

EXT. BONE FOREST - NIGHT

Gnarled bone-white trees curl, branches bare, to either side of a path lit only by the glow of a full moon.

MILO, twelve, decked out in his scouting uniform, scans the darkness past the trees, on high alert.

A fluffy red squirrel, GEORGE, rides on his shoulder. When George speaks, he has a thick New York accent.

MILO

You're sure this is the right way?

GEORGE

Do they just give away forestry badges for free or somethin'?

MILO

None of this is in the handbook!

GEORGE

Those trees is witch fingers. We follow them, we got a witch, see?

MILO

I don't want a witch, though!

With this, one of the trees STEPS ONTO THE PATH.

Milo SHRIEKS and cowers. George hides inside his shirt.

But it's not a tree - it's a tall, pale, skinny BONE MAN.

BONE MAN

You'll change your tune when you meet our witch. She's a charmer.

MILO

Don't hurt me!

BONE MAN

I'm just a humble toll collector. I wouldn't hurt a fly as long as it paid! Now, empty those pockets!

Milo pulls out his wallet, showing he has no cash. The Bone Man reaches in and plucks out a worn photo of Milo's mother.

MILO

No, that's my only copy!

BONE MAN

Then it buys you passage! Proceed!