

A PRESENCE

by
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Based on the short story "The Colour Out of Space"
by H.P. Lovecraft

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FADE IN:

EXT. OLD FARM - NIGHT

A cloudless night. The darkness is so encompassing the viewer can barely make out the decrepit farmstead that sits before a foreboding wood. Trees sway oddly. Unsettling ambience fills the soundtrack.

NICK GARDNER (28), blonde and classically handsome, stands in the field before the farm, swaying from side to side slightly as if in a trance. His eyes are barely open, but he appears to be staring at:

AN OLD WELL.

It doesn't seem to have been operable in years; its stones are crumbling, covered in vines.

Nick stares.

The ambience builds in volume, becoming more menacing. Nick stirs, walks up to the well, grips its sides and peers down.

NICK'S POV:

The inside of the well is nothing more than a black void.

Whispers can now be heard; some sound disturbingly inhuman.

CAMERA ZOOMS into the well, filling the screen with darkness.

CUT TO:

THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL.

Thick, almost black mud, squishes and bubbles. After a moment something is pushed up to the surface:

A STRANGE, MULTI-COLORED ORB.

The ambience and whispers build and build, now a near-deafening roar.

As the camera PUSHES IN on the ORB, we SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GARDNER HOUSE- MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick awakes with a cry, doused in sweat. His wife GAIL shoots up, startled.

GAIL
Honey? What's wrong?

Nick catches his breath.

NICK
Nothing. Just a nightmare.

Gail smiles, puts a hand on his chest.

GAIL
(sultry)
I can help you get back to sleep.

She kisses his neck.

NICK
Gail, the kids-

GAIL
I'll be quiet.

She kisses him, and they fall down onto the bed.

EXT. GARDNER HOUSE - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a classic American farmstead. The moon shines above.

TITLE: ARKHAM, MASSACHUSSETTS. AUGUST 1947.

CUT TO:

A BARE FOOT CREEPS ACROSS A FLOORBOARD.

INT. GARDNER HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick shambles across the creaky floor of his old farm house, his eyes closed.

He stops by a window and throws the curtains open.

Strange, barely audible WHISPERS can suddenly be heard, moments before:

A STREAK OF LIGHT whizzes across the starry horizon. A second later a BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT fills the window- Nick's eyes SHOOT OPEN!

There's a massive BOOM, that rocks the house and knocks Nick on his ass.

Then...

SILENCE.

Terrified, Nick moves his hand from his eyes and looks back up at the window. A cloud of dust swirls in the moonlight.

EXT. GARDNER HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick hurries his friend AMMI (25) through the gate to the farmstead. Ammi is noticeably tired and cranky.

AMMI

C'mon, Nick, it's the middle of the night-

He stops when he sees:

THE METEORITE.

Roughly three feet in diameter, it has embedded itself in a sizeable crater several meters from the front porch. It's dark brown in color, but the material seems somewhat bizarre- it's incandescent, as if it's pockmarked with millions of diamonds.

AMMI (CONT'D)

Well I'll be damned...

(beat)

What the hell is it?

TIM (10), Nick's son, who's leaning against the porch fence, perks up.

TIM

It's a meteorite. We read about them in school.

AMMI

That right?

NICK

(stern)

Tim, go inside.

TIM

But, pa-

NICK
Go inside and look after your
sister.

Tim sulks off towards the house. Through the living room Gail, clutching their daughter EMMA (5) to her bosom, watches with worried eyes. Nick casts a concerned glance her way, then turns to Ammi.

NICK (CONT'D)
Did you bring the hammer and
chisel?

AMMI
Yeah, but- gee, Nick, dontchya
think maybe you should, I dunno,
call the authorities?

NICK
I call the bulls and they'll take
this away from me. You have any
idea how much MIT will pay for
this? Harvard?

AMMI
I understand, but it could be
dangerous-

NICK
Did you bring the hammer or not?

Ammi sighs, produces a HAMMER & CHISEL, which he hands to Nick.

CUT TO:

Nick and Ammi crouch over the meteorite; Nick has the HAMMER & CHISEL at the ready. Ever so lightly he taps away at the space rock's bizarre surface. But instead of chipping, it seems to just crumble away like clay. Nick takes a handful and lets it sift through his fingers.

NICK (CONT'D)
(perplexed)
It's soft...

Noticing something, he brushes away crumbling dust, revealing:

A MULTI-COLORED ORB incased within the rock, the same from Nick's dream. Its surface appears to be constantly changing, a rotating palate of truly bizarre colors. Something about it is mesmerizing, and Nick finds himself prying the globule out of the rock. He brings it up close to his eye to inspect it.

AMMI
What in the hell is that?

NICK
I don't know...

He reaches out, and touches it.

A glimpse of something squirming and horrifying, like a writhing octopus tentacle, FLASHES briefly across the screen, accompanied by a piercing scream. Nick is taken aback.

NICK (CONT'D)
You should go home, Ammi. I can take it from here.

Ammi gives his friend a concerned look.

INT. GARDNER HOUSE- KITCHEN - DAY

Gail is busy preparing supper, peeling potatoes.

Nick enters the room, holding a covered bundle.

NICK
Honey, come look at this!

Gail frowns.

GAIL
Where have you been?

NICK
Nowhere. Just picking apples with Emma-

GAIL
That was an hour ago. I meant this morning. You didn't milk the cows, I had to make Tim do it. He was late for school.

NICK
I'm sorry, Gail, I was just... taking a walk. Look, thanks to that rock we're set for a month, there's nothing to worry-

GAIL
I know you took something from the meteorite.

NICK
Honey, what are you talking ab-

GAIL
You haven't been the same since.

Nick sets the bundle on the kitchen counter, takes Gail's hand.

NICK
I'm sorry, I've... I've just been having flashbacks to the war, you know? I just- I just want to forget about all that; I just want to be happy with you.

Gail is unconvinced.

NICK (CONT'D)
Here. This is what I wanted to show you.

He pulls the blanket off his bundle, revealing a BUSHEL OF APPLES. Only these apples are nearly twice the size of a normal apple.

GAIL
Oh my god-

NICK
I know. Biggest darn apples you've ever seen, right? Here. Have one.

He hands her one, takes one for himself.

NICK (CONT'D)
Gail... after everything that's happened, everything we've been through-

GAIL
That's all in the past now. I'm just glad you're home again.

NICK
I know, I know. But... maybe this rock was a blessing in disguise, you know?

GAIL
(smiles)
Maybe.

Nick smiles back. They bite into their APPLES- and immediately spit them out, coughing violently.

Gail looks at her husband with a horrified expression, BLOOD DRIPPING from her teeth and down her chin.

Nick spits blood onto the floor, and looks at the apple he just bit into-

IT'S BLEEDING.

He and Gail look at each other, horrified.

EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY

Nick and Tim stand side by side, covering their mouths with HANDKERCHIEFS. While we cannot see what they are staring at, we can tell it is revolting.

TIM
What the hell is that?

NICK
Language, son.

TIM
Sorry.

Nick leans in for a closer look.

NICK
Think it used to be a pig.

TIM
That? A pig?!

Nick reaches into the unseen corpse, and comes up with a hand of crumbly ash, much like the slab of meteorite he chiseled off earlier.

TIM (CONT'D)
What happened to them?

Nick ponders the question.

EXT. GARDNER HOUSE - DAY

Emma plays with a collection of dolls, near the farmstead's OLD WELL, humming a little tune to herself. The trees start to rustle and sway oddly, and the air is suddenly filled with whispers.

Emma grows uneasy.

VOICE
(whisper)
Emmmmmaaaa.....

Emma drops her doll and jumps to her feet. The trees around her start to sway even more dramatically, caught up in an unseen wind. Emma starts to back away as more whispers begin to emanate from the well, building to a terrifying crescendo.

VOICE (CONT'D)
(roar)
EMMA!!

Emma shrieks and runs into the house.

INT. GARDNER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Emma runs inside, screaming her head off. Within seconds Gail has entered from the kitchen, looking concerned.

GAIL
Emma! Emma, what is it, what's wrong?!

She cradles her in her arms.

EMMA
(terrified)
T-t-there's something in the w-well.

GAIL
Emma, I thought we talked about this. There's no such thing as-

BAM!!!

Something slams against the front door- Gail and Emma scream!

EMMA
See? It's trying to get in, mommy!

BAM!!!

The door is rocked by another impact. Gail's eyes dart around the room, looking for a route of escape.

GAIL
Get back, baby, get back-

She moves Emma away from the front door, which is stuck again, and against the far wall. The two crouch, trembling, staring at the door, but the presence seems to have gone.

After a beat more noises follow: clawing sounds, like something climbing up the house's outer wall. Then a CRASH, as an upstairs window is shattered.

Emma and Gail follow the noises with horrified stares.

There's a loud THUMP as something heavy crawls through the window and dumps its weight onto the attic floor. Emma and Gail tremble as the entity drags its wet and squishy bulk across the floor above them. There's a series of CLANGS as what sounds like chains are unraveled onto the floor. They grate against the hardwood as the unseen, wet creature drags them behind it.

THUMP.

THUMP.

THUMP.

It's climbing down the stairs- slowly but surely. As it nears, Gail buries Emma in her bosom, hiding her from whatever horror is approaching.

THUMP.

It's almost there, at the top of the main staircase, which leads into the living room.

Gail finally snaps:

GAIL (CONT'D)
(weeping)
What do you want from us?!!

Her plea dissolves into cries, but the entity seems to have vanished. No more thumps, no more noises- it's gone.

Gail weeps and holds Emma tight.

INT. GARDNER HOUSE - CHILDREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

An ashen Gail tucks a still-frightened Emma into bed. Tim is already asleep in an adjacent bed. Nick watches from the doorway.

EMMA
Are the monsters going to get me,
mommy?

GAIL
No, baby, of course not. Here.

She hands her one of her dolls.

GAIL (CONT'D)
Holly will keep you safe. And your
brother's right over there.

EMMA
Okay. Good night, mommy.

Gail kisses her on the forehead; a single tear runs down her
cheek.

GAIL
Good night, sweetie.
(beat)
I love you.

She gets up and meets Nick, casting him an angry glare. She
closes the door behind her, then:

GAIL (CONT'D)
This has to stop.

NICK
It was just noises, Gail. She's a
girl-

GAIL
I heard them too!! You know why
this is happening, *you know!!*

NICK
No, I-

GAIL
Ever since the meteorite hit the
land's been dying! We need to go,
we need to get out of here before
it gets us too!

Nick stares at her coldly.

NICK
No. This is our home.

He storms off. Gail breaks down and cries.

EXT. GARDNER HOUSE- PORCH - DAY

Nick rocks back and forth methodically in a rocking chair, staring at a bundle in his lap.

A CU shows it to be THE ORB, resting in cloth.

The faintest whisper is heard:

VOICE
(very quiet)
Niiiiicckkkk...

AMMI (O.S.)
Nick!!

Startled, Nick looks up to see Ammi running up to the porch. He quickly wraps up the ORB, and stows it in a WOODEN CASE, which he sets on a table beside the rocking chair.

Ammi runs up the porch steps and stops to catch his breath.

AMMI (CONT'D)
(panting)
I gotta talk to you.

NICK
What is it? I'm kinda busy.

Ammi looks around, confused- Nick clearly isn't busy.

AMMI
It's about the livestock. Same damn thing happened at my father's place.

NICK
That's a shame.

AMMI
Don't you get it? This is happening because of that thing, that stone you took.

NICK
I don't know what you're talking about.

AMMI
(frustrated)
Look around you! Your land is dying, can't you tell? Your crops, your animals- everything! You need to destroy it!

Nick looks up; the crazed glint in his eyes makes Ammi take a step back.

NICK

You ask me about that stone again,
and I'll kill you, Ammi.

Shocked, Ammi continues to back away, then hurries back up the path.

When he's out of sight, Nick opens his wooden case and takes one last glance at the ORB.

EXT. AMMI'S COTTAGE - DAY

A shaken Ammi returns home. His elderly father is asleep on a rocking chair on the porch. Seeing him makes Ammi smile ever so slightly, and he covers the old man with a blanket before heading inside.

INT. AMMI'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ammi steps into the kitchen and his eyes widen.

Standing in the middle of the room is Gail, her dress tattered, her face and body covered in blood and gore.

She stares at Ammi with bugshot eyes and laughs maniacally, like some kind of horrific witch.

Ammi looks away-

AMMI

PA, GET IN HERE!!

But when he looks back, Gail is gone.

SMASH CUT TO:

A LOG IS SPLIT IN TWO.

EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY

Nick methodically chops wood atop an old tree stump.

CHOP! A log splits, Nick replaces it. This goes on for a few seconds until he notices something on the stump. He peers in for a closer look-

The letter "D" has been carved into it, only it wasn't there a second ago.

Nick looks around the field, confused, and when he returns his gaze to the stump he gasps:

MORE LETTERS HAVE SUDDENLY APPEARED, CARVED INTO THE WOOD.

They spell two simple words: DO IT.

Nick winces as if overcome with a splitting migraine, and raises his hands to his throbbing forehead.

He opens his mouth to scream, but his cry is cut off as we CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

CU OF NICK'S EYES FLUTTERING OPEN.

INT. GARDNER HOUSE- DINING ROOM - LATER

Blood streaks and speckles Nick's face, and his confused expression as his vision comes into focus imply he has no idea where he is or how he got there.

He turns and comes face to face with:

GAIL'S BLOODY, LIFELESS FACE.

Nick gasps.

A WS reveals Nick to be lying in a pool of blood on the floor, surrounded by the butchered corpses of his three family members. His HATCHET, now drenched in blood, lies about a meter away.

Nick sits up, looks around him, and is so overwrought with grief that all he can do is moan.

NICK

Oh... god...

He tries to prop Gail's limp form up-

NICK (CONT'D)

Gail- Gail, baby? Oh- oh, no- no no
no-

Now hyperventilating, he moves to Emma, who's lying on her stomach, and turns her over- she too is stone cold dead.

Nick cradles his wife and daughter in his arms, and perhaps finally realizing what he's done, starts to weep and scream in earnest.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY

Paramedics wheel out the shrouded corpses of the Gardner family.

Ammi stands nearby, staring at the farm house, his face ashen and haggard. A pair of DETECTIVES stand beside him, scribbling notes.

DETECTIVE #1

We're really sorry to have to keep you here, Mr. Pierce. It must have been awful discovering the family.

DETECTIVE #2

We're hoping your testimony might help us better understand Mr. Gardner's motivation.

(beat)

Any idea what could have driven him to do such a thing?

Beat.

AMMI

The stone. He did it to protect the stone.

The detectives look at each other as if to say, "this guy's bonkers."

DETECTIVE #1

Er... what *stone*, Mr. Pierce?

Ammi points at the sky.

AMMI

It came from up there.

Detective #2 rolls his eyes- this is pointless. He puts a hand on Ammi's shoulder and starts directing him away from the crime scene.

DETECTIVE #2

I think that's enough for now, Mr. Pierce. You've had a rough day.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE #2 (CONT'D)
We'll call you if we have any
further questions-

Ammi stops dead in his tracks and grips the detective's arm.

AMMI
Just promise me you'll stay away
from the well.

DETECTIVE #2
Why?

AMMI
There's something down there.

The detective becomes slightly more intrigued.

DETECTIVE #2
What, exactly?

AMMI
A... a presence.

DETECTIVE #2
Have you seen anything?

AMMI
No. But I hear it.

Detective #2 nods, casts a worried glance at his partner,
then continues to lead Ammi away.

CAMERA PANS away from them and settles on a WS of the well.

CUT TO:

CAMERA SWOOPS INTO THE DARK VOID OF THE WELL, CUTTING TO
BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. BOTTOM OF WELL - CONTINUOUS

The thick black mud bubbles and boils much like it did in
Nick's dream. And just as it did in the dream:

THE ORB RISES FROM THE DEEP.

It rests magically on the surface, as whispers and groans
quickly fill the soundtrack, building to a cacophony that
ends abruptly as we CUT TO:

BLACK.

THE END.