

THE NIGHTMARE QUEEN

BY

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THE NIGHTMARE QUEEN

FADE IN

EXT. ROAD THROUGH A BOG - DAY

A dull, grey, misty afternoon as the sun begins to set.

Desolate bog land, blooming with ling heather and grasses of many colours. Rugged, bleak, beautiful - and silent.

A car breaks the silence as it drives along the deserted road. Just an ordinary car with Dublin number plates.

INT. CAR - DAY

The car radio plays traditional Irish music.

A pretty WOMAN (21) dozes in the front passenger seat. Her head gently rocked by the motion of the car.

A MAN (22) is driving the car.

He looks over at his sleeping companion and smiles lovingly. He reaches over and gently rubs her slightly bulging tummy.

She stirs. She smiles. She puts her hand on his.

WOMAN

You should be watching the road!

MAN

Don't worry - I am.

WOMAN

What time is it?

The man looks at the digital clock on the dashboard.

MAN

Three thirty three.

He looks back to the road.

MAN (CONT'D)

Do we have to listen to this crap?

WOMAN

I like this crap - and you won't find any other station out here.

MAN

Typical. Ireland's so backward!

The woman looks over at the man and smirks wickedly.

WOMAN

I still haven't forgiven you.

The man rolls his eyes.

MAN

I'm sorry. How many more times?
It was an innocent mistake!

The woman gasps with mock incredulity.

WOMAN

She was my sister!

MAN

Your twin sister! Like I said, I
was drunk and she could've
stopped me...

WOMAN

Don't blame her!

MAN

Alright, alright! I'm sorry.
(beat) We didn't do anything...

WOMAN

A good job too! You know you'd be
dead if you ever cheated on me,
don't you?

The woman playfully smacks the man's arm and grins. She settles back down and closes her eyes.

The man laughs nervously as he steals a sideways glance at the woman.

A large black bird flies across in front of the car and lands on the roadside a short distance ahead.

The man watches it intently as the car passes.

MAN

Is that a crow or a raven? I can
never tell the difference.

The woman opens her eyes again and looks round.

WOMAN

A raven. They're bigger. Do you
know what the raven represents?

MAN

Don't tell me - Death? It's
always Death with you isn't it?

The woman tuts.

WOMAN

Actually - the Raven represents Morrigan, goddess of war. Her name, "Maere - Rigan" means "Nightmare Queen". She appears to people just before they suffer a violent death.

MAN

Isn't that the Banshee?

WOMAN

No. The Banshee is totally different.

MAN

But they're both to do with death - right?

The man looks at her and chuckles.

The woman rolls her eyes and looks out of her window.

WOMAN

It's getting dark...

MAN

I'm looking forward to a nice, cosy turf fire when we get there.

WOMAN

How much further?

MAN

About thirty miles - I think. I haven't seen any signs for ages.

WOMAN

We're not lost again are we?

MAN

No!

WOMAN

I'm cold.

She shivers as she leans forward to switch on the car heating.

The man stretches and rubs his eyes.

The tune on the radio changes to a sad lament on the uilleann pipes.

The woman looks at the car's digital clock and frowns.

It still reads three thirty three.

WOMAN

Bloody hire cars - nothing ever works on them.

MAN

Eh?

WOMAN

The clock. It hasn't changed.

MAN

That's odd...

The man looks at the clock and frowns.

He casually looks back to the road. His eyes widen with utter panic.

MAN (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ!

A HOODED WOMAN stands in the road in front of the car. She seems oblivious to it.

At the last minute she looks up at the driver with wrathful eyes.

The man swerves violently to avoid her. He slams on the brakes and the car screeches to an emergency stop.

The man and the woman look at each other in shock.

The man angrily slams the steering wheel. He unclips his seatbelt and violently throws open his door.

He jumps out.

MAN

You stupid fucking...

EXT. ROAD THROUGH A BOG - NIGHT

The man stops, mouth open.

There is silence, broken only by the wind and sound of a lone raven cawing.

The man looks around in confusion.

He rushes around the car and throws himself down on the road to look underneath it.

The woman gets out and looks around, still in shock.

She shivers and pulls a shawl tightly about herself.

The man frantically runs his fingers through his hair.

MAN

You saw her - right? She was
standing in the road!

WOMAN

I didn't see anyone.

MAN

There was a woman - right here!

WOMAN

No... there wasn't.

The woman looks around and stops as still as a statue.
All colour drains from her face.

The bog looks cold, barren and hostile. The ruins of an
old stone cottage slump broodingly in the distance.

WOMAN

I've been here before...

MAN

I need a piss!

The man marches forward into a roadside ditch. He
stumbles and disappears from sight.

The woman watches him stumble. He doesn't get up.

She steps forward, concern etched into her face.

The man gets-up. He looks down at himself. He brushes mud
off his clothes.

He's where he expects to be, except it is much darker
than before he fell and now it is deathly silent.

He turns around in confusion. There is no woman, or car.

The sound of disembodied voices hissing angrily in Irish
surrounds him like the wind through long grass.

He turns back towards the bog in utter terror.

A hand touches his shoulder. He jumps out of his skin.

WOMAN

Are you alright?

The woman and car are back where they should be, as is
the sound of the wind. The darkness ominously remains.

MAN

W...w...what happened?

WOMAN

I don't know... You fell...

MAN

You weren't there...

WOMAN

I was right here.

A rushing sound of haunting, angry whispering voices swirls around them like the wind.

They both spin in circles desperately seeking the source.

They see nothing.

The woman looks desperately at the man.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

We'd better go - now!

She is deathly pale and her wide eyes erupt with fear.

The man is too confused to move.

He takes a deep breath and inwardly tells himself to get a grip.

WOMAN

Do you not know where we are?

MAN

Of course I fucking don't! It's just some shagging bog in the middle of fucking nowhere!

WOMAN

Get in the car! We've gotta go!

The woman gets back in the car and locks her door.

She fumbles with her seatbelt.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Get in the car now - for Christ's sake, would you!

MAN

What is your problem?

The woman takes a deep breath and exhales slowly.

She shakes in fear as she looks over at the man, who stares at her irritably through the open driver's door.

WOMAN

Féar gortach!

MAN

What?

WOMAN

Féar gortach - hungry grass!

The man scoffs.

MAN

Hungry grass!

WOMAN

Get-in-the-car!

The man shrugs and nonchalantly gets back in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The man sits there and sighs as he restarts the engine and drives off slowly.

There is silence, except for the noise of the engine and tyres on the road.

The woman stares out of the window and sobs mutely.

The man looks at her remorsefully and sighs again.

MAN

I'm sorry. So, go on - tell me about this "Hungry Grass".

The woman glances at him coldly. Her eyes red and puffy.

She looks out at the ruined stone cottage as the car passes it.

WOMAN

Hungry grass is cursed land.
It's where people died.

The man tuts.

MAN

Here we go - Death again!

The woman glares at him furiously.

WOMAN

Shut-up - will you! It's cursed because people starved to death there. During The Famine. People - evicted from their homes were forced to live in the fields and ditches. There was no food, so they starved to death or died of fever. So, yes - it is about death. Real people, real deaths!

The man looks shame-faced.

MAN

I'm sorry.

WOMAN

Ever since then, people stay well
away from the hungry grass.

MAN

What happens if you walk on it?

WOMAN

You go mad with hunger and you
die.

MAN

But why?

WOMAN

The spirits of the dead - just
buried in the fields where they
died - they're angry. They want
revenge on the living. Who knows?

MAN

And you believe it?

WOMAN

Don't you? That woman you saw -
what was she then?

MAN

What? Nah - that's bollocks!

He looks at the woman and smiles feebly.

He pats her leg.

MAN (CONT'D)

Come on - cheer up! We'll be
there soon. (beat) There's a
cheese sandwich for you...

The woman slowly cracks a weak smile.

He looks back to the road as he reaches behind his seat.

The car headlights illuminate the figure of the hooded
woman by the roadside.

MAN

I don't... there she is again!

The hooded woman looks at them, and then seems to just
melt away as the car draws near.

The radio crackles. They hear the same haunting, angry, whispering voices as before - getting louder and louder.

The man and the woman look down at the stereo.

The clock next to it still reads three thirty three.

They look at each other, very worried.

The man looks in the rear view mirror.

There in the back seat is the hooded woman. She looks at him with angry eyes

The raven instantly appears in front of the windscreen and flies through it as if it is not there, straight into the man's face - viciously attacking him.

The man puts his hands over his face to protect himself.

FADE TO:

EXT. ROAD THROUGH A BOG - DAY

A Garda car, blue lights flashing, blocks the road as a rusty old car comes to a halt in front of it.

A GUARD slowly gets out and goes up to the rusty car.

The DRIVER winds down his window.

GUARD

Sorry - road's closed. You'll have to go the other way.

DRIVER

Good morning Sean. Another crash?

GUARD

Yeah - a bad one. A couple of tourists came off the road.

The guard nods toward a battered car on its roof in a ditch beside the road.

DRIVER

Tourists you say?

GUARD

Yeah - young couple. Hire car, Dublin plates. Probably driving too fast and didn't see the bend.

DRIVER

Dead?

The guard nods grimly.

GUARD

The driver - young lad. The passenger survived with just cuts and bruises. She's sitting in my car right now. Lucky girl.

The driver shakes his head sadly.

DRIVER

These tourists just don't know the roads around here. They can be treacherous.

GUARD

They can indeed. That's four accidents this year - all in this exact spot.

DRIVER

You'd think it was cursed!

GUARD

Yeah - maybe it is.

The guard looks over to the upturned car.

Decaying roadside shrines and bunches of flowers surround the crash site.

The raven lands on the upturned car and caws.

INT. GUARD'S CAR - DAY

The woman sits in the front passenger seat, with the door open.

She is in a state of total shock. She has a nasty gash on her forehead.

She stares into nothingness.

A dark figure, with back turned, sits behind her.

The figure turns around and reaches forward. With sad, grey face and angry eyes, she is the hooded woman.

She screams.

The raven caws.

FADE OUT

THE END