

SCARY MOVIE

The film set was a poorly constructed cliché of every conventional Hollywood horror movie ever made. It was an Ed Wood fanatic's wet dream of shaky scenery and gross gothic décor. Sound stage 1 was dedicated to the main hall of a haunted house, complete with rickety staircase and cobwebs in the corners. Only the exclusion of rubber spiders hanging from the rafters gave it any sense of creditability. Stage 2 housed the standard grave yard set, complete with full moon that would never arouse a werewolf and Styrofoam headstones that were only painted on the front. It looked as if it had been detached from a fairground ghost train ride and had been damaged during the transportation. One of the graves was hollowed out so that an actor could be kept below; ready to pounce at the busty heroine on cue, grabbing at the ankle, an attack that somehow caused her to jump around enough for her breasts to slip out of her low corset.

Sandy looked around at the lacklustre sets and sighed. Four years in film school had led to this. His big break in Hollywood was to part of the production of a low, low budget run of the mill, teen horror that Universal had, in its infinite wisdom, miraculously decided to budget in an attempt to make a quick buck. It was supposed to be a throwback to the old black and white Universal monster movies of the '30s, a pitch that had been the sole reason for Sandy agreeing to the job. He was only a lighting assistant but he deserved better. He was good at his job and really should have come on board as chief lighting supervisor, given his impressive academic resume, but his age had led him to such a demotion.

Despite its obvious shoddiness, he couldn't help but feel weird at being the last one on set. It was only eight, but night was already in full swing and despite the quality of the props, the setting brought back childish fears of the old, classic horror movies that used to be filmed on these sound stages. The fake, almost yellow, full moon that hung overhead on the backdrop did nothing but incite hysterics if anything, but memories of the wolf man that howled at such a moon some seventy years ago, unsettled him. Of course now he could watch such films and be concerned more with examining the lighting rigs used rather than hiding behind his hands, but the kid in him stood as a reminder that not all fear is childish and unfounded. He continued clearing away the equipment, ironically aware that on a bigger budget film he would never be left alone to finish clearing up, but his situation was strangely reminiscent of the improbable situations that most horror movies revolved around.

He shook his head at his paranoia and carried on with his work, stoic in his attempts to dismiss any silly notions that were spurred on by his surroundings. They weren't even spooky, they were pathetic, they were poor, they were laughable. He tried to chuckle to himself to relieve some of the tension he could feel building, but only a dry sound came out. Ten minutes and he would be done for the day. He could go back to his shitty little Hollywood apartment that he shared with two other young hopefuls, both writers, both terrible. No doubt he would be bombarded on his arrival home with a full account of their combined creative day and be forced to listen to extracts of pure drivel that the two thought would make them the next Coen brothers. Even the next Farley brothers would be a stretch for them.

Behind him he heard an owl hoot and spun around to see. There was nothing there, no bird had suddenly flown in and perched upon the fake plastic trees. No sound effects would be left on the sound stage at this time either, meaning that all this

was a by-product of a tired, frustrated mind and a relentless imagination. There was a loud screech and he dropped the box he had been carrying, shattering the bulbs inside. “Shit!”

If he ever wanted to have anything left in his pay cheque at the end of this shoot, then he had to be more careful. The screech had been a bit on the loud side though; his imagination was really kicking into gear. Red faced, he bent down to open the box. He gasped at what he saw inside. Every god damn bulb was broken, amounting to a sum of money he didn’t even want to consider losing out of his wages. Even if he threw the box in the dumpster out back, he would still be held responsible for losing it. He could either be seen as being clumsy or irresponsible; he wasn’t sure what he preferred.

Carefully he picked up the rest of the stuff and headed outside to the truck. He only had to lock the stuff in the back, the driver was out having coffee somewhere and said that he would be back in an hour to pick it up and take it to storage. By coffee he meant beer and by an hour he meant at least two, but Sandy had no problem leaving the stuff locked up unattended for that long. As soon as the equipment was placed in that van, it was out of his hands and no longer his responsibility. He locked the back doors of the van and went round to the driver’s side to leave the keys under the seat where he said he would. He didn’t care anymore, this was so stupid but he couldn’t find it in himself to conjure up any amount of compassion for this project or its production. It was stupid and puerile and the worst kind of picture that could be released.

Despite his young age, Sandy was a stickler for the classics and saw most modern horror films as trash. They had no class like the older films and no guts, literally, like the contemporary horror flicks, they had no balls to go all out and be truly horrific, but nor were they scary. He threw the keys under the seat and slammed the door. Now all that was left was to deal with the box of broken bulbs. He made a quick decision to chuck it and claim ignorance to its whereabouts. If it was found, he could blame someone else on staff; swear that he had never seen it since lunch as the bulbs hadn’t been needed. He would get an ear full no doubt, but the one good thing about working for a low budget film was that the production couldn’t afford to fire anybody, mainly because they were all being so poorly made that no one else was foolish enough to take on the job.

He walked back onto the sound stage and instantly felt uncomfortable. It seemed darker in here since he had left and there was now a strange stench in the air that reminded him of lots of different things but nothing in particular. He ignored it and carried on with his task. As he reached the box he heard a noise behind him and spun round fast, surprised at his own instinctive bravery. He was unsurprisingly greeted with nothing. No monsters stumbling towards him, no wolf man looming in the background, silhouetted against the moonlight. No bats flying towards him morphing from rodent to man in a puff of smoke and dodgy special effects. Childhood fears belonged with his childhood, in the past.

He picked up the box but had to drop it immediately. It felt as if it was on fire, he could almost feel the flames licking up his arms, but the box looked normal. It wasn’t covered in fire, it wasn’t scorched, it was, normal. He almost left it there, almost walked away, headed back to his apartment and his annoying writer room mates but he didn’t. That would have been stupid. Almost as stupid as this damn movie. The box wasn’t on fire, it wasn’t even hot. He would pick it up, take it outside, throw it in the dumpster and then go home and probably lie down.

He bent down again to pick up the box and then definitely heard a noise this time, emanating from the graveyard set. More in anger than in valiance, he stormed over towards the set, determined to find out who, or what was behind all this. If he found out it was a member of the crew then he was determined that his fist would meet their face, although he knew that no such altercation would ever occur. He stood over by the grave stones and listened. He could hear a faint noise, a tapping. It was coming from the hollow grave. No doubt someone was finding it utterly hilarious to lie down in the whole and fuck with whoever was left here last at the end of the day. Sandy smiled a wicked smile that promised a whole lot of shouting and self righteous verbal attacks. He knelt down the side of the grave and pulled back the fake grass sheet that was covering it, hoping to do it fast enough to startle whoever was underneath.

What his eyes saw surprised him. It was beautiful, unlike anything he had ever seen. He could not help but gaze upon its majesty, trapped by its radiance. But there was something else. There was something lurking beneath that beautiful brilliance, something dark. He tried to get up but his body ignored him, tried to turn and crawl away but his body disobeyed. He was trapped now, looking at this thing, this thing that was all at once so incredible, so majestic and noble, yet so terrifying, so disturbing. The thing reached out to him, promising to caress him, to love him with its touch. Its brilliance threatened to melt his skin but it did not. He was transfixed, utterly engrossed. He felt no pain as his head leapt from his shoulders and the shower of blood that geishered from his neck drenched his body.

He was nothing but a special effect.

Word Count: 1717