

THE GRAVE BURNER

By

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06/14/2020
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OVER BLACK.

The sound of METAL being DRAGGED and SET DOWN over ICE.

DIRT being SPRINKLED over METAL.

The HISSING of GAS.

A LIGHTER FLICKS.

INT. GROUND THAWER - EVENING

POOF!

A strong and steady flame erupts within the pitch darkness of a metal dome. With the SQUEAK of a wheel, more gas is released; sending out a WHOOSH of billowing flames.

EXT. THE DARK ANGEL - CONTINUOUS

Smoke flows across the biting winter skyline, passing the towering figure of an ANGEL.

The statue depicts a stone-faced man, arms and wings outstretched yet far from welcoming. What once was shimmering bronze has now oxidized to a greenish-black.

A bird lands on its shoulder, pruning its feathers... when smoke starts protruding from under the bird's feet.

It flinches and tries to fly away, SQUEALING in pain, but its feet are held fast on the statue's shoulder. The bird SQUEALS again, flapping with all its might when... FREEDOM! The frightened bird flaps frantically away.

Left on the shoulder of the statue is a layer of skin and a piece of toe from the bottom of the bird's foot. All traces slowly disappear like the edges of a burning piece of paper.

Beat.

Distant GIGGLES and CLINKS of beer bottles approach.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

On top of a frosty hill stands JOAN (48). Though weathered in years, the cemetery caretaker remains sturdy; holding her shovel as a suit of armor holds it's sword.

To her right, the cylindrical dome of a ground thawer pipes smoke out of its chimney.

Dirt lies, freshly shoveled, around the seam of the dome and a propane tank shoots flaming gas into the thawer through a metal rod.

Joan turns to the gravestone on her left.

JOAN

Give 'er a few days, Janice, and we'll be welcoming yer next-door neighbor, eh?

No response.

With a heavy breath, Joan turns back to monitor the ground thawer.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Ground oughta be ripe fer diggin' in the mornin'

Joan looks up at the sun, nearly set over the horizon. As if startled, she hops into action; hurrying back to her compact tractor and turning back to the gravestone just before climbing up.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Take care, Janice. And, uh, stay indoors tonight if ya can. You know how Abaddon friggin' gets on the night of his--

A loud CRASH sends Joan's head spinning around to the direction of the sound.

Distinct LAUGHTER.

Joan's look of surprise melts into bristling annoyance. With her shovel in hand, Joan lumbers through the graveyard in the direction of The Dark Angel.

EXT. THE DARK ANGEL - CONTINUOUS

A group of teenagers, MELISSA (19), CONNOR (16), and TRENT (18) drink beer and break bottles as The Dark Angel judges them from above. PUNK MUSIC plays from a Bluetooth speaker clipped to Trent's belt loop.

The sky begins to fill with dark, ominous clouds.

Connor sucks on the end of a party horn while he spray-paints a dick on a nearby gravestone. Melissa laughs maniacally as she records Connor defacing people's graves on her phone.

Trent knocks back another beer and pulls from his cigarette before continuing to head-bang to the music.

He chucks the empty bottle at the Angel. The bottle SHATTERS and what little beer is left splatters on the statue; sizzling off without anyone noticing.

Trent opens another beer.

JOAN

Thaaat's just about enough there,
donta think?

The teens look up to see Joan leaning on her shovel with a tired look on her face.

Connor nudges Melissa, teasingly.

CONNOR

Lookie here, who invited their mum?

Melissa punches Connor.

MELISSA

(to Joan)

Nice shovel. Diggin' up a wife,
Frankenstein?

JOAN

Okay kiddos, you've had yer fun.
Best be on yer way or I'll have to
take action.

TRENT

Hey man, chill! This is a public
cemetery. We're allowed to be here.

Joan glances at the looming figure of the Angel.

JOAN

Haven't been allowed in here fer a
good half hour. Closin' time.

The teens smirk to themselves.

MELISSA

Is that why the gate was chained
up?

CONNOR

Guess we didn't notice.

Joan notices the clouds getting darker. A blizzard ramping up to attack. She spikes her shovel into the ground and moves forward confidently.

JOAN

That's it. Leave now, or--

TRENT

Or what?

Trent swaggers over, dropping his beer, and lays a hand on Joan's shoulder. Joan flinches ever so slightly but does not push the hand away.

JOAN

Well, I'll have to get the authorities involved.

TRENT

Relax. We just came to pay our respects. You know what day it is?

Trent follows Joan's eyes to the inscription etched under The Dark Angel: "Abaddon Lynch, January 9th, 1860 - January 9th, 1913".

Trent turns back to Joan.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Consider this his...
(sly shrug)
...and *my* birthday party.

Connor TOOTS his party horn.

JOAN

(heavy sigh)
Congratulations, but you don't understand. You all need to leave right this instant, ya hear?

MELISSA

Why? Are ya gunna lure us back to your basement?

Joan looks over at Melissa.

JOAN

Young lady, you make me wanna vomit.

TRENT

Hey, you'll get no judgment from us!

(MORE)

TRENT (CONT'D)

We are all just animals, are we not? Besides, you must get lonely out here...

Trent leans in to whisper in Joan's ear.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Ya know, they say if you kiss The Dark Angel at sunset tonight, you'll never live alone again.

Joan takes an involuntary breath.

JOAN

Don't...

Trent sees the sun fade over the horizon, sending the world into darkness. He smiles.

TRENT

Showtime.

Trent walks toward The Dark Angel.

JOAN

I won't let ya do this.

TRENT

Hey!

Joan catches Trent by the arm. He struggles to loosen her grip but it's no use.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Get off me, bitch!

Trent hits her in the temple with his elbow, causing Joan to stumble back but remain standing; firm as ever.

The teens stand wide-eyed at Joan for a moment. Before she can move after Trent again, Connor smashes a beer bottle over Joan's head. She drops to the ground as Melissa and Connor unleash a flurry of blows on her prone body.

Trent, smirking down at Joan, lights a cigarette and turns to approach the statue once again. He mockingly bows.

TRENT (CONT'D)

(to the statue)

Good sir.

Blood rolls down Joan's torn up face, freezing halfway down as Melissa and Connor finally decide to let up on the beating.

JOAN

(faint)

No...

Trent leaps up onto the platform and leans in.

Thick flakes of snow break free from the ominous clouds.

The teen kisses the statue long and hard, making a show of it as his friends HOOT and HOLLER.

Joan convulses on the ground, eyes rolled back in her head.

The others laugh as Trent dismounts.

TRENT

I don't s'pose that's the best
birthday present he's ever gotten,
eh?

Trent moves to put his cigarette out on the statue's crotch, but when he touches the burning end to the cold metal...

An ERUPTION of scorching FLAME envelops his arm. Trent SCREAMS in pain. The others duck for cover.

Beat.

Melissa and Connor look up to find that Joan is nowhere to be found.

CONNOR

Where the fuck did the bitch go--

CRUNCH!!

The blade of Joan's shovel plants itself midway through Connor's skull. His body falls limp but remains standing as Joan holds the other end of the tool.

But it isn't quite Joan, either. Through the thick snowfall, her last distinguishing facial features disappear behind that of an otherworldly creature: Her eyes are matte black, third-degree burns from head to toe, and a face without sympathy. She is The Dark Angel! She is ABADDON incarnate!

Melissa and Trent watch in shock as Abaddon removes the shovel from Connor's head with his foot. Tossing it aside, he reaches into the boy's wound with both hands and rips Connor's head apart.

Melissa SCREAMS in horror and begins to run, but not far.

Abaddon scurries with unnatural speed after her.

Barely able to get to his feet after the explosion, Trent cradles his burnt arm and looks back just in time to see The Dark Angel descend upon Melissa; cutting her SCREAMS short.

Trent turns and flees as Abaddon leaps into the night sky.

EXT. GRAVEYARD ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Trent limps and shivers past gravestones as the wind picks up. His blood and burns freeze and stick, leaving half of his body nearly useless.

Somewhere up above, a steady THUMP, THUMP, THUMPING follows the boy.

Finally, Trent reaches the main gate.

Without any success, Trent tries to open them but the locks are too secure. He tries to hop the fence, but the icy metal is too slick and he is too badly wounded.

Trent screams out into the night before collapsing to the ground, leaning his back on the gate.

Blood flows from nearly every inch of his body, and he is nearly frozen stiff.

The icy snow WHOOSHES around him, freezing him further, as the THUMP, THUMP, THUMPING moves closer.

Slowly... painstakingly... Trent forces himself to look up into the night sky.

There, in the dark shadows and blizzarding winds, Abaddon lurks. He slowly descends upon his victim.

Finally, he lands in front of Trent, kicking up even more ice and snow. Shivering with fear, Trent everts his tightly shut eyes. Then...

Abaddon sits. Beside Trent, in the snow. Matte black eyes never blinking.

Beat.

Trent, risking a glance, notices the radiating heat sizzling from Abaddon's scorched flesh.

The moment is long. The ROAR of the blizzard seems to die down and all that can be heard is Trent's belabored breathing.

He sobs.

TRENT

Please... Leave me alone!

Abaddon simply stares, waiting for Trent to lock eyes with him... When he does...

Abaddon kisses him. For a long moment, he kisses him.

When The Dark Angel pulls away, Trent's face is revealed to be scorched to the bone. He is hardly recognizable anymore.

Silence.

Abaddon convulses once again, falling to the ground. His eyes shut, and when they open, the matte black has vanished, the charred flesh fades away, and the wings disappear.

Joan is Joan once again.

She lies on her back, watching the snow descend from the darkness above.

JOAN

(beat)

Uffda.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Joan stands on top of the hill once again. The morning is accompanied by a clear sky. Knee deep in a partially dug grave, Joan pauses and looks to Janice's gravestone on her left.

To her right, three ground thawers blast flames over the frozen ground.

JOAN

Every year, eh Janice? Pete's sake.

In the distance, The Dark Angel seemingly stares at Joan.

Stabbing the shovel's blade back into the ground, Joan works slow and steady to prepare the homes for Janice's new neighbors.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.