

Diversion Down Elder Tree Lane

written by

\*Insert Witty Name\*

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**FADE IN:**

**EXT. HARVESTED FARM FIELD - NIGHT**

JANET HORNE (30) cloth nightie and no shoes, shudders in the middle of the field as the rain beats down on her.

SUPER: Scotland, 1727

Against her, she holds a terrified HELEN (10), pyjamas.

Half a dozen MALE FIGURES move in, surround the pair, but cautiously keep their distance. Smart, identical clothes.

JANET HORNE

Please, let us go. I'm no witch!

(beat)

I beg you for mercy. Please!

A FLASH of lightning, a CRACK of thunder.

The men draw swords, enclose the circle.

Janet furrows her brow. Innocence turns to hate.

She raises both her arms. The wind picks up, laps around the circle of men, their resolve waivers.

Janet SCREAMS - Roots shoot out of the ground beneath each man, wrap around their bodies and drag them under. Gone.

Janet collapses to the ground. The wind dies down.

Helen flees. A tree root grabs her foot, holds her.

JANET HORNE (CONT'D)

Their pursuit will know no end. I  
need a new form. An eternal form.

HELEN

I want my Momma. Please, I wish to  
go home.

JANET HORNE

Child, your Momma is dead! You obey  
me now.

Janet sits up, CLAPS both hands together high above her head.

Roots shoot out of the ground. Wrap around her.

The roots climb and tangle until they take the form of a gnarled Elder Tree. A large bulbous bulge on one side where Helen once lay.

**FADE TO BLACK.**

SUPER: "I place a warning unto thee, death awaits near the old Elder Tree" - A Dead Man

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. ABANDONED FIELD - DAWN**

The Elder Tree stands unchanged amongst the weeds and bush. a road has been laid nearby.

SUPER: 2019

A chirpy bird lands on one of its branches. Its song interrupted as a branch snatches it, drags it into the trunk.

**EXT. OLD HOTEL - DAWN**

Alone at the bottom of a foggy hill. A single BLACK CAB waits outside the door.

Thick, dark clouds block out the rising sun.

JEFF (35) dad-bod, baggy eyes, holds open the taxi door.  
ALFIE (10) trundles from the hotel carrying a bunch of flowers, he clambers in.

**INT. BLACK CAB - DAWN**

BILLY (50's) leathery and overweight - The taxi driver.

Jeff slides a piece of paper, with an address, through a hole in the plastic divider. Billy takes it, nods.

**EXT. OLD HOTEL**

The cab pulls away. On the horizon, flashes of lightning.

**INT. BLACK CAB - TRAVELLING**

Alfie, slumps in the corner, face buried in his phone.

Jeff opens his mouth, stops, unsure. He looks out of the window. Fog covered wilderness rolls by.

Jeff and Alfie speak with English accents.

JEFF

Your mother chose quite the place.

(beat)

What you playing?

(beat))

Come on, put that down and talk to me. Please?

Jeff slides his hand over, takes hold of the phone. Alfie yanks it from his grip.

Jeff grabs hold again, rougher, wrestles it from him. Alfie tries in vein to grab it back.

ALFIE

Give it me back!

Jeff pockets the phone.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

You're so annoying!

JEFF

Please, not today of all days.

Alfie stares out at the passing trees.

ALFIE

She chose this place to be away from you.

For Jeff, the words cut deep.

#### **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD**

The cab flies past a road sign. It reads "Cemetery - 4 Miles"

#### **FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD**

A CRACK of splintering wood. A large tree topples onto the road with a THUMP.

The black cab hurtles around the corner, SCREECHES to a halt.

#### **INT. BLACK CAB**

Heavy panting from all three occupants.

BILLY  
 Bollocks. 'at was close. Dornt fash  
 yerse, Ah ken a way aroond.

Jeff and Alfie exchange confused glances - *was that English?*

From where the tree fell, Alfie spots a small shadowy figure  
 dart into the woods.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD BEND**

The cab performs a three-point turn. This time, it turns into  
 a narrower side road.

A sign at its entrance reads "*Elder Tree Lane*". Another sign  
 above it reads "*13 Fatalities in 10 years. Drive with care*"

**INT. BLACK CAB - TRAVELLING**

Alfie twiddles the bunch of flowers in his hands.

JEFF  
 Good choice. She would love those.

ALFIE  
 Obviously, that's why I chose 'em.

JEFF  
 Do you have to be so snippy with  
 me? I'm trying my best.

Alfie turns his attention outside.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
 Look, Alfie. I know you miss your  
 mothe--

--POP. A tyre blows out.

**EXT. ELDER TREE LANE**

The black cab swerves, comes to halt on the side of the road.

A few yards away - The elder tree.

Heavy rain falls from the sky. A FLASH of lightning, a CRACK  
 of thunder.

**INT. BLACK CAB**

Alfie grips Jeff's arm tight with his hand. Jeff lets out a grin at the gesture.

JEFF

You Okay?

ALFIE

Yea. I'm Okay.

BILLY

Thes is wa Ah bloody avoid thes  
road. Cursit it is. A'll Be as  
quick as Ah can.

**EXT. ELDER TREE LANE**

Billy walks around the black cab, inspects the tyre - disintegrated.

A shadowy figure behind him moves through the fog, behind the elder tree. Billy turns - missed it.

Billy moves to the back of the taxi, opens the small boot. Roots around inside.

A creepy LAUGH.

BILLY

Is someone thare? Come oot!

A shadow moves through the fog near the elder tree.

Billy picks up a LUG WRENCH from the boot. Tentatively he walks towards the elder tree.

**INT. BLACK CAB**

Alfie and Jeff look out of opposite windows.

ALFIE

Jeff, Can I have my phone back?

JEFF

Dad.

ALFIE

Jeff.

JEFF

Do you want to talk instead? We can share stories about your mom.

ALFIE

No.

Jeff pulls the phone from his pocket, throws it onto the seat between them.

JEFF

Fine.

Alfie picks it up, plays a game.

JEFF (CONT'D)

You know I'm hurting just as much as you, right? Shunning me isn't going to bring her back.

Jeff struggles to hold back his tears, he focuses his gaze out of the window.

Alfie turns the phone off, sets it aside. He watches the rain roll down the window.

ALFIE

Mom wouldn't be happy. She hated rain on her birthday.

#### **EXT. ELDER TREE LANE**

Billy approaches the elder tree. A RUSTLE on the other side. He holds the wrench high, rounds the tree--

Nothing

Billy sighs. Looks at the bulbous bulge on the side of the tree- cracked open and empty.

--RUMBLE from the ground. Tree roots shoot out, wrap round him. His shout muffled by a tree root round the mouth.

The roots squeeze tight. CRACK, CRUNCH. Billy's body contorts as his bones crack.

The roots shoot back into the ground, taking Billy with them.

A long-healed crack in the trunk of the tree glows with delight.

A child size arm and hand reach around the trunk, covered in bark as if born from the tree.

**INT. BLACK CAB**

A muffled YELP from outside.

ALFIE  
Did you hear that?

JEFF  
Hear what?

Alfie looks out of the window.

ALFIE  
Can you see the driver?

JEFF  
Erm. No. For god's sake. I'll see  
if I can help.

**EXT. ELDER TREE LANE**

Jeff steps out, leaves the door ajar. A FLASH of lightning, CRACK of thunder.

Jeff circles around the taxi. No one there.

A creepy LAUGH. Jeff turns to its source - The Elder Tree.

JEFF  
Driver? You alright?

Silence. Jeff tentatively approaches the Elder Tree.

**INT/EXT. BLACK CAB**

Alfie watches his dad. He becomes more obscured as he moves into the fog.

A tree root CREEPS around the taxi towards the open door.

Alfie watches Jeff through the window.

The tree root reaches the door, it's tip pokes inside.

A gust of WIND hits the door, SLAMS it shut.

Alfie jumps out of his skin, turns to the slammed door. He looks back out of the window. Jeff has gone.

ALFIE  
Jeff? Jeff!

A soft, creepy LAUGH.

Alfie reaches for the door handle. A small shadowy figure moves past the window behind him.

Alfie opens the back door. Sticks his head outside.

He looks around - Nothing.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Jeff? Dad!

From above drops... a creepy HEAD.

It resembles Helen but hairless with skin made of bark, shadows where eyes should be.

CREATURE HELEN

Mother Tree summons thee, time for  
tasty tea!

The creature laughs manically as Alfie SCREAMS in fear.

Alfie scurries back, his back pressed firmly against the opposite side.

Creature jumps down from the taxi roof. Her body small and gnarled.

ALFIE

Dad! Dad! Dad!

CREATURE HELEN

Futile, to cry your plea, so my  
advice would be...

Creature puts both hands in the cab, approaches.

CREATURE HELEN (CONT'D)

Flee--

--Jeff clubs Creature over the head with the wrench. Drops it.

He clambers into the taxi, shuts the door. Alfie jumps on him, a saviour embrace.

JEFF

Are you okay? Are you hurt?

Alfie shakes his head.

BANG. Creature smashes her fists against the window.

Jeff looks around. Frantic - *what do we do?*

He leans back, smashes his feet into the plastic divider.  
Alfie joins him.

A crack appears- another big boot- *Yes!* A large chunk flies off. Jeff attempts to climb through- too big.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Alfie, you're going to have to do  
it. It's okay. I believe in you.  
You can do it.

Alfie nods. Jeff gives him a reassuring kiss on the forehead.

Alfie clambers through the hole. Stuck halfway through.

THUMPS grow LOUDER as Creature tries to bash her way in.

Jeff gives Alfie an almighty push. He falls into the front.

Many tree roots approach the back of the taxi.

Alfie turns the key. The engine ROARS to life.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Good boy! Now, take the stick. Move  
it to the P.

Alfie does as he is told.

Creature THUMPS repeatedly against the window.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Press the right-side pedal! Hard as  
you can.

Alfie slumps forward until his feet reach the pedal. He  
pushes it down.

The taxi lurches forward as the revs SCREAM. The taxi stops.

Tree roots wrap around the back of the cab. Root it to the  
spot as the back wheels spin.

Creature picks up the wrench. Smashes it against the window.  
The glass bursts into a thousand pieces.

Creature reaches her hand in grabs hold of Alfie.

Jeff reaches through the hole in the plexiglass, grabs hold  
as well - each pull, a child tug'o'war.

CREATURE  
I cannot guarantee, this will be  
entirely pain free.

ALFIE  
Momma! I want my momma, I want my  
momma.

The creatures rough face softens.

**EXT. FIELD - FLASHBACK**

Helen stands before Janet as in the beginning.

HELEN  
My momma. Please! I want my momma.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Creature stares at Alfie - genuine sympathy on her face. A  
tear rolls from her dark eyes.

Creature releases her grip, jumps away from the taxi.

She inspects her hands, horrified at the sight. Her attention  
turns to the Elder Tree - her face scrunches in anger.

She runs around the taxi, grabs hold of the roots. She yanks  
them from the taxi.

The bigger roots, she smacks with the wrench - they release  
their grip.

The wheels gain traction. The Taxi surges forward - *Free!*

A long drawn out SCREECH from Creature.

She runs full pelt, dives her way into the healed crack on  
the Elder Tree's trunk.

CRIES of pain pulse from within.

Smoke billows out of the crack. Flames flicker - the Elder  
Tree combusts from within.

**INT. BLACK CAB - TRAVELLING**

Jeff peers out of the back window at the burning Elder Tree.

He puts his hand through the Plexiglas. Reassuringly places  
in on Alfie's shoulder.

JEFF  
You alright?

Alfie nods.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
You called me dad.

Alfie chuckles. As does Jeff.

ALFIE  
Yea, I did.

Jeff falls back, relieved.

**EXT. CEMETERY**

Many gravestones - new and old.

Jeff and Alfie approach a newer one. Arms around one another.

Alfie lays the flowers next to his mothers grave.

Jeff kneels before it, places a hand on the cold stone.

JEFF  
Happy birthday.

FADE OUT.