

FOR HER LOV'D SAKE

'Ye Pow'rs, who under Earth your realms extend,
To whom all mortals must one day descend;
If here 'tis granted sacred truth to tell:
I come not curious to explore your Hell;
My wife alone I seek; for her lov'd sake
These terrors I support, this journey take.'

- Ovid, Orpheus and Eurydice, Metamorphoses Book 10

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rain lashes the window panes. A storm rages.

WILLIAM HARTSWELL (30, handsome but weary) sits in an armchair. In his hand is a BOOK, a small volume with a cracked leather cover, the pages yellow with age.

WILLIAM
(reading aloud, in verse)
Each year the night of Hallows
Eve,/ When men do sleep and all is
black,/ The border yields twixt
Earth and Hell;/ A chance to rescue
loved ones back.

He shuts the book. Gazes into the distance. Thinking.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

A HAND places flowers against a headstone.

William stands up, looks down at the grave. The headstone reads: ELEANOR HARTSWELL, 1835-1863. MY LOVE, FOREVER.

William wipes a tear from his cheek. WINNIE, his border collie, sits nearby. He steps forward, places a hand on top of the stone.

WILLIAM
I will find you. I swear it. I will
find you.
(turns)
Come, Winnie.

Winnie trots after him among the lengthening shadows.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRANCE HALL - LATE AFTERNOON

A KEY turns in the lock. The door swings open, and in steps William, Winnie close behind.

William shuts the door. He pulls out his pocket watch, checks the time: quarter past four.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

William opens a drawer in his writing desk, pushes a hidden catch, slides off the FALSE BOTTOM. Inside: the book.

He picks it up, places it on the desktop. He crosses his bed, reaches underneath, pulls out a long, thin case. Sets it on the bed, opens it. Inside: a SWORD, a deadly blade of gleaming metal. He picks it up, weighs it in his hand.

He crosses back to the desk, reaches into the drawer, pulls out a REVOLVER. He flicks open the cylinder, shakes the cartridges onto the desktop. He holds one up -- it GLEAMS brighter than it should. He picks up the book, reads.

WILLIAM

(reading aloud, in verse)

Though most below will pay no
heed,/ Inside that world you'll
face the Dead;/ Bring weapons
tipped with silver, for/ They hate
the living who there tread.

He reloads the revolver, pushes the cylinder back into place, puts both weapons on the desk. Winnie watches from the doorway.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

Well, I'd better just avoid them,
eh girl?

He smiles reassuringly. Then, consulting the book again, he reaches into the desk, pulls out a SHALLOW BOWL and KNIFE.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

(reading aloud, in verse)

A dish lay down upon the ground/ To
hold the off'ring made with knife;/
For if you wish to walk in Death,/
Your passage must be paid with
life.

He sets the bowl out in the middle of the floor, places the knife beside it. Looks at the book again.

He returns one last time to the desk, reaches inside. Pulls out a small object wrapped in brown paper, on which is scrawled some ancient, unintelligible script. He comes back to the bowl, unwraps the object.

A THICK, JET BLACK CANDLE. It sits in his hand, entirely inanimate but somehow unnatural, wrong. A cold WIND seems to whip around the room. Winnie crouches low, whimpers. William eyes the candle warily, consults the book.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

(reading aloud, in verse)

And then, in pool of blood most
red,/ The curséd candle must be
lit;/ At night in't fabric of the
world,/ You'll see the way you seek
be slit.

He places the candle in the middle of the bowl. He consults the book to make sure everything is correct, then stands and surveys the room.

He seems satisfied. He goes to his armchair, sits, checks his pocket watch: half past four. Still holding the watch, he looks at the book.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

(reading aloud, in verse)

Though time in our world passes
slow,/ There o'er the sky does
streak the sun;/ Though you may
think you've hours fourteen,/
Beware, for you'll have only one.

Winnie pads over, sits next to the chair. William puts the watch and book in his pocket, meets her worried gaze.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

I know. It's mad. This whole thing
-- witchcraft, black magic -- it's
truly mad. Evil, even. But don't
you see? I'm bringing her home.

He strokes the dog's head. His eyelids begin to droop.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

Bringing her home...

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE (MOS)

William and Eleanor (28, beautiful) walk hand in hand along the pavement. They talk softly, laugh, very much in love.

They pass a FLOWER GIRL. William stops, tells Eleanor to wait. He goes back, picks a rose from the Flower Girl.

Eleanor, meanwhile, watches group of YOUNG BOYS playing with a hoop-and-stick in the street.

A HORSE AND STAGECOACH bursts round the corner. The horses are at full gallop, out of control. The FOOTMAN fights with the reins, but in vain.

The boys scatter. But ONE BOY, the smallest, trips and falls. The horses draw nearer -- the Boy SCREAMS -- Eleanor leaps into the road, drags the Boy up, shoves him aside --

William turns to see the horses bearing down on Eleanor. His eyes widen, he lunges forward, stretches out a hand --

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - SUNSET

William jolts upright in his chair, fingers grasping --

WILLIAM
ELEANOR!

Silence. He looks around, but Eleanor is not there. Winnie looks up from near the door. The room is in near darkness now.

The CLOCK on the mantelpiece begins to CHIME. He whips his head round to look at it - five'o'clock.

William rushes to the bowl, kneels, seizes the knife. He grits his teeth, pushes the blade into the skin of his left wrist. He gasps in pain. Winnie starts forward.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)
It's alright, girl.

BLOOD spurts into the metal bowl, which begins to fill. He holds his wrist in place, letting the blood flow until a thin pool forms in the bowl. The first HOUR CHIME STRIKES.

William wraps a bandage around his wrist, pulls it tight. He fumbles in his pocket, pulls out a MATCHBOX. Strikes a match against the side. The clock strikes a SECOND CHIME.

He leans in, lights the candle. The yellow flame flickers, then turns BLACK. The third CHIME.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out the book. Thumbs through for the correct page. The fourth chime STRIKES. He finds it, incants --

WILLIAM (CONTD.)
(reading aloud, in verse)
I call upon ye pow'rs below,/ Open
the door to your domain./ If still
there once the sun does rise,/ (beat, deep breath)
I vow, forever, to remain.

The final chime of the five STRIKES. Then the blood in the bowl BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

William scrambles back as they reach higher and higher, a raging inferno. In the centre of the firestorm, a SQUARE begins to glow white.

The flames subside, leaving hanging in the air an EMPTY METAL SQUARE, like a windowframe. The edges glow white for a second, then turn a shiny black. It hangs free, suspended.

The flames flicker quietly in the bowl of blood. William stands, steps warily towards the frame, looks through -- But all he can see is the far wall of his bedroom. He leans in, puts his head through --

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

The room looks exactly the same, but bathed in a red glow.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (EARTH) - CONTINUOUS

William withdraws his head. He looks at Winnie.

WILLIAM

Dawn is at seven. I swear I'll be
back before then. If not...

He brushes the thought off. Moves to the desk, grabs the revolver, puts it in his coat pocket. Wraps a sword belt around his waist, keeps the sword in his hand. He steps in front of the portal. Exhales.

Winnie BARKS. He looks back.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

No, stay. We'll see you soon.

And then he climbs through.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

On the other side, he stands, pulls out his pocket watch. The second hand sweeps round unnaturally fast.

William moves to the window, looks out. The street looks exactly the same, but the sky is a DULL, OVERCAST RED.

EXT. CITY STREET - OUTSIDE HOUSE (UNDERWORLD) - NIGHT

The door opens, and William steps warily outside. He looks left and right.

PALE, TRANSLUCENT FORMS glide slowly along the pavements. AN OLD WOMAN, head bowed. A YOUNG MAN looking all around him, desperately searching for someone. Spirits, never at peace.

William raises the gun, walks forward. But they ignore him. He tracks the Old Woman with the barrel, crosses her path. She doesn't look up. Satisfied, he hurries off.

AT THE FAR END OF THE STREET, a DARKER FORM watches. Its eyes glow red, its mouth full of sharp teeth. A DEAD.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - GATES (UNDERWORLD) - NIGHT

William runs towards the metal gates. He stops, leans to catch his breath, checks his watch. Already, it shows eleven o'clock. Five 'hours' have passed. A third of his time gone.

A HISS close by. William looks up --

A DEAD glides towards him, clawed hands outstretched. He backs away, raises the revolver -- A HISS BEHIND HIM -- William turns -- TWO MORE approach from that direction.

He fires -- BANG! -- the nearest Dead disappears in a puff of black smoke. William unsheathes his sword, SLASHES at the one behind -- it evaporates on the silver-lined blade. He turns, dispatches the first Dead. MORE HISSES --

-- he looks in the direction he came from. A DOZEN MORE DEAD drift slowly towards him from all sides, faces full of hate. William turns and runs into the graveyard.

EXT. GRAVEYARD (UNDERWORLD) - NIGHT

The spirit of ELEANOR HARTSWELL stands by her own graveside, looking folornly down. As beautiful as the day she died.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Eleanor...

She turns. William stands there. The two stare at each other. A tear rolls down her cheek. She opens her mouth to speak, but no sound comes out.

William moves towards her, arms wide. Tries to embrace her, but his hands pass right through her. She's just a shadow. He steps back, looks intently into her confused face.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

I've come to rescue you, do you understand? I've come to take you home.

She nods, barely believing it. Then she rears back in fear, points at something OVER HIS SHOULDER -- William SPINS, SLASHES -- his blade dispels the Dead just behind him.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

We have to go. Now. Understand?

She nods. William sets off, gets a few metres, looks to his side. Eleanor isn't there. He looks back. She's hardly moved at all, just moving at a slow glide.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

Quickly! We must hurry!

She shakes her head, sadly. She can't speak, but the meaning is clear: she can go no faster. William pulls out his watch. One'o'clock.

EXT. CITY STREET (UNDERWORLD) - NIGHT

William and Eleanor inch their way through the red night. The PALE FORMS cast wary looks at the couple as they pass.

One form stands still on the pavement. William walks past it, stops, approaches it. It's the FLOWER GIRL. He looks back towards Eleanor -- she's in the road -- A HORSE AND STAGECOACH BEARS DOWN ON HER -- just like before --

WILLIAM

No!

He lunges forwards, but before he can get there it's ON TOP OF HER -- she throws her arms up to protect herself --

It passes right through. Disappears into the gloom. She lowers her arms, unhurt. William goes to her, tries to embrace her.

WILLIAM (CONTD.)

Never again. Never again.

EXT. CITY STREET - OUTSIDE HOUSE (UNDERWORLD) - NIGHT

The front door is still open. William jogs up, Eleanor trailing behind. A Dead drifts out of the front door -- William SLASHES it into oblivion, steps inside --

INT. HOUSE - ENTRANCE HALL (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

Two more Dead drift down the stairs from up above. William aims, takes each out with a round. He looks at his watch -- six'o'clock. Minutes left. He takes the stairs two at a time.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (EARTH) - CONTINUOUS

Winnie crouches, eyes fixed on the portal. The clock on the mantelpiece shows six fifty-nine. The sky through the window is ominously bright.

INT. HOUSE - CORRIDOR (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

William steps into the corridor. At the far end, his bedroom door stands open.

TWO DOZEN Dead stand packed between him and safety.

They snarl, move forwards en masse. William SLASHES wildly. His blade dissolves each it touches, but more press forward.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (EARTH) - CONTINUOUS

On the mantelpiece, the minute hand snaps to seven'o'clock.

INT. HOUSE - CORRIDOR (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

FROM THE FAR END OF THE CORRIDOR: a clock starts to CHIME. William stabs another Dead, then stops, listens.

WILLIAM

Oh no...

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (EARTH) - CONTINUOUS

Winnie recognises her master's voice. Starts to BARK.

The first of the seven hour CHIMES sounds.

INT. HOUSE - CORRIDOR (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

William hears.

WILLIAM
Winnie!

CHIME. Two of seven.

He charges forward, FIRES at the Dead directly in front of him -- it disappears -- FIRES at the one behind -- nothing happens -- out of bullets -- he SLASHES it away, ducks and twists from the fingers of the remaining Dead into --

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

The portal is still there. The clock STRIKES again. Three of seven. William glances at the window -- the red sky is now more orange. He turns back towards the door, wildly --

INT. HOUSE - CORRIDOR (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor appears in the corridor. She drifts towards him, painfully slow. The nearest Dead turn and HISS at her, but while she shrinks in fear they cannot harm her.

The clock CHIMES for a fourth time.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

William stands in the doorway, his arms outstretched.

WILLIAM
Come on, Eleanor! Come on!

Eleanor reaches for him, her face panicked. But as desperate as she is, she can go no faster.

The clock chimes its fifth chime. She has so far to go --

And then William realises the terrible truth.

She isn't going to make it.

O.S.: Winnie BARKS. William turns, faces the portal. Through it, he can see his bedroom. Safety. Home. Winnie crouches, stares back at him, ears back in concern.

He weighs it up, mind racing. And then he decides. Relaxes.

CHIME six.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (EARTH) - CONTINUOUS

Through the portal: William holds up a hand, blinks away the tears as he smiles one last time at his beloved dog.

WILLIAM

Stay, Winnie. Stay. Good girl.

Winnie whimpers. The clock chimes its SEVENTH, FINAL CHIME.

And then -- SUNLIGHT bursts through the window, floods the room. The flames in the bowl BLAZE HIGHER for a second. The black frame of the portal SHINES WHITE. It collapses inwards. The portal shuts.

The flames extinguish. The room is quiet, the ticking of the clock the only sound.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

William walks towards Eleanor. He lets the empty revolver drop to the floor. He passes into --

INT. HOUSE - CORRIDOR (UNDERWORLD) - CONTINUOUS

The Dead SNARL as he walks between them. He's calm now. No point in running. The sword falls from his grasp.

He reaches Eleanor. He stretches his hands out, cups a face he will never hold again. All around, the Dead draw ever nearer. William keeps his gaze fixed on his wife. He smiles, but his hands are trembling.

WILLIAM

My darling.

A SNARL in his ear. William closes his eyes. Just behind him, a Dead bares its teeth, raises its horrible hands --

SMASH CUT TO BLACK

THE END