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The use of Hugo’s cover of Jay-Z’s “99 Problems” under the end credits of FRIGHT NIGHT at first seems incongruous; it doesn’t seem to have much to do with the movie we’ve just watched. But when you think about it, that version of the song—which waters down the original’s bite in what feels like an attempt to boost its palatability to a wider audience—fits this defanged remake perfectly.

There’s nothing wrong with the people behind a cinematic reboot taking the material in different directions; indeed, that’s to be encouraged. But this one makes all the wrong moves in updating Tom Holland’s 1985 favorite about a young fright fan discovering a real vampire living next door, and calling on one of his horror heroes to help slay the monster. Myself, I’ve got nine problems with FRIGHT NIGHT 2011:

1. Charley Brewster (Anton Yelchin) is no longer a devotee of the dark; he’s a typical high-schooler with typical concerns, which means this story lacks the original’s provocative idea of a boy’s love of scary stuff turning on him in the worst way. Marti Noxon’s script also negates the suspense of Charley starting to suspect his new neighbor is up to no good, and slowly discovering his worst fears realized. Here, he’s not even aware that anything’s up in the house next to his, and has to be told by:

2. Evil Ed (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), who is no longer a quirky highlight among the supporting characters, but simply a plot device. It is he who snoops on Jerry (Colin Farrell), discovers why the young lovelies who disappear through his front door by night are never seen leaving and essentially exists to explain the plot to Charley before being quickly written out of the piece. This saps the tension from FRIGHT NIGHT’s first act, and the moment when Jerry catches up to Evil Ed lacks the charge of the corresponding scene in Holland’s film because:

3. The homosexual undertones that gave the original FRIGHT NIGHT a little extra edge have been whitewashed out of the scenario. Gone is Jerry’s ambiguous roommate, and the big scene between Jerry and Evil Ed is comparatively quite timid about expressing the obvious subtext. Who’d have thought that a movie made in 1985 would be braver about suggesting the material’s gay leanings than its 2011 counterpart?

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