

EXT. STONE CABIN - SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS - NIGHT

TWO FIGURES stagger against wind and snow toward the safety of the isolated cabin. They keep looking over their shoulders as if expecting pursuit.

INT. STONE CABIN - NIGHT

THREE HIKERS are laughing at a story and passing around a bottle of wine. The door blowing open startles them into silence.

The fleeing couple, TOMMY HIRST and MARGE McPHERSON, tumble to the floor. Their hair is tousled and their faces grimy.

HIKER 1  
Hey, what's the idea?

TOMMY  
Shut the door!

HIKER 2  
Shut it yourself.

Marge launches herself at the door and slams it shut.

MARGE  
It's coming!

The Hikers involuntarily glance out the window.

HIKER 3  
It? What it?

TOMMY  
Am Fear Liath Mor!

MARGE  
The Big Grey Man!

As one the Hikers burst into laughter. Climber 1 passes the bottle of wine to Tommy.

HIKER 1  
I think you need this.

HIKER 2  
Or maybe they've already had too much.

Tommy takes a long swig from the bottle, ignoring the renewed laughter. He passes the bottle to Marge, who drinks greedily, her back pressed up against the door.

HIKER 3

The Grey Man is just a story. A myth like the Yeti or Bigfoot.

Marge shakes her head.

MARGE

That's what we thought just a while ago.

Her body starts shivering violently.

Hiker 1 takes off his jacket and drapes over the young woman.

HIKER 1

Maybe you better tell us what happened.

Tommy sneaks up on the window and looks out into the dark. He turns around and slumps down to the floor. He takes the bottle out of Marge's hand and takes a drink before starting the tale.

TOMMY

We were hiking up to Ben MacDhui to spread Alan's ashes from the top.

MARGE

Alan loved MacDhui. It was the first mountain he ever climbed.

HIKER 2

Spreading ashes is illegal on -

HIKER 3

Shut up, Carse.

Tommy gets a distant look on his face as he thinks back to what happened.

TOMMY

It was only like three hours ago we were hiking up the Coire an t-Sneachda -- the Goat Track.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. THE GOAT TRACK - CAIRNGORMS MOUNTAINS - DAY

It is late afternoon of a brilliant summer day. Sun glints off the scattered snowfields and small lakes.

Four climbers, all in their 20s, all attractive, all extremely fit, are making good time up the steep path. Tommy and Marge are leading. LYDIA EWAN and JERRY CORBETT bring up the rear.

LYDIA

I thought maybe there would be more members of the club. You know all the guys who went to K2 with him.

JERRY

I guess the memorial service was -  
(searches for words)  
- emotional enough for most of them.

LYDIA

You mean it was more than enough for Alan.

MARGE

C'mon, Lydia, he didn't mean that.

TOMMY

Yeah, you know today's a workday for most of the guys.

LYDIA

No, it's okay. I know my brother could be unpleasant.

(beat)

When he wasn't being cruel.

(beat)

But I have to love him anyway, don't I?

No one answers as they carefully maneuver across the wet ground between two snowfields at the top.

EXT. SLOPES OF CAIRN LOCHAN -DAY

The path is well-trodden and easy for the four. But clouds are rolling in and the wind has picked up.

TOMMY

We better get this done fast.  
Getting caught up here in a storm is bad news.

JERRY

You know the old saying: "There's no bad weather, only the wrong clothing."

LYDIA

We're wearing the wrong clothing,  
then, if it gets bad.

Marge holds up an arm to signal for a stop, and they all go for their water bottles.

Marge raises the bottle to her mouth and her eyes go wide. The bottle drops out of her hand and she shrieks.

The others startle and look at what she's staring at.

WHAT THEY SEE

Four large shadowy figures are staring at them.

LYDIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Oh, my God.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Shit, the Grey Man!

(beat)

Men. And women.

Jerry laughs.

BACK TO SCENE

Jerry makes a waving motion and the shadow figure opposite him does the same.

JERRY

It's just our shadows reflecting  
off the mist. Germans call them  
"brocken spectres."

The others test this theory by waving, kicking their legs or making other weird motions with their bodies.

MARGE

My broken spectre scared the hell  
out of me.

LYDIA

I forgot about it, but Alan told me  
about seeing something like this a  
long time ago. On this mountain, as  
a matter of fact. I thought he was  
just trying to scare me.

JERRY

These brocken spectres are probably  
what gave rise to the Grey Man myth  
to start with.

TOMMY

Well, let's all wave bye-bye to the grey people and get on with what we're here to do.

They wave a final time then start up the path.

EXT. PLATEAU OF BEN MACDHUI - DAY

The plateau is vast and stony and desolate, but an easy walk.

LYDIA

How exactly did Alan meet his accident? No one's ever told me more than he was coming down to base camp when he fell. How could he fall? Wasn't he on a rope?

Tommy and Jerry exchange looks.

JERRY

He was holding onto a fixed rope and I guess the ground just gave way under him.

TOMMY

He was on a safe patch of ground -- or so we thought -- so went down alone.

LYDIA

Why was he coming down? I mean getting to the top of K2 is all he's ever talked about since he was ten years old.

JERRY

He was spitting up blood at Camp four so Doc Kramer ordered him down to base camp for a look-see.

MARGE

You let a sick man go down alone?

A few moments of silence.

JERRY

It was his call, Marge. He insisted everyone else keep going up.

TOMMY

Right. Besides he seemed to get better the lower down the mountain he got. That's the way it is lots of times.

LYDIA

Well, I'm sure he would've been happy to know his two best friends made it to the top even if he didn't.

Neither man answers.

EXT. SUMMIT OF BEN MACDHUI - DAY

The sun is much lower in the sky as the group nears the top of the rounded dome. They pass a roofless stone structure that provides shelter from the wind, then a large cairn that is the trig point, then finally stop at the summit indicator, whose flat surface has markings to identify the surrounding mountains.

They stare at the surroundings but mists are starting to blot out the distant peaks.

LYDIA

We should be quick about his.

She takes off the backpack and sets it on the ground. She opens it and pulls out a steel bottle. She stands up and the others gather around her.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

It's a long way from K2, Alan, but you're finally home.

(looking at others)

I suppose we should all say something.

TOMMY

Yes. Alan, we had a lot of great times together. And a few bad ones, but you were always there for me, man, and life won't be the same without you. God speed.

JERRY

Goodbye, Alan. You were a good pal and a great partner to climb mountains with. I'll see you in Valhalla.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

Just don't hang around MacDhui, or you'll freeze your ass off.

MARGE

I was your girl for a long time. I really loved you, but things just weren't meant to be between us. I'm sorry, Alan.

She starts crying and Tommy hugs her possessively.

TOMMY

It's okay, honey. He'd understand.

Lydia unscrews the lid and drops it to the ground.

LYDIA

Goodbye, Alan. Mom sends her love.  
We'll all miss you.

(beat)

Thunder, the wonder dog, misses you, too...

Tears streaming down her eyes, she throws the ashes into the sky.

A gust of wind springs up and takes the ashes...then the ashes coalesce into a funnel and move against the wind and disappear over the edge of the mountain.

The four share an astounded look but the biting wind dampens their curiosity.

EXT. LOWER DOWN THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

The four are hurrying down the steep path and become separated. The last one in line is Jerry.

ANGLE ON JERRY

He twists an ankle and hops to a stop. He finds a boulder and leans against it as he massages the ankle. He freezes as he senses something, then slowly looks over his shoulder and gives a start, then relaxes and smiles.

HIS POV

A huge shadowy figure is staring at him.

BACK TO SCENE

Jerry chuckles...until he notices the sun is at the wrong angle to cast a shadow behind him.

He whirls around and stares open-mouthed as the figure moves closer and assumes solid form.

It's a MAN wearing high-altitude climbing gear, including helmet and dark goggles. And a long climbing axe in each hand.

Jerry tries to run but his bad ankle sends him sprawling to the ground. He looks up and screams as one of the axes descends straight at him.

FARTHER DOWN THE PATH

The other three are staring up the path, but can't see anything because the mist has finally closed in.

MARGE

That was Jerry!

TOMMY

Shit, what the hell happened?

Before they can make a move up, a darkness hurtles out of the mists and crashes to the ground at their feet!

It's Jerry and the ice axe is still buried in his chest. The wound is still spurting blood in a fountain.

They all scream and back away, too horrified to do or say anything. Then when they stop screaming, they hear heavy footsteps coming down the path.

And the Climber's huge dark form starts assuming solidity as it nears them.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Oh, Christ!

Tommy and Marge and back up, while Lydia remains frozen in place. When the Climber steps out of the mists, Tommy spins around, knocking Lydia flat, and runs. Marge follows, screaming.

The Climber walks up to Jerry and rips the axe out, spraying blood on the prone Lydia.

He moves to the woman, who stares up in shock, then opens her mouth as recognition sets in.

LYDIA

Alan?

The Climber just stares down at her. She reaches up a hand...and he briefly touches it, before turning away and starting down the path again.

She watches her brother's spectre disappear into the dark mists.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Alan.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Tommy is still sitting on the floor. Marge is standing by the window, looking out with frightened eyes. The Hikers are watching them, weighing their story.

HIKER 1

So you just left the other girl out there? To face whatever it is?

Tommy notices their disapproval and shrinks up against the wall.

TOMMY

We had no choice. He was there.

HIKER 2

Who is he? And don't give me any of the Grey Man crap.

MARGE

I think I recognized him -- what little I could see of his face.

TOMMY

Don't say it, Marge! It can't be. He's dead! I was there when it happened.

Marge frowns.

MARGE

But you said he was alone. You both said that.

TOMMY

I, uh, no that's not what I meant. What I was going to say -

The door is ripped open and a furious wind blows a wall of snow in and the black form of the Climber appears and he's swinging both axes...

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

SCREAMS from many voices escape the shattered opening to the cabin, but the WHACKING SOUND of steel meeting flesh is also very loud.