

The Deathcap Skull

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAINS - SAWMILL YARD - DAY

A work locomotive eases a log flatbed to a stop beside a concrete platform. Two dogs converge on the undercarriage.

The yard boss, DRESSLER (42), big bones, gruff face, chases the dogs away. PEANUT (34), gangly, dark stubble, steps down from the control cab.

PEANUT

Curs been on my tail all morning.

He kneels to uncouple the flatbed but stops when he sees TRINA (18), black skin, who stands by a sawdust pile across the yard. She wears a knife belt, holds a burlap sack.

PEANUT

I still ain't seen him, Trina.

He turns back to the flatbed.

DRESSLER

I told her to quit coming up here.

PEANUT

Holy God Almighty, look-it!

Dressler crouches beside Peanut.

A head hangs like a chunk of foul meat between the inside wheel rim and axle joint. Most of the black flesh has been torn away or eaten.

DRESSLER

Jesus. How the hell?

PEANUT

Got caught, looks like. Bear musta took the rest of him somewheres.

DRESSLER

Good. The last thing I need is filing a friggin' accident report.

LATER - WOODS

Dressler tamps the ground with the back of a shovel, spreads leaves on top. Trina watches from behind a thicket of honeysuckle by a narrow creek.

LATER

Trina sits by the creek edge. She cuts and scrapes pieces of flesh from the head, throws them in the water. She uses a flat stone to scour the skull with sand.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - DAY

A two-room hut made of branches, brush, and mud stands among pine trees between a fire road and the water.

CHARLES (72), Native American features, short gray hair, dresses a deer strung on a pole between two trees.

NOOMY (56), black skin, rag bandana across her dark hair, unloads fishing poles from a drift boat on the bank.

Trina, sack in hand, darts into the hut. Noomy sees her.

NOOMY

Trina? Did you find Puffballs?

Charles walks around. Trina comes out again.

TRINA

No.

Charles shakes his head.

CHARLES

Nommy, she wouldn't know a Puffball mushroom from a Deathcap. I'm keeping her tomorrow.

INT. HUT - TRINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

A tallow lantern casts gray-yellow light. Trina sits cross-legged on a bed mat, the sack in her lap.

She removes the SKULL, places it at the foot of the mat.

TRINA

I thought you had gone, left me.

SKULL  
No, I've come for you.

TRINA  
You have?

SKULL  
Yes.

Trina giggles, places a red cloth cap atop the skull.

TRINA  
Perfect!

She removes her dress, displays her breasts.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - DAY

Charles and Trina sit on a bench by a cook fire. Noomy spoons a thick soup into bowls, and they eat.

NOOMY  
I picked out the bone. Not so many  
from deer shank.

CHARLES  
Not like pig marrow. The tibia  
makes splinters.

NOOMY  
(to Trina)  
What were you doing last night? I  
heard you talk -- and laugh.

TRINA  
It was a dream. Where else am I  
going to talk and laugh?

CHARLES  
Be quiet and eat, Trina. You and I  
need to take meat to the ice pit.

INT. HUT - TRINA'S ROOM - DAY

Noomy sorts through clothes and blankets by Trina's mat. She finds the sack, and the red-capped Skull rolls out.

Noomy recoils, screaming:

NOOMY  
The Demon -- No no no no no!

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - DAY

Noomy waits near the boat. She paces, murmurs to herself.

She sees Charles walk from the woods ahead of Trina. Noomy runs, grabs him by the arm.

NOOMY  
Trina has brought the Demon to our house. It hides in her room!

Charles's jaws constrict.

NOOMY  
It has taken her as a wife. We....

She stops as Trina approaches.

CHARLES  
Trina, take the rest up to the pit.

LATER

Noomy leans over the boat gunnel, pushes bags closer together. Charles approaches with another armful.

NOOMY  
That's all, Charles. Hurry!

Charles turns to the woods, sees Trina, runs to the boat. Noomy wades in, steadies the bow. Charles crawls aboard.

Trina cries out, runs to the bank.

Charles pushes off with a paddle.

TRINA  
What are...Don't leave me alone!

She splashes into the water, tries to pull herself into the boat. Charles smacks her head with the paddle.

Trina falls back. Her sobs echo through the pines.

INT. HUT - TRINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Trina lies in wet clothes on the bed mat, her head on a blanket. A welt discolors her face. She moans.

The Skull lies nearby in its red cap. The lantern glows.

SKULL

I am with you, Trina.

She sits up.

TRINA

No, I am all alone. They left me!

SKULL

I came for you. I am with you.

TRINA

No, you are nothing.

She kicks the Skull away. It bounces, lands upright.

SKULL

I must procure a body. I can be with you then.

Wind whistles in the pines. Trina draws the blanket to her.

SKULL

I will tell you about this.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - NIGHT

Trina places the Skull in the doorway, removes the cap.

SKULL

I must burn to ash. Wait with your head down. I will return.

With a straw-broom torch, Trina sets fire to the hut.

LATER

The hut blazes. Flames rise, smoke rolls and twists in the wind. Sparks ignite tips of pine branches.

Trina sits on the bank, head bowed, the cap in her hands.

DOORWAY

The Skull blackens, glows red, turns white, disintegrates.

LATER

A truck with a sawmill insignia tows a fire pumper to the bank. Dressler and Peanut jump out, unroll a hose.

The hut lies in charred ruins amid smoky debris. A few nearby pines have caught fire.

DRESSLER

Let's get them trees first.

Peanut sees Trina on the bank.

PEANUT

Girl, you all right? You hurt?

She doesn't look up.

They haul the hose toward the pines.

LATER

Dressler and Peanut wet down what's left of the hut.

PEANUT

I ain't seeing anybody in there.

DRESSLER

Nope. I guess they took off.

The sound of a vehicle echoes from the fire road. A dark-color sedan pulls around the hut, parks near the bank.

DRESSLER

Now, who the hell is that?

MERKE (35), tall, clad in a long, black coat, gets out.

MERKE

I'll take it from here.

DRESSLER

If you're with the company, Mr.--

MERKE

Merke. I'll take it from here.

LATER

Merke puts a hand on Trina's shoulder.

MERKE

I came for you.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - DAY

SUPER: One Year Later

A two-story white clapboard house stands on the hut site.

Merke and Trina, her face bright and cheerful, sit on the front porch and drink iced tea.

MERKE

You could go shopping while I'm in the meeting.

TRINA

I'm tempted, but the light on the river today is just right. I want to finish my painting.

Something in the water catches her eye.

TRINA

Oh, lord in heaven.

Charles poles the drift boat to the bank. He and Noomy crawl out. They pause a moment, stare at the house.

MERKE

Let's invite them in. For lunch. I don't have to leave just yet.

Trina meets his gaze, smiles.

Charles and Noomy walk to the porch steps.

NOOMY

I guess we didn't expect you'd be here anymore, Trina.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Merke sits at the table with Charles and Noomy. Grime outlines the wrinkles in their clothes.

Trina sets out china soup bowls.



NOOMY

My, my.

Trina smiles, serves them from a large bowl.

NOOMY

We made a bad mistake leaving,  
Trina. We thought you had--

CHARLES

Marrow, I see. I'm hungry.

TRINA

Yes.

Charles and Noomy gulp it down in big spoonfuls.

Trina glances at Merke. He puts on the red cap.

Charles stops, looks at Noomy, grabs his throat. She lurches forward, coughs, leans back.

TRINA

Pig tibia. You know how it can be.

Bone splinters puncture their throats like cat claws.

Noomy's tries to scream but can't. Her eyes roll up, fixed, and she slumps dead.

Charles tries to pull one splinter through but rips his throat down to his adam's apple. Blood soaks his filthy shirt. His entire body shakes in a silent death rattle.

MERKE

I hate to leave you with all this.

TRINA

It's fine, sweetie. I may leave it  
a while and work on the painting.

He kisses her forehead.

TRINA

Be honest now: Do you think adding  
the sliced deathcaps was too much?

MERKE

No. It was perfect.

FADE OUT.