

THE CLEARING

Written by

H.R. Pufnstuf

**FADE IN:**

**INT. PICK UP TRUCK - MORNING**

In the passenger seat, pretty nerd BRIDGETTE PETERSON (30), holds a "Google Earth" print out showing a lone road cut into miles of woods.

JOSH PETERSON (35), L.L. Bean rugged, tries to concentrate on the road while scanning the dense forest that surrounds them.

BRIDGETTE

It should be coming up on the left.  
He said they left a marker.

JOSH

All I see are trees, Bridgette.  
Trees, trees and more trees. You  
must be positively orgasmic, my  
botany babe. Me, on the other hand,  
I've totally lost my cell signal.

BRIDGETTE

Oh my. Cut off from civilization.  
Whatever will we do?

She leans over, kisses his neck. Just as he begins to loosen up...

BRIDGETTE

There it is! Stop!

**EXT. PICK UP TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER**

The pick up, U-Haul trailer in tow, is now parked on the side of the road. Josh watches Bridgette search.

JOSH

This can't be the right spot. It's  
too over grown.

BRIDGETTE

No, I saw something. Yeah...here.

She reaches into the brush, pulls out a yellow flag, waves it proudly. Josh's eyes widen. It takes her a second to realize her hand and arm are covered in blood. She screams.

JOSH

What happened? Where are you cut?

BRIDGETTE

I'm okay. It's...it' not my blood.

Kicking the brush aside, Josh reveals a dead pig, its heart cut out. He turns away in disgust.

Unaffected, Bridgette strains to see beyond the brush, into the dark woods. She spots a newly cleared dirt road.

**EXT. CLEARING**

Gravel crunches under tires and dust billows as the truck exits the woods. Josh pulls into the clearing and parks.

They get out, both in awe of the landscape. Acres of lush, grass surrounded by woods. A lake glistens in the distance.

BRIDGETTE

I can't believe this is ours. Do you love it?

JOSH

It's incredible. I could have done without the dead pig though.

Pulling him close, she whispers seductively.

BRIDGETTE

I can't wait to start.

JOSH

Well, tell me where you want it.

She looks at the lake, moves a few feet to the left, turns a bit. The view directly in front of her is breathtaking.

BRIDGETTE

Right here.

**EXT. CLEARING - DAY**

At the truck, Josh opens the tailgate. Sign on it reads, "JOSH PETERSON, CUSTOM HOME DESIGN".

He pulls out a box of wooden landscape stakes, wedged between a lawn mower, a generator, gas cans and camping gear.

**MONTAGE - BRIDGETTE AND JOSH AT WORK**

-- Josh mows inside a large area marked with stakes.

-- Bridgette and Josh set up a tent on the mowed grass.

-- Josh draws a floor plan. He measures and calculates.

-- Bridgette sets up a makeshift kitchen. Hibachi grill, dorm frig hooked up to the generator and blanket as a table.

**MONTAGE ENDS****EXT. CLEARING - DAY**

Lunch is laid out on the blanket. Bridgette sits, looks toward Josh, in his makeshift office busy calculating.

BRIDGETTE

Come on Josh, I'm starving.

He sprints over, sits, checks out the spread.

JOSH

I hope these aren't ham sandwiches.

BRIDGETTE

Oh will you shut up about that pig.

She laughs, holds up her bottled water for a toast.

BRIDGETTE

Thanks to my Great Grandma McQueen for her diligent estate planning...

JOSH

And pulling off the most epic posthumous wedding gift ever...

BRIDGETTE

And continuing to piss off every male McQueen still breathing, even ones who never met you.

As Josh taps her bottle, a loud squawk echoes around them.

A giant hawk appears, releases something from its claws and flies away. It lands in Josh's "office".

They rush over, shocked to see blood splattered all over the plans and a bloody heart dead center.

JOSH

Guess the pig mystery is solved.

Josh can't hide his disgust, even almost throws up. Bridgette has a different look, a mix of concern and fear.

**EXT. CLEARING - LATER**

With a roll of orange flagging tape, Josh lays out where the walls will be by stretching the tape between stakes.

With a smouldering bunch of dried sage in her hand, Bridgette slowly walks the parameter, leaving a trail of smoke.

JOSH

That's really witchy Bridgette.

BRIDGETTE

Sage burning isn't witchy. It's a cleansing. You've seen me do it before. I brought some to plant also and a bunch of other herbs.

JOSH

Oh, good. I was just thinking this place really needs more plants.

BRIDGETTE

I'm a botany professor, Josh. What did you think I was going to bring? A wide screen T.V.?

JOSH

Now you're talking.

She sticks her tongue out then keeps walking. He laughs then goes back to what he was doing.

As he wraps the tape around one of the stakes, it falls over. He grabs a hammer from his tool belt, tries to pound it back in, but there's something stopping it.

He digs with his fingers, sees something. Digs some more then tries to pull it out. As he removes more dirt, the object becomes clear. It's a small skull, possibly an infant's.

As if electrocuted, Josh quickly pulls his hand back. He checks to see if Bridgette saw. She didn't.

Horrified, he puts the dirt back in the hole, stands up and wipes his hand on his pants as he slowly backs away.

Bridgette comes up from behind, wraps her arms around him. Startled, Josh jumps.

BRIDGETTE

Jesus, Josh.

JOSH

Sorry. I just...I'm done.

They smile as they look at the network of stakes and tape that will someday be their house.

BRIDGETTE

Good. Lets go for a swim and get washed up, before it gets dark.

JOSH  
 (still wiping his hand)  
 Yeah. That's a great idea.

**EXT. LAKE - LATER**

Both in swimsuits, Josh and Bridgette head to the water. Suddenly he tosses her the towels and runs into the water.

JOSH  
 Last one in has to love me forever!

She laughs, lays the towels on a rock, grabs a bar of soap from her bag and follows him in.

**EXT. LAKE**

Josh and Bridgette playfully swim around, splash, soap each other up then...kiss. It begins to get passionate then Josh abruptly stops. He whispers.

JOSH  
 Somebody is watching us.

Bridgette turns, sees a really old and crumpled woman with scary, harsh features wearing all black. The woman stares at them with dark, icy cold eyes.

BRIDGETTE  
 Holy shit. Should we say something?

JOSH  
 (toward the woman)  
 Hey there! Can we help you with something?

BRIDGETTE  
 Can we help her with something?

JOSH  
 Well what did you want me to say?

The woman turns and slowly walks away, into the woods.

JOSH  
 This place just keeps getting better. Dead pigs, hawks of horror, friendly neighbors...

BRIDGETTE  
 We don't have neighbors. This property is at least five miles in every direction. That old woman couldn't have walked that far.

Bridgette swims for shore.

Treading water, Josh watches as she grabs her towel, slips on her shoes and heads in the same direction as the old woman.

JOSH

Oh shit. --- Bridgette!

**EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER**

Dripping wet, towel wrapped around her, Bridgette cautiously walks into the woods.

BRIDGETTE

Hello?

She keeps walking. Nothing around but trees. A hawk squawks overhead. She looks up, sees a few circling. Keeps walking.

Over to the left, branches snap. She doesn't see anything, turns and walks in that direction.

She spots bits of yellow behind a cluster of vines. As she gets closer she realizes it's a small, dilapidated shed.

Carefully she approaches it. The door is partially open. She holds her breath as she peaks inside then exhales when she sees it's completely empty. She laughs at her nerves.

She opens the door wide, gasps when she sees a bloody hexagram drawn inside a circle on the other side of the door.

She slams it shut then screams when she sees Josh standing behind the door. She punches him.

BRIDGETTE

Don't do that! You scared the shit out of me!

JOSH

Well good thing you found the out house.

BRIDGETTE

Is that what this is?

JOSH

I don't know. Maybe. I'm not using it, I feel safer behind the bushes.

He grabs Bridgette's hand.

JOSH

We gotta go. It's getting dark.

Josh leads Bridgette through the woods to the clearing. Still stunned, she looks back one last time, sees nothing.

**INT. TENT - NIGHT**

Inside a double sleeping bag, Bridgette's head rests on Josh's chest as he sleeps. Her eyes are wide open.

She listens to the many sounds around her. Mostly insects chirping mixed with the steady hum of the generator.

After a while it lulls her to sleep.

**INT. TENT - LATER**

They're both asleep. Suddenly, the generator stops humming.

Bridgette's eyes pop open. She sits up with a jolt.

Josh stirs but then rolls over, continues to sleep.

She gets up, puts a flannel on and slips into her shoes.

She grabs a lantern then slips out of the tent. It's really dark. She hits the switch on the lantern but it doesn't turn on. She hits it like ten more times then gives up.

BRIDGETTE

Stupid fucking thing.

Back into the tent she switches the lantern for a flashlight, testing it before she leaves. It doesn't work either.

BRIDGETTE

(softly)

I asked him to do one thing before we left...check the batteries.

She rifles through her backpack, comes up with matches and a small camera. She grabs them both and heads back outside.

She lights a match, holding it in front of her as she tries not to trip over Josh's tape walls. Match burns low, stings her fingers, she blows it out.

Seconds later, she strikes another, walks a little further then repeats a few times before she reaches the truck.

She strikes another, sees the gas cans, quickly blows it out.

In the dark she climbs into the back and attempts to gas the generator. The cans are empty. All of them. She's confused.

A sound comes from their tent area.

BRIDGETTE

Josh?

She gets out, walks back over. Checks her pocket. Forgot the matches at the truck. She groans in frustration.

She takes out the camera, clicks the shutter and the flash goes off. She sees where she needs to go.

Another noise. As she gets closer to the tent she hits the flash again. In front of her is the grayish figure of a woman and a young girl.

Bridgette screams, drops the camera, it flashes again. They're gone.

Panicked, she picks up the camera, does her best not to knock down too many tape walls and jumps in the tent.

Now awake, Josh sits up.

JOSH

You okay?

BRIDGETTE

Yeah. Fine. Just saw a raccoon. Go back to sleep.

He does. Easily.

Not so easy for Bridgette. She lays there with her eyes wide open.

**INT. TENT - MORNING**

Daylight peaks through the tent flaps. Bridgette is alone.

JOSH (O.S.)

Bridgette! Holy Shit. Come here!

Her eyes flutter open, she sits up, sees Josh standing right outside the opening.

**EXT. CLEARING - MORNING**

They both stand close to the tent which is now in the middle of a circled pentacle, designed with the stakes and orange tape.

JOSH

What the fuck? This is some devil shit Bridge.

Shocked, she stares at the intricate web.

BRIDGETTE

Wait. This has five points.

Shaking, she recounts, makes sure.

BRIDGETTE

Yeah, this has five. It's a symbol of protection. Six is the bad one. I saw one yesterday at that shed.

JOSH

What? You did? Why the hell didn't you tell me? We're getting out of here, now.

Just then, the hawk appears. It swoops down but repels when it gets close to the pentacle.

BRIDGETTE

See. It's protecting us.

JOSH

Bullshit Bridge. We're outta here.

He grabs her hand, she refuses. He looks at her in anger.

Josh stomps toward the truck, the hawk swoops down and rips his head off.

BRIDGETTE

Aww snap. It's like the writer didn't have time to finish. Man. Thanks a lot asshole. Procrastinator. Fade out I guess. Now I have to what...live in this pentacle or go out and have some hawk rip my head off. Whatever.

FADE OUT

8

8

8

8

Great grandma mcqueen had a son. The son had a son, that son had a daughter...bridgette.

Fight began over a man. Other witch killed him so he couldn't have kids with ggm. Mcqueen of hearts bakery. I have enough resources to keep them away...rye. Bring her hubby bread while she's at cafe googling. Offices closed...holiday. Other sides gm or ggm is still alive. Crazy. Scarey. Its a land dispute also.

They say that part of the land is theirs...either won or given. No record of it.

Clearing surrounded by woods. Truck appears, towing uhaul. Exit young couple. they've bought the land and are going to build a house. In the truck is a generator, tent, camping stuff but not really roughing it. Stakes and ribbon to layout the home. He does the planning, architect, while she sets up house in the tent and also sets a table...grills dinner. Is there maybe an old fireplace looking thing that they want to keep...she begins a garden...while he does his thing. They have music, lights. He hits something while trying to put a stake in the ground. What? Cracks a skull. He hides it from her cuz he knows she'll freak. No cell service. They have a great first night. Something weird happens but not too weird. In the morning what's the deal? They go for a walk...what do they find? Something when they get back? They take pictures so we know they have a camera with a flash. How many nights? What else happens? morning they wake up and stakes have changed to a pentacle. Does she read tarot cards? How do they get out? Tent in the middle. Do they meet anyone along the way? Does he change the design of the pentacle to get them out? Maybe the garden she stakes out on first day blooms completely? Does she find something while she's gardening? Something like a doll? Something creepy. Mother and daughter...maybe she kills husband or husband dies. flash forward to she and little girl living in the house.

Pentacle - 5 pointed star inside a circle...symbol for protection. Hexagram...6 pointed star, is for evil. dark magic. Devil, satan. Hexagram...put a hex on someone. This is something they see close to their property.

Maybe she brings pics of the original house that was on the property.