

THE FOREST LINE

Logline:

Constantly haunted by disturbing visions of his missing fiancé, a young man re-examines his own involvement in her disappearance during their trip through the Scottish Highlands.

Characters:

Tom - A professional young man still recovering from the shock of losing his partner.

Cassie - Tom's romantic partner who vanished very suddenly while they were on holiday.

Alan - Tom's law counsel, advising him on his legal options as a potential suspect in Cassie's disappearance.

Synopsis:

Tom sits slumped in an armchair, sleeping. Outside the headlights of cars pass by, occasionally illuminating the cramped, untidy space of his front room.

They also light up Tom's limp hand, which is clutching a crushed piece of paper. A letter. Written on the top of this letter is the word 'COLLECTIONS'.

Next to Tom's hand is a mobile phone. It starts to ring loudly, waking Tom up. Alan talks on the answerphone, and Tom picks up, apologising.

Alan's authoritative voice explains that the Police investigation, the search for Cassie, is winding down, and Tom is currently 'off the hook' as a suspect. Alan asks Tom not to continue to search for Cassie on his own.

That night Tom struggles to sleep. He can hear a distant voice, a female voice, whispering outside his room. He gets up to investigate.

Through his bedroom door he can hear wind through trees, and someone walking along a stony path, feet crunching the earth.

When he opens his bedroom door, he sees damp footprints on the carpet. Confused, he examines them more closely and picks up a single pine needle.

As he picks it up, he suddenly finds himself on a forest track at twilight, surrounded by thick layers of pine trees.

Tom notices someone is standing much further up the track, watching him, just a dark outline at the edge of the trees.

Tom shouts out. His voice seems muffled and unreal. There is no response. The person turns and disappears back into the trees.

Tom follows and notices what looks like a hand, caressing the side of a tree, its fingers stretching out towards him.

A naked arm, covered in soil, stretches out to caress his horrified face. The damp, dirty fingers pass down his cheek, leaving a dark smear of dirt across it.

Tom winces suddenly. The pine needle he was holding has dug itself into the flesh of his hand. As he pulls it out, he realises he is back in his own hall again. Those damp footsteps have vanished.

That night, Tom sits alone in his small conservatory, soft classical music playing in the background. It is pitch dark outside and raining heavily.

Next to him is an old photograph in a frame. It shows Tom holding hands with a woman. They both wear hiking gear and Tom is smiling. The woman's face remains out of focus and obscured.

Tom works on what looks like an insurance document. The name 'Cassie' can be seen autographed on the dotted line at the bottom.

Then he notices something out the corner of his eye. A blank white face is watching him from outside the glass, obscured by the dark and the relentless rain pouring down the window.

Tom stands up slowly and walks up to the window. On the other side a deathly pale hand stretches out towards him again, pressing its palm on the glass. It is full of soil and pine needles, and inside the palm an earthworm is squirming.

As soon as Tom touches the glass the pale hand disappears. When Tom looks down at his own hand in horror, the palm is now full of that same dirt, the pine needles, and that writhing earthworm.

The next morning, Tom is up early and on the phone to Alan. He tells him he intends to go back up into the hills where Cassie vanished. Alan pleads for him not to go alone, offering to help him look. Tom declines.

He starts packing, then he is out walking, climbing up into the forest along a rough track in the hills. He nears the spot where the arm had reach out to him. He stares into the trees and the dark inside. He can hear that whispering again.

Tom makes a call on his phone, and leaves Alan a voice message, saying he is intending to stay up in the hills until he has found Cassie.

That night in his tent, off the side of the track, Tom dreams of a hand hitting the earth, palm upwards on the soil of the forest. Its fingers go limp as the hand hits the ground.

Tom sits up. He hears the female voice whispering outside. When he looks out there is no one there. Though the whispering is still audible, merging with the wind in the trees.

Tom grabs a torch and climbs out his tent, calling out into the night. Inside those pine trees even the torch cannot penetrate the gloom. Tom steps through the tree line.

As he searches, he almost trips up on something. Fingers are reaching up through the soil! A hand partially buried in the ground. The palm is full of soil, pine needles and a dead worm.

As he digs frantically into the earth with his bare hands, Tom wipes the earth away and sees a female face buried there, pale as death!

As he wipes the soil away from the face its eyes open suddenly! That hand comes up from the soil and clutches Tom's cheek!

A faint hopeless cry drifts out from the forest, and down across the lonely hillside track Tom was just climbing.

Later, in Tom's front room the phone is ringing off the hook. The answerphone comes on and Alan starts speaking. He is sending round the Police right away as Tom cannot be contacted.

At the end of the room the conservatory can be seen. Behind the windows of the conservatory, past the old photograph of Tom and Cassie, can be seen the vague form of a man and woman holding hands in the rain.

THE END