The Black Dog

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT
A car drives along the road. There is no other traffic.

INT. CAR - NIGHT
An elderly couple are in the car. The husband is driving. He is CHARLES RENFREW. In the passenger seat sits his wife EMILY RENFREW.

Charles sighs and looks at the clock. It reads 1AM.

CHARLES
Bloody ridiculous time.

EMILY
Oh come on you know how it always is.

CHARLES
Yeah. Every damn year.

EMILY
It’s her birthday!

CHARLES
I understand that but she doesn’t have to keep us there till one AM, filling you with gin.

Emily looks at him offended.

EMILY
You had some too!

CHARLES
Yes but not nearly as much as you.
One of us has to drive remember.

Emily looks away and out the window.

EMILY
I can drive fine well.

CHARLES
Clearly.

Emily looks out of the window. Charles focuses on the road. His head starts to droop and his eyelids start to shut.

(CONTINUED)
EMILY
(o.s.)
Oh my god!

Charles is startled awake.

CHARLES
What? What is it?

EMILY
There was a dog.

CHARLES
What?

EMILY
It was a great big black dog. Running alongside the car.

CHARLES
Don’t be ridiculous.

EMILY
I saw it!

CHARLES
You’ve had too much to drink.

EMILY
I know what I saw!

CHARLES
What breed was it then?

EMILY
...I don’t know.

CHARLES
Exactly. Because you didn’t see it!

Emily glares at him.

CHARLES
Just, go to sleep or something.

Emily turns away as Charles sighs. She keeps looking out the window. Charles’ head starts to sag again. His eyelids drop...and then close.
EXT. CAR - NIGHT
The car starts to veer off the road.

INT. CAR - NIGHT
Emily turns to Charles.

    EMILY
    Charles!
Charles wakes up too late and turns the wheel wildly.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT
The car swerves off the road - and smashes into a at the side of the road. The car is wrecked. Inside both Charles and Emily are dead.

Somewhere in the distance a dog howls.

EXT. MANSION ESTATE - DAY
A car drives along the road.

INT. CAR - DAY
Two women are in it. In the passenger seat is JENNIFER RENFREW. Her friend HANNAH WILLIAMS drives the car. Jennifer looks out of the window deep in thought.

    HANNAH
    You okay?
Jennifer looks over and nods. Hannah smiles.

INT. DRIVE - DAY
The car pulls up in the drive of a large mansion. Several other vans and cars are parked there. Tradesmen come and go out of the main doors.

Jennifer and Hannah step out of the car.

    HANNAH
    Well they certainly had a nice place.

(CONTINUED)
JENNIFER
Yeah.

HANNAH
Where’s Richard?

JENNIFER
Inside probably.

They head for the entrance.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

RICHARD RENFREW stands in the main lobby giving the tradesmen orders. The lobby looks like it’s being redecorated. He looks up at a TRADESMAN on the balcony.

RICHARD
Look just get rid of it.

TRADESMAN
Are you sure?

RICHARD
Yeah, that bloody chandelier’s just going to get in the way. Just get rid of it.

Behind him Hannah and Jennifer walk in.

HANNAH
I see you’ve already started.

Richard turns to greet them.

RICHARD
Hello Hannah. Yeah well the place wasn’t exactly the most inviting. Reflected the old git’s personality.

Jennifer walks up to him. He hugs her. He looks over to Hannah.

RICHARD
So where’s John?

HANNAH
Picking up those tools you asked him to get.

(CONTINUED)
RICHARD
Ah good man.

He walks over to the staircase.

RICHARD
Hey take a look around. Have you ever seen our parents house?

HANNAH
No.

JENNIFER
You’re lucky.

They laugh.

RICHARD
Come on I’ll show you the guest quarters.

HANNAH
Oh, they have guest quarters?

RICHARD
I know. You’d never think they had anyone round they were so miserable.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

They walk down a long hallway. Various paintings are lined on the wall.

HANNAH
They sure liked their art.

RICHARD
That was mum’s. She always liked art.

They walk past a bedroom. Jennifer lags behind and looks into it.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A child’s room. Stuffed toys are lined perfectly on the bed. It doesn’t look like anyone’s used it in years. Jennifer walks over and picks up one the dolls. She stares at it.

Something moves quickly behind her. Almost like a shadow. Jennifer turns to look.

(CONTINUED)
JENNIFER
Hello?

A small clicking sound is heard. Almost like animal footsteps.

JENNIFER
Hello?

There is a noise from the other side of the bed. Jennifer jumps, looking over. Something growls from the other side, an animalistic, primal growl.

Jennifer steps closer to the bed...closer...

RICHARD
(o.s.)
Jennifer?

Jennifer nearly jumps out of her skin. The growling stops. Richard stands in the doorway looking at her oddly.

RICHARD
Are you coming or what?

JENNIFER
Yeah sorry.

Jennifer puts the doll back on the bed and leaves the room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Richard, Jennifer, Hannah and JOHN HOUGH all sit around a table. Empty carry out packets lie beside them.

RICHARD
So get this. Dad comes in and he’s practically tearing the house apart because he can’t find a pen for the life of him.

JENNIFER
And he needs it to sign a very important deal by midday.

RICHARD
Right so he goes half mad looking for one, and then runs out of the house and drives to the shops looking for one. And then Mum walks over to a drawer and finds like twenty of them all in a box.
The group laugh.

RICHARD
First place she looked as well. He would have been lost without her.

JENNIFER
Yeah...they were good together.

RICHARD
Yeah, they just weren’t good with others.

JOHN
They were nice enough to leave you the house though.

RICHARD
True, although I wouldn’t have put it past the old man to go and change the will on the fly. He was like that.

They sit in silence.

RICHARD
Still, it’s our house now.

He motions to Jennifer.

RICHARD
And we’re gonna make it good.

Jennifer nods.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer walks out of the en-suite bathroom and heads over to her bed. She gets in and starts reading a book. She gets drawn into it.

A low growl drifts into the room. She doesn’t hear it for a few seconds, but then notices it as it gets louder. She looks around the room.

A shadow can be seen from under the bedroom door. Something is standing outside. The growling starts again. Jennifer moves to sit on the edge of the bed.

JENNIFER
Who’s there?
The growl comes again - and then the shadow moves off down the hall. Jennifer stands up and walks to the door.

EXT. BEDROOM - NIGHT
Jennifer opens the door and looks into the hall. She looks both ways. Nothing. She closes the door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY
John washes a cereal bowl in the sink as Jennifer walks in.

    JOHN
    Morning.
    
    JENNIFER
    Morning. Uh, John?
    
    JOHN
    Yeah?
    
    JENNIFER
    Did you hear anything last night?
    
    JOHN
    How do you mean?
    
    JENNIFER
    Like...anything in the hall?

John shakes his head.

    JOHN
    No. Why?
    
    JENNIFER
    I could swear I heard an animal in the hall last night.
    
    JOHN
    What kind of animal?
    
    JENNIFER
    Like a dog. I don’t know, it was probably nothing.

She walks over to the table.

    JENNIFER
    So what are you doing today then?

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
Richard and I are going to work on the other wing. With any luck the whole house will be done in a few weeks.

JENNIFER
Nice.

JOHN
Yeah.

He leaves and Jennifer sits down at the table, unnerved.

INT. CONSERVATORY - DAY

Rain thunders down outside. Richard and John stand in overalls painting the wall.

JOHN
You sure we shouldn’t get the professionals to do this?

RICHARD
It’s just a paint job.

JOHN
Yeah you’re right.

Richard looks on the ground for something.

RICHARD
Hey Jen?

Jennifer walks into the room.

JENNIFER
Yeah?

RICHARD
Can you get me the roller? I think I left it in the kitchen.

JENNIFER
Sure.
INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jennifer walks into the kitchen. The door at the back is open leading out into the garden. Rain droplets come in. Jennifer walks over and closes it. She walks over to the counter and picks up the roller.

Behind her the door creaks open. The wind picks up and it opens further. Jennifer sighs and walks over, closing it again. She walks away.

The door opens again, the hinges creaking as it does. Jennifer turns and looks at it, frightened. She stands perfectly still. Nothing moves. The only sound is that of the wind outside.

Sighing she walks back over to the door and starts to close it again.

Suddenly the door is blown open again by a huge force. Jennifer screams as she falls backwards onto the floor. A dog snarls and barks at her. She looks up at it in horror.

Richard and John run into the room, hearing the noise. The barking stops.

    RICHARD
    Jen!

He runs over and helps up a terrified Jennifer.

    RICHARD
    What happened?
    JENNIFER
    A dog!
    RICHARD
    What?
    JENNIFER
    A huge, black dog! It tried to kill me!
    RICHARD
    John check the garden.
    JOHN
    Right.

He runs out as Richard sits Jennifer down at the table.
INT. GARDEN - DAY


INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John walks back in.

    JOHN
    There’s nothing there.

Richard turns to Jennifer.

    RICHARD
    Are you sure it was a dog?

    JENNIFER
    Yes! It was huge and it threw the door open!

    RICHARD
    That’s a pretty sturdy door Jen, are you sure it wasn’t just the wind?

    JENNIFER
    Yes I’m sure! It came right at me!

    RICHARD
    But there’s nothing out there.

Jennifer gets up and leaves the room. Richard sighs.

    RICHARD
    Must have been the wind.

John leaves the room. Richard goes to follow him. Something catches his eye.

Several muddy paw prints stain the floor.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTRE - DAY

Jennifer walks down a street with several bags of shopping. Several people move around with their own business. Jennifer turns into a car park.
INT. CAR PARK - DAY

Jennifer walks along the aisles of cars. Suddenly a woman grabs her arm. Jennifer struggles against her and looks at her. She is RACHEL ADAMS.

   RACHEL
   I know what haunts you!

   JENNIFER
   What? Let me go!

   RACHEL
   I know why it’s after you!

   JENNIFER
   I don’t know what you’re talking about now leave me alone.

She pulls herself free and walks away fast.

   RACHEL
   The black dog!

Jennifer stops.

   RACHEL
   I know why it’s tormenting you.

Jennifer turns around.

   JENNIFER
   Why?

   RICHARD
   (o.s.)
   Hey!

He walks up and grabs Jennifer. He looks at Rachel.

   RICHARD
   Leave her alone!

He leads Jennifer away.

   RICHARD
   Come on.

   RACHEL
   I know the truth!

(CONTINUED)
RICHARD
Shut up!

He leads Jennifer back to his car.

Some local nutter who runs a psychic shop nearby. Just ignore her.

They get into the car.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

Jennifer grabs her coat and puts it on. She moves for the door.

Jennifer <o.s.> Where are you going?

RICHARD
We've got plenty of food here in the house.

It's not our house.

RICHARD
It is now.

JENNIFER
I need to get some food.

RICHARD
We've got plenty of food here in the house.

JENNIFER
It's not our house.

RICHARD
It is now.

JENNIFER
We didn't exactly get it the right way did we?

Richard glares at her.

CONTINUED: She turns to see Richard sitting in a chair watching her.
RICHARD
I don’t know what you’re talking about.

Jennifer turns away and leaves. Richard watches her as she goes.

INT. STREET - DAY

Jennifer walks down the street. She looks around at all the shops, looking for one in particular.

Rachel stands outside of one of them. Her store.

They make eye contact. Rachel walks back inside. Jennifer heads towards it.

INT. SHOP - DAY

Jennifer enters the dark shop. Several occult objects are hanging on the walls. One has a picture of a large, shaggy black dog.

Rachel stands in the corner next to a doorway.

    RACHEL
    Come in.

She walks through. Jennifer follows.

INT. ROOM - TIMELESS

Rachel turns on a lamp and lights the room. It’s a small room with a table in the middle. Two chairs are beside it.

    RACHEL
    Sit.

Jennifer sits down on the chair.

    JENNIFER
    I don’t usually do this. How much do I pay?

    RACHEL
    I’m not charging you.

She sits down opposite Jennifer.
RACHEL
I know it’s been...visiting you.

JENNIFER
How do you know?

RACHEL
Call it an unwelcome gift.

JENNIFER
Why is it coming after me? Why me?

RACHEL
You’re not going to like this.

JENNIFER
Just tell me.

Rachel straightens up.

RACHEL
Okay. Black dogs are a death omen.

JENNIFER
What?

RACHEL
In all the lore surrounding them everyone who comes into contact with one of them dies soon after. No one else sees it, only the victim.

JENNIFER
No...

RACHEL
I’m sorry but that’s the truth.

JENNIFER
Why me? Why is it coming after me?! Why does it want to kill me?!

RACHEL
Well here’s the thing. They don’t just go after anyone. They go after people who are responsible for death...

JENNIFER
What?

(CONTINUED)
RACHEL
Yeah. Call it an act of karma if you will. They appear to those about to die, and then they appear to those responsible.

JENNIFER
No...

RACHEL
What did you do Jennifer?

JENNIFER
No...

RACHEL
Who did you kill?

JENNIFER
No!

Suddenly Richard barges into the room.

RICHARD
I knew it! Come on!

He grabs Jennifer and leads her from the shop. Rachel gets up and walks after them.

RACHEL
You can’t escape this!

Richard turns on her.

RICHARD
You! You stay the hell from my sister!

He and Jennifer leave the shop.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jennifer sits in a chair. Richard sits opposite her. A fire is lit in the fireplace behind them.

RICHARD
What’s going on with you?

Jennifer looks at him.

(CONTINUED)
RICHARD
We finally have everything we’ve ever wanted, and you start babbling about black dogs.

JENNIFER
It’s after us.

RICHARD
No it’s not.

JENNIFER
It knows what we did!

RICHARD
Knows what?

JENNIFER
It knows what we did that night.

RICHARD
We did nothing.

He stands up and starts walking away.

JENNIFER
That’s not true!

RICHARD
Nothing was proved. If nothing was proved then nothing happened.

JENNIFER
It knows. It knows that we drugged his drink.

RICHARD
Oh for Christ’s sake!

JENNIFER
It knows that we caused him to crash!

RICHARD
Look!

He bears down on her.

RICHARD
I have waited too long to get to where I am now! And I will not let you fuck this up for me!

Jennifer sobs up at him.

(CONTINUED)
RICHARD
I’ll have you committed if I have to.

He walks away leaving her crying in the chair.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Richard walks into the kitchen. Hannah and John sit solemnly at the table. Richard looks away and stares at the wall.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jennifer walks along the hallway, still sobbing. She walks towards her room. Suddenly there is a growl behind her. She turns - and then runs terrified down the hall.

The dog chases after her, barking as it goes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer runs into the bedroom and slams the door shut behind her. She locks it. The dog starts banging against it from the other side.

Jennifer backs away into the centre of the room. She is near hysterics.

JENNIFER
What do you want from me!?

The dog growls again, and bangs on the door. It starts to give. Jennifer looks around terrified. She looks over - and sees the window.

She runs over to it and opens it. The door starts to break. She climbs out of the window and onto the ledge outside. The dog bangs on the door again.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Jennifer climbs out onto the ledge. She looks down and sees a three story drop to the bottom. She clings on tighter. She starts to edge along it.

Suddenly her foot slips and she falls screaming from the ledge.
INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom door bursts open - and Richard, Hannah and John run in.

    HANNAH
    Jen?!

They see the open window and run over to it.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

They lean out over the window. Hannah gasps in horror.

Jennifer lies dead on the ground.

    JOHN
    Oh god.

Hannah starts to cry as Richard looks down at Jennifer’s body.

INT. CEMETERY - DAY


Richard turns around.

Rachel watches him beside a bench. He sees her.

She stares at him.

He looks away and leaves.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Richard sits in front of the fire with a glass of whisky. He takes a sip of it and sighs.

A deep growl starts to drift through the room. Richard looks over at the direction of the noise, fear on his face.

The dog barks.

FADE OUT.