

MEMORIAL DAY

A Screenplay

By

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THE SCREEN IS:

In TOTAL DARKNESS, resembling the BLACKNESS of SPACE. In the void, a TICKING sound.

FADE IN:

EXT. CLOCK TOWER - NIGHT

An OLD stone clock tower fills the FRAME.

Lit by the MOONLIGHT, the clock face GLISTENS. The clock is the SOURCE of the ticking. Slowly the clock hands move one more CLICK, indicating the time. It is 11:50 pm.

SUPERIMPOSE:

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2024

EXT. TOWN CEMETERY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In the center of the graveyard, huddled around a small GLOWING campfire, sits a group of CHILDREN of varying ages.

The children stare through the flames at the face of Arthur Romero, an elderly man sitting on the other side of the fire.

CLOSE-UP - ROMERO

He is a TALL PLUMP man, mid to late 60s. He has a full, white beard and is wearing a dirty, worn-out old cap. Dressed in over-all's, work boots, and a faded long-sleeve work shirt, he looks as every bit as southern as his voice sounds.

ROMERO

Eleven-fifty. Ten minutes until midnight. Ten minutes until the witching hour.

The flames HISS and CRACKLE. The tombstones look appropriately ominous as they are lit by the firelight.

ROMERO (Cont'd)

We have time for one more tale. A tale so terrifying, it will chill you to the bone.

(Continued)

Continued:

Romero is an ECCENTRIC sort of old-timer. Befittingly enough, he just happens to be the cemetery caretaker. Appropriately enough he is also the fire-side storyteller.

One boy, twelve-years old, sits beside his younger sister, a bright-eyed nine-year-old. She grabs his arm, hiding her face in his shoulder.

After a few seconds, she turns her head back around, listening to the old man again.

The children stare intently at the man telling the story. Their faces GLOW in the light. Their eyes JUMP back and forth between the man and the FLICKERING FLAMES.

ROMERO (Cont'd)

Ten more minutes before the devils hour. An hour of supernatural activity, where the undead wake to walk the land of the living, between midnight and one a.m.

Romero glances down quietly at the flickering flames. His face is EERILY lit by the firelight.

Suddenly, he lifts his head up, staring WIDE-EYED at the children. He gazes at each child, and in a WHISPERING, raspy VOICE, begins his tale:

ROMERO (Cont'd)

"One hundred and sixty-one years ago, during the American Civil War, on April 29, 1863, General Ulysses S. Grant moved his Union army south to cross the Mississippi River, in order to advance on Vicksburg. Several young men right from this very town fought against Grant's troops. All the men in their regiment, nine soldiers and the commanding officer, were charged with protecting hundreds of gold coins throughout the war. But during the siege at Vicksburg, just when the confederate army was slowly gaining the upper hand, out of the night, a thick, vaporous layer of smoke seeped up from the ground. For just a few moments, the confederate soldiers stood unmoving, frozen in place as it completely enveloped the battlefield, obscuring the fort and the river's shoreline. They could see nothing, not a foot in front of them, not even an inch.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

ROMERO (Cont'd)

Grant's troops begin advancing on the fort harder than before"...

Romero glances down at the flickering fire, then fixes his gaze back on the children.

ROMERO (Cont'd)

..."but the unearthly shroud prevented the Confederates from defending the fort or themselves."

CLOSE-UP - CHILDREN

Stare in WIDE-EYED HORROR at the old man in front of them.

CLOSE-UP - ROMERO

ROMERO

"The choking black shroud swirled around the confederate troops. Caught off guard, all the soldiers in the regiment were killed one by one."

MONTAGE OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

The close-up fades out. The image of Romero is slowly replaced with scenes of WARFARE.

The scenes are PURE CARNAGE...overlapping with the storytellers voice...

...the fort walls EXPLODE from CANNON fire...soldiers CHARGE on horseback, SWORDS drawn...

...MUSKETS and LONG-GUNS fire into on-rushing crowds of both Union and Confederate troops...

...the sound of CANNON FIRE and GUN SHOTS reverberate throughout the entire battlefield...

...the SWIRLING BLACK DEATH closes in around Cronenberg's regiment, their dead and dying bodies FALLING to the ground...

...soldiers CLAW and GASP for air, their eyes open and staring into the darkness...

...then, as suddenly as it had come, the smoke fades, recessing back into the ground...

(Continued)

Continued:

The montage FADES away. The image of the children once again fills the screen.

CLOSE-UP - CHILDREN

Terrified, they just stare at Romero.

The sound of the DYING and WOUNDED soldiers can be heard over the scene.

ROMERO

"But it has been told, by our fathers and grandfathers, generation after generation, that the soldiers from this town were forever entombed with the loot they were charged to protect. A curse was placed upon them. If their graves are ever disturbed and the gold stolen, the smoke will seep up once more from the earth, and the men buried in this cemetery will rise up and search for the ones responsible, for it was their duty to protect the gold in death, just as it was in life."

For a few seconds there is a HUSHED SILENCE.

The only sound is the FLICKERING CRACKLE of the campfire.

Suddenly, the CLOCK TOWER interrupts the silence.

The first GONG rings out, indicating Twelve a.m.

The children JUMP and GASP, their eyes WIDE OPEN.

CLOSE - UP - ROMERO

SMILES at the children, then glances at his pocket-watch.

ROMERO

Twelve o'clock midnight, the witching hour.

The scene shifts up from Romero's face, away from the children and campfire, up over the trees behind them.

Continuing its ASCENT over a hillside, it begins to look down on SOUTHERN CROSS, a SMALL Mississippi town.

The second GONG of the clock tower rings out.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

In the distance the lights of Southern Cross at night can be seen.

The third GONG of the clock tower rings out.

SUPERIMPOSE:**MEMORIAL DAY**

MAIN TITLE/CREDITS ROLL and are intercut with ESTABLISHING SHOTS. Eight different scenes of varying locations throughout the town fill the screen, in sync with the fourth through eleventh GONGS of the distant clock tower.

After the final credits roll, the scene dissolves to:

EXT. TOWN OF SOUTHERN CROSS - NIGHT

The twelfth GONG of the clock tower is ringing out. Lamp posts continue to illuminate the streets and sidewalks. The buildings are dark, with most all of the businesses closed.

EXT. CHURCH CLOCK TOWER - ESTABLISHING SHOTS - NIGHT

The clock tower is part of a huge, ANCIENT STONE CHURCH that sits at the end of town.

The church sits NESTLED at the base of the aforementioned hillside. The clock tower continues to TICK, counting down the hour.

EXT. HILLSIDE - ESTABLISHING SHOTS - NIGHT

A GRAVEL ROAD runs from the asphalt paved church parking lot up the hillside.

Trees LINE the top of the hill. Between them is a intricate, WROUGHT IRON DOUBLE GATE.

It is the ENTRANCE to the town graveyard. Above the double gate, spelled out in an ARCH, is the cemetery name.

CLOSE UP - WROUGHT IRON DOUBLE GATE:**ETERNAL PEACE CEMETERY**

EXT. TOWN CEMETERY - NIGHT

Beyond the wrought iron gates are rows of TOMBSTONES. Some of the tombstones are falling over.

Centered in the middle of the graveyard is an OLD STONE TOMB.

Right outside the tomb is the location of the opening fireside GHOST STORY.

Romero and the children have all wandered off back to their homes and families.

The campfire begins to fizzle out. The flames finally die in the cool air. Smoke billows into the night sky.

EXT. CLOSE-UP - CLOCK TOWER - NIGHT

One final GONG from the clock tower rings out into the night, signaling ONE a.m, the end of the WITCHING HOUR...for now.

EXT. SOUTHERN CROSS - TOWN SQUARE - DAY**SUPERIMPOSE:****SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2024**

Bright sunny day. Montage of shots matching the scenes from the night before. The town starting its day.

Next to final shot is in the town square, being prepped for the upcoming holiday weekend festival.

Banner up high reads "CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL DAY APRIL 28-29. Poles decorated with confederate colors. Last shot shows Town Hall.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mayor JOHN D. HOOPER, white, 60s, pompous and naive, is in his office with his team, planning out the holiday weekend.

His sons BEAUREGARD, 40s, dark hair, overweight, JACKSON, 40s, dark hair, trim, and daughter LEIGH, 30s, beautiful blonde, are the town council.

(Continued)

Continued:

JOHN D.

Why are we going over this again? You all have been handling this for me for months. I'd rather be out fishing.

BEAUREGARD

Because you know how things can go wrong at the last minute.

JACKSON

Yes dad...I mean Mayor. Remember last year when one of the jazz bands didn't show up and left a huge hole in our itinerary?

JOHN D.

Yes, yes. But what does that have to do with ME?

LEIGH

Because anything that happens in this town affects you and your image. You ARE the town after all.

JOHN D.

This is true.

LEIGH

Speaking of holes, there's a huge hole in the budget.

All three men express different levels of shock.

BEAUREGARD

That can't be. Go check the numbers again.

LEIGH

I have. Three times.

JACKSON

What about the festival? This won't hinder the festival, will it?

JOHN D.

And what about my reelection campaign? This won't hurt me being reelected will it?

LEIGH

The election is safe. No one runs against you anyway. But the bronze statue hasn't been paid for yet.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

LEIGH (Cont'd)

So we're going to have to pay the Sculptor out of our own pockets if the money can't be found.

JOHN D.

How much are we talking here?

LEIGH

Twenty-thousand dollars.

JOHN D.

I'm not paying that much out of my pocket. No way in hell! Why do we have to pay these people anyway? They should be glad we hired them.

LEIGH

Because there is a little thing called a contract. And it states quite plainly that they will get paid for the services they provide.

BEAUREGARD

She's right d...sir. Failing to pay them as agreed, could hurt you down the road. And it certainly would hurt the town's image if they spread the word. And we need tourists and tax revenue.

JACKSON

It's the whole point of making a big deal of this festival. It's the only real thing that happens in this town after all. We have no historic battlefields. We have no famous people birthplaces. We have no big name amusement parks nearby. We have...

JOHN D.

I get it. I get it!

BEAUREGARD

All we have near us is a cemetery and an old folk tale about a Confederate payroll lost on the battlefield or whatever. Even the treasure hunters stopped coming through here looking for it.

JOHN D.

Well like I said, I'm not paying for it out of my pocket.

(Continued)

Continued: (3)

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

So either you three find the money some how, and I don't care how, or you pay for it out of your own pockets. You all are supposed to be my town council. Your job is to make my job easier, not more stressful. Now get out!

All three know better than to push the subject with him this mad and leave. John D. Grabs his fishing cap.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

John D. Leaves town hall and walks through town, fishing pole and tackle box in hand. Everyone waves, smiles, and greets him. He greets everyone back.

INT. SOUTHERN CROSS B&B - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A family is checking in. DAN CRONENBERG, 40s, white, fit, southern accent but not Mississippi, with his wife EMILY, late 30s, white, trophy wife looks, and their son DANTE, 10, white, shy.

Dan is yelling at ROBERT behind the check in counter, 20s, white, polite. Emily looks like she couldn't care and Dante is embarrassed.

DAN

What do you mean you can't find our reservation? We booked it with you all months ago! What's your name?

ROBERT

Robert. Robert Cunningham.

DAN

Cunningham? What are you, straight out of Happy Day's or something?

ROBERT

No sir, I'm not. Please allow me to try again to find the reservation for you.

DAN

You had better. Look for it like your job depends on it.

John D. Happens to walk by the open door of the establishment. He hears the commotion and enters quietly.

(Continued)

Continued:

ROBERT

I found it. I found Mr. Cronenberg.

DAN

I told you already! My name is not Cronenberg! It is pronounced CRAH-NENBOORG! Get your head out of your 1950's ass and say it right!

Robert is cringing in terror behind the check in counter.

John D. Decides now is the time to step in and defuse the situation.

JOHN D.

Good morning everyone. Good morning Robert. How can I help you all today, Mr...

DAN

Cronenberg. Dan Cronenberg. And my wife Emily and son Dante. I'm guessing you are the manager?

JOHN D.

Even better. I'm the mayor. Mayor John D. Hooper. I happened to be walking by and wanted to see what I can do for visitors to our fair town.

Dan is all smiles, getting the treatment he knows he deserves.

DAN

Well, well, Mayor. Thank you. I don't know how much you heard, but we are trying to check in for your town's festival. Robert here can't seem to do his job here in finding our reservation. And then on top of that, he can't manage to say our name correctly. That is very rude in opinion.

JOHN D.

Hmmm...a double whammy. Certainly don't start my day off easy do you (chuckles)? It sounded like he just about had the reservation ready when I walked in. Is that right Robert?

ROBERT

Um, yes Mr. Mayor. It seems our guests, the Cr...

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

Dan glares at Robert, ready to pounce if he says their name wrong again.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

Cronenbergs (correctly), have a reservation starting tomorrow and going through Tuesday instead of today through Monday like he said.

DAN

What?! Are you calling me a liar?

Robert cringes again. John D. Intervenes.

JOHN D.

Now hold on a second please Dan. I'm sure he did no such thing. Let me ask you a question. Did you call the establishment directly, or book through one of those fancy schmansy booking app things?

DAN

I booked it online of course. No one books directly these days.

JOHN D.

Aah...so there's the answer. Blame the app thingy on screwing it up on you instead of Robert.

Dan starts to ease up, but he's still not satisfied. Robert starts to feel relieved.

DAN

Whatever. That still doesn't get us our reservation for today. What are we supposed to do about that?

JOHN D.

Robert, are there any vacancies open for today?

ROBERT

Yes Mr. Mayor. There are a couple left.

JOHN D.

Great! Then here's what I propose Dan. You all get to check in today and I will personally cover the bill.

(Continued)

Continued: (3)

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Then your reservation can continue uninterrupted as you already booked it. But there is one minor thing I will need from you please.

Dan is all smiles at the preferred treatment. He gets suspicious at the catch.

DAN

What's the catch Mr. Mayor?

JOHN D.

I just want you to apologize to Robert here, since it wasn't his fault and he was just trying to do his job. Then shake on it like we southern gentlemen do.

Dan is definitely thinking it over. Swallowing his pride for a free night.

EMILY

Come on Dan, we don't have all day to stand here.

DANTE

Yeah dad. It's already hot and I'm hungry.

Dan puts his best face on and agrees.

DAN

You drive a hard bargain John. But you have yourself a deal.

Dan reaches out to shake hands with John, then Robert.

DAN (Cont'd)

Robert, I formally and wholeheartedly apologize for the way I treated you just now. You were just doing your job. But I do ask kindly, that you pronounce our name right from now on.

ROBERT

Apology accepted sir. I promise to get your name right from now on. I'll even tell the rest the staff to make sure it doesn't happen again. In fact, as long as I'm on duty, please call on me for anything you need.

(Continued)

Continued: (4)

JOHN D.

See there? Smiles all around. That's the way it should be in Southern Cross. Now Dan, before I leave, I have to tell you something. You are going to hear your name said wrong a LOT all weekend. But before you get angry, and rightfully so, can I explain why?

Dan was about to get mad again, but gets curious instead.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Obviously you are here for the Memorial Day festival. We here in Southern Cross use it to celebrate the good men from this very town that died on the battlefield at the Battle of Grand Gulf.

DAN

Yes we are. But that still doesn't explain why...

JOHN D.

The leader of that fine regiment was Lt. Cronenberg.

All three family members eyes go wide at that revelation.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Yup, you get it now? These good people here revere that regiment almost like royalty. So naturally when they see your name, that is how they are going to say it. So, on behalf of the whole town in advance, I will apologize for any time it happens. Just please don't hurt anyone's feelings or get upset.

John D. Gets a look like a brilliant idea just came to him.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

In fact, if you play along with what I just thought up, I'll cover your room all weekend.

All three Cronenbergs perk up at the special treatment they will get.

DAN

You have curiosity for sure John. What are you proposing?

(Continued)

Continued: (5)

JOHN D.

That you act like you are a distant relative of the great Lt. Cronenberg. You came here to honor your ancestor. The town will eat it up. And after you leave, they will be none the wiser.

DAN

Hmmm...

EMILY

Oh come on Dan. What's there to think about? Just do it.

DANTE

Come on dad. It would be really cool.

JOHN D.

Think about it Dan. The town revering you, like a long lost legend or something. Your family certainly likes it. What do you say?

Dan gets an ear to ear grin.

DAN

Well when you put it that way, how can I refuse?

Dan and John D. shake hands. Both men seem overjoyed at their mutual agreement.

Robert sighs, feeling relieved the situation has been handled.

JOHN D.

Great! Done deal. Stop by my office around six tonight and we'll go over more details. Have you join in the festivities tomorrow and such. Robert, get these VIP guests of ours checked in and bags upstairs. Then get them settled in for the best breakfast they ever had. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got some fish waiting for me to catch.

EXT. SOUTHERN CROSS TOWN SQUARE - DAY

There are park benches, trees, and at the center of the square, is a gigantic covered Gazebo with a plaque on it.

(Continued)

Continued:

Across the street is the town hall. Workers busily put up wooden bleachers, a refreshment stand and various banners around the square. The largest banner being hung reads:

SOUTHERN CROSS
CELEBRATES IT'S PAST

Across from the gazebo is a large structure covered with a white drop cloth. From the shape and form, there appears to be a STATUE underneath.

Leigh Hooper strides across the square towards the statue. She is wearing a business blouse and skirt, carrying a briefcase.

She moves along the sidewalk with a great deal of authority and impatience.

Following along behind is her secretary JAMIE CURTIS, a petite young woman, mid-twenties, light-colored hair, with glasses and a sarcastic demeanor.

LEIGH

Now, the Mayor and his wife will be arriving at six-forty-five and will take a seat in the gazebo.

As Leigh walks, Jamie follows closely behind. She is entering notes into her iPad.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

At exactly seven a.m. tomorrow the flag will be raised, then the Mayor will give his speech. After that, we'll get Dan Cronenberg to do the countdown for the unveiling of the statue. Then, we can direct the crowd to form a line to the statue while the band plays "Southern Cross" by Crosby, Stills and Nash.

Leigh stops in front of the covered statue. She reaches down to grab the drop cloth, pausing briefly with nervousness.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

I just hope this is worth all the headache.

She lifts up the cloth. Underneath is GRANITE SLAB with the NAMES of the REGIMENT etched into the base.

The top of the slab is a LIFE-SIZE BUST of LT. CRONENBERG.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

Feeling relieved of her anxiety, she blows a breath of relief.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Not bad. It's better than expected.

JAMIE

It's marvelous.

Leigh lowers the cloth. She turns to face Jamie, glaring at her.

LEIGH

Jamie, I know this really isn't your cup of tea, but let's just get through this and make it as painless as possible. That's all I ask. This festival is all on me, and if it falls apart, then it's my...

She reaches around and pats one of her ass cheeks. Jamie smiles and nods.

JAMIE

Anything you say Ms. Hooper.

They turn away from the statue and walk back across the square together.

LEIGH

Please tell me you ordered the flags and candles. There is no way we can have a candlelight procession tonight without candles.

JAMIE

Ordered and paid for.

LEIGH

Did you get all the promotional material over to the clerk at town hall? The pamphlets, event schedules, everything like that?

JAMIE

All taken care of Ms. Hooper. Signed, sealed and delivered.

Walking to the end of the square, they reach a 2020 Grey Honda Civic Hatchback.

It is parked near the square on the adjacent street. Leigh pulls out her keys and presses the door lock button.

(Continued)

Continued: (3)

LEIGH

You know Jamie, you are an excellent assistant, but you can be annoying as hell sometimes.

JAMIE

Thank you Ms. Hooper. I take that as a compliment.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - DAY

Leigh and Jamie get in. Leigh starts the car. She pulls away from the curb and into the street.

LEIGH

If I can just get through the speeches without crying, I'll be fine.

JAMIE

Something wrong?

LEIGH

I couldn't sleep last night. On top of that, the meeting with the Mayor this morning didn't go very well.

JAMIE

Trouble in the ranks?

LEIGH

Trouble in the bank account. Dad, ... the Mayor isn't very happy at this moment. I had the pleasure of informing the council that this year's festival isn't within our budget. I have no idea how we're even going to pay the sculptor we hired.

JAMIE

Seriously?

LEIGH

That damn granite slab is what drained the town's funds.

JAMIE

It was that expensive?

LEIGH

Yes. Very expensive.

(Continued)

Continued:

JAMIE

How much are we talking?

LEIGH

Twenty-thousand dollars.

JAMIE

Ms. Hooper...

LEIGH

You have to promise me you won't mention this to anyone. If word of this gets out...

JAMIE

I won't say a word.

LEIGH

Promise me.

JAMIE

I promise, I promise! Geez. The town puts on this festival every year for the last 159 years and nothing happens. The we decide to do something extra to commemorate Memorial Day this year, and that one little thing causes the whole town to go broke.

LEIGH

Please Jamie. With you saying things like that, the more anxious it makes me. I'm hysterical enough as it is. Both mine and the Mayor's careers are in jeopardy if we don't figure this out. And let's not forget that the other two council members had a hand in this mess too.

JAMIE

Yes ma'am.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Leigh's Honda Civic travels along the road heading towards the old stone church at the end of town. Both she and Jamie can be seen conversing through the car windows.

A late model pickup trucks passes by them in the opposite direction.

TRUCK RADIO

Close up of the radio in the dashboard of the pickup truck.

WEATHERMAN (V.O.)

...the temperature for the Southern Cross area the next few days will be in the mid to upper eighties. Light winds will move in a north westerly direction with no chance of precipitation. All in all it's shaping up to be a gorgeous weekend for the Memorial Day festival.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

At the wheel of the truck is TOM ATKINS, a big rig driver. He is a rugged looking man in his early 40s.

He responds to the weatherman's forecast on the radio with a smile.

TOM

Sounds like my kind of weekend.

The forecast fades out. "The South's Gonna Do It Again" by Charlie Daniels Band plays on the radio. Tom looks back up.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - DAY

Through the windshield, Leigh sees the turn off and sign for the Southern Cross Power Sub-Station. She cracks a slight smile as they drive by.

JAMIE

I can tell what you're thinking. But you said yourself we're short on time. No time to stop in for a quickie with your boy toy.

Leigh blushes a bit as she responds.

LEIGH

I did no such thing Jamie. We're on our way way to see Father Holbrook after all. Well, OK, maybe I thought it. But it's not a sin to THINK it, right?

Both women laugh as the car continues down the road.

TOM'S POV - THE ROAD - DAY

From the interior of the pickup truck, the square at the center of town comes into view.

Dozens of people can be seen working diligently to prepare for the upcoming festival.

EXT. OLD STONE CHURCH - DAY

Leigh's Grey Honda pulls up into the driveway of the old church.

POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD

The car winds around the side of the church. The gravel driveway at the back of the asphalt lot can be seen leading up the hill to the cemetery.

The wrought iron gate at the top of the hill is a little rusty and somewhat overgrown with weeds.

LEIGH (V.O.)

Look at that place. If we survive this festival and can get back on budget, then that's my next project, the restoration of the cemetery. It's historical. Our ancestors are buried there.

Leigh pulls the car to a stop at the back of the church.

LEIGH

This town is proud enough of it's past to hold a festival every year, but trying to get anyone involved in any sort of community cleanup effort is like pulling teeth.

EXT. REAR OF CHURCH - DAY

Leigh and Jamie get out of the car and walk over to the rear door of the church.

Leigh glances over her shoulder at the cemetery.

LEIGH

After this weekends festival, get an estimate ready for next months council meeting.

(Continued)

Continued:

JAMIE

Yes ma'am.

They both stop at the door. Leigh reaches for the doorknob. Just as she is about to turn the knob, a sudden gust of wind blows the door wide open.

Both of the women glance at each other with a look of surprise.

JAMIE (Cont'd)

That was creepy.

INT. STONE CHURCH - DAY

Leigh and Jamie step inside the darkened structure. It is almost completely dark inside.

The only light visible in the darkness is from the stained-glass windows.

There is nothing but silence within the huge sanctuary. No sound, no movement, only the footsteps from the two women.

LEIGH

Hello...Father Holbrook?

Nothing but silence.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Father Holbrook?

Her voice echoes throughout the church, reverberating back towards the women.

JAMIE

That was even more creepy.

LEIGH

Try in another part of the church.

Jamie wanders off to the front side of the church. Leigh walks out between the rows of pews, looking around into the darkness.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Father Holbrook?

Suddenly, the rear entrance door is blown wide open. Leigh spins around. She realizes it was just the wind again.

Jamie steps out of the shadowed hallway next to the pews and touches Leigh's shoulder. Leigh jumps.

(Continued)

Continued:

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Jesus! Jamie don't do that.

JAMIE

Oh, I'm sorry Ms. Hooper. I didn't mean to scare you.

Jamie sees the anxiety in Leigh's expression.

JAMIE (Cont'd)

Are you alright?

Leigh's face is ghost white. She tries to control her nerves.

LEIGH

The wind blew the door open again. It startled me. It made me a little jumpy that's all.

JAMIE

Seems more than just a little jumpy.

EXT. REAR OF CHURCH - DAY

Leigh and Jamie exit the rear of the church. Leigh pulls the door shut tight behind her.

Turning towards the car, they spot a lone figure walking from the cemetery along the gravel road.

JAMIE

Who is that?

The lone figure approaches the two women, slowly striding across the parking lot. Coming closer into view, Leigh sees the persons face and immediately recognizes this individual.

LEIGH

Father Holbrook?

Father Holbrook seems agitated. His hands are shaking. His face is ghastly white.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Are you alright?

FATHER HOLBROOK

Ms. Hooper...I have something to tell you.

EXT. BOTTOM OF DOOR - PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Two feet land on the asphalt of a parking lot. Tom just stepped from his truck onto the pavement of the town square.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The square bustles with activity. Laborers continue to hang an array of decor.

"Southern Cross" by Black Sabbath is playing on the gazebo PA system in the background.

Merchants set up booths of merchandise, while an assortment of entertainment vendors ready their gaming tents.

Suddenly, Tom steps into view. He has a grin on his face.

TOM

How the hell are you Wallace?

Tom is standing a few feet away from Charles Wallace, the town maintenance foreman. He is close to the gazebo, checking off items on his work-list.

Wallace turns from his task, glancing up from his clipboard. Tom and Wallace greet each other with a friendly handshake.

WALLACE

Tom old boy! When did you get in?

TOM

Yesterday afternoon around 4:15.

WALLACE

I'm glad you made it back in one piece.

TOM

Thanks. I took on a shorter haul so I could make it home for the festival.

WALLACE

Well you made it just in time. How long you in for?

TOM

About a week.

WALLACE

Fantastic. That's plenty of time for some elbow bending.

(Continued)

Continued:

TOM

Sure is, but right now I just stopped by to see if you could use some help.

WALLACE

I thought you'd never ask. Come on. I'll show you where to start.

The men turn and walk past the gazebo together. Wallace points to the list on his clipboard, directing Tom to where there is still work to be done.

INT. CHURCH - PASTORS STUDY - DAY

Leigh and Jamie sit opposite from each other in leather bound chairs. Father Holbrook is a tall, gaunt man in his late-fifties.

He paces restlessly behind a large wooden desk. His hands tremble slightly. His voice is shaky as he speaks to the women.

FATHER HOLBROOK

I've been haunted for days by visions...not nightmares, not dreams. They're more like memories, of that day a hundred and sixty-one years ago, as if I were fighting alongside our ancestors. I see them die right there on the battlefield. I've witnessed everything from their deaths to their burial right up there in that cemetery. It's like their memory has been passed onto me.

There is a long moment of silence.

LEIGH

Preparing for the festival has been nerve-racking for us all Father. I think you just need a good nights sleep.

JAMIE

I think somebody's had one too many trips to the ABC store.

Leigh shoots a harsh glance at her. Jamie shrugs.

FATHER HOLBROOK

Tomorrow's festival should be cancelled.

(Continued)

Continued:

LEIGH

Well I admit that we might have gone a little overboard with all the planned festivities, but I think your taking this a little too seriously. We're too far into it to back out now.

FATHER HOLBROOK

I don't think you understand Ms. Hooper. This town has a curse on it!

JAMIE

And I thought the town being broke was bad enough...

LEIGH

Jamie, you're not helping matters any!

Leigh looks at Father Holbrook.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Why do you think that Father?

Father Holbrook points out the study window towards the hillside cemetery.

FATHER HOLBROOK

Our Memorial Day celebration will be met with tragedy.

Jamie looks bored with the conversation. Leigh is more than a little concerned with Father Holbrooks demeanor.

LEIGH

What does the cemetery have to do with this? Is all this the reason you were out there today?

FATHER HOLBROOK

The campfire story that's told to the children every year isn't just an old wives tale. There's a reason that tale has been told for the last 161 years Ms.Hooper.

Everyone in the room grows silent. Father Holbrook stares out towards the cemetery. Then...

LEIGH

Well, um...time is passing us by. Nothing we can do about all this now.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Do you think you will feel well enough to attend the festival Father?

FATHER HOLBROOK

This town has a curse on it...

JAMIE

I guess that means "no"?

LEIGH

Jamie...!

Leigh turns to Father Holbrook.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

We're leaving now Father. Will you be alright here alone?

Father Holbrook does not reply. He just continues staring out the window towards the cemetery.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

Father, I really think you're taking this all too seriously.

Leigh walks over and stands directly beside Father Holbrook.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

It might be best if we ask Dr. Joston to come by and check on you. Then you should try to rest afterwards.

FATHER HOLBROOK

The hour between midnight and one a.m belongs to the dead. We're all doomed...

Leigh and Jamie just look at him for a moment. They glance at each other, then the two women quietly leave Father Holbrook alone in the study.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - EVENING

The hustle and bustle of setting the town square up for tomorrow's festivities is wrapping up.

Wallace scratches the last item off his list with a proud look on his face.

Six gongs from the clock tower are heard in the distance. Wallace checks his watch.

(Continued)

Continued:

WALLACE

6 pm. Right on time.

Wallace whistles and the crew stops what they're doing.

WALLACE (Cont'd)

Great job everyone! Tighten up whatever last bolts you got, because it's quitting time! I want to thank you all for the fantastic work you all did today. It'll show when tomorrow's festivities look flawless.

Cheers all around as the crew finishes up and heads out. Wallace finds Tom.

WALLACE (Cont'd)

Hey there Tom. Thanks again for coming in last minute like that. Couldn't have finished on time without you.

TOM

I seriously doubt that, but thanks. Now how 'bout you pay me for all I did today.

WALLACE

Well I did say you got plenty of time for elbow bending. So let's get to it, on me of course.

TOM

Of course! Just like old times.

Wallace slaps Tom on the back as they head out of the square. They walk past Town Hall and the Cronenbergs are on their way in for their meeting with the mayor.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

The mayor and his sons are with his secretary, going over the final points for his opening ceremony speech when there is a knock at the door.

JOHN D.

Great! Right on time. Can you show in our special guests, dear, on your way out?

The secretary lets the Cronenbergs in and leaves. John D. shakes Dan's hand as the introductions go around.

(Continued)

Continued:

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Welcome Dan. And welcome to you both as well. These are my boys, and part of the town council, Beauregard and Jackson. Boys, say hello to the Cronenbergs.

DAN

Thank you John. And thank you for saying our last name correctly. This is my lovely wife Emily, and our son, Dante.

Emily is loving every minute of the trophy wife scene while Dante just waves and shrugs.

JOHN D.

Now boys, before we get started, I want to tell you to be polite to our esteemed guests and call them by their rightful last name in private. They already know they are going to hear our legendary Lts. last name repeatedly in public and they will play along.

BEAUREGARD

Yup. You got it dad.

JACKSON

A pleasure to meet you all Mr. Cronenberg.

DAN

And thank you also for fixing the snafu at the hotel. Robert has been amazing ever since you stepped in.

JOHN D.

Glad to hear Dan. Southern Cross is synonymous for hospitality after all. Now, I don't know about you, but I'm getting hungry. How's about we get right down to business at hand and then go out and enjoy the best dinner in town?

Even Dante perks up at the mention of a great dinner.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

You already know the basics Dan. You're the descendant of our great Lieutenant, and you came to the festival to pay respects.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

Tomorrow morning, Seven a.m sharp, we begin festivities at the gazebo in the town square. Music will play. I'll give a speech. Then I'll introduce you and you come up with me and I'll present you with this..

Beauregard reaches into a trunk and pulls out a Civil War era sword, in scabbard.

He hands it to his father. John D. pulls it out of the scabbard as he talks.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

This is a replica of the sword used by Lt. Cronenberg himself. We used to do reenactments, but it has just sat here ever since. When I hand it to you, you can say a few words honoring the legend, then we will drop the sheet covering the statue. You get to wear the sword all weekend long, basking in the glory. Just make sure you return it before you head out of town.

DAN

I did some acting. This will be a piece of cake.

Emily is all proud of her husband while Dante just rolls his eyes.

JOHN D.

Great! Then it's all settled. Now, lets get to dinner. We have a reservation for 7 pm. My daughter Leigh is going to meet us there.

Beauregard puts the sword back in the trunk and they all leave.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - EVENING

Headlights in the distance can be seen as a car approaches.

Leigh's Honda Civic moves along the lonely, darkened road heading back to town.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - EVENING

Leigh is still engrossed by the strange things that Father Holbrook mentioned at the church.

"Superstition" by Stevie Wonder plays on the car radio.

Jamie notices that Leigh has a look of concern on her face.

JAMIE

You're worried about Father Holbrook aren't you?

Leigh gives a quick glance over to Jamie.

LEIGH

He's preached in that same church for thirty years. I've never seen him act so strange before.

JAMIE

Do you think he'll be able to give the benediction tonight?

Leigh looks straight ahead, keeping her eyes on the road. With a sigh, she replies to Jamie.

LEIGH

Maybe it's just as well he doesn't.

JAMIE

What should we do now?

LEIGH

We should ask Doctor Joston to go by the church. We can stop by his office on the way to the restaurant.

JAMIE

Won't that make us late meeting the mayor and his guests?

LEIGH

Yeah, but I'll explain it to him. I'm sure he'll understand. Besides, I would feel better knowing the Doc checked in on Father Holbrook.

The Honda Civic WHIZZES by.

The dark street slowly starts to get brighter at the other end, illuminated by the towns buildings and street lamps.

EXT. CLOCK TOWER - NIGHT

The old stone clock tower is sounding the time. It fills the night air with nine gongs, indicating nine pm.

INT. O'BANNON'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The gongs from the clock tower can be faintly heard from inside the tavern.

A group of people sit at the bar. Tom, Wallace, Romero and the SHERIFF of Southern Cross are engaged in conversation while nursing their beers.

"Dixieland Delight" by Alabama plays on an old timey Jukebox in the background.

The floor of the tavern is full of patrons drinking, having a good time, playing pool and throwing darts.

TOM

(to sheriff
carpenter)

How's the sheriffing business?

Sheriff Carpenter is a tall, husky man, mid 50s. He has a slight beer gut from all the frequent trips to the bar.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Bout like usual. Same shit, different day.

WALLACE

Don't you mean "same shit, same day."

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Yeah, I guess you're right.

ROMERO

Yep. Other than this festival, nothing exciting ever happens in this town.

TOM

But uh, are you supposed to be drinking while you're on duty Sheriff?

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Nope. But since nothing exciting ever happens, that's exactly why I'm drinking...to pass the time away!

(Continued)

Continued:

Raising the glass to his mouth, the sheriff chugs down the last gulp of beer.

Tom, Wallace and Romero all laugh, then each one takes another sip.

Some of the tavern patrons are starting to get a little too loud. Their voices carry throughout the bar, DROWNING OUT parts of the music.

There is a ROAR of NOISE from the bar floor. A group of people gathered by the pool tables are YELLING and acting ROWDY.

The sheriff turns around from the bar. He is holding the beer mug in his hand.

SHERIFF CARPENTER (Cont'd)

Looks like those guys are getting a head start on the festival.

He turns and sits the mug down on the bar top.

He addresses the other three men drinking.

SHERIFF CARPENTER (Cont'd)

Well, gotta go. I need to handle this.

He walks away from the bar and out towards the pool tables. There is a hushed silence from the rowdy crowd.

The bartender picks up the sheriffs mug and wipes down the bar where the glass was sitting.

ROMERO

Maybe I was too quick to say nothing exciting ever happens here.

TOM

People getting a little too drunk before the festival is nothing. Just wait until tomorrow. I'm sure the sheriff will have his hands full then.

WALLACE

Or this years festival could be a complete dud and nobody will turn out for it. Then Sheriff Carpenter will have an excuse to be right back here drinking!

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

ROMERO

The way the town council has been going crazy with all the decorations and hired help, you can bet your ass somebody will be there. Even if it's only the mayor himself that shows up.

Just as Romero finishes his comment, Tom gets up from the bar.

TOM

I'm going out for a smoke.

He walks over to the exit door across from the bar, and out to the side parking lot.

Romero and Wallace get up from the bar and follow him out the door.

EXT. O'BANNON'S TAVERN - SIDE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The three men stand on the outside of the bar. All three light up cigarettes.

A second later, headlights illuminate the side of the tavern.

Coming into view is a brand new, shiny Cadillac CTS. It is the Mayors car.

The Mayor is driving. His wife is in the passenger seat. They have just finished dinner with the Cronenbergs.

Tom, Wallace and Romero all stand there puffing on their cigarettes. They watch as the Mayor's car drives past the tavern.

ROMERO

(to Wallace)

You said something about a DUD a minute ago? Well there goes one now.

WALLACE

Yep. Our good ole mayor. That boy sure has his head up his ass don't he?

ROMERO

Maybe he thinks that's where his next reelection is...

Tom, Romero and Wallace all chuckle at the crude remark. Tom drops his cig and stomps it out on the pavement.

(Continued)

Continued:

Romero continues puffing on his.

Wallace thumps his cig out into the parking lot. He looks at his watch, then turns to the other two men beside him.

WALLACE

Well, the procession starts in less than two hours. I'm gonna tie a few more on until then. Who wants to join me?

TOM

You owe me a couple more, so I'm in.

WALLACE

(to Romero)
You coming?

ROMERO

Hell yeah! I'm gonna make sure I'm good n' drunk before the bar closes tonight.

All three men chuckle as they make their way back inside the tavern, closing the door behind them.

EXT. CLOCK TOWER - NIGHT

The old stone clock tower is sounding the hourly time. The clock tower can be seen in the distance. The gongs reverberate all throughout town.

The time is now eleven p.m, the start of the late-night candlelight procession.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

From the top of the hillside that houses the town cemetery, the parking lot of the church can be seen. It is filled with vehicles of varying shapes and sizes.

A few late arriving townsfolk scurry up the gravel road towards the wrought iron double gate.

EXT. TOWN CEMETERY - NIGHT

VOLUNTEERS dressed in CONFEDERATE SOLDIER outfits pass out CANDLES and MINI FLAGS to the crowd of townspeople that have lined up in the cemetery.

(Continued)

Continued:

The crowd listens intently to the speech being made off-screen. The scene begins to move, along the rows of people, then up to the front of the crowd.

The MAYOR of Southern Cross is making his speech. He is standing on an elevated platform.

JOHN D.

...and all of us living here in Southern Cross today owe a great debt of gratitude to those brave men one hundred and sixty-one years ago who struggled and fought and sacrificed their very lives to serve this great state and their hometown.

CHEERS from the crowd. The Mayor pauses briefly, then continues his speech.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

The town that our ancestors fought to protect, in which they gave the ultimate sacrifice for, is the very same town that continues to grow and prosper, and that is the one single reason our town is what it is today!

There is a ROAR of applause. All the people in attendance CHEER and TWIRL the MINI FLAGS in joyous enthusiasm.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Normally, this is the part of the procession where Father Holbrook would say his words of blessing for the town, the festival, and most importantly, for our revered Lt. and his regiment. But he is a little under the weather and good ole Doc Joston saw to him earlier. Everyone say a little prayer for him to get better by the morning light.

The Mayor turns towards the tomb and speaks with a tone of reverence.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Lt. Cronenberg, and all the men of your fine regiment, we thank you for your service all those years ago, and for doing our humble town of Southern Cross proud.

As he turns to the crowd, he looks at his watch.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Well, well. Will you look at the time. If any of you believe Romero and his ghost stories like I do, then we better place our flags and high tail it outta here PRONTO!

Chuckles ensue as the crowd lights the candles, then place flags on the grave sites throughout the cemetery.

EXT. SCENE POV - NIGHT

The scene shifts over, away from the cemetery and towards the church.

It travels through the door keyhole, through the pews and then through another keyhole into Father Holbrook's bedroom. A prescription bottle sits on the nightstand.

Doctor Joston prescribed a potent sleeping aid for him. Father Holbrook is in bed. He is caught in the throes of a nightmare.

EXT. TOWN OF SOUTHERN CROSS - NIGHT

The clock tower is heard ticking. It gongs for 2 a.m. The town of Southern Cross is ending it's night.

The tavern is closing and the few remaining barflies STAGGER OUT.

Following the road out of town towards the church, a pickup truck RACES through the night to get to the cemetery.

At the wrought iron gate, someone gets out from the passenger side.

As the man, IN SHADOW, opens the gate, the truck is turned around and backed into the cemetery up to the tomb. The driver gets out.

Two more men jump out of the bed of the pickup. They FORCE OPEN the door to the tomb, then all four men enter.

INT. TOMB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

All that can be seen is the LIGHT from flashlights. The men descend a small set of stairs leading to the cramped chamber that houses the coffins of the soldiers.

(Continued)

Continued:

Three rows, three wide, contain the bodies of the soldiers. Against the far wall is the coffin of the Lt. Befitting his station, his coffin is a more ORNATE than the rest.

On the wall above his coffin is a CARVING with the name of the regiment under the Confederate flag. Around the carving are intricate VOODOO SYMBOLS.

Around the tomb are CANDELABRAS, GOLD and SHINING in the light that beams on them.

There are two stands holding worn and TATTERED FLAGS from the battle they perished in.

There is a palpable sense of FOREBODING in the tomb. The men speak in whispers.

VOICE ONE

I'm just gonna say it again. I think this is a bad idea. Disturbing the dead ain't a good thing.

VOICE TWO

Well, again, I don't care what you think, you're getting paid to do this. Just load whatever we find on the truck. We gotta get outta here quick. Besides, we pawn it after the festival.

VOICE THREE

Can't pawn anything if there ain't anything to pawn. Look around, what is there? Just a couple of old ass candle holders?

VOICE TWO

Candelabras you idiot! There has to be more. That old grave digger told us year after year there's a ton of gold in here. I aim to find it. I'll be damned if I pay my dad back out of my pocket!

VOICE FOUR

Yeah. Let these dead fuckers pay for their own damn celebration for once.

VOICE THREE

Why the hell are we whispering? Who's gonna hear us?

VOICE FOUR

Out of respect for the dead!

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

VOICE ONE

We're robbing their graves and you're talking about respect for the dead?

A second passes in the dark. That realization quickly sinks in.

VOICE TWO

Will you all just please shut the fuck up and look around!

The men scatter around the tomb. After a few minutes of rummaging around, a few items of value are found and taken.

VOICE TWO (Cont'd)

FUCK! This can't be all of it. That damn Lt. was rich. He has to have something on him. Someone help me.

Voice Two proceeds to PRY open the Lt's coffin. Inside, he is decked out in FULL DRESS UNIFORM with his SWORD across his chest. A fine, black layer of smoke swirls around the body. It dissipates into the air once the coffin lid is removed.

Although deceased for the last hundred and sixty-one years, the Lt. is almost pristine. He is in an unnaturally good state of condition, with slight decay to the body.

VOICE ONE

Whoa! What are you doing?

VOICE TWO

I'm taking that sword. It has to be worth a fortune to some collector.

VOICE ONE

No way man! Robbing the tomb itself is bad enough. You can't just go rob the body as well.

VOICE TWO

Just watch me!

Voice Two SHOVES Voice One. Voice One SLAMS into the carving on the wall. It falls down and a niche is behind it.

In the niche is an antique, wooden COFFER. All flashlights shine on it.

VOICE TWO (Cont'd)

BINGO! Okay. Someone grab that and let's get outta here.

(Continued)

Continued: (3)

Voice Two pries the sword away from the hands of the dead Lt.

Voice Three and Four grab the coffer, then follow in behind Voice One and Voice Two as they head for the door.

EXT. TOMB - CONTINUOUS

All four men high-tail it out of the tomb. Voice One and Two jump into the cab of the truck.

Voice Three and Four leap into the bed. They hold the coffer between them.

The driver punches the gas pedal, spinning the rear wheels. The tires dig into the ground, kicking up chunks of dirt and shredded grass.

Hauling ass out of the cemetery, the truck barrels down the gravel road, into the church parking lot and out onto the main road.

The taillights hurriedly fade in the distance.

INT. FATHER HOLBROOK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Father Holbrook is still within the throes of his nightmare. He is covered in sweat and thrashing about in his bed.

Tormented while he sleeps, he is experiencing a forthcoming VISION, brought on by the desecration of the tomb.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

The moon is three quarters full and bright as it hangs up above in the heavens.

The tomb stands tall and stately in the moonlight.

A lone figure strides across the lawn. The figure bobs almost drunkenly around the tombstones towards the tomb.

INT. TOMB - NIGHT

The interior chamber of the tomb is PITCH BLACK like a void.

The entrance leading inside to the top of the steps is FAINTLY LIT by the moonlight.

(Continued)

Continued:

Through the front door the lone figure appears in the distance. The figure grows larger and larger until it stops right in the front entrance.

ROMERO appears at the door. He CLICKS on a flashlight and then walks inside and down the stone steps.

He SHINES the flashlight all around the room. The beam flashes glimpses of the damage inflicted by the grave robbers.

ROMERO

What the hell! The tombs been robbed...

Romero is completely stunned at what he sees. He moves around the coffins, eventually walking in front of the Lt's.

He surveys the damage in what little light the flashlight provides.

INT./EXT. TOMB - SMOKE - NIGHT

THICK BLACK SMOKE begins to seep up out of the ground around the edges of the tomb.

As it spreads out slowly around the graveyard, it proceeds down the stairs into the tomb as well.

Romero is still transfixed on the Lt, as well as the niche above the coffin, unaware of the smoke CLOSING IN behind him.

He reclaims his senses as a thought comes to him.

ROMERO

Gotta report this.

Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out his cell-phone. Tucking the flashlight under his arm, he begins to dial the police.

The light shines behind him and shows the smoke covering the floor of the room. It creeps up the sides of the coffins and slithers through the cracks.

Once inside the coffins, the black shroud swirls around the corpses, covering the soldiers entire bodies like a cocoon.

Romero's call goes through, but the connection is horrible.

ROMERO (Cont'd)

Hello? Hello? Sheriff?

(Continued)

Continued:

He looks at the screen and sees the call disconnected.

ROMERO (Cont'd)

Shit! Damn dead zone! Gotta get outside.

Romero grabs the flashlight and turns to leave. He manages a couple of steps before he feels locked in place. He tries and tries, but he can't move his feet.

He shines the light around and sees the smoke everywhere on the ground and climbing into the coffins.

He hears a sound and turns towards the Lt's coffin. His eyes widen in HORROR at what he sees.

Smoke FILLS up the tomb. The interior is totally obscured. The flashlight hits the ground and shines through the smoke.

Romero opens his mouth and screams.

The smoke slowly creeps out the door and along the ground, disappearing from inside the tomb. Romero lies dead just inside the entrance.

The tomb is now clear, dark and quiet.

EXT. OLD STONE CHURCH - NIGHT

The black shroud SLITHERS over and down the hill through the wrought iron gate towards the church.

It slithers around Father Holbrooks car, completely enveloping it. It then spreads out around the church in a perimeter formation.

With the church being HALLOWED GROUND, the smoke CANNOT ENTER or get too NEAR the House of God.

To one side of the property, a tower that supplies cell signal to the town, is disguised as an EXTRA TALL STONE TOWER, matching the architecture of the church.

LOW ANGLE looking up the the TALL STONE/CELL TOWER. There is a SHADOW on the stone surface as the smoke slowly creeps up the sides. It moves inside a small hatch at the top.

The smoke ENVELOPS the top of the metal tower inside the stone facade. WISPY FINGERS of BLACKNESS curl around the cell transmitter.

The DEVICE begins to turn black, BURNT over by the dark shroud, almost MELTED.

(Continued)

Continued:

The electronics begin to HUM, FIZZLE, then suddenly SHORT CIRCUIT. The humming stops as it LOSES electrical power.

INT. FATHER HOLBROOK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Father Holbrook's shaking and sweating is more intense now. The images in his fevered dreams are not just of the battle so many years ago, but rewinding to before it all started.

He "SEES" Union soldiers "UN-kill" their enemy, the fort getting put back together as cannon fire REVERSES, the smoke SEEPING back into the ground.

Father Holbrook sees the Lt. and his regiment riding through the woods towards the fort before the battle.

The soldiers count gold that is in a wooden coffer. Their faces look almost DEMONIC in the torch light.

The scene reverses again, showing the soldiers RANSACKING a lone shack in the woods. The occupants are Black. The man is KILLED. The woman looks as if she had been RAPED.

EXT. POWER STATION - - NIGHT

The THRUM of turbines and generators comes from a small CONCRETE and STEEL BUILDING. A sign in front of the building reads:

SOUTHERN CROSS POWER - SUBSTATION
 CRAVEN COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

Slowly the smoke rises up and over the sign and completely envelops it.

INT. POWER STATION - GENERATOR ROOM

Low angle on the floor at the door of the power station. In the background are machines THRUMMING with power.

The smoke creeps under the door and DRIFTS across the floor towards the machines.

INT. POWER STATION - CONTROL ROOM

RONALD SHUSETT, a station tech, late 30s, sits in a cushy office chair with his feet propped up on an electronic console, playing with a handheld gaming device.

He looks like a reject from the 1980s, sporting a Robert Palmer haircut (short in front, long in the back).

(Continued)

Continued:

Ironically enough "Get It On" (Bang A Gong) by The Power Station is playing on a radio in the background.

A preset alarm goes off on his cell. He looks at the phone, checking the time as he turns off the alarm.

He stops playing the game and begins to dial Leigh Hooper's number. A hiss of static crackles in the phone.

INT. POWER STATION - GENERATOR ROOM - NIGHT

The smoke envelops a huge generator. A wisp curls sharply into the spinning turbine.

Suddenly there is a FLASH as the generator BURNS and SHORTS out!

INT. POWER STATION - CONTROL ROOM - - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly the power in the station goes out. Startled, Shusett looks around the room, staring at the machinery.

All the lights in the electrical consoles FLICKER and DIM. The machines DRONE to a stop. Shusett looks at the dials. They are all DEAD.

SHUSETT

Hey...

He then continues trying to dial out on his cell-phone. As he dials, the scene shifts towards the bottom of the control room door.

THIN WISPS of smoke curl up underneath the door sill. It completely covers the door, causing it to turn a CHARRED BLACK, sending a burnt smell throughout the room.

Shusett puts down the phone and stands up. Moving away, he walks around the chair. He stops cold, staring at the door.

SHUSETT (Cont'd)

What the hell is that?

The door continues to CHAR. Shusett slowly moves across the room towards it. Suddenly there is a LOUD, STEADY POUNDING on the control room door.

Shusett starts towards the door. The POUNDING CONTINUES, hard and steady.

At the bottom of the door, under the sill, the smoke continues SEEPING IN.

(Continued)

Continued:

Shusett is becoming increasingly NERVOUS and UNEASY. There is no exit from the room. He is trapped with nowhere to go.

Suddenly, the door BURSTS OPEN from the outside.

In the doorway is nothing but a SOLID WALL of BLACK, CHURNING SMOKE. Standing there, dumbfounded, he puzzlingly peers into it, scared out of his mind.

SHUSETT (Cont'd)

Hello?

No sound. Nothing but silence.

SHUSETT (Cont'd)

Someone there?

Again nothing but silence.

INT./EXT. CONTROL ROOM DOOR

Shusett stands there peering into the darkness, only mere feet away.

Suddenly a ROTTEN, EMACIATED HAND reaches from the blackness and grabs him by the back of his head.

Shusett gasps. His eyes WIDEN in horror at what he sees. He opens his mouth and SCREAMS.

From outside the door, the smoke begins to thin out. Two figures can be seen struggling in the doorway.

A BLACK SHAPE lifts Shusett off the floor like a RAG DOLL.

A rusted over DAGGER cleaves into Shusetts neck sideways with a violent THRUST.

His head is completely SEVERED from his body. The EMACIATED HAND holds the head up by the ponytail as the body drops to the floor.

The Smoke creeps away. Shusetts HEADLESS BODY lies in the doorway.

INT. OLD STONE CHURCH - MORNING

Father Holbrook awakens with a start. It is now DAYLIGHT as seen through the windows.

He jumps out of bed and races to get dressed. He grabs his car keys and makes his way out of the bedroom.

EXT. OLD STONE CHURCH - MORNING

Father Holbrook throws open the back door to the church as he hurries to his car. Reaching for the door-handle, he realizes the smoke has DAMAGED the vehicle.

The instrument panel CRACKLES and HISSES. The hood is charred as smoke faintly seeps out from underneath the wheel-wells.

He looks around, as the CHARRED, BLACKENED tower catches his attention.

FATHER HOLBROOK

It's already started. Heaven help us all.

He races back inside the church, locking the door behind him. The scene SHIFTS from the church and ZOOMS ahead into town, ending up at the town square.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

The crowd has gathered to start the festivities.

The Mayor is standing on the gazebo with a bit of frustration on his face.

The town has no electrical power, eliminating the use of the microphone inside the gazebo.

The Mayor begins his speech, using a bull-horn supplied by the police department.

JOHN D.

Good morning everyone! Unfortunately the town woke up to an electrical issue this morning as I'm sure you all are aware of. It's an inconvenience to say the least, but regardless, we aren't going to let it ruin this special day for us!

Cheers and applause from the crowd all around as he continues.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

And this year is even more special, as you all know, that it was on this VERY DAY that the battle of Grand Gulf was fought 161 years ago.

(Continued)

Continued:

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

The battle that so many of our dear southern brothers lost their lives defending our region, and our very way of life!

The crowd grows louder with more cheers and applause.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

But more importantly, we celebrate the lives and memories of Lt. Cronenberg and his regiment. Those brave young men that sacrificed their lives trying to protect the gold meant to pay the soldiers of that fort and others in the war. Those brave men, all from this town, did us proud.

More applause and cheers. The scene moves to show a merchant shop facing the square.

It is the shop of a FORTUNE TELLER. MADAME RUBY'S is spelled out across the glass front window.

Standing in the doorway is the proprietor, MADAME RUBY, Black, mid 50s, beautiful.

She looks disgusted with what the Mayor is saying.

She heads inside and closes the door.

The scene shifts back to the Mayor as he continues speaking.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

And this year, we have an extra special guest in our fine town. None other than a direct descendant of Lt. Cronenberg himself has come to pay tribute to his revered ancestor. Please give a warm, Southern Cross welcome to Dan Cronenberg and his family!

Cheers, applause and music from the band as Dan and his family enter the gazebo from the back side.

They take their place next to the Mayor and his family. Dan is all smiles as he waves to the crowd.

DAN

Thank you! It's great to be here Mayor.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

JOHN D.

Now Dan, I'm sure you'll want to say something to our wonderful townsfolk. Especially about how well they have received you and your family since you arrived. But I want to start off by presenting you with something to hold onto as you stay with us for the remainder of the festival. This...

The Mayor turns to his sons expecting one of them to hand him something. They are both empty handed.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Where's the sword?

BEAUREGARD

(to Jackson)

I thought you were getting it?

JACKSON

No, I thought you were getting it!

JOHN D.

I don't care who gets it, but one of you two idiots get the GOD DAMN SWORD!

Beauregard races to the office as chuckles pass through the crowd. John D. tries to cover.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Um, sorry folks. Another minor technical difficulty.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Beauregard bursts into the office. He sees the sword on the desk. As he grabs it, he stops for a moment thinking he had put it in the chest.

He turns after a second and races back to the gazebo.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Beauregard makes it back and hands the sword to his father, who glares at him. John jokes with the crowd to cover the lapse.

JOHN D.

We now return to the festivities, already in progress.

(Continued)

Continued:

As the chuckles die down, the Mayor turns to Dan.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

As I was about to say, this sword is the one used by your legendary ancestor all those years ago. For your time here in our wonderful little town, we proudly hand it to you to wear. Hopefully it will allow you to feel more connected to your ancestor and our history.

The crowd cheers with the hand off. Dan holds the sword reverently. He feels it like the memories and history make it weigh more than it actually does.

The crowd is totally eating it up as he plays, and overplays the part. Emily looks all proud like she should.

Dante acts like he knows his dad is over doing it.

DAN

Thank you Mayor. And thank you good people of Southern Cross. It is, indeed, an honor coming here this weekend. Long have I heard of the exploits of my ancestor, the Lt. It has been my dream for many years to come here and retrace his historic footsteps and learn from the town itself what a great man he was.

Various shots show the crowd beaming with pride, enraptured by Dan's words.

DAN (Cont'd)

And on that point, I have not been disappointed. This town opened the door and welcomed us like you all were welcoming us home. The tales I have heard have made me PROUD to be a Cronenberg.

Dan unsheathes the sword and raises it high, like leading a charge.

The sword almost GLOWS in the sunlight. The crowd hoots and hollers as they continue to applaud.

JOHN D.

I don't know which of you two found the time to do it, but thanks for polishing that. Looks great.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

The brothers look at each other dumbfounded.

Dan sheathes the sword as the Mayor takes over.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Thank you Dan. That was wonderful, downright beautiful even. Makes me proud to be this humble town's mayor. And with that, I want to turn everyone's attention to the side here.

Everyone turns to look at the statue.

It is still covered by the sheet.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Many of you have been speculating what's under there. And I'm going to bet some of you even snuck a peek. Shame, shame (chuckles). We had a little something made in the regiments honor. Dan, it may not be as glorious as leading a charge on the battlefield, but could you do the countdown to unveil this homage to your ancestor and his regiment?

Dan oversells it as he accepts the honor.

DAN

In honor of my ancestor, the Lt, and for the good people of Southern Cross, I'd be proud to do it Mayor. Now everyone, please follow my order and count down with me. On the count of 3. 1...2...3!!!

The sheet drops to the ground. The crowd applauds. The band starts playing "Southern Cross" by Crosby, Stills and Nash.

JOHN D.

Now that the statue has been unveiled, we should all make our way over to get a closer look, but before we do that, let's all keep in mind the significance of this day for every citizen of Southern Cross.

The crowd in the bleachers stand, giving one final applause.

EXT. ROAD - WOODS - MORNING

The smoke moves along the lonely road. It is a HUGE BLACKENED MASS that moves down the road towards a cluster of woods.

It is gigantic, PULSATING as if it were ALIVE, spreading through the grove of trees, heading towards town.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

The procession of townspeople moves slowly through the square past the now unveiled statue of Lt. Cronenberg and the regiment.

Leigh, Jamie, Tom, Wallace and the Mayor stand watching the crowd slowly move by.

Dan and his family are mingling with the crowd by the statue. Leigh anxiously checks her phone for the time.

As the crowd is focused on the statue and Dan, no one notices the smoke creeping along the ground towards them.

Eventually, people start to move and mill about. Those in the smoke realize they are trapped in place. Confusion starts to set in.

People trying to help others get free get trapped themselves. This gets the attention of the Mayor.

JOHN D.

OK, OK everyone settle down. We seem to be having a little commotion in the back there. I assure you, the statue isn't going anywhere. You'll have a chance to...what in Southern Tarnation is that?

All eyes look across the street from the square at the wooded area marking the edge of town. The smoke creeps out of the trees like a wall, at least TEN FEET HIGH.

It flows across the street ominously. All are frozen with either fear or shock, depending on the distance away from it.

When the wall is within a few feet of the crowd, it falls like a curtain and spreads out among them, quickly spreading halfway to the gazebo.

To everyone's horror, the regiment becomes VISIBLE within the smoke. The Lt. stands out in front.

(Continued)

Continued:

The regiment, dressed in their TATTERED BATTLE UNIFORMS, are truly HORRID to look at.

Their hideous appearance is now more visible, all showing VARYING STAGES of SLIGHT DECOMPOSITION. One of the UNDEAD has a MUSKET BALL lodged in his forehead.

The Lt. is in much FINER SHAPE. While clearly UNDEAD, he is much more HUMAN looking than the regiment.

The curse has kept the soldiers bodies from completely decaying.

"Hair of the Dog" by Nazareth plays over the scenes as background music.

"Now you're messing' with a" ... (A son of a bitch) "Now you're messing' with a son of a bitch!" (lyrics)...

SCREAMS and PANIC ensue as the regiment starts to MASSACRE the crowd around them, using edged weapons and bare hands.

Those that are trapped in place by the smoke are easy pickings for the shambling troops.

Some of the crowd are armed, pulling out pistols and knives to defend themselves, but to no avail.

All the while, the Lt. just stands in place. His eyes are locked on the gazebo.

INT. MADAME RUBY'S SHOP - MORNING

Madame Ruby is distancing herself from the festival. She is merchandising her shop.

"Black Magic Woman" by Santana plays over the stores radio system. She can still hear the chatter DRONING on from the gazebo.

When the mayhem ensues, she quickly realizes something is wrong and moves over to the window.

Through the chaos, she can see the Lt, the smoke, and the carnage starting.

MADAME RUBY

Kaka li ch final man rive.
(Shit, it's finally
happened)

Madame Ruby races to a bookshelf, pulling out a book of Incantations.

(Continued)

Continued:

She finds a PROTECTIVE SPELL and places a WARD on the door and window for no harm to come through those portals.

She also places RED BRICK DUST around the door and window.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

During the carnage, the regiment has fanned out until it is in a straight line formation. Without looking, the Lt. knows the line has formed and raises his hand in a HALT signal.

The regiment stops on command. Some people are still FROZEN in place by the smoke mere inches away from the regiment. Some are pleading to be spared. Some are saying prayers as they weep.

Without taking his gaze from the gazebo, the Lt, out of instinct, reaches for his sword. He feels it missing and a FLASH of ANGER crosses his DEAD, PALE FACE.

He raises his hand once more, signaling to advance. The regiment moves forward in formation. All humans trapped by the smoke in their path are slaughtered quickly.

One of the trapped happens to be a VOLUNTEER, dressed in a re-enactment uniform. He is on his knees praying, tiny confederate flag in his hands.

As "Bullethead" soldier gets closer, he knows his death is near. He shuts his eyes tight.

"Bullethead" recognizes the uniform and passes him unmolested. The volunteer realizes he has been spared and opens his eyes. The smoke RELEASES him.

Everyone in the bleachers has now run for their lives. A few remaining locals take pot shots to no avail. Some of the shots hit trapped humans caught in the cross-fire, adding to the slaughter.

Everyone in the gazebo are transfixed in SHOCK and HORROR at the carnage before them. Wallace, on the gazebo with the retinue, sees his wife just over the railing.

She is trapped by the smoke and about to be attacked. He is overcome with the need to save her.

Without thinking, he pushes people out of the way, grabs a metal flag pole and LEAPS over the rail.

WALLACE

Nancy!!!

(Continued)

Continued:

JOHN D.

Wallace! No!

Wallace skewers the regiment soldier in the head, just as it takes a bite out of Nancy's neck. The soldier falls to the ground.

Wallace holds his dying wife in his arms, not caring that he is trapped by the smoke.

The Mayor looks to the statue quickly. He sees that the undead before him is the Lt. The shock of it all affects his grasp on the situation.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

No! No! This can't be! We're honoring you.

While unable to speak, the Lt's eyes show he is angered by the Mayor's words. The regiment is within five feet of the gazebo at this point.

The smoke starts to creep up the steps.

Lt.Cronenberg takes something off his belt, without taking his eyes off of the Mayor. With a forward swing, he tosses it right at the feet of the Mayor and his family.

The head of Ronald Shusett lies on the floor. The mouth is still open from when he tried to scream. Leigh screams at the sight of her dead boyfriend.

INT. MADAME RUBY'S SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Madame Ruby is watching the crowd scatter in all directions to get away from the carnage. While the sight she sees terrifies her, she is not scared for her safety. She trusts the wards she has put in place.

Amongst the scattering crowd is Tom. He sees Madame Ruby through her shop window and rushes to her door.

TOM

Ruby, get out of there! Come on!

MADAME RUBY

I'm not opening my door for you or anyone. I'm safe where I am. Go save yourself before Baron Samedi claims you along with everyone else today.

TOM

What the fuck are you talking about?

(Continued)

Continued:

Ruby just stares him down through the window. Tom gives up and races away.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

The Lt. starts to climb the steps. Everyone starts to scatter. The smoke traps a couple of townspeople as the mayor's family and the Cronenbergs escape.

The two closest regiment members climb the steps after the Lt. and attack those that are trapped.

The rest of the regiment fan out around the gazebo, attacking anyone in their path.

The Lt's gaze never wavers from Dan as they run towards their room.

The Lt. motions for the regiment to charge in Dan's direction.

The regiment falls in loosely behind him as they obey. The smoke is creeping ahead of the troop, dissipating from the forest and the street as the troop moves.

INT. TOWN HALL - MORNING

The Mayor, his family, and several others from the gazebo race in through the front entrance.

After a few more townspeople get in, Beauregard and Jackson shut and lock the doors. They stop in the atrium to collect themselves.

JOHN D.

What the fuck is going on in my town?

JACKSON

It looks like the dead came back to life dad.

John D. slaps Jackson hard.

JACKSON (Cont'd)

Why'd you do that dad?

JOHN D.

For saying the stupidest thing of the year, that's why.

Leigh jumps in between them.

(Continued)

Continued:

LEIGH

Hey! Cut it out!

BEAUREGARD

Yeah. We have to figure out WHY this is happening and we have townspeople to save.

JAMIE

Shh. Quiet. Look.

Jamie is pointing at the entrance. Everyone sees the smoke starting to creep under it. Everyone backs away from the door.

They hear the regiment getting closer, then hear it pass the building. Everyone lets out a collective sigh of relief.

JOHN D.

OK, everyone. Let's go up to my office so we can try and figure out what we are gonna do about this mess.

Everyone follows the Mayor. Beauregard gives his brother a smack upside the back of his head.

INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Tom and the Sheriff are trying to get as many people inside as possible.

They see the smoke getting close and the regiment is in view.

When they both see that they can't save any more people, they shut and barricade the door.

TOM

What the hell is going on here?

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Damned if I know.

Everyone gets quiet as they hear a few screams of victims.

The smoke starts to come under the doorway as the regiment gets closer.

The crowd shuffles towards the back area. The bartender stays behind the bar while moving away from the door.

(Continued)

Continued:

The smoke never travels far from the entrance. Everyone holds their breath as they watch the regiment get closer and closer until they pass the tavern and continue up the street.

TOM

Well Sheriff, you said nothing ever happens in this town. I think this qualifies as something, don't you?

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Tom, you're a good man, but sometimes you can be annoying as fuck.

INT./EXT. SOUTHERN CROSS B&B - CONTINUOUS

Dan and his family are amongst the panicked crowd fleeing for their lives.

They get inside the B&B as the rest of the people keep running.

Once inside, Dan slams the doors shut and tries to barricade it.

People start banging outside, but he is in self-preservation mode.

Robert is behind the desk.

ROBERT

Mr. Cronenberg? Is the ceremony over already? What's all the commotion?

DAN

If you value your life, do NOT open that door. No matter how many people beg or plead or threaten, DO NOT OPEN THAT DOOR!

ROBERT

Y-y-y-yes sir.

As Dan races up the stairs, the smoke starts to creep under the front door.

The screaming changes as anyone outside gets slaughtered, and disappears as everyone dies.

The pounding starts again and Robert, scared out of his mind, tries the land line to no avail.

(Continued)

Continued:

Dan, Emily and Dante make it to their room and Dan barricades the door with a chair under the knob.

They grab luggage and start to pack. Dante seems to be the only one thinking semi-coherently.

DANTE

Dad, why did you bring us back here?

DAN

Shut up son. We have to pack!

DANTE

Pack? We should have just gotten in the car and drove away. Fuck the clothes!

EMILY

Watch your mouth and don't talk back to your father. Just keep trying the phone till we're ready to go.

Dante face-palms as he tries his phone to no avail. They hear the main door CRASH and they freeze in fear.

The DEAD SILENCE outside is eventually broken by the sound of boots on the stairs.

The smoke starts to creep under the door. Dante and Emily slump to the floor, cowering in one corner.

Dan slumps to the floor, cowering in another corner opposite them. The beds are between the three.

Lt. Cronenberg PUNCHES his way through the top half of the door as they scream.

Seeing the chair blocking the door, he reaches through and HEAVES it to the side. He then KICKS the rest of the door apart and walks through.

The Lt. stops right in front of Dan, only mere inches away. He stares at the family while his regiment piles into the room.

He fixes his gaze on Dan.

With a point, the regiment moves towards Dante and Emily. Dan unsheathes the sword and SWINGS WILDLY a couple of times, then points it straight at the Lt. to try and ward him off.

DAN

STAY BACK! GET AWAY FROM ME!

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

The Lt. stops right at the tip of the sword. He locks his gaze with Dan. The regiment is inches from his family.

The Lt. gives the ATTACK command and the regiment hack away on Dante and Emily. Their screams ECHO throughout the B&B.

At the same moment, the Lt, unflinchingly, IMPALES himself on the sword, straight through the abdomen, stepping closer to Dan. Dan wets himself as he screams.

The Lt. reaches down and grabs Dan, placing two hands on either side of his head. The Lt's grasp sears into Dan's head, literally "sucking" the LIFE-FORCE from his body.

Dan's once lightly tanned skin becomes SHRIVELED and DARK, almost GRAYISH BLACK in TONE.

The regiment stops the slaughter. What's left of Dante and Emily's lifeless bodies lie in a pile. The Lt. slowly pulls back off of the sword.

Dan, now transformed into one of the UNDEAD, rises up off the floor. The Lt. takes the BLOODLESS sword from his new recruit and sheathes it.

He leaves the room, and the regiment, including Dan, follow in behind him.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The group enter and crowd around the Mayor's desk. John sits in the chair.

He rubs his face, trying to wipe away everything that happened.

JOHN D.

OK, so as my idiot son has pointed out, the Lt. and his regiment are terrorizing our town. What we need to know right now is why, and how to stop them.

JAMIE

Father Holbrook would know maybe.

JOHN D.

What? You said he was ill and sent Dr. Joston to check up on him.

Leigh is slow to respond.

(Continued)

Continued:

LEIGH

Yeah, we did. He was having visions as he put it, saying "Were all doomed and the festival should be canceled." Sorry, but having my boyfriend's head thrown at my feet is not exactly something you can just brush off.

Uncharacteristic of her, Jamie tries to comfort her boss.

BEAUREGARD

OK, so we all know the legend. There's only one reason why the Lt. and his regiment would come back from the dead.

JOHN D.

Entering the tomb and taking their gold? Wait! The shit Romero's been saying all these years is REAL?

Jackson starts to back away from the group. John D. catches his movement out of the corner of his eye.

JOHN D. (Cont'd)

Jackson! Slinking away like that means you're up to something. What in the holy hell did you do?

Jackson backs up more and bumps into the trunk. The coffer is now next to it.

JAMIE

What's that?

Beauregard pushes his brother out of the way. He struggles to move it, so he pops the old locks, opening it on the floor.

Everyone's eyes go WIDE as they see the gold coins inside the coffer. But instead of awe or greed, they all have a look of FEAR. The curse of the treasure is MANIFESTED in their eyes. Beauregard slams the coffer shut.

BEAUREGARD

Now we know WHY the soldiers are up and destroying everything. But WHY did you steal it? And WHY did you bring it here?

JACKSON

Because dad said we needed money. I couldn't afford it, could you? I was trying to help him and the town!

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

JOHN D.

So you thought robbing graves would help the town? You really are an idiot!

The realization of everything hits Leigh and she lunges at her brother.

LEIGH

You got my boyfriend killed you son of a bitch!

Beauregard steps in while Jamie tries to hold her back.

BEAUREGARD

Hey hey hey! We have bigger problems to deal with right now. You can kill him later.

Leigh finally relents while Jackson cowers in the corner.

JAMIE

What if we put it back?

Everyone stops to listen.

JAMIE (Cont'd)

They legend says they're protecting the gold, right? So if we put it back, wouldn't they return to the tomb to protect it again?

INT./EXT. BED & BREAKFAST - CONTINUOUS

The regiment moves down the stairs and through the lobby to the front entrance.

Robert is held in place by the smoke, scared to death, but otherwise unharmed. He sees what happened to Dan and reacts.

The regiment doesn't notice Robert as they leave. They step over the corpses and march into the center of the street, turning to head towards town hall.

INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is huddled in the back area except the Sheriff and Tom, who are at the bar. The smoke is seen receding from the doorway.

Scattered sighs of relief can be heard. Instead of beer, they have coffee mugs in their hands.

(Continued)

Continued:

Some patrons pass coffee to the rest of the group.

TOM

I guess this explains why we woke up to no power this morning.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Reckon so. Poor Shusett.

TOM

Yeah. Wonder about Father Holbrook. Or Romero.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

I dunno. Romero tried to call me in the middle of the night. Couple seconds of static, then nothing.

BARTENDER

LOOK!

Tom and the Sheriff turn to the front door. Through the glass they see Wallace shambling towards the tavern.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Holy shit!

The two men race to open the door. Wallace, grieving and covered in his wife's blood, shambles in with their help.

WALLACE

I tried to save her. I couldn't do it. I'm so sorry Nancy.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

You're a good man Wallace. Plenty of others in this town wouldn't have tried. And you got that fucking monster in the process. You avenged her at least.

Tom shoves his coffee mug in Wallace's hands and makes him drink.

EXT. TOWN HALL - REAR ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Beauregard and Jackson are hauling the coffer out of Town Hall. Jackson struggles as he's not as strong as his brother.

Leigh, Jamie and the others are close behind, keeping lookout for any of the regiment or smoke.

(Continued)

Continued:

BEAUREGARD

I may be stronger than you, but don't expect me to carry this thing all the way back to the graveyard by myself idiot!

JACKSON

Stop calling me that. Just a little further. I know who to ask for help.

INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Wallace is still depressed but improving. The crowd is still huddled, but not as frantic. The bartender eyes the men suspiciously as he keeps their mugs full of coffee and wipes the bar.

TOM

OK, so the Lt. and his men are back. Romero's ghost tale seems to be true.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Which means Romero was trying to call me to tell me about the tomb.

The sheriff gets sad as he realizes his friend is probably dead.

TOM

So now we have to figure out how to put the dead back in their graves.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

I doubt Romero would have known how to do that. He was just good at scaring little kids.

TOM

What about Father Holbrook? Wouldn't a clergyman have knowledge of stopping the undead?

WALLACE

Father Holbrook married me and Nancy.

The sheriff tries to comfort Wallace as he keeps speaking.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

I wouldn't know if he does or doesn't. But we can't call him or even know if he's still alive.

(Continued)

Continued:

TOM

What about Madame Ruby?

SHERIFF CARPENTER

What about that crackpot fortune teller?

TOM

When all this shit started, I saw her in her shop. I tried to get her to run with everyone else, but she said she was safe where she was, and Baron something or other was gonna get me.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Baron Samedi?

TOM

Yeah...

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Shit! She's been spouting that nonsense forever.

TOM

Doesn't sound like nonsense right now, does it?

SHERIFF CARPENTER

No I guess not. Tom, Wallace, you both go to her place and see if she knows of anything that can help us. I'll check on the Mayor and his family, and if I'm lucky, find out who the fucker is that started all of this.

At that moment, Beauregard, Jackson, Leigh, Jamie, and a few others burst into the tavern from a back door.

Jackson yells across the room.

JACKSON

Hey Loomis! We need to borrow your truck again.

The bartender turns to Jackson with a "deer in the headlights" look.

TOM

What the fuck! We're all trying to survive a zombie invasion, and all you can think about is going for a fucking joyride?

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

SHERIFF CARPENTER

And why are you looking all suspicious right now Loomis?

BARTENDER

Well, um...LOOK!

Tom and the Sheriff look to the door again. This time there is nothing.

Loomis tries to vault over the bar, but the Sheriff snags his shirt.

He stumbles and hits his head on the counter. He's out cold behind the bar.

JACKSON

Shit!

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Now, can either of you two tell me what the hell is going on here?

BEAUREGARD

My idiot brother... (smack to the head)...

JACKSON

Hey!

BEAUREGARD

...thought it would be a good idea to rob the tomb. So now we're trying to put the gold back.

The whole room erupts at the revelation.

Tom, Wallace, and the Sheriff join everyone in the back of the tavern.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

The Lt. and the regiment are shambling in formation up the middle of the street, heading towards Town Hall.

Reaching the front of the tavern, the Lt. Signals a HALT command.

The smoke starts to spread out and creep towards the tavern.

Pivoting in place, the Lt. turns to face the tavern and gives the ADVANCE signal.

INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

While the bar patrons are trying to rip Jackson apart, the Sheriff, Wallace and Tom manage to haul the brothers to the bar area.

LEIGH

Oh my god! Look!

Everyone turns and sees the regiment right out in front of the tavern, heading their way.

The smoke has crossed the threshold.

Tom and Wallace look at each other, then slug the two brothers simultaneously, knocking them to the floor.

They head to the back door first, checking the rear exit for safety. The Sheriff, along with the others, follow in behind.

The Sheriff, Leigh and Jamie help the bar patrons out the rear exit. They all scatter in different directions.

The bartender comes to and sees the regiment approaching him. The smoke has now surrounded the bar and enveloped the brothers.

Loomis grabs a big knife to defend himself. He stabs the first soldier that climbs over the bar.

The knife gets stuck in the zombies shoulder, pinning him to the bar.

Loomis, in full panic mode, reaches for a stolen candelabra that he hid behind the bar.

He smashes the soldier about the head and shoulders until his BLACK, ROTTEN skull caves in.

Loomis doesn't notice that another undead soldier crept up on him and attacks in return.

Jackson wakes up and sees Loomis being killed. He is subdued by the smoke and is forced to watch his brother attacked and killed right before him. He realizes he is next as the regiment approaches.

The Lt. HALTS them as he steps closer. He effortlessly lifts Jackson off the floor by the neck.

Holding him high, the Lt. drains the life-force from Jackson's body.

(Continued)

Continued:

Within mere seconds, Jackson is turned into another member of the regiment. Leigh witnesses his demise.

LEIGH (Cont'd)

NO!!

There are no other people to get out of the tavern's rear exit.

The Sheriff forces Leigh and Jamie out the door. He turns in behind them to leave, but is too late.

The smoke has grabbed his ankle. He turns to see the regiment approaching. The Lt. walks in front.

The Sheriff pulls his pistol and takes several shots, but does not inflict sufficient damage.

SHERIFF CARPENTER

Fucking hero my fucking ass! FUCK YOU
Cronenberg!

He puts the pistol up to his temple and pulls the trigger. The doorframe behind him is splattered with brain matter.

EXT. TAVERN REAR PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Tom and Wallace are loading the coffer into Tom's pickup as Leigh and Jamie run from the rear exit door.

Suddenly they hear the Sheriff fire his shot. Leigh turns to Tom.

LEIGH

What the hell are you doing with that?

TOM

Doing what your brothers said they were gonna do. Get this thing back up to the tomb.

Leigh wants to feel sad for her brothers, but her emotions are being torn in several different directions.

JAMIE

Good idea. What can we do to help?

TOM

Go to the church and check on Father Holbrook. See if he knows how to stop this.

(Continued)

Continued:

JAMIE

Got it. (to Leigh) Come on boss.

The two ladies head back towards Town Hall to get Leigh's car.

TOM

Wallace, there isn't much time. Take my keys. I'm gonna go see Madame Ruby. Buy me some time.

WALLACE

How?

TOM

Drive. FAST. In a different direction. Buy me the time I need to convince her to come out and help. Just meet me at her shop in ten minutes.

WALLACE

You got it.

Wallace hops in the truck and peels out. Tom sees the smoke and high tails it away from the tavern.

The regiment passes through the rear exit door.

The smoke creeps after the truck with the regiment in tow.

The smoke cannot keep up with the truck, but it and the soldiers keep their pace.

A portion of the smoke breaks away as Leigh and Jamie run towards town hall, following in behind them.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Mayor is standing in a corner of his office, looking out several windows.

He sees the destruction of his beloved town and all the carnage.

Out a different window, he sees the backside of the tavern.

He sees the regiment and spots Jackson marching along with them.

He realizes his son is now one of the undead. His heart breaks at the sight.

EXT. TOWN HALL - PARKING LOT

Leigh and Jamie race to the Honda Civic. Jamie reaches the car first. Leigh throws her the keys as she runs to the passenger side.

LEIGH

You drive!

Jamie catches the keys as they jump inside.

Neither of the women notice that the smoke is creeping up behind the Civic.

Jamie throws the car into reverse, then peels out of the parking lot into the street. The smoke follows as the Civic races away.

INT. MADAME RUBY'S SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Madame Ruby is praying at a Voodoo altar, hidden behind a cabinet, asking for protection.

On the back of the cabinet are historical pictures and family photos.

Leigh's Civic can be seen racing along the street past the square.

After a couple of minutes, Tom bangs on the door, startling Madame Ruby.

TOM

Madame Ruby! Open up. We need your help!

MADAME RUBY

KOULYE A, madman SA yo between ed mwen?

(Now these
motherfuckers need
my help...

(to Tom)

...if you're good of heart and not here to harm me, then you can open the door and enter.

Tom is confused but opens the door and enters anyway.

MADAME RUBY (Cont'd)

Why do you need MY help?

(Continued)

Continued:

TOM

I know you see what's going on out there today.

MADAME RUBY

I see this proud town's "heroes" are back to wreak havoc like they did generations ago.

TOM

What are you talking about? Those men died protecting this land and the gold to keep our troops...

MADAME RUBY

You mean the gold they STOLE!

Tom is stunned as Ruby's words carry real power.

TOM

What do you mean stole?

MADAME RUBY

You grew up listening to that crazy old man's ghost story right?

TOM

Yeah we all have.

MADAME RUBY

The tide of the battle turned because the smoke seeped up through the ground. The Union soldiers attacked and slaughtered the Confederate soldiers easily.

TOM

Yes, but...

MADAME RUBY

And in 161 years no one EVER questioned about the smoke? Like smoke turning the tide of battle is a common thing? It's not even SMOKE! You all trivialize anything that doesn't fit your WHITE privileged narrative!

Tom is feeling foolish, but doesn't interrupt her further. Ruby goes to the altar and grabs a photo sized drawing from it.

She shows it to Tom, speaking as she moves.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

MADAME RUBY (Cont'd)

You all call me a crackpot fortune teller. You don't think I hear it, but I do. And sometimes, that's some of the nicer things said. You call voodoo "evil", even though your own religion is filled with more atrocities than ours ever was.

TOM

Ours?

MADAME RUBY

Yes. I'm a priestess, descended from several generations of worshipers, priests and priestesses. This woman was my great, great grandmother. She was more powerful than I.

The drawing is of the woman seen in the reverse visions that was raped while her husband was murdered.

MADAME RUBY (Cont'd)

They lived in a simple shack in the forest, not far from Grand Gulf. She worked simple protecting spells to keep them safe and helped anyone that asked for it. She gave offerings to Bakulu in the forest to keep him satisfied and everyone safe. 161 years ago, in the dead of night, she and her husband were performing the ritual to appease Baku. Buried in the dirt was a coffer with treasure. Every year it is dug up and a little more added to it, then buried again. In that way, Bakulu is made happy.

Tom is trying to understand, but still not connecting the dots.

MADAME RUBY (Cont'd)

Your "heroes" happened upon them as they performed the ritual. They saw the gold and thought of nothing but taking it, raping her and killing her husband in the process. Bakulu saw his offerings being stolen and became angered. With the pact broken, he summoned the forest to avenge the priestess.

(Continued)

Continued: (3)

TOM

Now wait just a minute! You're trying to say...

MADAME RUBY

That's exactly what I'm trying to say! Your "heroes" are nothing more than common thieves, rapists and murderers. Your forefathers decided that it didn't fit their heroic nature, so they became the legendary regiment, with the Lt. being turned into some kind of Martyr. They wanted the gold so badly, they were cursed to keep it, in death as in life. This way the pact was renewed and Bakulu was pleased. The tomb was built, the bodies buried, the gold hidden, all by my families followers. Your people thought they were slaves doing their master's work fitting for heroes.

Madame Ruby changes her tone, verbally "twisting the knife" as she continues.

MADAME RUBY (Cont'd)

That curse followed them as they traveled to Grand Gulf. If you think about it, those soldiers are really responsible for the fall of the fort and the south losing the battle. But true to white form, you all twist the story around. Imagine how that battle, or even the war would have been if those beloved heroes didn't do what they did to my ancestors.

Tom is stunned by this revelation. His whole reality has been flipped on its head.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

The smoke follows the street alongside the town square. Leigh's civic is zooming along the road headed out of town.

The smoke creeps up and on to the lawn of town square. It heads back towards the woods from whence it came.

EXT. MADAME RUBY'S SHOP - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Just then, Tom's truck screeches to a halt outside the shop. Wallace honks the horn.

(Continued)

Continued:

WALLACE

Hurry up! They're not far behind!

Hearing Wallace snaps Tom out of it.

TOM

I'm sorry. I never knew. But all that's in the past, and we need to focus on what's happening right now. Is there a way to stop them?

MADAME RUBY

Return the gold to the tomb as an offering to Bakulu.

TOM

So if we get the gold back up there to the cemetery, they'll follow and return to their tomb?

MADAME RUBY

Basically yes, but the pact has to be renewed or none of this will work.

TOM

Are you able to help us?

MADAME RUBY

Yes I am, but we need Father Holbrook. We need the help of a holy man to defeat this evil.

TOM

Then please help us save the town. Not only for the innocent people left, but in the name of your ancestors as well.

Tom's words move her. She ponders it for a moment.

MADAME RUBY

Our family has always believed we should use our power and religion for good. You've shown there can still be good to come from this tragedy. I'll help, but I have to grab my incantation book.

EXT. HONDA CIVIC/SMOKE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Leighs Civic hustles along the road leading away from town towards the church.

(Continued)

Continued:

Just past the town square the smoke drifts through the woods between trees in the same direction as the church.

EXT. MADAME RUBY'S SHOP - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Wallace lays on the horn a second time. He is starting to get antsy.

WALLACE

Hurry up! Their almost here!

Tom rushes out the door and looks up the street. He sees the smoke and regiment not far away.

TOM

Come on Ruby! We have to go now!

Ruby grabs her spell book and races to the entrance. Tom is standing just outside the shop door.

They hop in the truck just as Wallace floors it. They speed off, barely in time before the smoke can reach them.

The smoke is right behind the truck as it speeds away. It follows in the same direction.

EXT. TOWN ROAD - HONDA CIVIC

Leighs Honda move along the road towards the church. The smoke is moving through the trees.

The smoke moves through the woods in a direct beeline towards the church.

INT. HONDA CIVIC

Jamie drives. Leigh sits staring out of the passenger window. Ahead, coming into view, Leigh sees the side road and sign for the power sub-station.

As the Civic passes the road, Leighs eyes turn to look back past the car.

Her thoughts are immediately that of Shusett and the fate that befell him.

In her mind she still can't believe what is happening.

Jamie glances over at Leigh, staring at her briefly. Jamie looks back ahead up the road in front of them.

(Continued)

Continued:

Neither of the two women say a word.

EXT. TOM'S TRUCK - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Toms truck hurtles away from town hall. Tom is in the passenger side.

He looks in the rear view mirror and sees the smoke following in behind.

TOM

It's right behind us. Take the main road. Lets see if we can lose it!

The truck lurches sideways, turns and careens down the main road.

EXT. MAIN ROAD - SIMULTANEOUSLY

The Honda Civic rounds a curve in the road.

The second portion of smoke moves out of the woods across from the Civic.

It moves right in front towards the car. Jamie and Leigh see what is happening.

INT. HONDA CIVIC

LEIGH

Jamie...

Jamie brakes to a stop.

POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

The smoke gets closer and closer to the Civic, almost right on top of the car.

EXT. HONDA CIVIC

Jamie reacts instinctively. The Civic ROARS straight back, tires SQUEALING, burning rubber, a few feet away from the smoke.

Lurching forward, Jamie slams the pedal, gunning the car onto the grassy embankment, fish-tailing a turn around the black shroud.

(Continued)

Continued:

At the bottom of the curve is the turn-in for the church. The Honda Civic SCREECHES into the turn, then barrels up the driveway.

EXT. WOODS - SIMULTANEOUSLY

The wall of smoke glides off the road and back into the woods, cutting across the trees towards the church.

EXT. TOMS TRUCK - - MOMENTS LATER

Toms truck roars down the road and into the curve mere moments later. The first portion of the smoke is still following in behind in relentless pursuit.

Reaching the turn in, Wallace pushes the truck up and along the church driveway.

INT. TOM'S TRUCK - POV THRU WINDSHIELD

Through the windshield of the truck, the scene moves along the driveway, then around the side towards the rear of the church.

Parked beside Father Holbrook's car is Leigh's Civic. Jamie and Leigh are just getting out.

EXT. REAR OF CHURCH - AFTERNOON

The truck SCREECHES to a stop behind Father Holbrook's car.

Tom, Wallace and Madame Ruby get out and huddle with Leigh and Jamie right at the parking lot sidewalk.

MADAME RUBY

The smoke is following us!

LEIGH

It tried to cut us off!

JAMIE

Where is it now?

MADAME RUBY

Right behind us, coming down the road!

At that very moment, the fog creeps out of the woods. It creeps along the lawn towards the driveway.

(Continued)

Continued:

The portion that chased Toms truck comes into view. The two halves merge on the lawn next to the driveway, creating one giant shroud.

Tom, Wallace, Leigh, Jamie and Ruby see the two halves merge.

TOM

Everybody inside!

They all run to the steps and up to the rear door, piling into the church as quickly as possible.

INT. STONE CHURCH

The church is dark, lit only by flickering candles on the altar. Father Holbrook stands staring out one of the front windows.

He is holding an almost empty bottle of MAKERS MARK LIQUOR.

As the groups runs inside, Tom slams the rear entrance door and locks it.

The group scatters out as Leigh moves over to Father Holbrook at the window.

LEIGH

Father Holbrook...

TOM

Can you see it?

FATHER HOLBROOK

There...

POV THROUGH CHURCH WINDOW

The BLACK SHROUD is one THICK, SOLID MASS moving along the driveway and the lawn towards the church.

INT. STONE CHURCH

TOM

Is there an attic or basement in here?

FATHER HOLBROOK

We can't hide from it. No matter where we go it will follow us.

(Continued)

Continued:

LEIGH

Father please...we have to try!

Jamie peers out the window. She spots something strange within the smoke.

JAMIE

Look! It's the people in the smoke!

POV THROUGH CHURCH WINDOW

The smoke PULSATES as it creeps along. Dark figures, hidden within, spread out in a slow-moving line.

It is the regiment of the Vicksburg battle marching towards the church.

MADAME RUBY

Those aren't people anymore...

TOM

We can't just stand here Father.
Where can we go?

Leigh looks around the room, then...

LEIGH

The pastor's study is here in the back. Come on!

The group starts towards the pastors study. Father Holbrook remains at the window.

He stands there staring out at the BLACK MASS in disbelief.

Tom rushes back over to him. He grabs Holbrook, and pulls him to the study behind the others.

TOM

Come on Father...

Father Holbrook tries to take another sip of the liquor. Tom takes the bottle of of his hand and TOSSES it across the room.

ANGLE ON WALL - FLOOR

The bottle SMASHES against a stone wall next to the candlelit altar, SHATTERING GLASS into several pieces.

The liquor runs down the wall and onto the floor, TRICKLING into a pool under a window sill.

(Continued)

Continued:

The alcohol soaks into a floor-length pair of curtains that hang from the window.

INT. CHURCH - PASTORS STUDY

The group moves inside. Tom secures the door. Leigh looks out a rear window.

LEIGH

Now they're on the side!

POV THROUGH STUDY WINDOW

The smoke begins creeping along both sides of the church, slowly making its way towards the rear entrance.

The regiment marches along one side, hidden within the shroud.

INT. CHURCH - PASTORS STUDY

FATHER HOLBROOK

Lt. Cronenberg and his soldiers have come for us. It's our day of judgment.

JAMIE

Why? None of US have done anything wrong!

FATHER HOLBROOK

Everything is happening as foretold.

TOM

What are you talking about?

FATHER HOLBROOK

We are cursed, all of us. This whole town!

TOM

So you knew all along Romero's tale wasn't just an old ghost story?

FATHER HOLBROOK

Everything was in my visions. All of it. I saw it all!

(Continued)

Continued:

MADAME RUBY

It doesn't matter who knew or didn't know. All Lt. Cronenberg and his men want is the gold in the coffer.

JAMIE

All anyone's ever heard is how those men were supposed to be heroes. How can they kill their own people?

MADAME RUBY

The regiment weren't heroes. They were rapists and murderers. They stole the gold from my ancestors. The smoke killed them on the battlefield at Vicksburg. They were all cursed to die that day, no matter what side won the battle. As punishment for their crimes, the gold they had stolen was to be in their charge for all eternity, destined to seek out and destroy anyone or anything that defiles their tomb and the gold, cursed until the end of time as one of the undead.

Father Holbrook has a smirk on his face as he comments on Madame Ruby's revelation.

FATHER HOLBROOK

All these years we have been honoring murderers.

Father Holbrook points out the window towards the cemetery on the hill.

FATHER HOLBROOK (Cont'd)

Our only hope of salvation lies there.

MADAME RUBY

The gold must be returned to the tomb in the exact place it was found as if it were never taken.

LEIGH

But this is a holy place. Shouldn't we be safe here?

MADAME RUBY

This is hallowed ground, so the smoke can't enter the house of the lord. But the regiment can, having once been human beings.

(Continued)

Continued: (2)

MADAME RUBY (Cont'd)

They'll eventually find a way in, no matter how long it takes.

TOM

We can't stay in here forever.

MADAME RUBY

Father Holbrook has to return the gold to the tomb, but he'll need help.

The group stands around in silence, then momentarily, Tom speaks up.

TOM

I'm going with him.

LEIGH

So am I.

Tom turns to his trusted friend Wallace. He clasps a firm hand on Wallace's shoulder.

TOM

I need you here with Ruby and Jamie. Stay inside and watch over them huh?

WALLACE

You got it. You three just watch your asses out there.

INT. CHURCH - PASTORS STUDY

Afternoon has turned to evening. The door to the study opens. Tom stands there peering into the candlelit sanctuary. He steps into the room.

Leigh and Father Holbrook step out of the study behind him. All three move towards the rear entrance one after the other.

Madame Ruby walks out a few seconds behind Father Holbrook. She is holding her book of incantations.

Wallace and Jamie watch from inside the study.

MADAME RUBY

Once you get to the tomb, be sure to place the coffer inside the niche it was hidden in. It must be returned to its original resting place. Keep the lid shut at all times and do not open it for any reason.

(Continued)

Continued:

MADAME RUBY (Cont'd)

Every piece of gold has to be
accounted for. None must be removed.

TOM

Once we're outside, shut this door
and lock it!

EXT. REAR OF CHURCH - EVENING

The rear entrance door slowly opens. Tom peeks out,
surveying the surroundings.

He rushes along the pavement, past Holbrooks damaged car,
and up to the rear of his truck.

He motions for Leigh and Father Holbrook the OK to proceed.
Madame Ruby closes the door behind them.

Leigh runs to the left side of the truck, jumping into the
drivers seat.

Father Holbrook enters through the passenger side. Leigh
cranks the truck.

Tom jumps into the bed of the truck. He braces himself
against the coffer, keeping it in place.

The sliding glass rear window is open. He yells into the cab
at Leigh.

TOM

GO, GO!

INT. TOM'S TRUCK

Leigh jams her foot down on the pedal. The truck ROCKS
FORWARD and STOPS.

EXT. REAR TRUCK WHEELS

The wheels WHINE, SPINNING and BURNING tires into the
pavement. The smoke has crept under the truck undetected.

CLOSE UP - REAR AXLE

It wraps around the rear axle with WISPY FINGERS OF
DARKNESS, holding the truck in place like a GIANT, BLACK
HAND.

INT. TRUCK - REAR WINDOW POV

Through the rear window a portion of the smoke has SEPARATED and begins moving up and over the tailgate and along both sides of the pickup.

It BILLOWS closer to Tom as SEVERAL DARK FORMS walk within it a few feet away from the truck.

SHOT OF LEIGH

She takes the gear out of drive and SHOVES the truck into REVERSE.

TRUCK REAR WHEELS

The wheels BURN RUBBER as they SQUEAL in reverse.

SHOT OF LEIGH

She tries SHOVING it into first gear. The gears grind.

EXT. TOM IN TRUCK BED

Toms is nervously clinging to the coffer. The figures within the smoke are on both sides of the truck, REACHING IN AT HIM!

The closest one trying to grab Tom is BULLETHEAD.

SHOT OF LEIGH

She SLAMS the shift into first gear.

REAR OF TRUCK

The smokes grasp is broken as the truck ROARS off into the DARKNESS, away from the approaching figures.

INT. TRUCK - LEIGH & FATHER HOLBROOK

Leighs hands are shaking on the wheel as they hurtle up along the gravel road towards the cemetery.

Father Holbrook reaches over and lays a comforting hand on her shoulder.

INT./EXT. STONE CHURCH - EVENING

Madame Ruby prepares to place a protective ward on the church. Suddenly, she sees a dark figure approaching the door through the window.

Dropping her book of incantations, she rushes over to the adjacent wall and tries shoving a table against the exterior door.

Suddenly a hand breaks through the small glass window and grabs Madame Ruby by the hair.

Madame Ruby struggles as she holds the table. The hand **CLAWS** at her head violently.

INT. CHURCH

Seeing Madame Ruby struggling from inside the pastors study, Wallace rushes from the room, through the darkness, past the candlelit altar and over to the rear door.

Wallace grabs the table and shoves it up to the door. Madame Ruby pulls free, staggering backwards.

She tries to help Wallace hold the table in place as the figure on the other side claws against the door, trying to get in.

Madame Ruby and Wallace try to hold the door, but to no avail. They let go of the table, then turn and race towards the study. The table moves and the rear door **RIPS OFF** its hinges.

The figure steps into the room. As it gets closer in view, the face can be seen. It is the undead Dan Cronenberg.

MADAME RUBY & WALLACE POV

They both see the undead Dan walk across the room after them. Shambling about, he steps on the book of incantations.

INT. CHURCH

Madame Ruby and Wallace race to the study. Suddenly a window next to Wallace **SHATTERS** and a **BLACK ROTTEN HAND** reaches through.

A face can be seen outside the broken window. It is that of the now undead Jackson.

(Continued)

Continued:

The hand swipes at Wallace. He ducks out of its way, stumbles and CRASHES into the altar.

One of the candles tip over and SMASHES to the floor right into the puddle of liquor.

The puddle and curtain ignite. Flames quickly spread up the wall, engulfing the altar.

Wallace regains his footing and races back to the study. Madame Ruby is already inside the room with Jamie.

Wallace runs inside right as she closes the door.

The flames spread down the entire wall, floor and ceiling towards the study.

INT. CHURCH - PASTORS STUDY

Wallace, Ruby and Jamie react to the flames as they engulf the room outside the study.

All three stand helpless in the middle of the room as the flames creep under the bottom of the door and up the wall.

The entire room is soon engulfed in flames.

EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

Tom's truck shoots through the wrought iron gates and hurtles across the cemetery grounds towards the tomb.

Reaching the tomb , Leigh suddenly SLAMS on the brakes. The truck SLIDES SIDEWAYS in the grass.

Leigh exits the drivers side and runs around towards the tomb.

Father Holbrook exit the cab as Tom grabs the coffer and pulls it to the rear of the truck bed.

Father Holbrook lowers the tailgate. He and Tom grab the coffer and lift it off the truck.

EXT. TOMB - EVENING

Leigh, Tom and Father Holbrook reach the door of the tomb. They start to move the coffer inside.

Suddenly, A LOUD, OVER-POWERING CRASH shakes the entire area.

LEIGH, TOM, FATHER HOLBROOK POV - CHURCH

In the distance, over the hill, the old stone church, engulfed in flames, COLLAPSES under its own weight due to the fire.

Flames shoot up from the middle of the structure, flickering brightly.

The fire sends smoke and ash billowing into the evening sky.

EXT. TOMB - EVENING

Leigh, Tom and Father Holbrook react to the collapse. All three are horrified at the DESTRUCTION of the church and the death of their friends inside.

The coffer drops to the ground as Leigh sobs, tears running down her face.

LEIGH

Jamie! No!

Tom and Father Holbrook are equally stunned. They stand beside Leigh, staring at the church ruins in the distance.

FATHER HOLBROOK

Dear lord in heaven...

TOM

My god, they were still inside...

LEIGH, TOM, FATHER HOLBROOK POV - CHURCH

There isn't much time to grieve for the loss of their friends inside the church.

Standing there, they realize the smoke has already made it's way to the cemetery. It has almost reached the tomb.

A few remaining regiment can be seen moving inside the smoke.

EXT. TOMB - EVENING

Tom turns to Leigh, directing her back to the truck.

TOM

Get behind the wheel! Keep it running!

(Continued)

Continued:

Leigh opens the passenger door and slides over into the driver's seat as Tom moves over to the coffer.

The entire back of the tomb is enveloped by the BLACK SHROUD. It has started seeping over the roof and around the sides.

TOM (Cont'd)
Come on Father, lets go!

INT. TOMB - EVENING

Tom pulls the coffer up to the door. Father Holbrook grabs the other end and the men heft the box up and carry it inside.

They stop at the center of the tomb, dropping the coffer to the floor.

Dismayed, they notice the smoke has entered the tomb interior.

It has crept through the floor and the walls.

Realizing they cannot reach the niche the coffer was in, Tom turns to Father Holbrook.

He speaks to him as he starts to move back towards the steps.

TOM
Father Holbrook, we have to go, now!

EXT. TOMB - EVENING

Tom races to the truck, making it to the passenger door.

Looking back, he realizes Father Holbrook did not follow him to the truck.

Tom starts to turn back, when suddenly he sees the smoke has completely enveloped the entire tomb, obscuring the entrance.

Tom can't see into the tomb. Nothing is visible through the black shroud.

DARK, BLACK figures surround the tomb entrance. Tom knows he cannot get past the undead guarding the door.

Lt.Cronenberg steps through the black swirling mist and walks inside the tomb a few feet away from Father Holbrook.

INT. TOMB - FATHER HOLBROOK

Realizing he is trapped, Father Holbrook yells out to Tom and Leigh.

FATHER HOLBROOK

You two get away! I can stop them!

SHOT OF LEIGH**LEIGH**

No Father! Don't!

INT. TOMB - FATHER HOLBROOK

Ignoring Leigh's pleas, Father Holbrook places his foot on the coffer. Lt. Cronenberg slowly moves closer.

SHOT OF FATHER HOLBROOK**FATHER HOLBROOK**

Cronenberg! Take back your gold.

With his foot, Father Holbrook gives the coffer a heaving push.

The chest slides out towards Lt. Cronenberg, tipping over, spilling gold coins across the floor.

INT. TOMB - LT. CRONENBERG

Lt. Cronenberg suddenly stops, standing right on top of the pile of coins that lay scattered across the tomb floor.

Neither he nor Father Holbrook notice that some of the loot has spilled out into a corner of the tomb.

The smoke has somewhat dissipated enough to reveal the Lt's features. TWO LIFELESS, INHUMAN EYES stare sharply at Father Holbrook.

SHOT OF FATHER HOLBROOK**FATHER HOLBROOK**

Cronenberg...

Father Holbrook slowly steps forward, walking over the scattered out coins.

(Continued)

Continued:

Lt.Cronenberg does not move.

FATHER HOLBROOK (Cont'd)

Take back your gold Cronenberg! Take me for your last victim! I'll surrender to you! Just please leave this town and it's people in peace!

Lt. Cronenberg continues staring at Father Holbrook with COLD, DEAD EYES.

Then suddenly, he grabs Father Holbrook by the neck and LIFTS him off his feet.

SHOT OF FATHER HOLBROOK

Father Holbrook's face begins to turn a GHASTLY WHITE, as Cronenberg's hands SEAR into his neck.

Holbrooks LIFE-FORCE begins to SLOWLY DRAIN AWAY.

SHOT OF LT.CRONENBERG

Lt.Cronenbergs cold, undead hands tighten around Father Holbrook's neck. Holbrooks feet DANGLE a foot above the floor.

The gold coins underneath Lt. Cronenbergs feet begin to GLOW incandescently.

TWO SHOT - CRONENBERG & HOLBROOK

There is a sudden, HOLLOW, EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM as the interior of the tomb turns from COMPLETE BLACK to a BRIGHT, STARK WHITE.

SHOT OF FATHER HOLBROOK

Father Holbrook lies on the floor of the tomb. His features have returned to normal.

He slowly gathers himself, then rises from the stone floor.

POV - TOMB INTERIOR

The smoke, the regiment and the gold are GONE! The coffins are closed. The niche in the stone wall is once again whole.

There is complete silence.

EXT. TOMB ENTRANCE - DUSK

Tom walks up to the tomb, a few feet from the entrance.

Leigh steps out of the truck and moves in behind him.

Father Holbrook walks out from inside, as Tom and Leigh step up to him.

FATHER HOLBROOK

They all went away...

EXT. CEMETERY TOMB - MOMENTS LATER

Tom, Leigh and Father Holbrook move away from the tomb and walk towards the rear of the truck.

They look out towards the remains of the church at the base of the hill. In the far off distance, the town can be seen.

POV - SOUTHERN CROSS - DUSK

Southern Cross is clear and quiet. The town's power supply has been restored.

Buildings and streetlamps begin to FLICKER ON.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Fire-trucks and Rescue Squad vehicles descend upon the burning remains of the collapsed church.

The FLASHING LIGHTS and WAILING SIRENS break the silence from a distance.

EXT. CEMETERY TOMB - NIGHT

Dusk has given way to night. Tom, Leigh and Father Holbrook stand gazing towards the smoke cloud beyond the cemetery.

Fire personnel surround the burning mass, trying to contain the blaze.

TOM

Let's go down and see if we can help.

FATHER HOLBROOK

You two go ahead. I just want to be alone awhile.

(Continued)

Continued:

LEIGH

Are you sure Father?

Father Holbrook looks at Leigh. He reassures her with a slight smile.

FATHER HOLBROOK

I'll be down shortly...

Leigh and Tom hop inside the truck. Leigh turns the truck around in a circle and pulls away.

Father Holbrook watches as the truck drives towards the wrought iron gate. He turns and makes his way to the tomb entrance.

INT. TOMB

Stepping back inside, Father Holbrook walks around the coffins in the center of the floor.

The tomb is DARK and SILENT.

He looks about the room with a look of puzzlement on his face, then quietly speaks out-loud.

FATHER HOLBROOK

You had me in your grasp Cronenberg.
Why not take me?

Father Holbrook stands there for a few seconds collecting his thoughts.

His words inadvertently summon the return of the smoke.

He does not notice it creeping up through the floor around Lt. Cronenberg's coffin.

It begins to form a VEIL right behind the pastor.

Father Holbrook moves towards the steps, momentarily stops, then turns back around, facing the coffins.

TWO SHOT - CRONENBERG & HOLBROOK

From inside the VEIL of SMOKE, a black figure emerges. It is Lt. Cronenberg. Grasping his sword, he swings it FURIOUSLY.

The blade SLICES through the black shroud, right at Father Holbrooks neck.

The pastor doesn't even have time to SCREAM...

EXT. TOWN OF SOUTHERN CROSS - VARIOUS CLOSING SHOTS

Leigh is speaking in VOICE OVER as the town is shown in various closing shots...

...Town Square, Power Sub-Station, Town Hall, O'Bannon's Tavern, and Church.

Last two shots are of the Cemetery and Tomb. Father Holbrooks headless body lies on the floor of the tomb.

LEIGH (V.O.)

I don't think anyone could ever imagine what we faced today could truly happen. But it actually did, and none of us will ever be the same. Our town's past came back and tried to destroy us. Something evil, fueled by greed and deceit, sought revenge just as it did so many years ago on that fateful day at the battle of Vicksburg. I wish this were just a nightmare, but it's one we can't wake up from. What happened here could happen again. My advice to anyone visiting or living in Southern Cross, be respectful of the dead, and look out across the cemetery. Watch out for the smoke...

FADE OUT.

Molly Hatchet's "Flirting with Disaster" plays in its entirety as film credits roll across the screen.

After film credits roll, the screen is in total blackness. Momentarily the screen fades in once again to reveal an end credits scene.

FADE IN:**EXT. TOMB - NIGHT**

In a darkened corner of the tomb, small objects shimmer in faint light creeping in. The scene closes in to reveal several gold coins, left from the spilling of the coffer.

Scene holds on the coins for several seconds, then slowly fades to black.

THE END.