

PINS AND NEEDLES

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. DERVIN TAILOR SHOP - DUSK

A compact, red brick shoebox of a building on a suburban commercial corridor. It stands like a diminutive relic surrounded by thriving, brawny big box retailers.

The faded, hand-painted lettering on the large front window reads, "Dervin Tailor Shop - Alterations, Dressmaking, Bridal, Formal. Since 1968."

MARVIN DERVIN, 64, appears at the front door, adjusts his glasses, looks up and down the street.

A small group of young trick or treaters, along with their parents, scamper giddily along the sidewalk.

Marvin watches them pass, then flips a greeting sign from "Open" to "Closed."

INT. DERVIN TAILOR SHOP - DUSK

Marvin turns and walks toward the front desk. He can still move his short, husky frame with some aplomb, nimbly squeezing through a gap in the counter as he pulls a measuring tape from around his stout neck.

He tosses the tape on the old wooden counter, which is as timeworn as the rest of the dark and dusty place.

He exhales deeply, runs stubby fingers through what's left of his wispy white hair. Then, he walks into the backroom.

INT. BACKROOM - DUSK

Bolts of fabric, sewing machines, cutting tables and innumerable little boxes of thread, pins and needles clutter the cramped backroom.

Marvin weaves his way through the makeshift maze and arrives at a door. He puts his hand on the knob, pauses. Turns it.

INT. BASEMENT - DUSK

Marvin begins his slow descent down the creaky wooden staircase, each step groaning under his weight.

He arrives at the dingy cement floor.

MARVIN
I'm back, dear.

The basement is lit by a lone bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Decades worth of ancient, discarded Singer sewing machines, precariously stacked cardboard boxes and a small army of tailor's mannequins fill the cellar.

But there, lying on a couch near the far wall, is TESS DERVIN, 63. At first glance, she appears in good health.

But look closer. Her hands are fixed in a semi-clutch. The rest of her body barely moves. Her lips purse slightly, producing warbling sounds.

The only active, vigorous part of her -- her eyes. Deep blue, piercing, but brimming with sadness and frustration.

Marvin walks over, kneels next to her, clasps her hand.

MARVIN
Won't be long now. Sundown at
seven forty-three tonight. Gotta
get ready.

He kisses her forehead, then walks to the far wall.

A small altar has been constructed of crumbling brick and old wooden planks. A sheet of black fabric lies over the altar, with four black candles and an ornate bowl upon the fabric.

Just above the altar, on the wall, a symbol has been scrawled in red paint. A crescent moon with a series of intercrossing lines emanating from it.

Marvin holds a piece of paper with the same symbol drawn on it. His eyes dart from the paper to the wall, searching for discrepancies. He sees none.

MARVIN
Perfect.

Tess watches, her EYES SCREAMING in protest. All she can manage is a high-pitched gurgle.

Marvin turns to her, sees her obvious distress.

He walks back, kneels next to her.

MARVIN
Don't you worry, Tess. You'll be
back tonight. You'll be whole
again.

Tess' eyes shift to her left, then back to Marvin. Tears roll down her cheeks.

MARVIN

Now, now.

Marvin smiles and wipes the tears with the cuff of his shirt.

MARVIN

You just think about walking in the park. Swimming in the ocean. Dancing with me under the moonlight. Heck, we'll be like two kids again. Just you wait.

Marvin stands, checks his watch. It's seven forty-five.

MARVIN

Alright.

He walks over to the altar, strikes a match, lights all four candles. Then, he reaches into his back pocket, pulls out a pair of thick, gleaming tailor's shears.

He holds out his left index finger, slices it, then allows the blood to run into the bowl.

Tess closes her eyes, shakes her head as she listens to the blood dribble and pop upon the bottom of the bowl.

Marvin holds up his finger, gazes at the wet crimson, then flicks the blood upon the symbol on the wall.

He puts the shears back into his pocket, wipes his finger on his shirt and grabs a piece of paper near the altar. He reads from it.

MARVIN

I invoke thee, Lucifer, bright morning star. You are to show me power and wisdom and grant me my everlasting desires.

Tess lets out a loud, harsh grunt through clenched teeth.

Marvin looks back to her, watches her eyes widen in desperation. Again, her deep blue eyes dart to the left.

Marvin returns his attention to the paper.

MARVIN

Hear me, oh mighty one. Enter this world and take hold. I beseech you, with offering of mortal soul.

He slowly turns back to Tess. Her body shudders, tears flooding her face.

Marvin takes two steps toward her.

MARVIN

I have to.

He reaches to his back pocket, pulls out the shears.

Tess is raw hysteria bound in a powerless body.

Again, her eyes flash to the left.

Marvin follows her gaze, which leads to...

REBECCA, a woman in her early twenties. She lies on the floor, her mouth covered with strips of duct tape. Her wrists and ankles lashed with twine. A length of rope secures her hands to a thick metal pole.

Marvin walks over to her, cuts the length of rope, drags her over to the altar.

He grabs a handful of her long brown hair to hold her in place, revealing a large bruise on her right temple.

Then, he touches the point of the shears to Rebecca's throat. Her jugular throbs wildly beneath the steel.

MARVIN

Should be any time now. Any moment.

Rebecca struggles to pull away, but can't move.

MARVIN

I'm sorry for this, Miss. I truly am. I hope you find it in your heart to forgive me, someday.

Rebecca screams through her the tape.

MARVIN

See, this is what you call a last resort. Ever since...

He looks to his wife, whose face burns red as she tries everything in her diminished power to protest.

MARVIN

Ever since Tess had her stroke. We've tried everything. Every doctor. Every specialist.

(MORE)

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Went to church every single day
asking God for help. Four years of
that. Four years of... silence.

Marvin's own eyes begin to well.

MARVIN

So now I take things in my own
hands. Now I do what I have to.
You married, Miss?

Rebecca shakes her head.

MARVIN

Children?

She shakes her head.

MARVIN

Then you wouldn't understand. You
ain't lived enough yet. You don't
know what it's like to have someone
that you'd give your own life for.
That... that you'd kill for. We've
been together forty years, me and
Tess. I just can't let that go.
Understand? I can't let that go.

Marvin scans the altar, the wall for anything. Any sign.

MARVIN

I don't know how long this is gonna
take, really. First time trying
this, if you hadn't guessed yet.
But I done my research. Looked
long and hard for this invocation.
Everything had to be perfect. Yes,
tonight's the night.

He adjusts his grip on the shears.

MARVIN

I'll make it quick, Miss. That I
promise you. Not looking to cause
you any more pain than I must.

Marvin nods, as if trying to convince himself of what he's
about to do.

MARVIN

Just a simple transaction is all
this is gonna be. That's all. He
takes one soul, he grants one
desire. Old as time.

Tess vocalizes her loudest objection yet.

Marvin ignores her, gazes around the dark shadows of the basement.

MARVIN
C'mon, already.

LATER

The shears now hang at Marvin's side. His other hand gently grasps Rebecca's shoulder.

Impatience, frustration, rising anger etched across his face.

He checks his watch. It's ten thirty.

MARVIN
I done everything like I was supposed to. Come on!

LATER

Marvin lays Rebecca on the floor.

MARVIN
Please don't try anything.

He gingerly steps to the couch, sits next to Tess.

MARVIN
Ankles acting up again, dear.

He checks his watch. Quarter past midnight.

MARVIN
He'll show. How could he not?

Summoning everything she has in her, Tess shakes her head, then slowly lifts her index finger. With monumental effort, she touches her trembling finger to Marvin's wedding band.

MARVIN
I know, Tess. I know! I'm trying to keep us together. To bring back what we had! What we deserve.

Rebecca cranes her head to watch as...

Tess taps the band twice.

CLOSE SHOT

of the band, inscribed with a cross.

Marvin grimaces.

MARVIN

Already tried him. Been trying for four years! And before that, been to church every Sunday of my life. What'd it get me? No, you gotta take what you need in this world. Or find someone who'll give it to you.

Again, the tears stream down Tess' cheeks. She taps the cross one last time, then rests her hand on Marvin's.

MARVIN

is clearly shaken by her sheer exertion. Surely the most she's displayed since the stroke.

MARVIN

But... but it's for your own good, Tess.

She turns her head away from him.

Marvin stands as uncertainty, doubt and fear creep across his face.

MARVIN

Well, I can't just stop now, can I?

He drops the shears to the floor, begins to pace. Rebecca watches him, eyes the shears.

MARVIN

Maybe I... I don't know.

He walks amid the junk, kicks over an old sewing machine.

MARVIN

Damn it! Why can't... why can't things go back? To the way they were.

He looks to the ceiling, past the ceiling, to the heavens.

MARVIN

WHY?! Why did you take her from me?!

He leans against a wall and starts to cry.

Rebecca subtly moves her body like a caterpillar, edging closer to the shears.

Marvin slaps the wall.

Rebecca's hands inch toward the shears. She just makes contact when--

Marvin snatches them, then stands over her. His chest heaves, hands shake in wild emotion.

MARVIN

Forgive me.

He raises the shears.

Rebecca's eyes expand, pleading for mercy.

He kneels down... slices into the twine lashed around her ankles.

Tess closes her eyes in relief as she watches her husband cut through the twine around Rebecca's wrists.

Marvin steps back as Rebecca warily slides away from him.

He turns to the altar, blows out the candles, kicks it to pieces. Then he faces Rebecca.

MARVIN

Forgive an old fool.

Rebecca rips the duct tape from her mouth. Her eyes glint with fury. Her lips curl back, teeth bared as she opens her mouth to scream at him.

But the scream never comes.

Marvin stares at her, confused, as the rage drains from her face. What replaces that seething anger... an expression of pure, absolute, unbridled *horror*.

A thick, guttural GROANING is heard, and begins to rise in volume. Like the lamentations of a thousand tortured voices.

Marvin's gaze turns from Rebecca to Tess, whose eyes are transfixed onto something -- directly behind Marvin.

Slowly, he turns.

A BLACK MASS of vapour and smoke hovers before him. Within the miasma -- the undefined, obscure figure of a hulking man. Two diamond-shaped, burning red eyes smoulder with hate.

Marvin, paralyzed by primordial fear, can only stand and gaze in despair.

An arm extends toward Marvin, a massive, grotesque hand beckoning payment.

His jaw trembling, Marvin glances back toward Rebecca, who sits against the staircase, petrified.

Marvin turns back to the thing, shakes his head.

MARVIN

I won't.

(then)

I rescind my offer.

The hand flexes, expands its five claws, demanding what is owed.

MARVIN

No.

(to Rebecca)

Run.

Somehow, Rebecca wills herself to move, rising to her feet, then bounds up the staircase.

MARVIN

I have nothing more to offer.

The searing eyes narrow on Marvin, then turn their focus to Tess, who stares on aghast.

MARVIN

No. You can't. Not her.

The monstrous hand reaches toward Tess, then clenches its fingers into a fist.

Tess exhales, locks eyes with Marvin as her body convulses upward into an arch then slams violently back down.

Her lifeless eyes, drained of all colour, drip tears for the last time. Marvin runs to her, takes her head in his hands.

MARVIN

Tess! No! Come back to me! Come back to me! You--

He turns back toward the wall. All that's left is a black, sooty stain across the painted symbol.

He throws himself onto his wife's body, an agonised wail shattering the dim stillness of the basement.

INT. SALES FLOOR - DERVIN TAILOR SHOP - DAWN

Marvin is sat in an old chair, facing the front door. He cradles Tess' body.

The sun just begins to rise above the suburban sprawl, filling the room with golden light.

MARVIN

One more sunrise, Tess.

He smooths her hair back, gently kisses her lips.

MARVIN

I'll see you soon. And then we'll dance.

Marvin holds the shears in his right hand, then slashes his left wrist.

THE SHEARS

rattle to the floor, sending specks of blood across the cheap linoleum tiles.

Within moments, Marvin's head slumps to the side.

FADE OUT.