

Our Lady of Eternal Suffering

FADE IN:

INT. THE WHITE LADY INN - NIGHT.

CHARLES BRIGGS (58), bespectacled academic type, chats at the bar of an old English pub with the INNKEEPER and a few regulars.

CHARLES BRIGGS
I'm a Theologian of sorts...

He sees the confusion on his companions faces.

CHARLES BRIGGS (CONT'D)
...I research old religions. I have a particular bent for the beliefs of the ancient Anglo Saxons. Surprisingly little is known of their customs...virgin territory, as it were.

The Innkeeper, a large, ruddy man in his forties, replies sarcastically.

INKEEPER
Sounds riveting.

CHARLES BRIGGS
Well a man's foibles are his own, I suppose. That's what brings me here. I found reference to an old Abbey built on a site sacred to the Saxons and I rather thought I'd check it out.

An awkward silence.

CHARLES BRIGGS (CONT'D)
You know it?

INKEEPER
We know it.

CHARLES BRIGGS
Well spit it out. Where is it?

INKEEPER
You're an educated man, Mr. Briggs, rational. If I warn you not to go, you'll go anyway, won't you?

CHARLES BRIGGS
Warn me? Come now. You're playing tricks on the outsider.

An elderly gentleman by the bar, JIM GUTHRIE, speaks.

JIM GUTHRIE

Give him the flashlight. Let him see for himself.

The Inkeeper leans under the bar and brings out a large torch. He hands it to Charles.

INKEEPER

At the end of this road, there's a path that leads into the woods. Follow it for a while. There's a statue on your left. You'll know it when you see it. Turn left there, the Abbey is a hundred yards up.

CHARLES BRIGGS

Now? You evil bastards. I know your game, but I'll play.

Charles laughs, gets up, throws his coat round his shoulders.

CHARLES BRIGGS (CONT'D)

This place better be open for a brandy when I get back.

He leaves.

EXT. QUAIN T ENGLISH VILLAGE - NIGHT.

Charles trudges to the end of the fog shrouded street. He peers into the darkness of the woodland path, glances towards the pub, and heads in.

EXT. WOODLAND PATH - NIGHT.

His torch barely illuminates the eerie passageway.

Strange sounds unnerve him as he walks.... a BREEZE through the trees, animal SCUTTLES in the undergrowth.

His torchlight lands on something in the bushes ahead.

A face! Blood dribbles from the eyeless sockets of a statue of a female angel who holds out her hands for mercy.

An Inscription:

"Our Lady of Eternal Suffering".

Charles moves closer to study it.

An Owl HOOTS as it flies from behind the statue. Charles screams in terror.

CHARLES BRIGGS

Pull yourself together old man.

He pushes back brambles and takes the path to the Abbey.

EXT. ABANDONED ABBEY - NIGHT.

The moon hangs over the remains of a Gothic Abbey.

Charles tightens his jacket against the falling rain and examines runes and symbols on the walls of the Abbey... many of them depict images of a woman.

He passes into the Atrium.

INT. ABANDONED ABBEY.

The ceiling has collapsed, but stone pews and a huge stone altar are still extant. Above the altar stands another statue of the suffering woman.

There are old wreathes round the statue. Evidence someone comes here, from time to time.

THUNDER. Charles looks at the gathering storm clouds.
LIGHTNING splits the sky.

A blue haze falls over the Abbey. As he turns away from the brightness he notices movement on the altar.

A young woman, dressed in a simple nightgown, moves restlessly on the stone slab.

He edges closer.

CHARLES BRIGGS

Hello?

He moves closer still.

CHARLES BRIGGS (CONT'D)

Madame? Are you alright?

Closer.

She rises, screaming, to stand before him.

Charles shrieks, stumbles backwards to the floor.

The WHITE LADY'S bottomless eye sockets, dribbling with blood, stare right through him.

WHITE LADY

Why are you doing this to me? It hurts. Oh God, it hurts.

CHARLES BRIGGS
It's not me, I...

He sees that her feet don't quite touch the floor. An apparition.

Her eyeless gaze falls on Charles.

WHITE LADY
There's someone here.
I see him, I can see his soul.

She floats towards Charles who scrambles away.

She collapses to her knees, holds out her hands as if begging for mercy.

WHITE LADY (CONT'D)
I can't. It's too much. Please
don't make me.

She screams. Stares into the sky...

WHITE LADY (CONT'D)
I see. I see!

... and disappears.

Charles regains his feet, tries to regain his composure.

CHARLES BRIGGS
They've spiked my drink. That's
what this is. Get back to the
hotel. Sleep it off, get home and
call the Police in the morning.

As he moves something catches his eye. The White Lady has returned. She beckons him.

Against his better judgement, he follows her.

She leads him to the back of the Abbey, starts to scabble ineffectually in the soil.

WHITE LADY
It's too much. Stop it. Please stop
it!

He approaches cautiously. There's a door, hidden under a thin layer of soil.

With a huge effort he lifts it. Dust and decay rise from the ground.

INT. CRYPT.

Torchlight reveals a stairway into the depths.

The woman walks down.

The blue haze that has surrounded the area subsides. The woman disappears. Charles carries on alone to the bottom.

INT. CORRIDOR.

A corridor with two empty rooms, possibly old, disused crypts.

A CRACK of lightning. The atmosphere changes. The blue haze returns. Everything around him changes. The walls are covered with luminous astrological symbols, religious symbols, complex equations.

The rooms themselves have changed. Charles can see into the first...

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

...It is full of a mix of futuristic, high tech equipment and Victorian style engineering. A laboratory of some sort.

Computer screens display various anatomical graphs and analyses, from heart rates to brain scans, and emit an incessant BEEP.

There's a man dressed like some kind of Monk in bright white robes...DOCTOR PHILIPS (47), an intense, nervous man, meddles with some controls.

The Doctor is oblivious to Charles presence, he's too absorbed in his work. Charles steps back into the shadows to view the action.

The Doctor speaks into a microphone.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Day 1475 of the Gatekeeper
Project.

He flicks a switch. A monitor in the corner of the room FIZZLES into life.

ON SCREEN:

A basement room. Bare stone walls. A toilet. A girl of around 26, dressed in a simple nightgown, lies on a bed... The White Lady.

Suspended above is a metallic construction. It covers the entire length and width of the bed. Thick power cables hang from it like so many unnatural umbilical cords.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

The girl moves restlessly. Her arms and legs are tethered. Electrodes connect to her head and body.

Most disturbingly of all, her eyes have been removed.

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

The Doctor talks into a microphone.

DOCTOR PHILIPS

Subject 23 displays increasing signs of depersonalization consistent with the levels of dissociative hallucinogens and direct brain stimulation it has experienced. Proceeding to the tertiary stage.

He presses a button on the control panel.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

Two metal blocks move into position, holding the girl's head rigid.

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

The Doctor presses another button.

DOCTOR PHILIPS

Beginning stimulation of the temporoparietal junction.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

A long needle WHINES as it moves towards the girl's head.

She winces as it pierces her skull. The contents empty into her brain.

A plate sized light above her begins to glow intermittently, a deep HUM sounds. The Doctors voice is heard over a tannoy system.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Listen to the sound of my voice.
You are about to go on a journey.

He pushes a lever forwards. It hits level one. The dial goes all the way to ten.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

Blue lights activate on the metallic structure above the bed and CRACKLE with electricity.

The girl writhes, her motion blurs, as though her soul is disconnected from her physical body.

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

WHITE LADY
Why are you doing this to me? It hurts. Oh God, it hurts.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Pain is merely an illusion.

He pushes the lever to level three.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

The girl thrashes violently from side to side. A blue electromagnetic force-field surrounds the bed. It pulses with increasing power and spreads a blue haze everywhere.

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

The Doctor moves the lever. Level 4.

The machines BEEP faster and faster. Her heart rate rises. Brain function is off the scale.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
You can feel your astral body separating from your base. Don't be afraid, don't try to hold back. You are flesh no longer.

The lever is manoeuvred to level 5.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

The girl's body twists and turns. Her face contorts in agony.

The light above her shines ever more brightly and beats with that dreadful HUM.

She SCREAMS.

Blue energy tears from her body as her soul itself is released.

We push in on her face as...

GIRL'S POV.

...Images and noises collide. The Abbey, as seen in hyper-reality.

BACK TO SCENE.

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

The Doctor, perspiring heavily, scans her life signs.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Where are you? What can you see?

INT. HOLDING CELL.

WHITE LADY
There's someone here.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Describe them.

WHITE LADY
I see him, I can see his soul.

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Good. GOOD. You're free from the shackles of your body. Look to the sky. Imagine flying through space at the speed of a thought.

WHITE LADY
I can't. It's too much. Please don't make me.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
There is no progress without sacrifice. We're about to go beyond the limits of science and religion.

(MORE)

DOCTOR PHILIPS (CONT'D)
We are pioneers, immortals in the
pages of history.

He moves the lever forward once again.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

The girl's face twitches in pain.

GIRL'S POV.

She looks up to star filled sky and then races through
space itself. The Moon passes, planets fly by in a blur.

BACK TO SCENE.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Can you see the stars? The
Universe? Can you understand the
power that I have harnessed?

WHITE LADY
I see. I see!

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Only the illusion. We're going to
go beyond time and space, cross
dimensional reality itself.

He moves the lever forward once again.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

The girl's body shudders as even more power surges through
her.

WHITE LADY
It's too much. Stop it. Please
stop it!

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Stop now? We're going to open the
secrets of Heaven.

The lever is pushed forward again.

DOCTOR PHILIPS (CONT'D)
Do you not want to see the face
of your God?

He ramps it up again...

INT. HOLDING CELL.

...The girl's body convulses.

The energy in the room shines impossibly bright. Machinery CLUNKS and GROANS as it pushes full operational intensity. Smoke and sparks leap from wires.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Tell me what do you see?

WHITE LADY'S POV.

The world dissolves around her. The fabric of reality tears apart piece by piece. Light shines through from the other side as...

...the VORTEX opens. A tunnel of sound and vision that moves at breathtaking speed and ends in unbearable light.

BACK TO SCENE

Her mouth opens in awe...

WHITE LADY
I see everything.

She slumps...

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

...An ALARM sounds. Vital signs drop. Her brain activity ceases.

Flat-line.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Not now. Don't do this to me now!

He runs into the corridor. He slides back the bolt and opens the huge metal door of the holding cell...

INT. HOLDING CELL.

... races to the bed, bangs on her chest to get her heart working again.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
Don't you dare do this to me! I'm
one step away from the greatest
breakthrough in history.

There is no response. He pumps on her chest in desperation.

DOCTOR PHILIPS (CONT'D)
How dare you. How dare you!

INT. CORRIDOR.

The White Lady's spirit appears in the corridor. She beckons to Charles. He moves to her.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

The Doctor leans over the body in anguish.

Behind him, silhouetted in the doorway is the White Lady.

Doctor Philips becomes aware of the presence. His head snaps to the side to look.

WHITE LADY
Congratulations Doctor. Your
experiment was a complete
success.

Doctor Philips charges towards the exit.

INT. CORRIDOR.

Charles steps forwards and slams the door shut. The bolts CLANG into place. The Doctor is trapped.

He bangs desperately on the door, stares through the tiny slide door that allows him to see out.

DOCTOR PHILIPS
You can't do this to me. I've
unlocked the key to the Universe.
Me, Doctor Philips. Me. Do you
understand? Let me out. Let me
out!

INT. CORRIDOR.

WHITE LADY
Turn it off.

Charles heads into...

INT. BASEMENT CONTROL ROOM.

On the screen, the Doctor slams on the door in pointless desperation.

Charles uses the computer to shut the system down. The computer monitor screen reads:

Gateway Project Shutting Down.

A bar grows as files are deleted. The computer blinks off.

We get one last look at the crazed Doctor on the CCTV screen before that too, blinks off, forever.

Charles turns to the White Lady...

CHARLES BRIGGS

Is it...?

...But she's gone.

EXT. ABANDONED ABBEY.

Charles exits the passageway to find the group of men from the Inn carrying wreaths. The Innkeeper passes one to Charles.

INKEEPER

Welcome to the club.

They walk to the Atrium, place the wreaths around the altar on top of the earlier ones.

CHARLES BRIGGS

Is it over?

INNKEEPER

This site has been sacred for millenia. We believe the portal reaches through all time, maybe through different dimensions. She stays to suffer again and again to protect the secrets for all Eternity.

Charles blows air from his mouth at the thought.

CHARLES BRIGGS

I could use that brandy about now.

INKEEPER

I brought the bottle.

The Innkeeper opens his jacket and hands it to him with a smile.

FADE OUT.