

THE LEDGER

Written by

An Ugly Bag of Mostly Water

FADE IN:

EXT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL - NIGHT

A run-down motel on the outskirts of New Orleans. No cars in the parking lot. Strong winds rip violently at the palm trees.

A neon vacancy sign reads "NO VACANCY". The "NO" flickers off and on rapidly, and then--

"VACANCY" winks out, leaving just the word "NO".

INT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The motel lobby, with a couple of upholstery chairs by the door. The bad '70s decor seems right at home here, complete with an old cigarette machine next to a short hallway.

A tacky, dimly lit chandelier hangs over the front counter where the MANAGER (50, tall, gaunt, charming) stands staring at the door, drumming his fingertips.

The door bursts open and lightning flashes, silhouetting a figure standing in the doorway. FATHER JAMES (28, rugged, dour), wearing dirty vestments with a decidedly off-white collar, drops his leather case inside and leans on the door to close it.

He wearily carries the case to the desk.

MANAGER

Hell of a day to be traveling.

Father James grunts agreement.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Just in from the hurricane or will you be staying on?

FATHER JAMES

Just the night.

MANAGER

I see. In that case, could I trouble you with a delicate matter?

FATHER JAMES

It's been a long day, actually a long year. If you could just show me to my room--

MANAGER

This won't take but a minute. In exchange, please stay as my personal guest. No charge.

The manager slides out from behind the counter. Takes Father James by the arm, guides him back towards the door.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

I'd just like you to take a look, see if there's something you can do.

The door opens again. Rain obscures the parking lot behind OPHILIA (56, Black, Creole, rotund) as she shuffles inside carrying a knitted bag.

OPHILIA

Phew, that wind's got a right chill to it! Straight to the bones.

She sees the Manager with Father James and stops short.

OPHILIA (CONT'D)

Well don't that just figure. Shoulda stayed in the frying pan.

MANAGER

I'll be right with you, ma'am. Soon as I take care of this gentleman.

OPHILIA

Save your please and thank-yous. I know what you want and you won't be getting it.

The manager smiles uncomfortably at her and leads Father James out the open door, closing it after them.

OPHILIA (CONT'D)

(yells)
That's right! You can't have it!

She chuckles and eases herself into one of the chairs.

EXT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The manager leads Father James along the covered sidewalk. The wind whips the rain beneath the covering, soaking them.

They stop in front of Room 6.

INT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL, ROOM 6 - CONTINUOUS

A motel room in total disarray. Furniture strewn about haphazardly, clothing everywhere, and rotting food mixed in with it all.

Father James covers his nose against the malodorous assault.

EDWARD (70, frail, lanky) sits cross-legged on the bed in soiled pajamas.

MANAGER

He came to me two nights ago, about the same as you see him now. I was going to call the police but with the hurricane...

FATHER JAMES

I'm not a doctor.

MANAGER

Of course not, but you'll be able to tell me if he is in need of one.

Father James scoffs.

FATHER JAMES

Clearly, he is.

Edward giggles and kicks his feet over the edge of the bed.

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)

What do you want me to do?

MANAGER

Only your job. Tell me if he's truly possessed.

Father James gives the Manager a hard look.

FATHER JAMES

You knew I'm an exorcist.

Edward giggles again. The manager bows slightly.

MANAGER

I'll leave you to it.

As soon as he exits, a bureau slides across the floor and crashes against the door, blocking it.

Father James considers the bureau for a moment.

FATHER JAMES

What's your name?

EDWARD

We have many, for we are Legion.

Father James pulls a heavy silver crucifix from around his neck. He slowly winds the strong chain around his fingers.

FATHER JAMES

Play games all you like. It just tells me you're scared.

He steps to the bed and holds the crucifix in front of Edward's face.

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)

In the name of the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit--

EDWARD

No Latin?

FATHER JAMES

--I cast you out, demon! Release this
soul, in the name of Jesus Christ!

Edward leans forward and presses his forehead against the crucifix. It burns his skin, but he laughs.

Father James takes hold of the man's hand firmly.

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)

I am speaking to the man inside this
foul creature. I know you can hear
me.

He shakes his sleeve, still holding Edward's hand. A rosary slides out from the sleeve and falls over Edward's wrist.

Edward howls in pain and tries to break Father James's grasp.

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)

Help me rid you of this demon! Say
the Lord's Prayer!

Edward stops howling and smiles wickedly.

EDWARD

My Father, who is in Hell, damned be
his name, his kingdom shall come.

Father James lets the hand go as though burned. Fear clouds his face.

Edward strokes his own cheek softly.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
You can't save this one.

FATHER JAMES
You're the third so-called anti-Christ I've faced this year.

EDWARD
But the first to make you doubt.

Edward jumps on the bed gleefully.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
You aren't strong enough!
(points at Father James)
Not faithful enough!

Father James picks up a kitchen knife from the floor.

FATHER JAMES
This hurricane is a sign, isn't it?

EDWARD
The little monkey has a brain.
(eyes the knife)
What are you going to do with that, Father?

FATHER JAMES
You're right. I can't save you.

Father James jumps onto the bed and buries the knife into Edward's chest.

Edward collapses, a look of shock on his face.

Father James steps away, hands sprayed with blood.

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)
But I can delay you.

He wipes his hands on his vestments. Grabs hold of the dresser to move it.

EDWARD
(loud whisper)
Thou shalt not kill.

EXT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL, ROOM 6 - CONTINUOUS

Lightning flashes from inside the room. Father James's screams rise above the sound of wind and rain.

INT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The manager looks up from a leather-bound ledger to the door.

Ophilia rocks in her chair.

OPHILIA

That was a dirty, dirty trick.

The manager takes a fountain pen and draws a quick line across the ledger page.

The door opens again. AMELIA (36) rushes in, out of breath and soaked without a coat or umbrella.

Behind her, Ophilia spots Father James walking across the parking lot. He smiles at her, eyes black as pitch.

Amelia shuts the door, leans heavily against it.

Ophilia shudders and makes arcane gestures to ward herself.

MANAGER

I've just put on the kettle. Earl Grey?

AMELIA

Oh, God, thank you!

Ophilia cackles quietly, amused.

MANAGER

(to Ophilia)
Madam, surely you'd be more comfortable in one of our rooms.

OPHILIA

Don't you worry 'bout me, you just keep to your business and I'll keep to mine.

The manager lifts a white towel from behind the counter.

MANAGER

(to Amelia)
Here, dry yourself a bit.

Amelia takes the towel and rubs at her face and hair.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Will you be staying long?

AMELIA
Just waiting out the hurricane. A
night?

The manager smiles warmly, puts his ledger away.

MANAGER
I have just the thing for you.

Amelia hands back the towel. Pats herself down, growing
alarmed.

AMELIA
Oh no.

MANAGER
Problem?

AMELIA
Dammit! I left my wallet in the car.

MANAGER
Nothing to worry about. You can fetch
it once the storm passes.

AMELIA
Again, thank you.

MANAGER
Now, why don't you come with me to
your room?

EXT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL, ROOM 1128 - LATER

The manager struggles with a large umbrella to protect Amelia
from the whipping wind and rain.

Amelia stops when she sees the room number.

AMELIA
I used to live at 1128 Rose Avenue.
Weird.

The manager opens the door for her.

INT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL, ROOM 1128 - CONTINUOUS

A single bed, low to the ground. A low dresser, sky blue. A child's table and chair, canary yellow. A red bookshelf with children books and action figures. Baseball players and movie posters on the walls. Toy cars and trucks on the floor.

Amelia stiffens as she enters, recognizing everything. It pains her to be here.

She turns back but the door is closed and she's alone.

She tries the handle but it's locked.

She takes a deep breath and turns to face the room, expecting to see something, but nothing's changed.

AMELIA

Hello?

A picture frame on the dresser turns slightly, catching her eye. A picture of a boy, about 8, in a baseball uniform.

Amelia reaches for the frame but can't bring herself to touch it. Tears roll down her cheeks.

She sits on the bed.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay.

A baseball rolls out from beneath the bed beside her feet.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Ryan? Is that you?

The picture frame flies off the dresser, smashing against the far wall. Amelia jumps.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

You're angry. Of course you are. I'm so sorry, Ry.

Lightning flashes through the window. In the flashes, a child-size silhouette appears on the floor.

Amelia leaps to her feet, backs away.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

It's not my fault. I was sick, I couldn't think clearly. It was a disease.

A remote control car zips across the room and crashes into a jar of marbles. The jar overturns, spilling marbles across the floor.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Stop it, Ryan!

Books fly off the bookshelf, then action figures, one by one.

Amelia covers her face, afraid.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

(screams)

What do you want?

The room grows still. Amelia peeks out. Lowers her hands.

A dresser drawer slowly opens.

She moves closer and sees--

In the drawer, a pair of sewing scissors. Sharp. Next to them, red nail polish.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

I don't understand.

The scissors slowly unhinge, exposing their blades.

The nail polish tips over, spilling red all over the blades.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

You want me to...?

The scissor blades snap shut with a loud SNIP.

INT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Ophilia rocks in her seat, staring into space.

OPHILIA

Dirty, dirty tricks.

MANAGER

Just filling the quota.

OPHILIA

Somebody gonna break you.

The manager gives her a look of pity. He pulls the ledger out from behind the counter and opens it.

MANAGER

Perhaps. But not you.

He unscrews the cap to his fountain pen and holds it ready.

INT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL, ROOM 1128 - CONTINUOUS

Amelia reaches into the drawer. Picks up the scissors.

Sits on the bed. Rolls up her sleeve, weeping.

Opens the scissors. Places a blade against her wrist.

She holds it there--

And throws the scissors across the room. Red lines mark her wrist, maybe polish, maybe blood.

AMELIA

No! I love you, Ryan. I always will.
But it's not my fault.

She moves to the door and hauls on the handle--

It opens easily. Outside, the storm has eased, the wind gone and rain falls lightly.

She looks back at the room. Everything is back in its place.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Good-bye, Ry.

She closes the door.

INT. SEA-TO-SKY MOTEL LOBBY

Ophilia, rocking, staring into space.

OPHILIA

Good for you, hon.

A door in the hallway creaks open and GEORGE (22, black, big afro, broad smile) shuffles out dressed in '70s Sunday clothes. He stops at the cigarette vendor and pops a couple of coins into the slot.

Ophilia watches him like a hawk.

OPHILIA (CONT'D)

Another poor soul.

George turns to the sound of her voice. Straightens up, takes a closer look.

GEORGE

Ophilia?

Ophilia stares hard at him. Her look turns to fear when she recognizes him.

OPHILIA

Oh, no. No you don't.

GEORGE

Ophilia, it's me. George.

Ophilia gestures wildly, trying to ward him away.

The manager looks up from his ledger with a thin smile.

OPHILIA

Stay away from me. Go back to Hell where you belong.

George, confused, sits in the chair next to hers.

GEORGE

You sick or something?

Ophilia rummages in her bag and pulls out a voodoo wand, long and sinewy, with teeth embedded into it and hair wrapped tightly around it. She brandishes it like a weapon.

George's eyes fix on the wand, revulsion on his face.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ophilia...where did you get that?

Ophilia waves the wand in his face, smug and defiant.

OPHILIA

What, you don't recognize your own skin? Your teeth? Your hair?

She sucks her teeth.

OPHILIA (CONT'D)

You ain't my George. You're a sham, a conjure. Nothing but a shade.

George grabs her wrists, surprising her.

GEORGE

Can a shade do this?

Ophilia looks at the manager, afraid. He smiles, fountain pen hovering above the ledger.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Is this why I can't rest? You put a hex on me? On me?

Ophilia struggles but George's grip is too strong.

OPHILIA

Please, George. I had to, honey. You're my conduit.

GEORGE

It ain't too late, baby. Drop the wand. Let it go. Let me be.

Ophilia looks like she might do it, but she kicks him in the shin instead. George lets go.

OPHILIA

Oh, dirty tricks again! Trying to rid me of my mojo. I'll teach you.

Ophilia reaches into her clothes, then tosses a handful of black dust into George's face. She begins chanting and waving the wand at him.

The manager's fountain pen scrapes across the ledger page.

George, sad and pitiful, grabs Ophilia and heaves her over one shoulder.

Ophilia screams and pounds on his back and head with the wand.

He carries her down the hall and into the room. The door slams shut behind him, cutting off her screams.

FADE OUT

THE END