

"BOOK OF THE DEAD"

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By

Samuel M. Raimi

Renaissance Pictures, Ltd
1010 Kensington
Grosse Pointe Park, Mi. 48230
(313) 886-1022
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Something evil is lurking deep within the wooded mountains of Tennessee. Rising from a swampy bog, the mud slides from its view allowing it to look off into the early morning mist hanging about the forest. Creeping silently past trees, gliding over small shrubs, this dark and brooding force stops at the top of a forest ridge to peer downward. Its view focuses upon a lone car with Michigan license plates speeding along a narrow highway far below. Inside the cramped car are couples ASHLY and LINDA, SCOTT and SHELLY, and CHERYL, ASHLY's sister. Both SCOTT and SHELLY wear "Michigan State" Tee shirts, and are students with the others at that University. They are singing along with a 1950's song on the radio when the steering wheel suddenly jerks violently from ASHLY's grip and sends the car out of control into the opposite lane. A large oncoming tanker truck with its horn screaming races toward the car on a collision course.

LINDA

Ashly! Watch out!

The truck races closer.

SCOTT

Turn!

The steering wheel is locked into position and ASHLY cannot pull out of his course. Only at the last possible moment does the wheel release and the car swerves into its own lane. The truck speeds past harmlessly.

SCOTT

What the hell was that, you tryin' to kill us?

ASHLY

The steering gave out for a second, I...I couldn't control the wheel.

SCOTT

Damn thing almost made tomatoe paste out of me.

SHELLY

Remind me to update my life insurance.

SCOTT

Damn thing nearly killed me. God Damned Japanese engineering-that's what it is you know.

CHERYL

Ash, maybe we should call home and tell `em where we are.

ASHLY

Cheryl, if dad knew we were skipping classes, we couldn't be up here. And once he does know-

LINDA

(Cutting In) -He'll call my parents who wouldn't let me go if they knew it was with him-

She points her thumb to ASHLY at the wheel.

ASHLY

-Whom they already hate.

LINDA

Ash, they don't hate you, they just dislike you passionately. (She laughs)

CHERYL

Still, I...I think we should call.

ASHLY

Cheryl, will you relax please?

SCOTT

Wait a minute. This is the guy that's telling us to relax? This Kamikaze driver that nearly ran us into a Mack truck not two minutes ago? He's telling us to relax? Great.

The car speeds off. Further along the road, it pulls into a small, partially run-down structure "Bob's Bait Gas 'N Go" for a fill up, and the keys to a rented cabin that have been left there for them. SCOTT, CHERYL, SHELLY and LINDA get out of the car to stretch and buy some refreshments at the station's coke machine.

SCOTT

Finally, my bladder is screaming for mercy.

ASHLY approaches an old man sitting outside playing the banjo.

ASHLY

Pardon me, uh...you wouldn't happen to be (He pulls out a slip of paper) ...Bob Caxton, the owner of this place would you?

The BANJO PLAYER stops playing and turns to ASHLY, pauses for a moment, then continues. OLD BOB emerges from the gas station wiping his hands with an oily rag.

OLD BOB

Lookin' for me young fella?

ASHLY

I think so. I'm Ashly Roberts, I'm supposed to pick up the key to the old Morrison place I'm renting up in the mountains.

OLD BOB

Been expectin' ya. Got that right here for ya. (He produces a ring of keys) It's one of these on here.

ASHLY

What do I owe you?

OLD BOB

Naw, that won't cost you nothin'

ASHLY

Thanks.

The BANJO PLAYER continues to play.

OLD BOB

You goin' up there alone?

ASHLY

No, my buddies over there will be going with me.

He motions to the others who are kicking at the coke machine trying to get their money back.

OLD BOB

(Looking at ASHLY) You ain't from around these parts.

ASHLY

No, we're not. We're from up north. We're just down here for a few days. See, we got a real good deal on the cabin is why.

OLD BOB

That's what I figured-couldn't get anyone from around here to rent that old place up in those hills.

ASHLY

Why not?

OLD BOB

Well, 'bout six months ago a couple up there disappeared.

ASHLY

You mean they left without paying rent?

OLD BOB

No, I mean they disappeared. Everything they brought up there is still there... 'cept them.

OLD BOB heads for the gas pump, and ASHLY follows. The BANJO PLAYER stops playing and turns to the two.

BANJO PLAYER

Tell 'em about the dog.

OLD BOB

(Harshly) You shut up.

The BANJO PLAYER begins to play again. OLD BOB and ASHLY are at the pumps. OLD BOB removes the nozzle.

ASHLY

What dog?

OLD BOB is silent. He engages the machine and inserts the hose.

ASHLY

What dog?

OLD BOB

Well, come last spring, I went huntin' coons up in those hills with 'ol Grey-that's my dog. Was my dog. Well, I went huntin' up in those hills and Grey starts acting real funny like, and I feel like something's sorta wrong. Then ol' Grey starts diggin' at something and it turns out to be a bunch of dead opossum-lot's of 'em. All bloody and in pieces, like something just ripped 'em apart. It's then that I gets this real funny feeling you get when you feel like something's watchin' ya-and you know its eyes are starin' holes in your back, but you don't want to turn around cause then you'd see it. So you just wait there. That's the last time I seen ol' Grey 'cause he just goes tearin' off into the woods howling like a mad dog. It's then that I hears that sound. Real strange like. Still hear it sometimes-even from down here. It's like, well it sorta sounds like...a baby...cryin'...

A loud horn honks suddenly as a carload of young local boys screeches in.

YOUNGSTER #1

Hey you been talkin' to old Bob? Man, he's crazier than shit!

YOUNGSTER #2

He been tellin' you his ghost stories?

The tank is full. OLD BOB removes the nozzle, shuts off the pump, and heads back to the station.

ASHLY

Ghost stories?

YOUNGSTER #1

Man, he's so full of bullshit, you could swap him for a hundred pounds of manure.

ASHLY follows OLD BOB to the office so he can pay, and by now LINDA and the others are back in the car.

LINDA

Ash-C'mon!

ASHLY pays OLD BOB, thanks him, and returns to the car. The group drives off as the local youngsters jump up and down on the bell hose. Enraged by the bell ringing inside, OLD BOB runs out at them.

OLD BOB

You young vandals-get off of there!

The crew cut youths retreat until OLD BOB is back inside the station, then attack the bell hose again.

On the road once more, the car winds along a narrow mountain road toward their cabin. Finally, they approach a wooden bridge extending over a great chasm. Carefully, the car crosses. This is the last leg of the journey, and by late afternoon, the carload has arrived at their destination. The small, wooden cabin is surrounded by thick dark woods. ASHLY throws SCOTT the keys and helps unload while the others stretch and become oriented. After trying several keys, SCOTT is able to unlock the door. Inside, there are two small bedrooms, a kitchen and main living room which contains a stone fireplace set into the wall. An old grandfather clock stands silently in one corner, and a door in the rear of the cabin leads to a small work shed. Located in the center of the main room is a trap door leading to the cellar. This catches SCOTT's eye.

SCOTT

Hey look, this place has a dungeon.

With a key on the ring, SCOTT unlocks a chain securing the trap door. He tries to open the hatch, but cannot. The others have entered the cabin by now.

SCOTT

They nailed it shut.

CHERYL

Good, I don't like cellars. Probably just some garbage down there anyways.

SCOTT

Cheryl, they don't nail garbage in cellars. I mean it's not going to try and get away or anything.

CHERYL

Okay Mr. Know-it-all, then what's down there?

SCOTT

Well, could be any number of things. Old baseball cards, mushrooms, dead bodies-

CHERYL

Scotty!

LINDA

Hey, look at this!

LINDA is standing in the corner next to the old grandfather clock. She repositions a balance weight, and it begins to tick.

LINDA

Ta Daaaa!

The others applaud and whistle.

Later at twilight, they unpack and prepare dinner. CHERYL sits alone in the main room, near the window. She is drawing sketches of the old clock. As she works, the ticking suddenly stops. She puts down the pencil and looks up at it. The clock stands in the corner silently; its hands frozen on the face of it. CHERYL hears a rustling from the woods. She looks out the window but can see only the trees. Something is moving outside, yet hidden within the forest. A gust of wind fills the room. CHERYL looks down at her own hand. It begins to shake and jerk about convulsively, and she no longer has control of it. It turns a pale white. She stares on incredulously as her hand guided by some unseen force picks up the pencil and begins to sketch a figure on her pad. The wind is now gailing through the open window, and as the hand finishes drawing, the wind slowly dies. Whatever was at the edge of the woods now retreats further into them, and the pencil falls from CHERYL's hand. Now losing its pale cast, the hand is under her own control once more.

ASHLY enters from the kitchen munching on a stalk of celery.

ASHLY

What're you drawing Cheryl?

CHERYL

I...I don't know.

She picks up the piece of paper. A book with the likeness of a man with a jackal's head is drawn upon the cover.

ASHLY

What is it, a Bible?

CHERYL

No, no it's no Bible. I don't know what it is.

CHERYL looks over to the woods which are now silent. She turns to a noise emanating from beneath the trap door which leads to the cellar. Possibly it is just a mouse, but CHERYL fixes her gaze upon it.

In the kitchen, a blender screams as it mixes up a drink prepared by SHELLY. She serves it at the dinner table where all are now seated. SCOTT sits next to CHERYL and leans over to her.

SCOTT

(In a whisper) Dead bodies in the cellar, dead bodies in the cellar-

CHERYL

Will you shut up?

ASHLY stands with his drink, and raises the glass.

ASHLY

I'd like to make a toast for all here this evening. As a greek friend of mine once said, "Nis-Hat-Nis-Fert, Dis Ruben Tu-Tar-Im."

LINDA

Which means?

SCOTT

Party down!

The girls laughter is stifled by a loud snap and crackling of wood heard from the main room.

CHERYL

What's that?

All stand from the table and move to the main room. The nails holding down the trap door have been ripped out, and although still in tact, the hatch is wide open.

SHELLY

What did that?

LINDA

Maybe something that wanted to get out awful bad?

SCOTT

Or maybe something that wants us to go down there - huh Cheryl?

CHERYL

This place gives me the creeps. Let's close it.

ASHLY

Yeah, let's just close it up and leave whatever's down there alone. It's probably just some animal or something.

SCOTT finds a flashlight and peers down into the darkness of the cellar but can see nothing.

SCOTT

That's right. It's probably just some animal - uh...Cheryl, why don't you make sure.

He hands CHERYL the flashlight but she quickly gives it back.

CHERYL

Scotty, I'm not going down there!

SCOTT

Cowards. I'll go.

With flashlight in hand, he moves down the narrow steps into the cellar's blackness. He scans the floor with his light and spots something slumped into a pile. He moves closer to discover that it is the remains of a dog. It has been torn apart and is now no more than food for maggots. SCOTT holds his nose and backs squarely into a pair of arms which grab him.

SCOTT

Ahhhhhhh!

It is only ASHLY behind him.

SCOTT

Ashly...uh...don't sneak around in dark cellars and grab people, okay?

ASHLY

Find anything?

SCOTT

Well, there's a dog over there-smells like it's been dead for a while.

ASHLY

Probably old Bob's dog, Grey.

SCOTT

That old guy at the station? How'd it get down here?

ASHLY shrugs.

ASHLY

What's over there?

SCOTT sweeps his light to another corner, and reveals several items atop a small table. These things belong to the previous tenant, and had been placed down there following their disappearance. Beneath a dusty cloth, SCOTT finds a book which appears to be covered with some sort of animal hide. On its cover is a picture of a man with a jackal's head. Along with the book, SCOTT and ASHLY uncover a diary and an ancient Sumarian dagger. The stench of the dog forces them to return upstairs and close the trap door behind them.

It is evening as the whole group sits around the fireplace. ASHLY is reading a section of the diary to himself. It reads; (voice over)

My name is Julian Knowby. I am a professor of ancient Egyptian mythology in Dextin University's ancient history department. I am writing this entry from a small cabin in the southern mountains of Tennessee. Here I am staying with my wife for a few weeks so that I may continue my research undisturbed. Since May, a group of associate professors and myself have been excavating the ruins of Ca'n Dar.

I believe I have made an important find in that area, and thus the reason for this log. With it, I can keep an accurate record of translations from my latest find; the first of six (the others still lost) volumes of ancient Sumarian burial practices and rites. Basically, it is a book of do's and don'ts dealing with the deceased, entitled "Naturan Demanto" roughly translated "Book of the Dead". It is bound in human flesh, and this particular volume deals with demons and demon resurrection. These are of the Katardi family, meaning those forces believed to inhabit the jungles and woods of man's domain.

The first few pages that I have translated warn that these demons are dangerous, everpresent and exist partially through this book. Only the sacred high priests of the Ca'n Dar tribes could possess these books and thus keep the demons controlled. Upon their deaths, these books were sewn into the linings of their stomachs. It is only through the resurrection passage that these demons would be able to possess the living. Phonetic spellings of the first passages can be found on the following page.

SCOTT

Lemme see that.

SCOTT grabs the book from ASHLY and begins reading aloud.

SCOTT

Listen to this. "Tantir-ah-mis-trobeen-ha-zar-ta. Ha-zen-ma-to-fare. Tantir-man-ov. Mis hazen-sober. Kanda. Kanda. Kanda. Kanda.

The passage is short and SCOTT pronounces it as best he can. While he speaks, all natural sounds of the forest die out, and the autumn colors in the trees fade to a gloomy grey. Storm clouds roll in from the east, thunder booms in the distance, and as the wind picks up, it begins to rain. SCOTT stops as the others move by a window to watch and listen to the storm.

SHELLY

It's raining-

A section of earth deep within the woods begins to crack, and opens. Smoke seeps out from within, as if some evil force was now being unleashed.

SHELLY

-It's pouring-

The winds howl, and blackbirds fly from their nests, screaming.

SHELLY

-The old man is-

A bolt of lightning strikes very near and the thunder crash is deafening.

SCOTT

(To CHERYL) the dead bodies are coming tonight.

CHERYL

Scott, will you just shut up with that already.

CHERYL stalks into her room and slams the door behind. She is obviously upset by something besides the joking from SCOTT.

ASHLY

Scott, you gotta know when you carry something too far.

SCOTT

Big deal, it's just a joke. Shit.

SCOTT and SHELLY head for their bedroom.

SHELLY

Good Night.

LINDA

Good night Shelly, good night Scott.

SCOTT slams their door in response. ASHLY sighs. LINDA looks at him.

LINDA

He's really been bothering you hasn't he?

ASHLY

Yeah,...No, it's not him-ever since we came down here, things have been a little tense. (He sits) Something about this place.

LINDA

It'll be better tomorrow-things'll smooth out, you'll see.

ASHLY

I hope so.

LINDA

You going to bed?

ASHLY

Naw, I'm gonna stay up for a while and listen to the storm.

LINDA

Want some company?

ASHLY smiles, then remembering something, he reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a small box.

ASHLY

Guess what I've got in here?

LINDA

A human tooth.

ASHLY

Almost. (He opens it.) It's a necklace. (He gives it to her.)

LINDA

Oh, Ash. It's beautiful. (She kisses him.)

ASHLY holds it up around her neck.

ASHLY

(Fastening it behind her) I was going to give it to you before we left, but things got so hectic, this is the first chance I've had. Do you like it?

She moves to a mirror.

LINDA

It's beautiful. I really love it. (she turns to him) I'll never take it off.

Lightning strikes as something in the woods examines the small cottage. Through the window ASHLY and LINDA can be seen embracing. This force watching them moves away, around the house to another window. It sees the silhouette of SCOTT and SHELLEY undressing. The force continues around, and arrives at CHERYL's window. Inside, she brushes her hair in front of the mirror, puts down the brush then moves to the window. She stops to uncrumple the sketch drawn earlier, looks at it, then out to the dark woods.

The next morning, beautiful autumn colors return to the trees as the sun rises above the forest. A trail of wine bottles and cupcake wrappers strewn along a wooded path lead to SCOTTY who is chopping down a number of small trees for fun. Next to him, an eaten lunch lies on the forest floor and CHERYL can be seen sleeping on a blanket. ASHLY is next to her, and LINDA rests her head on his shoulder. She is watching SCOTT.

a forested area where a few trees can be felled

LINDA

Scotty, you're not impressing anybody with the fact that you can cut down a few trees. If it came down to it, you wouldn't last five minutes in these woods alone.

SCOTT

I would too! I took wilderness 301 at State-I'm perfectly trained to survive out here.

LINDA

There's a lot of things out in these woods that you never even dreamed of in class.

ASHLY is reading more from the Professor's diary.

MARCH 10th:

I had the same bad dreams again last night. Those glowing white eyes in the woods, and the Book Of The Dead. I was going to tell my wife about them, but she's been acting so strange lately. Each night after she falls asleep, I hear those sounds emanating from the woods. Over and over again. When I do finally fall asleep, I awake suddenly with a feeling that I am somehow being watched.

During the passage, the trees can be seen above ASHLY. Slowly, the natural sounds of the forest fade once more, and when the picnic area is shown again, only CHERYL remains sleeping on her blanket. The others have left, allowing her to rest. A cold wind passes over the surroundings and CHERYL wakes with a start. A cry deep within the forest can be heard faintly.

CHERYL

Ash?

The whispering in the distance grows somewhat louder and a soft wail is heard-like that of a baby crying.

CHERYL

Who's out there? Ash, Linda, Where are you?

CHERYL hurriedly gathers up her things and heads toward the cabin. The cold wind increases its intensity. CHERYL calls ahead of her.

CHERYL

Ash! Linda!

She is almost running now. There is a rustling in the woods. Something is in a group of trees about twenty yards behind her. CHERYL freezes. No sound. Nothing moves. Several yards to her left, a twig snaps suddenly. She turns but there is silence again. The winds die down leaving a deathly stillness throughout the woods. All at once, the entire forest becomes alive in a flurry of chaotic noises. Trees nearby begin to claw and rake at her. Panic stricken, CHERYL runs onward, stumbling until she eventually falls into a pile of mutilated forest animals. Opposums, squirrels, and other small creatures lie about with eyes bulging, teeth and jaws frozen in their death scream. Crying to God for help and soaked in animals' blood, CHERYL continues on through the woods. Trees and branches now scratch at her, ripping her clothes and flesh. Snake-like vines slither over her legs and arms until she can no longer maintain balance. CHERYL falls again, struggling to free herself from the clinging weeds, when an enormous tearing sound diverts her attention to one side. A massive oak has been uprooted and topples towards her. She throws herself out of the giant tree's path as it smashes upon the forest floor in a thunderous crash. After struggling further, CHERYL emerges from the woods, but the force is still following. She reaches the cabin finally but the door is locked. One by one, she frantically searches her key ring for the correct one. The force is coming closer with each key.

CHERYL

Please, someone please! Help me, Help meeee!

CHERYL jams one key after another into the lock but still cannot find the one she needs. The evil entity is almost upon her. The correct key is finally produced, but her actions are so frantic that the ring falls to the ground. Quickly she bends to pick them up, but a hand grabs her arm. It is SCOTT who has opened the door from the inside. She pushes him in the door and slams it tightly.

SCOTT

What the hell happ-

CHERYL

(In hysterics)-They were...they were all cut up on the ground.

SCOTT

What was?

CHERYL

I saw them...I saw them...it tried to kill me, I woke up and I ran and it...it...and the trees.

SCOTT

What the hell are you talking about?

ASHLY approaches with the others.

ASHLY

Cheryl, whats wrong with you? Did someone in the woods do this to you?

CHERYL

No,no,no...the woods themselves-the trees-they're alive.

She hugs ASHLY tightly and cries in hysterical sobs.

CHERYL

They're alive!

LINDA

Ash, why don't I take her into the bedroom so she can lie down for a little-

CHERYL

(Cutting her off)-I'm not lying down! I'm not staying here. We're leaving this place. We're getting out of here right now.

SHELLY

Cheryl-

SCOTT

Cheryl, there's nothing out there. Trees do not attack people.

CHERYL

Ashly, will you drive me into town or not?

ASHLY

Of course, of course I will, but if you'll just listen to what you are saying.

CHERYL

I want to leave this minute. You can bring back my things when you go.

ASHLY locates the keys.

ASHLY

Okay-if you don't want to stay, I can't make you.

ASHLY helps CHERYL to the car, and tries to start it. There is no response. She becomes somewhat worried. ASHLY tries again. The car will not turn over. A look of dread comes across CHERYL's face. SCOTT joins them outside, kicks the car's engine block and it starts immediately.

SCOTT

Cheap Japanese models-they lose the war and send us all their junk.

ASHLY and CHERYL drive off through the wooded mountains towards town. ASHLY glances to CHERYL who studies the forest intensely for signs of movement. His concern for his sister, CHERYL, is made obvious by the look on his face. The car approaches the narrow bridge area and comes to halt. ASHLY fixes his gaze directly ahead, and his mouth opens slowly. He stares at the bridge over the chasm which has been torn away. CHERYL is silent as ASHLY walks to the edge of the ravine to examine any remains.

CHERYL

(Mumbling to herself) No,no,no,no,no,...it's not going to let us leave-it's not going to let us leave...

From deep within the forest something emerges. In the distance, ASHLY can be seen standing at the edge of the great chasm. Forcefully, the entity rushes towards him with tremendous speed ready to push him off the edge to his death far below. A moment before impact, ASHLY turns to look behind him, but sees only the woods.

At twilight, SHELLY and LINDA are seen playing cards inside the cabin. CHERYL sits with her back to them, drinking tea while watching SCOTT chop wood outside. She looks from SCOTT to the dark woods beyond. ASHLY is seated near the fire with the professor's journal in hand. He reads:

MARCH 12 :

Suzanne came after me and almost murdered me. My own wife. At first I thought it was a mental or physical disorder because of what it had done to her eyes, but I was only fooling myself. I knew what it was. I knocked her down and even clubbed her. God be my witness, it continued on after me. It was no longer my wife. I knocked it down and was able to locked it in the cellar.

MARCH 15 :

Three days have passed since that thing has been down there. I was hoping to weaken it without food or water. Nothing worked. Finally in desperation, I dragged her out to the shed and dismembered her, so that whatever it was could not get up again. This is when I saw the dark figures moving about in the woods. I should have never tampered with the Book of the Dead. I know now that whatever it is I have resurrected through this book is coming for me.

The journal ends there abruptly. ASHLY looks up to the forest. Tree branches swaying in the wind give the woods an appearance of something almost alive. LINDA breaks the silence.

LINDA

Cheryl, wanna play cards?

CHERYL

(Turning with a smile) Uh-UH.

CHERYL faces the window once again.

LINDA

Cheer up will ya? Tomorrow we'll all go on a hike,
and find some way around that cliff into town,
Okay?

CHERYL

Okay.

Outside the window SCOTT chops more wood for the nightly fire. SHELLY, still engaged in cards with LINDA, holds up one in particular.

SHELLY

Okay, guess this card.

LINDA

How am I going to know what card that is?

SHELLY

Guess- I'm going to see if you're psychic.

The card is a two of clubs.

LINDA

Okaaaay...is it a queen?

SHELLY

Right!

LINDA

Really?

SHELLY

Yeah.

LINDA

Hey Ash, I guessed the card right.

ASHLY

(Indifferently) Truly amazing Linda.

SHELLY

Cheryl, did you see that?

CHERYL remains with her back to them staring out the window.

SHELLY

Try this one.

She removes a nine of clubs from the deck and holds it up.

LINDA

Okay lemme think. Uh-

She puts her hands to her head in a curved funnel formation as if to direct her thoughts to the card.

LINDA

-Um it's a seven.

SHELLY

Oh my God what suit?

LINDA

Diamonds-wait no! I mean Hearts!

SHELLY

That's right-seven of hearts!

LINDA

Ash, did you see that? I guessed two cards in a row.

ASHLY

(Still not paying attention) How do you do it Linda?

LINDA

You know, I always thought I had some sort of extra sense. You know, like ESP or something.

SHELLY

What's this one?

She holds up the queen of spades.

LINDA

Another seven!

SHELLY

I don't believe it!

CHERYL

(Still looking outside) Queen of spades.

SHELLY looks at her card then back to CHERYL. SHELLY holds up another card.

CHERYL

Four of hearts.

The card is a four of hearts. SHELLY bites her lip and reaches for another card. ASHLY and LINDA watch in silence.

CHERYL

Eight of spades.

SHELLY picks it up. CHERYL is correct again.

CHERYL

-Two of spades...Jack of diamonds...Jack of clubs-

Faster and faster she calls them off. Even before SHELLY can flip them to keep up. Suddenly, CHERYL turns toward the group. Her eyes are bone white. SHELLY'S deck of cards slip from her hand and scatter across the floor. CHERYL'S body is then hoisted up in the air and maneuvered about like a white eyed marionette. Hoarsly, she begins to chant the ancient Sumarian resurrection passage from the Book of the Dead. The voice coming out is not her own. CHERYL'S head jerks violently downward and her body goes limp, collapsing to the floor.

ASHLY

Oh my God, Shelly, get Scott in here!

LINDA moves to CHERYL and lifts her head gently. CHERYL appears unconscious, but behind her, she reaches for a pencil and clutches it tightly.

ASHLY

Should we lie her down on the couch?

LINDA

Ash, did you see her eyes? I'm scared. What's wrong with her?

SHELLY enters with SCOTT.

SCOTT

What happened to her?

LINDA

Look at her eyes.

SCOTT's hand moves towards her eyelids to pull them back when they blink open! The pencil in her hand races upward, then slashes downward, ripping into LINDA's achillies tendon. The pencil breaks off into LINDA's leg. With a blur, she raises the jagged, bloodied pencil stub upward again - ASHLY grabs her arm stopping her. With a single thrust she shoves ASHLY stumbling across the room, smashing into a bookcase which topples over, trapping him beneath its weight. Linda lies screaming as CHERYL advances towards ASHLY's face with the jagged pencil stub. He tries to pull himself out but cannot. She raises up the pencil ready to strike when SCOTT grabs her from behind. She effortlessly

tosses him off of her. Now she is almost upon ASHLY. SCOTT climbs to his feet, grabs the axe and gives her a sharp jab to the jaw with its wooden handle. She stumbles past LINDA and topples backwards, head first into the cellar. She begins to climb out but SCOTT slams the trap door shut on her hand. It won't close and she begins to push the trap door open from below. SCOTT climbs on top of it and is almost thrown off, until he takes the butt of the axe and viciously rams it down upon the fingertips of the protruding hand. Demented screams and moans are heard from below as finally the hand pulls back and SCOTT is able to secure the chain to the cellar.

Later that evening, ASHLY puts LINDA to bed after attending to her wounds. He gives her a couple shots of whiskey to kill the pain. ASHLY, SCOTT, and SHELLY sit in the main room near the fire. From the cellar, strangle moans, sobs and laughter emerge, and then a sound almost like that of a baby crying. They listen to the weird noises from below as ASHLY looks out the window to the woods beyond.

ASHLY

We've still got a few hours before morning.

SHELLY

I don't know if I can wait that long.

SCOTT

You have to. We all have to. Then, once it's light out we'll try to find a way to get around that chasm.

SHELLY

(Covering her ears) Why does she keep making those horrible noises?

ASHLY

I don't know.

SHELLY

And what about her eyes?

ASHLY and SCOTT are quiet.

SHELLY

What about her eyes? (Desperately) For God's sake what happened to her eyes?!

CHERYL is patiently sitting in the darkness of the cellar with a streak of light across her white eyes from the crack in the trap door. Her head is slightly tilted as she watches and listens to what they are saying above. From her point of view we hear SCOTT say to SHELLY:

SCOTT

Everything's gonna be alright.

CHERYL'S lips part slightly as a thick blackish yellow liquid drools out between her teeth. She grins.

In the forest it is very dark. The unseen force moves out of the wooded area. Pushing over small trees and shrubs. The small cottage comes into view and the force moves right up to it.

The small figure of a girl in the cabin window is looking out at it. It stops and moves behind a bush. Inside the cottage SHELLY is looking out at the woods.

SHELLY

Scotty, I ... I think there's something out there.

SCOTT moves to the window and looks out. From within the woods this force watches him peering out, but he sees nothing. Through the window he says something to SHELLY to reassure her, then moves away. Inside, SCOTT can be heard in mid sentence.

SCOTT

... is to get some rest. Ash and I can stay up with Cheryl.

SHELLY

Okay.

SCOTT

Everythings gonna be Okay. Come morning - you'll see.

SHELLY moves off into the bedroom. SCOTT walks back to the fireplace and sits. He slices twigs from a branch with the Sumarian dagger and tosses them into the fire. ASHLY glances at the Book of the Dead, and then to the old clock. It stands silent.

Again the evil entity watches from outside. It sees SHELLY leave one room and turn the lights on in another. She begins to undress near the window. The force now moves from behind the bush and rushes at a tremendous speed to SHELLY who is looking out her bedroom window. She sees it and sheer terror covers her face as a scream stifles itself in her throat, but it is too late.

A noise is heard in SHELLY's bedroom. SCOTT drops the small stick he was whittling.

SCOTT

What's that?

He puts down the dagger and rushes toward the other room.

SCOTT

Shelly, are you okay?

She does not answer. As SCOTT approaches her door, he turns to ASHLY.

SCOTT

Keep an eye on Cheryl for a minute.

SCOTT moves into the darkness of her room and sees nothing but shadows. SHELLY is not on her bed.

SCOTT

Shelly?

He looks over to the window and sees that it is open. The wind blows upon the curtains. SCOTT steps into the bathroom and sees that the shower curtain is drawn. Cautiously, he moves up to it.

SCOTT

Shelly?

He pulls it back revealing an empty tub. Turning back into the bedroom he sees the closet door banging about in the wind. He opens it and with a screech, what was once SHELLY flies out and latches onto him in mid air. Her eyes have gone white and her nails rip and tear at his clothes and face. Screaming, SCOTT stumbles back into the main room with SHELLY still upon him biting at his throat. SCOTT knocks her off of himself and into the fireplace.

She remains motionless as her head smolders upon the hot coals. SCOTT rushes to her, grabs an arm and pulls her out. SHELLY's face and hair on one side of her head are seared and blackened. She blinks her eyes open, turns her charred head to SCOTT and says in a rasp.

SHELLY

Thank you. I don't know what I would have done if I had remained on the hot coals burning my pretty flesh. You have pretty skin. Give it to us!

Cackling, she clutches SCOTT's neck throttling the life out of him with a vise-like grip. SCOTT tries to break her hold but cannot. ASHLY also tries but with a backhand blow she knocks him into a cabinet, smashing it to bits. A garbled cry for help escapes from SCOTT'S frothing mouth. SHELLY reaches down, picks up the Sumarian dagger, and holding SCOTT by his throat with one hand, she raises the dagger with the other. ASHLY, slightly injured, crawls to his feet. SCOTT grabs her raised arm and although choking, swings out his camping knife from his side sheath, and slices it deep into SHELLY's raised wrist, almost severing it. A murkey black ooze pumps from the wound. She emits an ear splitting howl and tightens her grip on SCOTT's throat. He drops the hunting knife. ASHLY watches terrified, unable to move as SHELLY raises her wrist with the dangling hand (still clutching the dagger). She brings it to her mouth

and bites it off. The hand with the dagger firmly in its fist falls to the floor. She continues to throttle SCOTT one handed. SCOTT, now almost dead, grabs her severed hand which still clutches the dagger. In a last attempt he swings it around ramming it into her spine.

SHELLY screeches along with CHERYL in the cellar, the old grandfather clock gongs and lightning strikes all at the same instant. SHELLY reaches around with her remaining arm to clutch at her severed hand and knife sticking out of her own back. A thick black ooze pours from the wound as she bends backwards screaming. ASHLY stands in horror, clutching the axe, unable to move. Black ooze runs from SHELLY's mouth as her body writhes about spasmodically upon the floor. Gradually the movements cease and she is dead.

As SCOTT slowly stands to his feet, SHELLY's arm grabs his leg!

SCOTT

AHHH!

Some force reanimates her, even though her body is dead.

ASHLY

...No..No..No...

SCOTT

Hit her!

SHELLY's body is hoisted up again, jerking about to its feet, and laughing madly.

SCOTT

Hit it!

SCOTT screams this as he backs toward ASHLY. ASHLY stands with the axe, paralyzed. Gurgling black ooze, SHELLY moves toward them with one remaining arm. SCOTT grabs the axe from ASHLY, pushes him away, and slams it into her. Lightening flashes, thunder booms, and CHERYL screams from the cellar. SCOTT brings his axe down again and again in a frenzy. Then, after a final chop, there is silence.

SHELLY's body remains on the floor for some time; until ASHLY can cope with the fact that she is dead and something must be done.

ASHLY

Um...Scott?

SCOTT

Yeah.

ASHLY

What is uh... What are we gonna do?

SCOTT

Bury her.

ASHLY

You...can't bury Shelly. She's a friend of ours, isn't she?

SCOTT

Ash, she's dead.

ASHLY moves away from SCOTT.

SCOTT

Shelly's dead. We're gonna bury her now.

ASHLY bites his lip and looks about blankly. Finally the body is dragged outside and buried.

The sun now rises over the dark woods. ASHLY peeks in on LINDA who is still asleep, then returns quietly into the main room to join SCOTT.

SCOTT

I saw an old hiking trail when we were driving up here. Now I don't know if it goes all the way around that gorge.

ASHLY

-Or if it's even still intact.

SCOTT

Or if it's even still intact. But uh, I guess I'll find out. Take good care of Linda.

ASHLY

I will. Do you have everything?

SCOTT

(Putting on a small backpack) Yeah - all set.

ASHLY

Listen...Scotty..I'm sorry about falling apart like that last...

SCOTT

Don't bother really.

He steps out of the door.

SCOTT

If I find a way out of here I'll mark it and return. If I don't come back - well...If I don't come back, grab Linda, leg and all, and just take her the hell out of here.

They shake hands.

ASHLY

You're a good man.

SCOTT

Good? I'm the best.

ASHLY smiles a good bye to SCOTT and watches him move off into the clearing. Slowly he disappears into the woods. ASHLY shuts the door and then turns back to face the main room. He sees CHERYL's eyes through the crack in the cellar. She has been watching all of this through the space between the trap and the floor. ASHLY moves past her and toward LINDA's room. He stops at the outside of her room, composes himself, and enters.

LINDA is fingering her necklace as she looks out the window. She turns as ASHLY approaches. He kisses her on the cheek.

ASHLY

Good morning, baby.

LINDA

How's Cheryl?

ASHLY

The same.

Where's SCOTTY and SHELLY?

ASHLY

They, they went to get help. They should be back later this evening...and by then we should be out of here.

LINDA

Shelly went with him?

ASHLY

Yeah. Hey, how's your leg?

LINDA

All right I guess. Still hurts a lot.

ASHLY

Lemme see, lie down.

ASHLY unwraps the bandage and looks at the wound, it seems to have begun healing very well.

ASHLY

You may live. (Linda smiles). Why don't you get some more rest?

LINDA

Thanks for taking such good care of me.

ASHLY

Okay, Doll.

They kiss. ASHLY moves towards the door.

LINDA

Ash, Cheryl's gonna be alright isn't she?

He can no longer hide his fear and anxiety and keeps his back to her.

ASHLY

(In a whisper so as not to let his voice quiver)
Yeah, sure. she'll be okay.

LINDA

I love you.

ASHLY

Get some rest.

He closes the door behind him and we see that fear from the previous night has engulfed him once more. He moves into the main room, picks up the axe, and steps outside. He begins to chop wood, taking out his emotions upon the logs with each blow. From the latch in the cellar, CHERYL watches ASHLY chop wood in front of the window. The shadow of his axe rising and then striking is seen over her white eyes.

By late afternoon, SCOTT has still not returned. ASHLY decides to check Linda's leg wound and enters her room. She is still asleep. Quietly, so as not to wake her, ASHLY pulls back her blanket exposing the bandaged leg. He removes the bandage and looks at the wound. As he does this, it infects with a blackened coloration at an incredible speed. ASHLY looks up to see if LINDA is still sleeping and sees that she has been watching him with white eyes and an evil grimace upon her face. She lets out a low growl. ASHLY jolts backwards, out of her room to escape through the front door. As he opens it something ragged and bloody falls inward! It is SCOTT's mutilated body which now resembles the dog in the basement and the animal carcasses that CHERYL had stumbled upon earlier in the woods. He is still alive. ASHLY looks behind him through the door of LINDA's room. She is still sitting on the bed watching him with glaring white eyes. SCOTT is in agony and can barely speak.

SCOTT

Ash, the tr-trees. The trees, Ash. Ch-Cheryl was right. They're alive.

He passes out. ASHLY moves him over to the couch, props him up and wraps a blanket around him. SCOTT regains consciousness.

SCOTT

Ash, I think I'm dying.

ASHLY

Uh, uh, Scotty, you're gonna be okay. You're gonna be just fine - you'll see.

He throws another log on the fire.

ASHLY

...You'll see...

ASHLY looks off into LINDA's bedroom but she is gone. She is now sitting in the corner of the main room where ASHLY is, watching him. SCOTT is now moaning from his pain.

SCOTT

It's, it's not gonna let us leave... Cheryl... Cheryl was right... we're all gonna die here.

ASHLY

We're not gonna die!

SCOTT

...All gonna die.

ASHLY grabs him and shakes him violently.

ASHLY

We're not gonna die! We're not gonna die! We're getting out of here! Now listen to me - is there a way around the chasm?

SCOTT again passes out, ASHLY shakes him.

ASHLY

Scotty. Scott!

SCOTT stirs awake and mumbles.

SCOTT

There is... one way, the trail... but the trees, they know... Don't you see - They're alive!!!!!! They're ali - ahhhhhhh!

His sentence is cut short as he crys out in sharp pain. LINDA begins to laugh. ASHLY looks at her, or rather what possesses her, in hatred.

ASHLY

Shut up!

She continues to laugh. CHERYL in the cellar below also begins to laugh. ASHLY moves to LINDA and slaps her but she continues. He grabs a hunting rifle from a rack on the wall, loads it with shells, flips off the safety and places it against LINDA's head.

ASHLY

God forgive me, Linda.

Just then, the laughter stops and LINDA's eyes return to normal. It is LINDA again. ASHLY puts down the rifle.

LINDA

Ash, oh God, help me! Don't let them take me away again, please, please, don't.

She hugs him tightly. CHERYL's voice is heard from the blackness of the cellar.

CHERYL

Ashly? Ashly, help me. Let me out of here. I'm alright now.

ASHLY moves cautiously to the cellar with LINDA remaining behind him.

CHERYL

I'm alright now, Ashly. I'm alright. Come unlock this chain and let me out.

ASHLY

Cheryl?

There is no answer from the cellar. He looks through the crack but sees only darkness. He reaches for the chain and begins to unlock it. Sensing something is wrong, he stops.

ASHLY

Cheryl?

He puts his ear to the floor to listen for the slightest sound. CHERYL's arms rip through the floorboards and grab ASHLY's head! He breaks away and watches as her hand reaches for the chain but cannot quite grasp it. It slowly withdraws beneath the floor.

CHERYL

(A little too sweetly) Ash, what are you doing? This is your sister Cheryl. Don't you recognize me?

Then her voice drifts off and the evil laughter from below resumes.

ASHLY

(Crying and yelling to the cellar) You Bastards. Why are you doing this??? Why???

There is silence. And then the laughter behind him. It is LINDA. Her eyes are again white and she is laughing at ASHLY.

ASHLY

Oh my god, Linda.

With a newly found courage, ASHLY angrily grabs her by her legs and drags her outside to the woods and leaves her. He moves back to the cabin, closing the door behind him.

SCOTT moans.

SCOTT

Ash, Ash, please... I-I want to die. I can't take all this pain. Please Ash.

ASHLY

I can't, I can't. I know how horrible it must be, but I can't be alone now. I'll lose my mind.

SCOTT

Please Ash, please.

ASHLY

You'll get better- You'll see.

LINDA'S laughter is faintly heard outside. ASHLY moves to the window and pulls back the curtain. LINDA is no longer in the woods, but sitting at their edge, looking at him with her glowing white eyes.

ASHLY

Yeah, tomorrow, soon, you'll be better and we'll both get out of here tomorrow.

SCOTT

There is no tomorrow! You- You've got to kill her and cut- cut her up - your sister too.

ASHLY

No, that was only with Shelly. You had to with Shelly. You- Linda loves me. You're delirious- I...I'll get you some water.

ASHLY puts the glass of water to Scott's lips.

ASHLY

Now as soon as the sun comes up, we'll get out of here...together. You, me, Linda, Shelly and Cheryl. We'll all go home together. Wouldn't you like to be going home? Ha, ha, ha. You'd like that I'd bet, wouldn't ya.

There is no answer. The water dribbles out of SCOTT'S mouth.

ASHLY

Wouldn't you Scott?

SCOTT is dead. LINDA's laughter is heard again. ASHLY moves to the window and pulls back the curtain. There is nothing there. He turns and there she is! With the Sumarian dagger, LINDA rips into ASHLY'S shirt, cutting his arm. ASHLY screams and looks on in horror as she runs her tongue over the dagger, licking the blood from it. She turns again towards ASHLY. He grabs her and they struggle. LINDA backs ASHLY up against the couch, knocking the body of SCOTT to the floor. ASHLY manages to turn her arm so the knife is behind her back. Forcefully, he pushes LINDA and she falls backward upon the dagger. The blade tears into her back and rips through her stomach. Lightening flashes, thunder roars, she screams in a deep growl once, then all is quiet.

ASHLY recalls the quote from the old man's journal.

Finally, I had to drag her out to the shed and dismember her so that whatever it was, could not get up again.

And also SCOTT saying,

SCOTT

You-you've got to kill her-and cut-cut her up.

ASHLY drags LINDA'S corpse past the crumpled body of SCOTT, past CHERYL, who is in the cellar watching all of this, through the back door and into the shed. He lifts her up on to the work bench, grabs a chainsaw, starts it up and moves towards her. Buzzing madly the saw is lowered to a position a few inches above her neck. ASHLY looks at LINDA's face. Her eyes have gone back to blue. He stops.

ASHLY

(In a whisper) Linda ...

He drops the saw and breaks down crying over herbody.

An evening mist drifts out of the woods and cloaks the house as ASHLY carries LINDA'S body outside for burial.

Harsh floodlights from the side of the cabin create weird shadows on the ground as he digs LINDA's grave. Inside the cabin, CHERYL begins slamming her fists against the trap door in the cellar. She wants out. The screws which hold the latch in place begin to loosen. ASHLY places LINDA'S body in the grave, oblivious to CHERYL's pounding. He covers her with dirt then stops. He looks downward to the grave and sees LINDA'S necklace on top of the dirt mound. ASHLY reaches down to pick it up when LINDA'S hand shoots up from beneath the grave and grabs him! LINDA pulls herself up out of her grave screaming, and clutches ASHLY'S leg with a black and bloodied hand. He twists around and tries to free himself, but she will not let go and is now almost totally out of the grave. With her fingernails she rips into ASHLY'S leg, tearing his skin. Screaming, he picks up the spade and

swings it roundhouse, slamming it into her face. She falls but pulls herself up again. Moving towards him, she chants the resurrection passage from the Book of the Dead. ASHLY lifts a large log and breaks it over her skull. She falls but something hoists her up again. The thick black ooze pours from her nose and mouth. She continues after him. With a final powerful thrust, ASHLY swings the spade and lops off her head. The head falls into the mud but the body flails about a moment before collapsing. Then on the ground it continues to writhe about a little while longer as thick black liquid pumps from the neck. ASHLY staggers back to the cabin. He looks to the center of the room, past SCOTT'S body.

ASHLY

Oh... Jesus no!

The trap door is open and CHERYL is gone. ASHLY slams the door, bolts it, and locks the back door leading to the shed. He pumps his rifle and waits. He hears the ticking of the grandfather clock. Looking up, he sees it slowly winding backwards. He watches and waits. The door knob slowly turns. ASHLY spins around and fires a shot into the door. There is silence. The ticking grows louder. He moves back against a large window to watch both doors. CHERYL springs up growling in the window behind him. He turns and fires, shattering the window. CHERYL moves around to the side of the house. Wind whips through the cabin swirling glass and leaves on to the floor. He waits, leaning against the door for something to happen. He is tense and more determined than ever to survive. He begins whispering to himself.

ASHLY

C'mon, C'mon, get this over with. Why are you tormenting me like this?

Placing his hand to his side, he discovers something in his pocket..He lifts it to his eyes. It is LINDA's necklace.

ASHLY

... Linda (he whispers)

The ticking stops. He tilts his head to listen for the slightest sound. All is silent. From behind him two arms rip through the door and grab him. He tears away and falls to the floor, sending the necklace flying. The hands pull away and CHERYL looks through a hole in the door. From the floor ASHLY raises his rifle and fires at her head. Clutching at her face and screaming horribly, CHERYL is jolted from the door. ASHLY places the dresser and chair against the holes in the door. SCOTT's corpse sits up and opens its white eyes! It stands and moves toward ASH. ASHLY turns with the gun but SCOTT knocks it out of his hands. Desperately, ASHLY grabs the table lamp, shatters it across SCOTT'S head, then jams the exposed socket into SCOTT'S face, shocking him. SCOTT staggers back a few steps, then continues after him. CHERYL is now pounding against the outside of the front

door. ASHLY picks up the table, upon which the Book of the Dead and old man's journal are resting, and throws it at SCOTT. This does not affect him and he moves closer. The Book of the Dead lands on the floor near the fireplace and the edges of the pages begin to darken from the heat. SCOTT picks ASHLY up as if he were a rag doll and starts to throttle him. The front door begins to give under CHERYL's pounding. ASHLY brings his hands up to SCOTT'S face and places his thumbs over SCOTT'S eyes. With a crash, CHERYL breaks through the front door and now begins to push the dresser out of the way. The Book of the Dead's pages are now smoking. ASHLY gouges out both of SCOTT'S eyes and panting heavily slips from his grip. SCOTT clutches his eye sockets as his back begins to smolder. ASHLY now sees the Book of the Dead, which is beginning to burn on the edges. CHERYL topples over the dresser and enters the room. Her face is now partially torn away from the bullet ASHLY fired. ASHLY rushes to throw the Book of the Dead on to the blazing logs, but CHERYL, smoldering also, gives him a backhand blow across the head which sends him sprawling on the floor. She grabs the fireplace poker with her crushed fingers and turns back to ASHLY. ASHLY nearly exhausted, crawls toward the fireplace. When almost in reach of the Book, SCOTT grabs his leg and begins to pull ASHLY backward. CHERYL approaches with smoke pouring from her clothes and slams ASHLY across the back with the poker. He screams. A glitter catches his eye. It is LINDA's necklace. Grabbing it, he tosses the end with the clasp toward the book. It slides off the cover. SCOTT pulls him back once more as ASHLY swings the necklace in a last desperate attempt. CHERYL raises the poker for a final blow. The necklace drapes over the book and as he is dragged the clasp hooks the cover pulling the book along with him. With a yank, he seizes the book and tosses it upon the blaze.

CHERYL and SCOTT freeze. The Book of the Dead burns. Smoke pours from SCOTT and CHERYL as distant demonical screams are heard from the woods. The poker slips from CHERYL's hand and sticks into the wood scarcely an inch from ASHLY's head. Then the bodies of CHERYL and SCOTT cave inward upon themselves and collapse to the floor in a smoldering heaps. Finally nothing is left of them but their burnt clothing and a blackish-grey ooze on the floor where their bodies once were.

The old clock begins to tick again normally. ASHLY slowly climbs to his feet to stand above the fuming debris. Opening his hand, he looks down upon LINDA's necklace. The force pulls back from him, out the door, slowly returning to the darkness from which it emerged. Gradually, the natural sounds of the forest swell and the trees lose their gloom as the autumn colors return. The first rays of sunlight gleam over the cabin. Daybreak has finally come.

THE END