

The Pond
by
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FADE IN:

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

LANDSCAPERS cut back overgrown hedges, prune trees, and edge walkways, turning back years of neglect.

A CONTRACTOR laden with a worn duffel bag passes a covered swimming pool on his way to a large pond in the back, tree-shaded corner of the yard.

He drops his load and wipes his brow, contemplating the dark, murky water choked by vines and algae and bordered by slime-covered stonework.

With heavy clippers, he snips at vines and roots, revealing small, rounded stones fixed between larger ones, each with a vague shape etched into it.

With a handful of vines freed, he pulls, trawling them out of the water. They snag, and he strains harder.

The vines release suddenly and he stumbles as something white rises out of the water, entangled in the vines.

A cat skull grins at him.

He startles in fright, then chuckles at his foolishness. He heaves again, extracting more of the tangled vines...and three more cats in various stages of decay. One so fresh it may have been drowned that morning.

Unsettled, the Contractor drops the vines.

LATER

Water from a power washer blasts away ages of grit and slime, restoring the stonework to a light gray. The jets strike one of the smaller stones, bringing the etchings into sharp detail.

Lines and geometric shapes form a rune of some sort.

The stone suddenly snaps and is hurled away by the pressurized water, disappearing into the pond.

The Contractor stops the water and stares guiltily at the now empty spot and then at the disturbed waters.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

JAY BENNETT (30s) admires the gleaming stainless steel appliances and granite countertops.

POLLY BENNETT (30s) slips her arms around him.

POLLY

Bet you can't wait to cook something in here.

JAY

Tomorrow, yeah.

POLLY

They did an amazing job in the yard. Go look while I finish up with the movers.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Jay walks along a neatly trimmed stone walkway leading to the pond, admiring the landscaping.

The stonework gleams warmly in the fading sunlight. The water, still dark and murky, is free of plants and algae.

He stands at the edge, delighted. Then he frowns and stoops to the missing stone, and runs his finger along the fresh break.

POV: Beneath the pond surface, looking up at Jay's silhouette as he stands and walks away.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

With the sun setting, Polly waves to the moving truck as it pulls away, the engine sound fading. She looks around as quiet returns to the tranquil neighborhood.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - BACKYARD - EVENING

Polly emerges from the house. No sign of Jay.

POLLY

Jay?

She sees wet footprints on the patio. Her eyes follow their path in the direction of the pond.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

Jay removes his shirt and sniffs it. Not a good idea. He's about to chuck it into the laundry basket but...

JAY

Hon? Where's our laundry basket?

No answer. He shrugs and drops it on the floor.

Drip. Drip-drip. Faint, but he hears it.

Following the sound, he goes to the window. Droplets splash against the outer frame. He puts his hand against the window to lean against it, trying to see where the water is coming from.

He gives up and turns from the window, removing his hand to reveal a smaller, wet handprint on the outside.

Polly breezes in, sees him without his shirt, and slinks over to put her hands on his muscular chest.

POLLY

Shall we christen our new home?

JAY

You know it.

POLLY

I'm going for a quick shower.

They kiss, brief but passionate.

CRACK! Startled, they look at the window. A spiderweb of cracks splinter from the handprint, obscuring it.

JAY

What the hell?

Jay looks out again, into the backyard for whomever might have caused the damage.

POLLY

You don't think someone threw a rock, do you?

JAY

Windows don't just break. Do they?

POLLY

We'll deal with it tomorrow.

She goes into the bathroom while Jay takes one more look outside, perturbed.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Polly stands under the running shower rinsing her hair. Soapy water cascades over her face.

The water suddenly goes cold and she shrieks.

POLLY

Fuck, that's cold! What--?

Eyes squeezed tight, she blindly fumbles for the temperature control. Steam builds and quickly fills the air around her. She tests the water and recoils.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

She reaches blindly for a towel. Her fingers near the white towel on the rack.

Drip-drip. Drip. Drip-drip.

She pulls the towel into the shower and wipes her face. Finally able to see, she shuts the water off and listens, but the drips have stopped.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jay lies on his side facing away from the bathroom. He reads a book in the light from his night stand.

Behind him, out of focus, a FIGURE settles on the bed and he smiles. An arm slides over his waist beneath the blanket and the smile turns to shock.

JAY

Jesus, you're freezing! And wet?
Come on, go dry off.

The arm slides back out and the weight lifts. The bathroom door opens and Polly steps out drying her hair.

POLLY

Did you say something?

He turns to her with a disbelieving look.

JAY

Really? Playing games with me?

POLLY
(confused)
What games?

She returns his hard look with a puzzled one. She leans on the bed to kiss him.

POLLY
Whatever I did, I...what the hell?

She lifts her hands, now dripping wet. Her entire side of the bed is damp.

POLLY
What the fuck, Jay?

JAY
Me? You're the one who decided to lay down there soaking wet.

POLLY
No, I didn't. Why would I??

They look at each other accusingly, both annoyed.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jay and Polly lay sleeping, the bedding changed, facing away from each other with a no man's land between them.

Drip. Drip-drip. Drip.

Water drips onto the floor, approaching the bed.

Droplets hit the blanket near Jay's feet. Near his knees. Onto the rise of his thighs. Onto his abdomen. His chest.

Water drips onto his hair. He stirs and shifts away from it, settling back into sleep.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - MORNING

The sun rises over the peaceful neighborhood.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - BACKYARD - MORNING

The sliding door opens and Polly emerges in a swimsuit carrying a towel. Her breath is visible in the chill air.

She sets the towel down and presses the button to draw back the pool cover, revealing the crystal clear water. A light fog forms over the warmer water.

Polly dives into the water, sending ripples across the surface. The ripples spread and rebound off the sides for long moments. No sign of Polly.

She breaks the surface at the other end with an expulsion of air. She wipes water from her eyes and flings herself onto her back and floats.

The water settles, disturbed only by her small movements. She closes her eyes and smiles with contentment.

She bobs as the water is suddenly disturbed. She opens here eyes and looks but sees nothing.

POLLY

You better not try to scare me,
Jay. I'm not in the mood.

The fog on the surface grows denser. She turns but still no sign of what caused the disturbance.

She swims for the ladder and is suddenly yanked under.

She struggles and kicks. She claws and splashes at the surface. She swims with all her might, desperate to reach air just inches above her.

The splashes grow feeble, and then cease.

She floats just beneath the surface, lifeless eyes open as the pool cover activates, plunging her into darkness.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Jay scrubs his body. The air cools enough to see his breath and he turns the temperature up.

Steam fills the shower, and arms slip around him from behind. He stiffens, then relaxes and smiles.

JAY

I'm still annoyed, you know.

A hand slides down his body and he closes his eyes. He takes a sharp inhale.

JAY

Warm your hands up first.

The hands turn him and lips meet with his own.

Outside the shower, Jay's form can be seen through foggy, water-streaked glass. Another form stands close to him, smaller, less substantial.

Inside the shower, Jay breaks the kiss and looks.

The eyes that meet his are dead and flecked with algae. The lips that kissed his are blue and cracked, baring yellow rotting teeth as they spread into a smile. Long black hair tangled with vines and matted with algae cling to flesh that hangs loosely from sunken cheeks.

Jay screams and recoils into the shower wall and his feet slip from under him.

His head strikes the faucet with a sickening sound and he lands in an awkward heap.

A steady ribbon of blood merges with the water and swirls into the drain.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Landscapers once again work in the yard, trimming and pruning months of growth.

The pond looks the same except for a thriving colony of algae building along its edges.

A MAN (30s) stands at the pond edge, peering into its depths as if listening.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Looking through the window at the man as a WOMAN (30s) walks up behind him.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

The Woman wraps her arms around the Man, breaking his reverie. He smiles and puts his arm around her.

Behind them, the bedroom window cracks.

FADE OUT.

THE END