

DARK PLACES

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EXT. BOARDED UP GAS STATION - NIGHT

A cat sits by a window as an old car parks by the pumps.

ELLE'S DAD, 30s, a mess of a man, gets out and paces by the car. YOUNG ELLE, 8, in pigtails, sleeps in the backseat.

A truck skids into the lot and two men step out.

Elle shifts in the back while her dad argues with the men. She wakes to a thud and looks to the window. Her father's face, sorrowful and soaked in liquid, smashes against it.

ELLE'S DAD

Shh...

A lighter clicks. Her father bursts into flames and screams.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - YEARS LATER

ELLE, 30s, bangs in her face, sets down an old photo of her and her dad. She reaches for a bottle of Valium and a bottle of wine on her table.

SERIES OF SHOTS - ELLE IMAGINES OVERDOSING

-- Elle pops the top off the Valiums,
-- pours a mouthful of pills,
-- chugs the wine,
-- and sees her dead body covered in vomit.

END SERIES

Elle pulls her hand back.

ELLE

Shit.

A notification sounds. She takes out her phone.

An unknown number texts: "Hi. Got your number from Cheryl. Wanna meet at The Tavern?"

Elle glances at the pills and replies: "Be there in five"

INT. THE ROOM - LATER

A love song plays as a man cradles Elle behind her neck and kisses her forehead.

He lets go and Elle's head slumps down. Her bangs cover her eyes and her mouth is duct-taped.

Elle sits, unconscious in an armless chair. Her wrists are taped behind the back and her ankles are taped together.

THE ABDUCTOR, 30s, cloaked and hooded, dances toward an open door, and stops.

THE ABDUCTOR
Don't miss me too much.

The music stops as he leaves and locks the door.

Elle wakes and sees a shelf with an empty jar labeled: "Elle" and another jar, with a pair of eyes floating in liquid, labeled: "Jackie"

Elle lolls her head to the side and her bangs fall away. Her right eye is blind and scarred in the shape of The Eye of Ra. She lifts her head and looks around in panic.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Damn. Poor girl.

ELLE (V.O.)
Who said that? What's going on?
Where am I?

JACKIE (V.O.)
Oh shit. Am I hearing you thinking?
Can you hear me?

Elle's Ra eye has a faint glow of light as she looks at Jackie. Elle shakes in disbelief, and panics.

ELLE
What? No. What?

JACKIE (V.O.)
Damn this is crazy. Just calm down,
baby girl. Just breathe.

ELLE (V.O.)
Oh my God, am I dead?

JACKIE (V.O.)
Nah. Well, I'm ninety nine percent
sure you ain't.

(MORE)

JACKIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm down to my eyeballs and still
ain't dead. I'm Jackie. And you?

Elle perks up.

ELLE (V.O.)
Oh, I know. I'm hallucinating. I've
been drugged.

She slumps in the chair.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Hallucinating, no. Drugged, yes.
Psycho Gandalf brought you here.

Elle's eyes tighten as she looks up at Jackie.

ELLE (V.O.)
What is -- how is -- I'm talking to
a jar of eyeballs.

JACKIE (V.O.)
I know, right. This is some crazy
shit. What's up with your eye? Are
you a witch or something?

ELLE (V.O.)
What? No. A cat scratched me
when... when I was little.

JACKIE (V.O.)
That must have been one hell of a
cat. Well, you want to get out of
that chair, whoever you are?

ELLE (V.O.)
I'm Elle.

Elle struggles, almost falls, and stops.

ELLE (V.O.)
I can't.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Elle, baby, take a deep breath.
Push down with your feet and wiggle
your shoulders up, left and right.

Elle wiggles up the back of the chair.

JACKIE
Good. Now, push off and stand up.

Elle pushes up out of the chair and stands.

ELLE (V.O.)
Hey, it worked.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Yes! Now point your toes out to stretch the tape. Squat down hard and you'll rip right through it.

Elle rips through the tape on her ankles.

ELLE (V.O.)
Wow. Thanks, Jackie!

JACKIE (V.O.)
You did it, girl. Now lean forward, make fists, and stretch the tape.

Elle's eye tighten with determination as she follows along.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Lift your arms up, keep your elbows to the sides, and smash down to force your arms in front of you.

She breaks her hands free and peels the tape off her mouth.

ELLE
Holy shit! Jackie, you're a badass!

JACKIE (V.O.)
I took self defense but it didn't help me much here. I have some hair pins you can pick the lock with. He put my body in that fridge.

Elle side-eyes the fridge.

ELLE
Your body?

The compressor clicks and hums. Elle swings back to Jackie.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Is your refrigerator running?
Sorry, couldn't help it. It's just a body in a fridge.

Elle inches toward the fridge and pulls the lid up. Fog pours out. Elle hops back, covers her nose, and looks at Jackie.

ELLE
It smells so --

Elle hears a thud from the fridge, shifts her gaze to it, and sees cold, dead fingers curl over the lip.

An eyeless corpse emerges, twisting its limbs with the pop of stiff joints, and faces Elle.

Elle stumbles back and whips her head toward Jackie.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Oh shit. That's not me. I mean it
is me but I'm not doing that.

Elle spins back to the corpse.

It peels its lips back with a raspy growl as a murky liquid drips down its jaw. The corpse lumbers toward Elle.

Elle trips on the chair and falls on her back.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Get up, girl, get up!

The corpse creeps toward Elle as she clambers back.

JACKIE (V.O.)
The chair, use the chair!

The corpse crawls on Elle, snapping its teeth. Elle holds it back as the murky liquid oozes onto her face.

Elle flails for the chair and slams it into the corpse. It falls by the shelf, knocking the chair across the room.

Elle turns to Jackie swimming around in the jar.

JACKIE (V.O.)
Elle. Strip the ends off the pins.
Make an L shaped loop with one and
put the loop in the bottom.

The corpse scrambles to get up.

ELLE
What are you --

JACKIE (V.O.)
-- Curve the end of the other,
slide it over the loop, and use the
leverage to pry the pins up.

The corpse claws at Elle's leg.

JACKIE (V.O.)
You got this.

Jackie slams into the jar. It topples off the shelf and shatters on the corpse. Jackie smacks onto the floor.

ELLE

No.

Elle snatches a shard of glass. Her hand bleeds as she jams the glass into the corpse over and over. Black blood spews out of the corpse and drenches her.

She slumps back and stares at Jackie's motionless eyes.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Elle, bloody hand taped, pries the lock with a click.

ELLE

Finally.

She opens the door, turns away, breaks a leg off the chair, and looks at Jackie.

ELLE (CONT'D)

A badass.

Elle strides through the door, chair leg in hand.

EXT. ILLUSION OF BOARDED UP GAS STATION - NIGHT

Elle's eyes widen as she sees her dad, in the distance, pacing around their old car. The chair leg falls from her hand and clacks on the ground.

Her dad turns to her.

ELLE'S DAD

Shh...

Elle's Dad bursts into flames and screams. Elle falls and curls up on the ground.

She closes her eyes.

ELLE

A badass, Elle. A badass.

She feels around for the leg and grabs it. She opens her eyes and her father stands in flames before her, screaming.

She swings the leg through him. He turns into wisps of smoke that separate and pull back together.

ELLE (CONT'D)
This isn't real.

The flames subside and her father becomes translucent.

ELLE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, dad. I love you.

Elle reaches out as her father vanishes in a wisp of smoke.

She sees a door superimposed on the faint gas station. Elle takes a deep breath and trudges onward. At the car, she sees Young Elle staring at her from the backseat.

ELLE (CONT'D)
You're gonna be okay.

Elle walks on to the door. The illusion vanishes in smoke as she opens the door and steps through.

INT. ABDUCTOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elle appears by a wall, confused. She tucks her bangs back.

The Abductor, hooded, pores over an ancient manuscript at an old desk. The somber glow of a single candle illuminates the room. Flickering shadows dance against the light.

THE ABDUCTOR
Astonishing. How did --
(turns to Elle)
-- The Eye. Unfathomable!

He bolts up, knocking his chair down, and hisses.

Elle throws her chair leg at him and dashes toward him.

He reaches for the book as the leg strikes him. He reaches again but Elle charges into him, knocking him back.

The Abductor looks down and raises his arms up at his sides.

THE ABDUCTOR (CONT'D)
(Ancient Egyptian)
Kekewey sheni.

Tendrils of shadow reach out from the walls. Pitch black bathes the room and closes in around Elle.

Bright light from her eye surrounds her. The light blasts out, shatters the dark, and slams The Abductor into a corner.

THE ABDUCTOR (CONT'D)
Fascinating.

The Abductor stands and waves his arms in a pattern.

THE ABDUCTOR (CONT'D)
A'nen seba en kheti.

The corner twists unnaturally. The Abductor bows to Elle with a flourish and a toothy smile across his shadowed face.

THE ABDUCTOR (CONT'D)
Then he parted, but without sorrow,
for he knew he would see her again.

The Abductor vanishes as the room straightens.

ELLE
What the fuck?

Elle turns to the book with ancient text and surreal images.

ELLE (CONT'D)
Soul transference? Demonic
invocation?

Jackie's eyes hop onto Elle's shoulder.

JACKIE (V.O.)
You can read that?

ELLE
Jackie! Oh my god, you're alive!

JACKIE (V.O.)
That's one way to look at it. Let's
get the hell out of here. We should
probably take that with us.

Elle grabs the book and walks outside.

EXT. OUTSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

A purple sky shimmers over a landscape speckled with silhouettes. A mass of distant hills lay across the skyline.

The hills slither forward.

Elle and Jackie look at each other and shudder.

THE END