." That's a good one! You can make it sound either happy or sad.

The GOTH says nothing, and looks down.

PEGGY

Hey...

SARAH

(To PEGGY)

Let me handle this.

She walks directly up to the GOTH, right under his bowed head, forcing him to look at her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

It's time to get down to brass tacks, Goth. You're not a team player, are you? Just look around you. Look at the total and complete team playing happening all over this playground. Look over there -

The GOTH looks over at the school building, where some kids, a modern ARMY OFFICER and a COURT JESTER are playing marbles.

SARAH (CONT'D)

- look over there, over there now -

They turn to look the other way. We see a jogging pair of PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALLERS, playing keepy-up with two NUNS and two seven-year-old boys.

SARAH (CONT'D)

- everyone's making connections, networking, doing street-level market research, moving forward. But not you. Oh no, not the Goth. You haven't got a nose for it, plus you haven't got a leg to stand on, plus you also stick out like a sore thumb. You know what? You're letting Peggy down.

This alarms the GOTH -- he looks at PEGGY.

PEGGY

Um, well, no, I'm not sayin'...

SARAH

No, seriously, Peggy, he's letting you down.

SARAH moves away from the GOTH and resumes her position with the notebook held aloft.

SARAH (CONT'D)

He's letting you down. You're letting yourself down. He's a 1980s Goth in a 21st century Goth market. I mean, you tell me: how long has it been since The Cure made a decent album? The Mission? Fields Of The Nephilim? -- don't make me laugh! He probably reads Angela Carter novels, doesn't he? Does he hang around in candle shops and cost a fortune in pan-stick? I'm telling you, the world's moved on.

The GOTH, alarmed, starts to take a few steps backwards.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Try this one:

(Reads from notebook)

"I'll be your Razorblade Jesus."  
Got that? Razorblade Jesus. Try that one.

The GOTH looks straight at PEGGY, angry and scared.

GOTH  
I feel violated.

PEGGY: suddenly scared. But SARAH laughs.

SARAH  
Oooh, that's good! Say it again! "I  
feel violated."

The GOTH turns to look at the school gate behind him.

PEGGY  
Don't go...

SARAH  
"I feel violated!"

A couple of the YUPPIES behind her repeat "I feel violated"  
in different annoying ways.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Get him to say it again, Peggy.

PEGGY  
I'm sorry, Goth. Don't go.

SARAH  
Is he even listening? Look at him.  
The wheel's still spinning, but the  
hamster's dead.

The GOTH turns on his heel and runs from the playground.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Oh for crying out loud -

PEGGY, upset, moves to follow the GOTH.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Where do you think you're going?

PEGGY stops. She can now see that behind the YUPPIES, a  
larger crowd of kids has gathered. IAN JOHNSON and his HIPPIE:  
smirking.

PEGGY  
I don't want to lose him.

SARAH  
You're better off without him.

PEGGY  
No I'm not.

SARAH

Yes you are. Look at you! Look at your hair! You've got pigtails! What's on your t-shirt? IT'S A PUPPY! What have you got to do with Goths and... dark... things? NOTHING. That's what. NOTHING. He's so yesterday! He's so boring!

PEGGY

He's not boring.

SARAH

Yeh, right! What are you, in denial?

PEGGY

(Starting to cry)  
SHUT UP -

SARAH

It's a dog eat dog world -

PEGGY

SHUT UP SHUT UP -

SARAH

YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THE BIG PICTURE!  
WHY DON'T YOU RATIONALISE? WHERE'S YOUR SYNERGY? YOU'VE GOT ISSUES!

PEGGY

SHUT UP YOU BITCH I'M ONLY TEN!

PEGGY runs off, through the school gate, crying.

SARAH turns to the assembled (and slightly amused) crowd. The YUPPIES mass behind her.

SARAH

I run this playground. I want a smooth operation.

IAN JOHNSON is still eating crisps.

IAN

Ha! She called you a bitch.

SARAH stares at him icily.

SARAH

Next time you're at some stupid festival I hope your Hippy gets stuck in a cattle grid and run over by a tractor.

Silence. The crowd disperses.

IAN and the HIPPIY are left standing alone.

IAN

Well. That told me.

CUT TO:

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A small street of terraced houses. MR FRAME approaches one and rings the bell.

The door is answered by a woman: late 30s, glasses, dressed for the office. This is ALICE. She's relaxed - eating a sandwich.

MR FRAME

Hi. Mrs Julius?

ALICE

Yep.

MR FRAME

I'm Robin Frame. I'm Peggy's teacher.

ALICE

Oh, you're new.

MR FRAME

I'm standing in for Mr Thompson this term. Yep.

ALICE

Right. Why don't you come on in?

MR FRAME

Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

An airy, pleasant room. A couple of battered but comfy sofas; lots of books; CDs in precarious stacks up against the skirting boards.

The walls are decorated with sketches and still-lives that would appear to be ALICE's own work; interspersed with HR Giger prints, or similarly gothic material.

ALICE indicates that MR FRAME should sit on a sofa. She leans against a table strewn with artist's materials.

MR FRAME

Am I right in thinking the Police have already been round?

ALICE

Oh yeah, I got back from work early. A nice policeman told me pretty much everything. I'm going to work from home this afternoon in case Peggy comes slinking back.

MR FRAME

I've been told this is a sort of regular occurrence.

ALICE

Oh, yeah. You know how they say you can tell you're getting older when policemen look younger? Total lie. The officer who came round today... was ancient. Big, long, grey beard. Looked like a wizard. Ha ha.

MR FRAME

A wizard?

ALICE

Yeah. So it's a lie. The policemen are getting older, and I'm getting older...

MR FRAME

Oh, well, you don't... you're -

Pause.

ALICE

Cup of tea?

MR FRAME  
Tea would be lovely.

ALICE leaves the room.

MR FRAME rises from the sofa and looks at some of the pictures.

One is obviously drawn by Peggy. A huge yellow and gold moon, a scrawny huddled black shape below it. Labeled: *the goth wurships the moon - by Peggy Julius - age 9.*

The picture next to it is a finely detailed sketch of Peggy looking ebullient and colourful, grinning away. In the background the Goth sulks, looking out of frame. It is labeled *Peggy and The Goth* and signed *Alice Julius*.

ALICE returns with mugs of tea and hands one to MR FRAME.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)  
Thanks. I like these pictures.

ALICE  
We were looking at them the other day and Peggy said to me: "Mum, am I weird? Because the happy pictures make me feel sad, and the sad pictures make me feel happy."

MR FRAME  
That sounds like Peggy.

ALICE  
I tried to explain the concept of catharsis. But I think she got lost a little. She now gets confused between catharsis and cartilage. She thinks catharsis is something you find in your nose. And cartilage -

MR FRAME  
- Is looking at sad pictures and feeling happy.

ALICE nods. A slight pause.

MR FRAME (CONT'D)  
We should talk a little about Peggy, if you have the time -

ALICE

You're going to ask me if it worries me that she runs off as often as she does?

MR FRAME

Well, it's been noted. But only because we'd want to know if she was being bullied, or -- there's one girl at school, who sits at her table -

ALICE

Sarah? The girl with the yuppies?

MR FRAME

Sarah Wyatt. Do you know her?

ALICE

Well, I sort of saw it coming. I prised the information out of Peggy a few days ago. When I was at school the same sort of thing happened to me.

MR FRAME

You had a Goth as well?

ALICE shakes her head and pauses for effect.

ALICE

I had a Hell's Angel. I'm still quite proud of that. What did you have?

MR FRAME

Guess.

ALICE

You had a...

It's an excuse to look at him at length. Which she does.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You had a punk.

MR FRAME shakes his head.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You had a surfer. A surfer dude.

MR FRAME

You're nowhere near.

ALICE  
You... you tell me.

MR FRAME  
I had Morrissey.

ALICE lets her mouth drop.

ALICE  
You had Morrissey?

MR FRAME  
Yes.

ALICE  
Morrissey from The Smiths?

MR FRAME  
Yep.

ALICE  
You had the original Morrissey from  
the Smiths? That's a collectible.

MR FRAME  
Mmm well I don't have him any more.  
(Beat)  
It really doesn't bother you that  
Peggy might be getting picked on?

ALICE  
Yes. But. I dunno. Underneath those  
girly t-shirts she's really a very  
tough kid.

MR FRAME  
Does it bother Mister Julius?

ALICE  
Ah, there's no Mister Julius. Um..

She sits down. MR FRAME sits opposite her.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Story, brief: Car Crash. All three  
of us, Mister Julius, Peggy, and  
myself, in the car. Peggy was six.  
Mister Julius went into a coma. He  
hung on for a year, full of tubes  
and stuff, refusing to wake up.  
Brain slowly... going. We were then  
persuaded to switch him off.

MR FRAME

I'm sorry.

ALICE

Don't be. Look at the walls. Here we are. Living. Breathing. Dancing. Singing. La la la.

MR FRAME

It must have been hard on Peggy.

ALICE

Yeah. But like I said: tough kid.

MR FRAME

Do you think the, um... coma and the..

ALICE

The hospital, the Dad full of tubes, that it affected her? Obviously, but...

MR FRAME

I don't mean to pry. I was just wondering whether it influenced her choosing the Goth. The darkness, the... doubt.

ALICE

Oh, come on. You're a teacher. You know better than that. What kids choose has nothing to do with what they're like deep inside. It's all about the, wotsit -

MR FRAME

Impact?

ALICE nods and gives a wry grin.

ALICE

When she brought that Goth home for the first time I knew it would mean trouble for her. But I knew it would do other things for her that I couldn't possibly imagine. Come on, I mean... I had a Hell's Angel. You had -

MR FRAME

I had Morrissey.

ALICE  
You mad boy. Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTELAND - AFTERNOON

A piece of industrial wasteland. Cracked concrete and weeds.

The GOTH: sitting on a collection of reject breeze blocks, sculpting his lump of black putty. Once more, a terrible thing with ragged wings and dead eyes emerges in his hands.

PEGGY appears in the distance, running. The GOTH sees her, puts the sculpture in his pocket and begins walking away.

PEGGY  
Goth! Wait!

She finally overtakes him and stands in his path, forcing him to stop. The GOTH doesn't know where to look, and decides to look at the sky.

PEGGY (CONT'D (CONT'D))  
(Out of breath)  
Wait... I... sorry... I... I'm dead sorry!  
We'll go somewhere. Somewhere nice.  
Or even somewhere you wanna go. We  
can go anywhere. Just say!

GOTH  
The Ghost Train.

PEGGY  
You always wanna go on the ghost  
train. Why do you always wanna go  
on the ghost train?

GOTH  
It's mostly mechanical.

A pause.

GOTH (CONT'D)  
I thought you said we could go  
anywhere?

PEGGY  
Yes. O-KAY! We can go on the Ghost  
train.

CUT TO:

INT. GHOST TRAIN - AFTERNOON

Minor key 1950s synth music. A clunking, rattling whir, and: a dumpy VAMPYR looms out of the darkness, cackling with the tape-loop crapness you get on fairground rides.

An automatic car trundles past, with two occupants: PEGGY and the GOTH, side by side in silence. There's no indication that the GOTH is actually enjoying it.

Sudden close up of a cheap skeleton juddering out of the darkness, accompanied by a taped scream. It jams in place, not retreating.

The sound effects grind to a halt. The light dims. The skeleton is still looking at us, gormlessly.

GHOST TRAIN OPERATOR (V.O.)

There is a fault. Please remain in the vehicle. Do not leave the vehicle. The ride will continue shortly.

GOTH

Typical.

PEGGY

I'm sorry I let Sarah Wyatt near you. I hope she didn't scare you.

The GOTH snorts derisively.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

She just uses long words 'cos she's learnt them from all those Yuppies she has. She doesn't know what they mean. She just likes how it sounds, to sound big and important.

GOTH

I hate those Yuppies. They're always doing stuff like trading in futures. How stupid is that? Trading in futures. As if you can control it.

PEGGY

Goth...

GOTH

What?

PEGGY

What do you want to do in the future?

GHOST TRAIN OPERATOR (V.O.)

Remain in the vehicle.

A pause.

PEGGY

Well? What do you want to do in the future?

GOTH

I don't know. It's very dark out there.

He looks at the jammed skeleton inches from his nose.

GOTH (CONT'D)

Plus, after several years of extensive and painstaking research, I'm pretty much convinced the whole world hates me.

Suddenly the ride judders back to life and the car trundles away through a set of cheap black curtains.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIRGROUND - LATE AFTERNOON

PEGGY and the GOTH are riding adjacent horses on a colourful but old and battered carousel.

PEGGY

People don't hate you. They just don't know how to talk to you because you're...

She pauses as their heads bob in and out of frame.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

- Because you're a little bit weird.

The GOTH says nothing.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Do you think I'm weird too?

GOTH

(Snorts)

You're not in the slightest bit weird. You're about as weird as a bunch of daisies.

PEGGY

I am weird, though. At the hospital they thought I was weird. They thought I was weird when I wanted to switch Dad's machine off.

GOTH

(Genuinely surprised)

You never told me that.

PEGGY

I said it was important that I turned him off. Me. So they gave me a switch to press, but the switch wasn't really part of the machine.

GOTH

What... did you do?

PEGGY

I told them I knew it was a trick. And that they shouldn't trick me 'cos it was important I turned the machine off. Mum and me both made the decision, and if I made the decision I had to turn the machine off. He'd know if it wasn't me that did it. Even if his head had been smashed up so bad his brain was dead. If it wasn't me that did it, he'd know.

A pause.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

I got all angry that they tried to trick me. And next to Dad's bed I saw some plugs. Plugs in the wall. I pulled them out of the wall and the machine stopped.

GOTH

What did your Mum say?

PEGGY

Nuthin'. She was crying and smiling.

GOTH  
At the same time?

PEGGY nods.

PEGGY  
So don't you ever say that I'm not  
weird. Me and my mum are just as  
weird as you, and there's nothing  
you can do about it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH STREET - TWILIGHT

A grey, unprepossessing high street on a slight hill. The shops are just shutting and PEGGY and the GOTH amble along the pavement.

PEGGY  
What made you decide to be a Goth?

GOTH  
These decisions aren't made by an  
individual. It's a calling. I heard  
the call, and I answered.

PEGGY  
Was it like a phone call?

GOTH  
No. It wasn't like a phone call.

PEGGY  
Sometimes I think being a Goth must  
be funny.

The GOTH stops in his tracks.

GOTH  
Funny? Funny?

PEGGY  
(Laughing)  
Yeah.

GOTH

There's nothing funny about it.  
We're talking about people who  
voluntarily carry the wrath and  
pain of centuries on their backs...  
Who see the cracks in the world and  
the primordial fear seeping out! I  
am a moonchild!

PEGGY

Ha ha!

The GOTH frowns and walks on again.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

(Sarcastic)

Ooh I'm sorry...

She skips to catch up with him.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

(Sings)

*Never laugh at a goth  
Never laugh at a goth  
Never laugh at a goth  
There'll be troooooouble...*

There might even be a little smile on the GOTH's face.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Hey, do you think someday everyone  
will want to be a Goth?

GOTH

It's not about fashion. What, you  
think Milan, New York and Paris can  
distill this ball of hate inside  
me? You think they can roll it up  
and down a catwalk? Being a Goth is  
about being different, being  
entirely different to anyone... else..

He sees something and trails off mid-sentence. Both he and  
PEGGY grind to a halt.

Their POV: the far end of the street, by the traffic  
junction, a group of seven or eight GOTHs is moving slowly  
towards a pedestrian crossing.

They are uniformly white faced, black clad and dark haired,  
all roughly the same age as the GOTH. Whilst they don't  
appear to be having a "good time" they are definitely a  
little community all of their own.

PEGGY

Wow.

GOTH

Hmm.

PEGGY

What a big bunch of Goths.

GOTH

They're probably... just passing  
through...

The group of GOTHs stops at the pedestrian crossing. Within the crowd, a GOTHETTE with heavily lined eyes and matted hair turns her head and makes eye contact with the GOTH. She has one bright red contact lens in her left eye.

She doesn't exactly smile... but her eyes narrow. The GOTH also lowers his eyelids slightly. It's like cats communicating.

PEGGY notices the interaction.

PEGGY

You should go.

This confuses the GOTH.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

You should go with them.

GOTH

No.

PEGGY

I think you should go.

They look at each other for a moment.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

It might be fun.

Her voice starts to crack a little.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Well... I don't mean you'll have fun,  
I know you don't like to have fun,  
but maybe... maybe it'll BE fun.

The GOTH thinks about it for a few moments. When he looks down at PEGGY, she's crying.

GOTH  
Always pain and suffering.

PEGGY  
You should GO. And I'll miss you,  
Goth, but you should really go.

He looks back at the black clad crowd near the traffic lights. Then, sheepishly, back at PEGGY.

GOTH  
I'll probably miss you.

PEGGY  
You better go quick or the lights  
will change, and they'll be gone.

GOTH  
(Suddenly annoyed)  
I'll miss you. But that's life, OK?

PEGGY  
Yeah.

He hurriedly takes something from his pocket and presses it into her hand -- then turns with a swoosh of his coat and strides down the street.

The crowd of GOTHS has reached a central traffic island and is waiting to cross the last stretch of road. Coat billowing, the GOTH joins them.

Curt nods are exchanged, but no words. His presence seems to be accepted instantly.

PEGGY watches as the GOTH merges with the crowd, which then shuffles around a corner, and vanishes.

She looks at the object in her hand. It is the decrepit, clawed monster the GOTH has been modelling. Small yet vicious. Amateurish yet somehow heartfelt.

She wipes her eyes, and walks back the way she came.

The opposite side of the street: from beneath a shop awning, a POLICEMAN steps forward, watching PEGGY leave. He has a huge grey beard, like a wizard.

CUT TO:

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - EVENING

The streetlights have begun to glow. PEGGY sprints along the road to her house, takes a key from her pocket, and enters.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWAY AND LANDING - EVENING

PEGGY clumps up the stairs at speed, bundling into her room and slamming the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. PEGGY'S ROOM - NIGHT

A riot of colour and clutter. Little trellis shelves with bright trinkets. Pictures on the wall are uniformly cute and gaudy. Feather boas strewn everywhere.

PEGGY is lying on her bed. She is still upset, but in a quiet, pensive way.

There is a knock at the door, and ALICE pokes her head in.

ALICE

Hey.

PEGGY

Hey.

ALICE enters, and perches on the end of the bed.

ALICE

No Goth?

PEGGY

No. There were some other Goths in town. I told him to go with them.

ALICE

Oh, right.

ALICE picks up a couple of pieces of A4 paper at the foot of the bed. They are both covered in dense scrawls of black biro that have made the sheets ridged and contoured.

PEGGY

The other kids are going to laugh at me even more now. I don't have anyone.

ALICE

Don't you dare say that. You were always going to be the first to move on. A mum can tell. Anyway, you and I have to have a little talk. All this bunking off... and mooching... around...

PEGGY sighs.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You can sigh all you want. You're such a drama queen -

She tickles her. PEGGY harrumphs and turns on her side.

ALICE (CONT'D)

How about some ice cream?

PEGGY suddenly brightens.

PEGGY

Yeah!

ALICE

Come along then.

She pulls her up from the bed with a single hand, and they leave the room.

On PEGGY's bedside table: covered in little anthropomorphic toys, a forest of wide eyes and goofy grins.

Amongst other things it features rabbits, horses, trains and princesses, a loose affiliation of cuteness.

Closer, on something in the dead centre of the tableau, something innocuous:

It is the GOTH's sculpture: black, hunched, and glowering.

FADE OUT.