

PENDULUM SHORT

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BLACK

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FADE IN:

EXT. YALE UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

Fly over of an Ivy League college campus on a dark night.

It is raining gently as storm clouds blow over the landscape. The view hurries above the treetops to an old culdesac.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PIT DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Rain PATTERS on a heavily cobbled stone driveway that circles the front of an ancient fraternity mansion.

Grim yellow lights shimmer through the fore-court as a black limo pulls through and SQUEALS to a halt at the entrance.

A group of porters emerge and go running through the rain to open the limo's doors. There are polite greetings as the guests exit the vehicle to be ushered by umbrellas.

The first honored guest to step out is a white-haired, distinguished old gentlemen with a grand smile on his face.

So enters MR. BILL PATTISON, former Senator, corporate head, and chairperson of The Hanging Man Alumni Association.

The second is a dark haired woman of about 30 years, DONNA, who is wearing a reserved, politely calculated smile, being daintily helped to her feet and escorted by Mr. Pattison.

She looks back at the third to emerge.

A young man of graduate age is the last to exit.

His name is DARWIN VON RICHTHOFEN, a youth from old money, who carries it in his staunch demeanor just as the others do.

He nervously smooths his suit and tie as he steps from the limousine. Donna reaches a hand to smooth part of his hair.

DONNA

There you are.

She pats him on the shoulder and beckons him to follow as old Pattison begins chatting about what a big night it will be to all within earshot. The servants hang on his every word.

The group is moved through the massive front doors.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PIT - NIGHT

Once inside they are promptly tended to, with their wet coats gently taken, their hair primped and dried, made presentable before going further into the stately old building.

The group moves into an elegant sitting room.

The wood, silver, gilding, and crystal on every surface has been polished to a mirror shine. Serving staff greet and offer sparkling glasses of champagne as the party enters.

A formal celebration is taking place. All faces turn with congratulatory praise as Mr. Pattison and company enter the large room, which is a luxurious banquet hall of antiquity.

A few among the crowd with hands free clap their genuine friendship and support. It is warm among the welcoming crowd.

The night is full of wealth and opulence, but the identities of the members present are mostly unclear and anonymous.

A few yell out heart-felt encouragements.

UNKNOWN MAN

(shouting)

Hey Big'Bill! How about it?!

Is tonight the night, or what?!

LAUGHTER fills the room as charismatic Mr. Pattison works the crowd, calming them at the same time encouraging them with a hand gesture. He smiles widely and meets eyes with everyone.

Someone TAPS a glass for attention.

MR. PATTISON

Okay, okay Everyone. Thank you for coming. Sincerely. This day marks a turning point for our organization. Since the founding of this great nation we have been here at the forefront of its construction. We will continue to be at the forefront, and it's all thanks to you. You who have dedicated your

(MORE)

MR. PATTISON (CONT'D)
 lives to something greater than
 yourselves, and our new blood,

He turns to wave his hand at the younger man by his side.

MR. PATTISON (CONT'D)
 Here, to take up our shield and
 continue our cause. For almost two
 hundred years we have functioned as
 a body, as one, but we have been a
 body without its heart. Without a
 head. We are legs moving forward,
 and hands preparing the way, but
 for what end? Tonight, we move in a
 new direction, and my promise to
 you is that we will regain that
 head to lead us. We will find that
 heart, and it will carry us, our
 nation, perhaps even the whole
 human race towards a new, better
 future. This is the time my old
 friends. This is our time. Best of
 luck to us all, and thank you.

With a respectfully genuine smile, laugh, and a small bow,
 Mr. Pattison concludes his speech. He raises his glass and
 the crowd returns the gesture with a happy cheer.

The group mingles with the party, shaking hands while
 exchanging both greetings and congratulations among them.

A middle-aged and ELEGANT COUPLE approach Darwin, Donna, and
 Mr. Pattison, who are now surrounded by people trying to meet
 the new member as they make their way around to everyone.

ELEGANT MAN
 So! This is the one, it would seem?

The pair laughs excitedly.

Darwin's head bows some as his eyes hit the floor, cold and
 unsure, then catching himself, he confidently nods and shakes
 hands with the couple as Mr. Pattison answers for him.

MR. PATTISON
 Ah, yes! Our big graduate.
 (laughing)
 Mister big graduate! We scouted far
 and wide for a young man of his
 caliber, and incredible talent.

He affectionately claps the young man on the arm, but the
 sudden contact clearly makes Darwin withdraw into himself.

A few seem to take note of this, and smile with approval.

The couple glances at one another, briefly.

ELEGANT WOMAN

Well, he seems just perfect.

(to Darwin)

It takes a certain... special type,
don't you know?

Darwin opens his mouth to speak, but Mr. Pattison interjects.

MR. PATTISON

It takes *his* type, you mean?

He smiles, then reassures them loudly.

MR. PATTISON (CONT'D)

I dare say, we couldn't find a more
perfect new addition to our family!

(to the crowd)

Enjoy yourselves! Mingle! We shall
get down to the business at hand,
shortly. Everyone? Darwin?

At that, Darwin accompanies Mr. Pattison to the back of the room, through a foyer, and under a small archway.

Donna quietly follows behind, observing a few around her.

They move into a den attached to the back of the mansion.

Mr. Pattison gives an usher a nod, and from the other side of the room, a hidden switch is promptly thrown for him.

Effortlessly, quietly, a wooden panel slides open in the siding of the wall, and a dark stairwell is revealed.

Catching up, Donna shares a bright smile with Mr. Pattison, and she gestures for him to lead the way to the underground.

Looking back around the corner of the wall, a last glimpse of the party guests reveals the strange phenomena of the people coming together at random, embracing, kissing, and disrobing.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PIT MUSEUM HALLS - NIGHT

The size and quality of the colonial era manor's hidden museum provides some hint that the building shelters a large and well-guarded underground complex deep beneath the earth.

It is full of marble and gold, gilding and wood, polished display cases holding ancient-looking and treasured relics.

Eyes forward, Mr. Pattison leads the group further on into the now brightly lit, remodeled seeming chambers.

They pass through a modest archway dividing the old and new spaces, which sprays a finely calibrated chemical mist that marks the entry-point to a hermetically sealed environment.

The halls further down become clinical and regimented, reminiscent of the highest quality government-issue.

Darwin eyes the changing decor somewhat nervously, as Donna is smiling and walking confidently by his side, arm in arm.

They reach a set of tightly sealed and perfectly polished sliding-glass doors, which part for them with a low HISS.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE CHAMBER - NIGHT

The monotone halls sealed within abruptly open to a circular stone chamber that recedes down beyond sight into darkness.

It is hundreds of years old, but perfectly preserved since the time of its building, hand-carved of no known method.

At its center floats a pentagonal shaped temple.

The edifice is lined with torches and emits steam from its evenly spaced, slitted windows, possessing an interior warmth in stark contrast to the dark, dank, and cavernous room.

It waits ominously at the end of a long and narrowly built bridge that dissects the radius of the abyssal space, below.

The depth over which the whole thing spans cannot be seen.

A servant in modest robes stands at the apex of the bridge. He halts the group and asks for the secret sign to pass.

Mr. Pattison steps forward to respond.

MR PATTISON

Sleep in shadows.

Mr. Pattison grabs the man by the shoulders, guts him with a quickly drawn ceremonial blade, now unconcealed, and throws him lightly from the bridge into the dark chasm's depths.

Horrified SCREAMING follows the man's fall.

Donna chuckles delightfully as Darwin eyes her with a smirk.

The group continues to the temple doorway.

As they approach, the stone opens with an unnatural circular rotation that makes disturbingly little sense to the eye.

They pass through without hesitation.

As they cross the threshold, a distant, wet SMACK of a human body hitting stone echoes throughout the chamber.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

The interior of the temple bares a strong resemblance to ancient Egyptian occultism, and is lit by strange torches.

Standing by the door of an open antechamber where the torchlight shines dimly, Darwin watches his companions be escorted by female slaves into opposite facing rooms.

With eyes closed and arms outstretched, they are each clothed in the dark ceremonial robes and jewelry of priesthood.

He sees other obscure items being brought to them, but turns his attention forward to another slave, stunningly beautiful, who is smiling, welcoming him, and reaching for his hand.

Childlike, Darwin follows her to a water basin seated just before the worship area in the next section of the temple.

Two more slaves appear from either side to help disrobe him. As they go, they wash his body with a mixture of haste and meticulous care. It cascades down his body to the floor.

He is gaunt but tightly built. As he stands with arms raised, they wrap him in an animal skin loincloth, the ancient way.

Once prepared, they gather before the next archway, in line.

Mr. Pattison, waiting, nods at Darwin with a proud smile. They turn as one, passing into the central alter room.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE ALTER ROOM - NIGHT

Glistening wet in the firelight, Darwin is the first to enter the alter chamber, passing between the parting procession.

The room is large and pentagonal to reflect the outer shell, and possesses a massive, black-steel throne at its center.

In unison, the slaves let out a low, haunting moan as they continue through the room, together, and circle to its sides.

Darwin, Donna, and Mr. Pattison walk towards the throne.

On it sits a skeletal figure, slouched and wearing thick cloths that drape over the arms of the menacing sepulchre.

A long, labored breath hisses from between malnourished lips.

Shakily, THE PRIEST points a long, bony finger to a marking on the floor, where Darwin stands in statuesque repose.

Darwin bends to kneel before dark figure.

The slaves raise their hands to the ceiling, and the ceremony begins among the present witnesses. It builds to a crescendo.

With sudden agility, the Priest stands and takes three hard steps to come within arm's reach of the kneeling Darwin.

A cacophony of songful chanting sirens from the women slaves, now writhing in their places in a circle around the alter.

Just as suddenly, the Priest extends his arm to its fullest length, and gently taps Darwin on the center of his forehead.

Darwin explodes in a cloud of blood vapor.

CUT TO:

INT. HELL - NO TIME

Darwin rushes back into existence, finding himself in a new world of fiery horrors, anguish, and black hopelessness.

Towering over him, BAAL, the demon prince, stands in his chasm of flame, meditating over a lake of magma far below. He turns to regard the small man kneeling on a natural arch.

Beyond the range of human hearing, in a forgotten language, this prince of legions exclaims a series forceful commands.

Once finished, after a pause of consideration for the human, it extends a hand the size of a building, and taps the awed, newly energized Darwin on the center of his forehead.

Darwin's body is exploded with a shortened gasp.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE ALTER ROOM - NIGHT

Almost as quickly as he had been torn apart, Darwin's body is re-materialized back in the alter room where he was sent.

He returns panting and wet, but whole, except for a painting of blood splattered on the floor and walls all around him.

Once aware, dripping with clotted gore, Darwin takes a fast, deep breath. He fills his lungs with panicked urgency.

His eyes snap open as the heads of each of the waiting slaves burst apart, bloodily, in concert with his awakening.

The Priest lies dead in his seat, head hanging to one side.

Donna steps boldly up to the corpse, and casts his body to the stone floor with a dry CLATTER. She turns to face Darwin.

Stepping down, Donna pulls her own robes off and throws them over Darwin's shoulders, leaving her in her black underwear.

He sighs at her loving touch. Donna gently leads him to the throne, where she carefully turns and helps to seat him.

She stands tall by his side with her hand upon his back.

His eyes glow a dull, luminescent white, which fade back to their original deep blue as he stares ahead at nothingness.

He sinks into a dark, creeping, and permanent depression.

Mr. Pattison, standing with his hands clasped behind his back, is smiling as he regards the picturesque triumph.

He turns, and briskly exits the temple.

THE END