

MASTERS OF HORROR

Episode #12 - "Haeckel's Tale"

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"HAECKEL'S TALE"

FADE IN:

1 EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT - 1885 1

It is a ramshackle, broken-down little HOUSE, almost completely overrun by VINES and BRUSH, practically to the point where it's completely hidden. The GRASS is unruly, the blistered WOOD not whitewashed in decades.

In the FRONT YARD just outside the house lie THREE splintered, weathered WOODEN GRAVE MARKERS. The GRAVES beneath them seem RAW and FRESH, despite the age of the MARKERS.

It is the Late Nineteenth Century in Connecticut, and a warm FIRE flickers behind the WINDOW.

Under the heavy-clouded SKY, a WELL-DRESSED MAN in his late thirties, EDWARD RALSTON, arrives on horseback. He looks completely out of place in this neighborhood.

He checks the address on the SLIP of PAPER in his HAND, then, taking a last look at these strange old GRAVES, dismounts and heads up the path to the DOOR. He RAPS gently.

No answer, so, almost timidly, he raps again.

An OLD WOMAN'S VOICE calls out from within.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
Enter if you must! Just cease that
damnable tapping!

Ralston hesitates at the sound of her voice, then takes the KNOB in hand and opens the door.

2 INT. OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT 2

Ralston ENTERS, we find an OLD WOMAN, MIZ CARNATION, sitting in front of a meager FIRE, sipping something HOT and ALCOHOLIC, her face withered into a perpetual, wrinkled APPLE-DOLL FROWN.

MIZ CARNATION
You knock like a woodpecker, and it
just hammers right through my
brain. You knock like a man, with
a big "boom, boom, boom" and I'm
fine.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIZ CARNATION (cont'd)
But with that little birdy "tippy
tappy tippy tappy", it's like to
make my eyes pop out of my head.
Come in and sit down by the fire,
where I can see you. My eyes are
not so sharp anymore.

Ralston comes around to stand in front of her. He is TALL
and HANDSOME, obviously well-to-do... and DISTRAUGHT. His
EYES are RIMMED with TEARS.

RALSTON
Mrs. Carnation?

She SPITS into a SPITTOON at her side.

MIZ CARNATION
Depends on who asks.

She SQUINTS and EYES him appraisingly as Ralston shuffles
uncomfortably.

RALSTON
My name is Edward Ralston.

MIZ CARNATION
A handsome man.

RALSTON
You are Mrs. Carnation, the
necromancer?

Miz Carnation stares up at him through cloudy eyes. She
FINGERS a fine, very distinctive, filigreed LOCKET in her
gnarled old HANDS.

MIZ CARNATION
Been many long years since anybody
called me that.

RALSTON
But you are she?

MIZ CARNATION
Well, let us say I once was she.

RALSTON
Madam, I desperately need your
help.

MIZ CARNATION
I cannot help the likes of so
prosperous a gentleman as you.

RALSTON

But I was told that you could raise the dead.

MIZ CARNATION

Well, you was told wrongly.

RALSTON

You cannot raise the dead?

MIZ CARNATION

I *will* not raise the dead. Not even for so comely a gentleman as yourself.

Ralston is quaking with desperation, unable to hold back his tears.

RALSTON

Madam, I have just come from the funeral of my beloved wife, Samantha. A lovelier, more vibrant woman you could never hope to meet.

MIZ CARNATION

I am sure your missus was all you say she was and more. But let her go with God and lie in peace.

RALSTON

There is no peace in her death!

MIZ CARNATION

Believe me, young gentleman, you surely would not like the alternative.

RALSTON

But you hold the power to bring her back to me! I am a man of means; I shall pay you whatever you require! A hundred dollars! Five hundred dollars!

The old woman seems to consider it for a moment... or is she just studying him?

MIZ CARNATION

What good is five hundred dollars to an old woman like myself?

(MORE)

MIZ CARNATION (cont'd)

Take your five hundred dollars to some far-off place and make a new life for yourself. Grieve and make amends and start all over again. Find love again. It will happen, I promise.

RALSTON

I shall never, ever love again. I shall always love my Samantha.

MIZ CARNATION

Then celebrate her memory. I cannot help you.

RALSTON

You are able to help me, and yet you refuse?

MIZ CARNATION

It is for your own good. And my own. I'm all used up.

RALSTON

And why not? Why will you not help assuage my grief? Why will you not bring back the woman I love to me?

MIZ CARNATION

Have you heard the story of young Ernst Haeckel?

RALSTON

What has he to do with this?

MIZ CARNATION

Oh, young sir, he has *everything* to do with this. Mayhaps you could call it a cautionary tale. If I tell you my story and you still wish your beloved Samantha brought back from the dead, then I shall gladly grant you your wish...

RALSTON

(excited)

Do you mean that?

MIZ CARNATION

If your love is so great, then yes, I will bring your wife back to you.

RALSTON

No love is greater, I swear to you!

MIZ CARNATION

We shall see, we shall see. Now.
Sit with your back to the fire, and
I shall tell you my tale. You are
a tall man, and it hurts my poor
old neck to look up at you.

Ralston hesitantly takes a seat opposite her.

MIZ CARNATION

Rum?

(Ralston shakes his head)

Ernst Haeckel was a medical student
in Massachusetts. A cocky young
boy. He thought he knew it all.
'Course, that's what education is
all about, is it not?

She looks at him through CLOUDED EYES.

RALSTON

Do go on.

She takes a deep breath, as the CAMERA drifts past them
toward the reaching FLAMES of the FIREPLACE.

MIZ CARNATION

Oh, this was long ago...fifty years
or more. A naive age. Not so filled
with answers as today...

And as the CAMERA is devoured by FIRE, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

3 INT. MEDICAL LABORATORY - DAY - 1832

3

It is not vast: a simple hall in an 1832 New England medical
university. This is the elite class, sparsely attended by
the sharpest minds and highest level of medical student.

We LOOK DOWN through a HIGH SKYLIGHT on the class below.

The small LAB is far simpler and more primitive than any of
the Frankenstein movies. However, it hearkens back to them.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR HAUSER, a 60-ish, bitter lemon of a professor, his eyes magnified by owlsh GLASSES, stands behind a CADAVER, splayed out in all its bloodless glory before the class, who have moved in for a close look.

DR. HAUSER

Here he is: *man*, laid out in his final inglorious chapter. Devoid of a soul, all we have left is flesh, a machine without power, a mere husk, an empty vessel. Only God, in his wisdom, may grant life, and take it away. So you, my young charges, are the instruments of God's will. The sanctity of life is in your hands. It is up to you to serve Him well.

A 21-year-old student, darkly handsome with a fierce spark of intelligence flaring in his eyes, stands apart. He is ERNST HAECKEL.

HAECKEL

What has God to do with Man?

All eyes turn toward Haeckel; there is more than one GASP.

DR. HAUSER

Ah, our young heathen. Why don't you tell me and the rest of the class, Mr. Haeckel?

HAECKEL

Man and woman procreate to create life. Accident or disease or old age take it away. Your God has nothing to do with it.

DR. HAUSER

He is *our* God, Mr. Haeckel, not my own. And He has everything to do with it. The creation of life is divine. There is no man without God.

HAECKEL

I am a man without God, Dr. Hauser.

DR. HAUSER

You may think so, but you are wrong. There is no life without God.

HAECKEL

I take it you are unfamiliar with the recent experiments in Germany which have proven otherwise.

DR. HAUSER

I am well aware of the tales of Victor Frankenstein, Mr. Haeckel. They are balderdash at best. Fairy tales and wishful thinking. Scripture tells us: "the Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away". God gives us life, and once He has taken it away, it is gone for good. The light of life is extinguished in the body, leaving the sheath to decompose.

HAECKEL

And you believe that there is no life after death.

DR. HAUSER

I believe in an *afterlife*, but not in the re-animation of a human corpse.

HAECKEL

Then what on earth do you celebrate every Easter Sunday?

DR. HAUSER

That is an entirely different matter, young man. God may resurrect; man may not.

HAECKEL

And I believe that you are wrong, sir.

DR. HAUSER

What you believe is of no consequence to me, my young free-thinker. Tell it to our good friend, Mr. Willoughby, here.

He motions to the gutted CORPSE on the table before him, and the class LAUGHS.

HAECKEL

Well, I can *prove* it, Professor.

DR. HAUSER

Oh, I've no doubt that you can
inseminate, Mr. Haeckel. But it is
God that grants the spark of life.

HAECKEL

No, Professor, I mean I can give
life to the dead!

The class looks at one another, then at the professor,
waiting for his reaction. Hauser merely SMILES, amused.

DR. HAUSER

I should like to see that.

HAECKEL

I imagine you should.

TIME CUT TO:

4 SAME PLACE - THE LAB FLOOR - NIGHT

4

A thunderous, classical LIGHTNING STORM booms outside, the
occasional FLASH of LIGHT illuminating the room from the
WINDOWS ABOVE.

The class and Dr. Hauser have gathered around, and Haeckel
WHEELS IN a GURNEY with a sheet-covered BODY on it. Hauser
chooses to stand at the back and watch Haeckel make a fool of
himself.

Haeckel proudly YANKS the SHEET off of the CORPSE: an
attractive young FEMALE, pale and naked in the moonlight. He
fastens ELECTRODES to her TEMPLES, checks dials and switches
and all kinds of very scientific-looking (for 1832) details.

HAECKEL

This unfortunate young lady died of
consumption over a week ago.

DR. HAUSER

How did you acquire her body?

HAECKEL

Does it really matter?

DR. HAUSER

It matters a great deal, young man.

(CONTINUED)

HAECKEL

And where does the University
acquire its cadavers?

DR. HAUSER

(staring him down)

From accredited legal sources.

Haeckel just SNORTS, turning from him. Hauser narrows his eyes.

DR. HAUSER

Your father is a wise and pious
man, Mr. Haeckel. Surely he does
not approve of this blasphemy.

Haeckel turns to Hauser, and his eyes spark with an anger
that overrides an obvious pain.

HAECKEL

You know nothing of my father! My
father approves of the truth!

He turns from the professor and regains his focus and
dignity. Mention of his father has thrown him.

Outside the windows, the storm rages, as in a Frankenstein
movie. Thick, woven ELECTRICAL CABLES run from the windows
to the LAB EQUIPMENT, and then to the DEAD WOMAN'S TEMPLES.
LIGHTNING strikes, and the ELECTRICITY surges the length of
the CABLES in dangerous pulses.

Haeckel moves to the corpse, focussing on the building
excitement here.

HAECKEL

I have been following the notes of
the German scientist quite
specifically, and have been able to
harness the electrical power of the
lightning. My challenge has been
to channel that power through these
copper ropes and into the body, and
thereby ignite the spark of life.
This girl shall live again.

He fusses with his dials and controls as ELECTRICITY CRACKLES
through the room... and the young woman's BODY. Her HAIR,
charged with STATIC ELECTRICITY, RISES from her HEAD.

HAECKEL

(filled with excitement)

Now... *watch!*

Haeckel THROWS a MASTER SWITCH, and giant electrical currents rush through her body.

The CORPSE starts to JERK and TWITCH like a frog on a skillet, and the excitement in the room is building, the awe-filled faces caught in the constant FLASHES of LIGHTNING.

Suddenly the young woman's eyes pop wide open and for a brief moment it appears as if Haeckel's experiment is a success.

Then, in a sudden surge, the young woman's BODY is caught in a giant electrical BURST, and IGNITES into flames!

The ELECTRICAL POWER dies, throwing the room into SHADOWS, lit only by candlelight, the LIGHTNING through the windows, and the FLAMES enveloping the corpse.

Haeckel frantically puts out the fire with a blanket, but when it is out, all that is left on the gurney is the hideously charred remains.

The room is thick with the DARK SMOKE of her burned body.

It is Dr. Hauser who breaks the silence:

DR. HAUSER

Well, it appears divinity is still
a ways off for you, is it not, Mr.
Haeckel?

The crowd of students break into laughter, and Haeckel smolders...

TIME DISSOLVE
TO:

HAECKEL is alone in the lab. He gently places the charred remains of the young woman into the open FURNACE built into the wall of the lab.

HAECKEL

(to the corpse)

I am so sorry...

There is a light TAP on the door, and Haeckel looks up from the BODY in the furnace.

The door opens to reveal CHESTER FLANNIGAN, a seedy gent who is covered in rain that has soaked through his OVERCOAT. Chester is middle-aged, with the CHERRY NOSE of a brandy drinker, lathered with a week's beard. He pulls a WOODEN CART into the lab behind him.

HAECKEL

Oh, hello, Chester.

CHESTER

Good evening sir. And how fares
your father?...the elder Dr.
Haeckel? I'm hoping his condition
is improved.

Haeckel's face DARKENS. His voice cracks with emotion.

HAECKEL

He's not well, Chester. Not well at all.

CHESTER

Well. You give him my best wishes and salutations for me, will you?

Chester sees the still-smoldering remains in the furnace.

CHESTER

Oh, my. Is that--?

Haeckel nods.

CHESTER

Still dead, hey Mr. Ernst?

Haeckel just glares at him.

CHESTER

You're lucky I'm here. Got some good beef with me tonight.

He pulls the TARPAULIN off of his CART to reveal the recently exhumed CORPSE within: a middle-aged MAN, streaked with the dirt of his GRAVE.

CHESTER

Pneumonia. Just last night. And a real bargain at ten dollars.

HAECKEL

Not tonight, Chester.

CHESTER

Money's tight, is it, Mr. Ernst?

HAECKEL

Always. Ten dollars or a hundred-- even a *thousand*. I've failed. The key to life after death is still beyond my reach.

The new corpse lies in Chester's cart, staring at Haeckel, almost accusingly.

CHESTER

Well, chin up, sir. You're a young man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHESTER (cont'd)

You'll surely figure out the
mysteries of life and death before
you have shuffled off this mortal
coil, right?

HAECKEL

I am in no mood for sarcasm,
Chester.

CHESTER

(sarcastic)
Sarcastic? Me?

HAECKEL

Yes, Chester. You.

CHESTER

Well, if it's life after death you
seek, should you not speak with the
necromancer?

HAECKEL

I place no faith in magic and the
supernatural. I believe in science
not fairy stories.

CHESTER

Well, Mr. Haeckel, I am a simple,
uneducated man. Science and magic
seem one of a kind to me. I saw
Montesquino the necromancer down to
the park of a weekend, and his
magic seemed pretty scientific to
me, young sir. He made the dead
rise. But as I said, I'm not so
sophisticated as you... but I think
that we should be careful when we
talk about necromancers.

HAECKEL

Why should we be careful of a
little English prick who preys on
our women? Good lord, he's
practically stealing from their
purses! Claiming he can raise the
dead!

CHESTER

And how do you know he cannot? Why
you and not he?

HAECKEL

Science, Chester, not balderdash!

CHESTER

I believe the evidence of my eyes,
young master, and I saw what I take
to be proof that such crafts as
this Montesquino professes are
real. I should not dismiss it out
of hand. Mayhaps you should see
for yourself.

CUT TO:

A small CROWD has gathered under hand-painted BANNERS
surrounding an enclosed WOODEN WAGON. They proclaim "The
Great Montesquino, Necromancer".

FERDINAND MONTESQUINO is a middle-aged, corpulent gent in a
frayed TOP HAT and long MOUSTACHE. His SUIT was once fine,
but now is too tight, and stretched at the seams.

Young Ernst Haeckel wends his way through the small crowd as
Montesquino waxes theatrical, his British accent mellifluous
and flowery.

MONTESQUINO

What is the line between life and
death, between darkness and light,
between existence and infinity? I
am here to tell you that the dead
can live again! I possess that
mystical secret, held until now
only by the sacred shaman of
Zanzibar. It came to me at great
cost, and it is not a power I use
lightly. With power comes great
responsibility. Each life I grant
takes a year off of my own. But
because of the sacred trust I hold,
it is well worth it.

He looks around the tiny audience, his eyes rimmed with last
night's debauchery. His gaze falls upon the doubting face of
Haeckel.

MONTESQUINO

I sense disbelief among you.

He grins, his eyes not leaving Haeckel, revealing a horribly
aligned, snagged set of teeth.

(CONTINUED)

He leans right down in Haeckel's face, the stench of his breath practically knocking him unconscious.

MONTESQUINO

You, sir. I expect an educated young man like you would require proof of such a proclamation.

HAECKEL

I would, indeed, sir.

MONTESQUINO

And what would convince you of my powers?

HAECKEL

Not this sideshow, *Professor* Montesquino.

MONTESQUINO

I ask again. What proof would you require that I tell the truth?

HAECKEL

Nothing less than to see the dead revived before my own eyes.

MONTESQUINO

And so you shall have it, young man!

He moves to the back of the little PLATFORM and drags a WICKER BOX to the front of the little makeshift stage.

The people in the crowd crane their necks to see what's inside. With a grand flourish, Montesquino reaches down to the lid of the box.

MONTESQUINO

Behold... *DEATH!*

He PULLS the top off the box and leans it forward to reveal a DEAD DOG within, obviously road kill, horribly mangled by the wheels of a CART or WAGON. The thing's a mess.

The crowd GASPS and takes a step back. All except for Haeckel, who has seen more than his share of death up close.

MONTESQUINO

(to Haeckel)

The miserable cur is dead, is it not?

HAECKEL
(with a smile)
Quite dead, sir.

MONTESQUINO
Just so.

His hands gesture theatrically in florid and arcane movements.

MONTESQUINO
(chanting)
*Vobiscum botanicum; terra firma
romanticum. Magicus validus;
animus activus, funero exsanguinis.
Miraculum spectaculum!*

A HUSH falls over the paltry crowd, and the silence that ensues is long and expectant.

Nothing happens.

The crowd moves in a little closer, and Haeckel SMILES, enjoying the old fraud's act.

And then, the wicker basket suddenly JERKS!

The crowd pulls back, except for Haeckel. Then it JERKS AGAIN!

MONTESQUINO
Behold: *LIFE AFTER DEATH!*

The wicker box SHIVERS and SHAKES, and then, from within it comes a low, MOURNFUL HOWL. It grows in intensity: hideous, agonizing.

CRIES from the crowd: "Kill it!" "Put it out of its misery!" "Poor beast!" Etc.

The unbelieving Haeckel gets right up close to the basket.

As he starts to REACH for the LID, *it suddenly JOLTS OPEN, and the RE-ANIMATED DEAD DOG within LURCHES OUT, and SNAPS at him with BLOODY, FROTHING TEETH, just missing getting hold of his HAND!*

Haeckel LEAPS BACK as Montesquino KICKS the undead beast and FIRES A BULLET into its brain.

The DEAD DOG flops back into the wicker basket, and Montesquino drops the lid into place. The basket, this time, remains STILL.

As Haeckel quakes from his close call, Montesquino leans down and grabs him by his shoulders, bringing him face to fearsome face.

MONTESQUINO

Do you believe your own eyes, young man?

This close, the necromancer's EYES are BLEARY and BLOODSHOT, his stubble mottled with grey, and his BREATH muscular. Haeckel cannot answer him.

MONTESQUINO

(to the crowd)

To resurrect a simple beast is not so taxing as to bring back a human being, a man with a *soul*. Compared to that, this is merely a parlor trick. Man is far more complex.

HAECKEL

So you're saying a dog doesn't have a soul?

MONTESQUINO

I am, young sir.

FARON and RACHEL MAYBERRY, a young couple of obviously meager means, approach the front of Montesquino's platform, timid and vulnerable.

FARON

Professor Montesquino...

MONTESQUINO

My good man...

FARON

My wife and I... we... we lost our little girl to diptheria in the summer. She was but three years old. And we... and we wondered if you could... if you might...

MONTESQUINO

You want me to bring her back.

FARON

We don't have much money, but...

MONTESQUINO

Do you have a hundred dollars?

FARON

Oh, no, sir, nowhere near...

MONTESQUINO

How much do you think a year of my life is worth?

FARON

We wouldn't know, sir.

MONTESQUINO

I should say it's worth more than a hundred dollars. Could you *get* a hundred dollars?

RACHEL

Not in a million years, sir. But we were hoping that as a good Christian you might find it in the goodness of your heart...

MONTESQUINO

I'm sorry. Find one hundred dollars, and I can bring your little girl back to you. I am not a charity.

(turning to the crowd)

Now, then; who else would like to have their late, bereaved loved ones back in their arms again?

The crowd looks at one another. Montesquino looks at Haeckel.

MONTESQUINO

What about *you*, young man?

Haeckel, for once, is speechless.

CUT TO:

A CAMPFIRE is burning as Montesquino cooks a GAME FOWL for his supper when Haeckel approaches.

(CONTINUED)

HAECKEL

Montesquino...

MONTESQUINO

(looking up)

Ah, the young Doubting Thomas. A good evening to you.

HAECKEL

And to you.

MONTESQUINO

As delighted as I am to see you, I am having my supper. Perhaps you could return in the morning.

HAECKEL

My name is Ernst Haeckel. I am a medical student at the University, and I wish to inquire of your ways.

MONTESQUINO

Ah, a man of science. Well, perhaps a *boy* of science.

He LAUGHS. That doesn't sit well with the already defensive Haeckel.

MONTESQUINO

I am absolutely thrilled to meet you, Mr. Haeckel. However, I am not here to instruct you. My knowledge came over many years of intense instruction, at great risk to my own life and limb.

HAECKEL

I am willing to take risks.

He pulls a BOTTLE of WHISKEY out of a SACK and hands it to Montesquino.

MONTESQUINO

Are you, indeed?

(taking the bottle)

The costs are greater than a bottle of whiskey. I know you do not believe in my ways. You think necromancy is twaddle, a sideshow for the gullible.

HAECKEL

Is it not?

Montesquino just smiles and shakes his head.

HAECKEL

The dog: an excellent trick.

Montesquino just raises his eyebrows.

HAECKEL

You threw your voice, did you not?
And the movements of the dead
dog... some sort of puppetry, I'd
wager.

MONTESQUINO

You would, would you?

HAECKEL

Well, surely necromancy cannot be
real.

MONTESQUINO

I see. If you say it cannot, then
surely it cannot. Who could argue
with the likes of such a brilliant,
educated young man as yourself?

HAECKEL

So you do not even argue with me?

MONTESQUINO

I do not. I am tired, and wish to
sleep. Sweet dreams, young man,
and thanks for the bottle.

He kicks dirt over the fire, and retires into the WAGON, and
Haeckel leaves in frustration.

As Professor Hauser drones on and works from the dissected
CADAVER in front of him, Haeckel remains at the back of the
room. He's not paying any attention to the lecture; he pores
over the NOTES and ILLUSTRATIONS in his NOTEBOOK.

There are complicated DIAGRAMS and crude DRAWINGS both
anatomical and electrical.

He is startled from his studies when a HAND gently falls on his SHOULDER. He jumps a mile, but it's just a YOUNG WOMAN from the office; she hands him a LETTER sealed in wax.

YOUNG WOMAN
(whispering)
Mr. Haeckel...

HAECKEL
(recovering)
What is it?

YOUNG WOMAN
I...I am told it concerns your
father.

He takes the ENVELOPE from her, and stares at it nervously, as the young woman stands by for a reply.

HAECKEL
Thank you.

The young woman EXITS, and Haeckel stares at the LETTER, as his hands start to shake. It is news he's been dreading. Finally, he UNSEALS it and READS.

THE LETTER (accompanied by the VOICE of DR. HARTWELL): "My dearest Master Haeckel: your father's illness has taken a turn for the worse. His malaise has turned much more serious, and the prognosis is not optimistic. He may only have a matter of days remaining. He wishes to see you before he passes. Signed, Dr. Alfred Hartwell."

Haeckel's EYES start to fill with TEARS. He CRUMPLES the letter and EXITS the lecture hall, as all eyes turn to watch him go.

DR. HAUSER
Mr. Haeckel?

But he is already gone.

CUT TO:

Ernst Haeckel makes his way through the verdant countryside, carrying a CARPET DUFFEL of his belongings over his shoulder. CLOUDS roil ominously overhead.

A horse-drawn FARM WAGON passes him, and the FARMER on-board eyes him with suspicion as he passes.

9 CONTINUED: (2)

9

The farmer's DOG BARKS ferociously at Haeckel, and the farmer makes no move to shut him up.

Haeckel walks to and past us; he has a long way to go.

DISSOLVE TO:

10 EXT. ANOTHER COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

10

The sun is setting, and the DRIZZLE of RAIN is soaking through Haeckel's COAT. It's a miserable journey.

There is a DRY SPOT up ahead, under the vast TREE that overhangs the road. Haeckel makes his way to the shelter of the tree, and sits on the soft MOSS beneath it.

Dark shadows of worry and sleeplessness are under his eyes as he stares out at the long road before him.

He opens his DUFFEL and takes out a large LOAF of BREAD. He TEARS OFF a HUNK, and takes a big bite. Delicious.

But there is a strange SMELL: Haeckel looks around to see where it is coming from. Seeing nothing, he digs back in, famished.

Just as he is about to take another bite, something DARK and WET drips onto it, right before it enters his mouth.

DRIP. And another. DRIP.

A BREEZE has kicked up, and Haeckel looks up above him.

ANGLE - HAECKEL'S P.O.V.

A BODY is HANGING by the NECK from a stout branch above him, dripping castoff FLUIDS. A hand-scrawled BOARD hangs from his neck: "PEDERAST".

ANGLE - OVER THE BODY, LOOKING DOWN ON HAECKEL

Haeckel stares up in horror at the HANGED CRIMINAL leaking on him from overhead.

The ROPE and BRANCH GROAN in the breeze.

RESUME HAECKEL'S POV (THIS SHOT IS OPTIONAL)

As a LARGE DRIP falls in SLOW MOTION and hits him in the eye.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

He leaps to his feet and casts the chunk of bread to the ground. Not the best place to set up camp, after all.

Pulling his coat up over his head, Haeckel sets back out on the road.

11 MONTAGE (2ND UNIT):

11

Three angles of Haeckel's journey on foot: A COUNTRY ROAD, A GREEN HILLSIDE, A RICKETY FOOTBRIDGE. He is all alone, Man vs. Nature.

12 EXT. ANOTHER COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

12

It is RAINING, and Haeckel is miserable.

He comes to a ROCK WALL against the GRAVEL ROAD, and sits to rest on the soft grass against it. He looks even worse than before. He is SNIFFLING and in a foul temper.

There is a protective natural OVERHANG that provides a dry area for him to rest.

It is dead silent as he unrolls a BLANKET from his DUFFEL. He collects STICKS and BRANCHES, and proceeds to BUILD a FIRE.

He sits on the blanket and takes out a HUNK of the hard BREAD. He starts to eat it, starving.

A DADDY LONG-LEGS SPIDER starts to crawl on his arm, and he stares at it. He lets it crawl the length of his arm and onto his hand, watching it, bemused, as it crawls into his palm.

HAECKEL

Life...

(crushing it in his hand)

... and death.

He opens his hand and stares at the crumpled remains of the creature.

(CONTINUED)

HAECKEL

And one day, I shall be able to
bring you back...

He takes a long PULL from the BLADDER filled with WATER, then
corks it and gathers MOSS for a pillow.

The STORM is getting worse, and LIGHTNING is FLASHING.

As he puts his MOSS into place, some of the ROCKS from the
WALL give way and TUMBLE to the ground, revealing:

A small BAT'S SKELETON, falling onto his new pillow!

Haeckel backs away, into:

An OLD MAN, standing right behind him!

HAECKEL

Jesus!

WOLFRAM

My deepest apologies, young sir. I
did not mean to cause you fright.

HAECKEL

(calming down)

You startled me...

The old man, WALTER WOLFRAM, is stubbled and shabby. One EYE
is clouded with CATARACT, but his TEETH are clean and even.
WOODEN FALSIES, we might guess. An enormous UMBRELLA keeps
the rain from dumping on him.

WOLFRAM

It would not be wise for you to
sleep here tonight.

HAECKEL

I am tired, and I am not going to
move an inch. This is an open
road. I have every right to sleep
here if I wish to.

WOLFRAM

Of course you do. I did not say
the right was not yours. I simply
said it was not wise.

HAECKEL

I'm sorry. I'm cold and I'm tired
and I'm hungry. I meant no insult.

WOLFRAM

None taken. I am Walter Wolfram.
A pleasure to make your
acquaintance.

He reaches out his hand, and Haeckel clasps it.

HAECKEL

My name is Ernst Haeckel. I'm on
my way to Windsor. My father is...
(choking on it)
... quite ill.

WOLFRAM

Please, come with me; I live
nearby. I can offer you a warm, dry
bed, a proper fire, some hot potato
soup.

Haeckel can't believe his good fortune.

HAECKEL

An offer I shan't decline. Many
thanks to you, sir.

Haeckel rolls up the blanket and stuffs it into his rucksack
with his other belongings as Wolfram watches him with an
inscrutable face.

Haeckel looks up to see the man staring at him, and Wolfram
looks away. As he finishes packing up:

HAECKEL

Why do you think it unwise for me
to sleep in this place?

Wolfram gives him a deep, sorrowful, heart-breaking look.

WOLFRAM

You are a young man, and no doubt
you do not fear the workings of the
world. But please believe me when
I tell you there are nights when it
is good not to sleep next to a
place where the dead are laid.

HAECKEL

The dead?

WOLFRAM

Aye. Their home. The necropolis.

12 CONTINUED: (3)

12

He motions to a view over the stone wall to reveal, in a FLASH of blinding LIGHTNING:

Laid out before them is a CEMETERY, filled with cockeyed stone GRAVE MARKERS, twined with VINES. It's the essence of every creepy GRAVEYARD from the classic HORROR MOVIES.

HAECKEL

I am a medical student. I do not
fear the dead.

His expression says otherwise.

The RAIN slows to a halt and the SKY begins to CLEAR, revealing a MOON that illuminates the shining, wet GRAVEYARD in all its glory.

WOLFRAM

Then I suppose you are a lucky man.
Come.

13 WIDE ANGLE - CEMETERY

13

The old codger leads Haeckel out across the Necropolis in the silvery MOONLIGHT, their BODIES and the GRAVESTONES casting LONG SHADOWS. The MOON frowns down on them from behind the parting CLOUDS.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. WOLFRAM'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

14

The little FARMHOUSE is nestled in GREENERY, sparkling from the RAIN that has just passed. The moon's BLUE LIGHT makes it particularly magical.

The WINDOWS are WARM with FIRELIGHT as Wolfram leads Haeckel to the door, leaving the GRAVEYARD far behind them.

WOLFRAM

It is not much, but it is warm and
dry.

And he opens the door to their sanctuary.

15 INT. WOLFRAM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

15

A warm FIRE is burning in the hearth, with a large KETTLE of SOUP over it as they ENTER.

(CONTINUED)

But most inviting of all is the BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN who greets them: she is ELISE WOLFRAM, 22 years old, and astonishingly, voluptuously beautiful. Chestnut hair, full of figure, lush and desirable.

WOLFRAM

Elise, this is Ernst Haeckel.
He'll be staying with us tonight.
Mr. Haeckel, this is my wife,
Elise.

Haeckel is stunned, first by her beauty, second by her matrimonial status. He can't help but to STARE at her. He GLANCES over to Walter, but the old man doesn't seem to notice the immediate attraction... *infatuation*.

Haeckel extends his HAND, and when their hands meet, the sensation is ELECTRICAL.

HAECKEL

A great pleasure to meet you.

Elise merely nods silently and sweetly.

WOLFRAM

Elise, get young Mr. Haeckel some soup and wine. He has been out in the cruelty of the elements for several days.

Haeckel can't take his eyes off of her as she bends over the KETTLE to serve up his soup and reaches into the cabinet to fetch him wine.

Walter seems not to pay attention. He keeps glancing at the CLOCK on the MANTEL-- and the simple PAINTING of a HANDSOME YOUNG MAN next to it-- then out the window into the dark, blue NIGHT.

TIME CUT TO:

They all sit at the heavy wooden TABLE behind BOWLS of SOUP and GLASSES of WINE. Haeckel has already finished his first bowl, and is digging into his second.

WOLFRAM

Young Mr. Haeckel is on his way to Windsor. His father is ill, maybe dying.

Haeckel CHOKES on his SOUP.

ELISE

I'm sorry.

HAECKEL

I hope not dying.

WOLFRAM

My apologies. Of course. I misunderstood. The young man is a student at the university.

ELISE

What do you study?

HAECKEL

Medicine. I'm studying to be a physician.

ELISE

To save your father's life?

She seems simple... something a little off-kilter about her.

HAECKEL

Yes, yes, I hope so. Among others.

Wolfram sees Haeckel's attraction to his wife, but it doesn't seem to matter much to him.

WOLFRAM

Mr. Haeckel needs more wine, Elise.

Elise doesn't look at her husband.

ELISE

Of course.

Wolfram watches Haeckel watch his wife. Haeckel turns to see that he is being observed.

WOLFRAM

She's lovely, isn't she?

HAECKEL

She's a charming woman.

WOLFRAM

Oh, she's much more than that, and it will not inflame me for you to say so.

(MORE)

WOLFRAM (cont'd)

I know what you are thinking. How do I, an old man with a small farm on the edge of a graveyard in the middle of nowhere, deserve this lovely young lady as a wife?

HAECKEL

I thought nothing of the sort.

WOLFRAM

Liar.

Wolfram glances up again at the CLOCK on the MANTEL. It is close to 11 p.m.

HAECKEL

Sir, I--

WOLFRAM

A white lie. I do not take offense. Let me just say this: the ways of love are mysterious.

His speech is heavy with irony. But we don't know what his point is.

He looks up to see Elise standing at the WINDOW, staring out longingly into the night... for *what*? There seem to be TEARS in her eyes.

She looks again to the MANTEL: at the CLOCK or at the PAINTING?

Wolfram takes another sip of his WINE, and Haeckel follows suit.

WOLFRAM

Are you a married man, Mr. Haeckel?

HAECKEL

No, sir. I am quite unattached.

WOLFRAM

Are you in love?

HAECKEL

(getting uncomfortable)
Not at present, no.

WOLFRAM

Have you ever been in love?

HAECKEL

I have not had the pleasure. Or
the time.

Wolfram smiles without humor, and takes another long drink of his wine.

WOLFRAM

Elise! The young man has no time for love.

Elise turns from the window; something beyond is gnawing at her.

ELISE

Yes?

She is even more lovely in the glowing LIGHT of the FIRE.

WOLFRAM

Bring us more wine. And join us.

Elsie, clearly distracted, obeys her husband.

HAECKEL

I believe I've had enough wine.

WOLFRAM

Nonsense. It is no substitute for love, but it will warm you on a cold, wet night, right, Elise?

She returns to the TABLE and refills their WINEGLASSES.

ELISE

You have never known love?

Haeckel is embarrassed. He's in the throes of love right now.

HAECKEL

Only fleetingly, I'm afraid.

WOLFRAM

Better fleetingly than not at all, eh?

Strangely, he's staring at Elise as he speaks. She casts her secretive, melancholy EYES away. Haeckel, unable to take his eyes off of her, takes another long drink from his wine.

He's getting heavy-lidded with fatigue.

WOLFRAM

Mr. Haeckel is a fine-looking young man, is he not, Elise?

Elise looks at Ernst, as if for the first time. Then looks at Wolfram, trying to figure out what he's getting at.

ELISE

Yes, a very handsome man.

WOLFRAM

And well-read. The most eligible of bachelors. A shame. Surely you've experienced *physical* love, have you not, Mr. Haeckel?

Elise glares at her husband as Haeckel twists in awkward discomfort.

HAECKEL

I am sorry, sir, but your question breaches propriety.

WOLFRAM

I apologize if my simple conversation has made you uncomfortable. Let us just blame it on the wine, shall we?

Embarrassed, Elise rises from the table and collects the bowls and glasses. She takes them to the sink, then stops and stands at the window, her hands against the glass, staring again out into the night.

HAECKEL

I feel very tired. I should like to go to bed, if you don't mind.

WOLFRAM

Of course not. Elise, make up the bed for Mr. Haeckel.

She pulls herself from the window, and leads Haeckel to an adjoining room.

17 INT. SPARE ROOM AT THE WOLFRAM HOUSE - NIGHT

17

THUNDER rumbles distantly, as RAIN patters on the roof. Distant LIGHTNING flickers soft light through the window. You can see into the LIVING ROOM from here.

Elise leads Haeckel into the room, and makes up the bedclothes. Haeckel stands right behind her, and when she finishes and stands up, they are almost touching.

(CONTINUED)

They face one another, their faces heated by the glow of the FIREPLACE in the corner. Their proximity is charged with silent sexuality.

ELISE

I hope you will be comfortable here.

HAECKEL

I am sure I will be, thank you.

There is a long, uncomfortable BEAT. She is about to leave.

HAECKEL

Certainly better than out under an old oak tree in the rain.

He attempts a smile. She doesn't. But she doesn't leave, either, at least for a moment.

Then, she turns to look outside, and Haeckel takes her hand.

HAECKEL

What are you looking for?

She just shakes her head and looks away.

Her hand still in his, Haeckel's VOICE drops to a whisper.

HAECKEL

You are a lovely woman, Elise.

ELISE

I-- I must go now.

He releases her HAND, and she turns and goes back out into the living room, as Haeckel watches her from behind the partly-closed door.

She has set his heart to fluttering.

He turns away, and begins to UNDRRESS, taking off his muddy BOOTS and WET SOCKS.

He pulls his SHIRT over his head, and when he turns back, he sees Elise on the far side of the room, in front of the window... staring out at God knows what.

He can see the FLUSH of COLOR in her face. There is a light SHEEN of perspiration on her face and chest, as she lightly runs her hand down over her stomach and feels the cleft between her legs.

17 CONTINUED: (2)

17

Fascinated and excited and confused by the sight, Haeckel cannot tear his eyes away. And then... Elise TURNS, and their EYES LOCK. She seems in a TRANCE. Then:

Suddenly aware of what she is doing, she turns to peer once again out the window.

Entranced by her, Haeckel watches her, hoping she'll turn back to him, but it's a futile hope.

Soon, he gives in to exhaustion, and settles back on the bed to SLEEP.

FADE TO BLACK

CUT TO:

18 INT. BEDROOM - LATER

18

The FIRE in the FIREPLACE is down to EMBERS, and the room is DARK. There is a low, THUMPING SOUND, awakening Haeckel. His HEAD is thick with wine and sleep, his eyes bleary, barely conscious.

He looks up through the door, which is ajar, into the living room.

ANGLE - HAECKEL'S P.O.V.

The view is bleary, blurry, unstable. On the far side of the room, Walter opens the door to a SILHOUETTED STRANGER in a DARK CLOAK. There is WHISPERED CONVERSATION that cannot be heard, and what seems to be an exchange of money.

There's something really creepy about him. And FAMILIAR...

Walter closes the door, and the house is quiet again.

RESUME HAECKEL

Haeckel, barely conscious, goes back to sleep, and we:

FADE TO BLACK.

SLOW FADE IN:

19 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

19

RESUME HAECKEL

He's sound asleep again. But there is another sound: a low, mewling ANIMAL sound. A CRY.

It wakes Haeckel, and sends a chill up his spine.

20 INTERCUT: HAECKEL'S ROOM AND HAECKEL'S P.O.V. OF LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 20

He looks up through the cracked-open DOOR to see Elise standing in front of the MANTEL, staring out the WINDOW. Her HANDS rest on the FRAMED PORTRAIT of the HANDSOME MAN.

Soon it becomes apparent that the SOUND is a CRYING BABY... but not the *normal* sound of a baby's cries; they are oddly twisted, inhuman. There is something profoundly haunting about the sound.

Walter calls out to Elise in a harsh whisper.

WOLFRAM

Elise! Pull yourself away from the window and see to the baby!

(she doesn't answer)

Elise! The baby!

She gives some sort of guttural REPLY. Something about her has changed: her HAIR is WILD, her SKIN flushed and mottled, her TEETH pulled back in a grimace, her VOICE barely human.

Her HAND is RUBBING at the place between her legs, and she is in a FEVER... as if an inmate in a madhouse.

ELISE

(rough, hoarse)

It has been a full year! I cannot wait any longer!

WOLFRAM

Patience. He has the money; everything is being taken care of. Now go and look after the child.

She leaves the frame, and the sounds of the child's cries subside.

(CONTINUED)

Haeckel doesn't dare make a sound; he avoids all attention.

He catches another glimpse of Elise and the back of the head of the CHILD in her arms. The sight of the child NURSING at her bountiful BREAST raises Haeckel's temperature, and turns her appearance from fearsome to erotic.

Haeckel's BREATH is heated.

Then she is out of sight again, and we HEAR the contented mewling of the nursing baby.

WOLFRAM

Make sure he's had enough before
you put him down. I don't want him
waking and crying for you when you
are gone.

It is QUIET again within the little house, but all Haeckel (and we) can see is Wolfram watching his wife and baby off-camera.

In the distance, the mournful CRY of a DOG: much like the agonized howling of the revived animal at Montesquino's sideshow. It filters through the night sky like a knife through the heart.

As Haeckel watches, Elise comes from the baby's room, empty-handed, and goes to the door. Walter steps into her way. She shoves him aside, and they WHISPER to one another, seeming to ARGUE.

They cast LOOKS back to the room where Haeckel is "sleeping", and he CLOSES his EYES to feign sleep.

Soon enough, Elise LEAVES the house, shutting the door quietly in her wake.

Walter watches her go through the WINDOW, with a long and mournful stare. We can see his deep, impossible, mournful love for her in his rheumy eyes.

Then he goes and sits in his chair before the fire, with a bottle. He takes a long drink, staring into the fire, then pours another, downing it noisily.

He begins to MUTTER to himself, the mutterings soon becoming TEARFUL. It's not long before he is SOBBING to himself.

21 INCLUDE LIVING ROOM

21

Haeckel cannot bear this any longer. He gently rises from his bed, and approaches the old man.

HAECKEL

Mr. Wolfram. What is going on here?

WOLFRAM

(though his tears)
Oh, my friend! I could not begin to explain. This is a night of unutterable sadness.

HAECKEL

Would you prefer that I left you to your tears?

He starts to walk toward the FRONT DOOR-- and Elise-- and Walter suddenly GRABS his WRIST.

WOLFRAM

No! I do not want you to go out after her now.

An awkward moment as the old man holds Haeckel there by the wrist, staring into his eyes. Finally, with a sigh, he drops Haeckel's hand and turns his gaze into the fire again.

HAECKEL

The man who came to the door...

Wolfram looks up at him, his eyes wide... with *fear*?

HAECKEL

Who is he?

WOLFRAM

His name is Montesquino. *Doctor* Montesquino. He is an Englishman of my acquaintance.

HAECKEL

(gently prodding)
And a friend of your wife's.

Wolfram's expression turns steely.

WOLFRAM

No. It is not what you surmise.
(taking another drink)
You are supposing they are lovers.
But they are not. Elise has not
the slightest interest in the
company of Doctor Montesquino,
believe me. Nor indeed in any
visitor to this house.

HAECKEL

Sir, if you mean--

Walter waves away his protestations.

WOLFRAM

Do not concern yourself. I took no
offense at the looks you gave my
wife. How could you not? She is a
beautiful woman, and I should be
surprised if a young man such as
yourself did *not* try to seduce her.
At least in the heart. But let me
tell you, my friend...

(eyes filling with tears
again)

You could never satisfy her.

(mostly to himself)

Neither, of course, could I. When
I married her, I was already too
old to be a husband to her in the
truest sense.

HAECKEL

But you have a baby.

The HOWLING of the DOG drifts through the night again, and
Walter takes another long look out the window.

WOLFRAM

The boy isn't mine.

HAECKEL

So... you are raising this infant,
even though he is not your own?

WOLFRAM

Yes.

HAECKEL

And where is the child's father?

WOLFRAM

I am afraid he is dead. She was pregnant when we met, and I offered to raise the baby as if it were my very own.

Beat.

HAECKEL

Then you are a very noble man.

Wolfram tosses him a contradictory look.

WOLFRAM

I am guilty of many things, but never have I been accused of nobility.

He sinks under the weight of self-loathing, moving closer to the fire as if to burn out the sins we don't know of.

WOLFRAM

(miserable)

She so loved her husband.

(looking up at Haeckel)

Still does, to this day...No other man could ever fulfill her.

HAECKEL

(shifting gears)

I have met this Doctor Montesquino. He claims to be a necromancer. He claims to be able to raise the dead. The man is a charlatan.

WOLFRAM

The esteemed Doctor Montesquino deals in a science which I do not profess to understand. But the man is not a charlatan.

HAECKEL

(getting animated)

Have you paid this necromancer so that Elise could speak to the dead man who fathered her baby?

Wolfram just shakes his head; there is no way Haeckel could understand. He stares miserably out the window.

HAECKEL
That's it, is it not?
(getting angry)
(MORE)

HAECKEL (cont'd)

And now, Montesquino is going to play some miserable trick on poor Elise to make her believe she is talking to a spirit!

WOLFRAM

It is *not* a trick. Would that it were. What the man does is real, I'm afraid to say. Which is why you should stay here until it's over and done with. It is nothing you need ever--

Their conversation is interrupted by a CRY. Elise's SOB carries through the still night. Then another, and another.

HAECKEL

Listen to her!

WOLFRAM

Better not.

HAECKEL

She is in pain! What is the old fraud doing to that poor woman? I am going after her.

He heads to the DOOR, and Wolfram tries to stop him. Haeckel pulls the door open and heads outside.

WOLFRAM

(to himself)

She still loves him...

Haeckel comes charging out of the house into the night, the landscape covered with the twinkling remains of the rain shower that passed over in the moonlight. A CURTAIN of CLOUD has parted to grant the MOON a look.

Walter comes out after him, and grabs his arm.

WOLFRAM

Come back into the house! For pity's sake, leave this alone and *come back into the house!*

We can hear Elise's SHRIEKS now, reaching across the landscape from the CEMETERY in the distance.

HAECKEL

No! Someone has to help her!
Listen to her cries!

He yanks out of Wolfram's GRIP and heads down the path,
leaving Wolfram in his wake.

Walter goes back into the house, and emerges with a MUSKET in
his hands. Haeckel STARTS, afraid he's going to use it on
him, but Wolfram hands him the musket.

WOLFRAM

Take it!

HAECKEL

(pushing it away)
I do not intend to kill anybody! I
just want to get Elise out of this
damn Englishman's hands.

WOLFRAM

She won't come, believe me. Please
take the musket! You're a good
fellow, I don't want any harm to
come to you.

Haeckel turns from him, ignoring him, and marches up the path
toward the GRAVEYARD.

Walter comes behind him, wheezing, trying to keep up with the
young medical student.

Haeckel imagines himself the knight in shining armor, out to
rescue the fair damsel in distress. So why is Walter trying
to talk him out of it?

Walter can barely speak as he tries to keep up, talking
between deep breaths.

WOLFRAM

Listen to me, Haeckel. Elise...
she has a sickness... She had it
when I met her... What did I know?
I loved her... I sold... *everything*
I had to grant her this... I wanted
her to be.... happy...

Another CRY rends the night.

HAECKEL

Well, she doesn't sound very happy right now.

WOLFRAM

It's not what you think...

HAECKEL

And what do I think, old man?

WOLFRAM

Well, it is and it isn't. Oh, God, please come back to the house!

HAECKEL

I said no! I will not have her molested by that man!

WOLFRAM

You don't understand.

HAECKEL

I don't *want* to!

Walter is practically in tears.

WOLFRAM

We couldn't begin to please her. *Neither* of us...

HAECKEL

(whirling on him)

So you hire Montesquino to service her? *Jesus*, man!

He shoves Wolfram hard in the chest, and the old man tumbles to the wet path, grabbing at Haeckel's LEGS, and PULLING himself up, rising with MUDDY HANDS and SKINNED KNEES.

WOLFRAM

Stop, I beg of you! Stay away from the Necropolis!

There is a break in the cries, and the night goes silent as Haeckel strikes back out on the PATH, with Wolfram straggling behind him.

HAECKEL

Bastard! What kind of husband are you to her?

A new SOUNDS joins the symphony: the damned, mournful HOWL of the DOG again. It sounds in complete agony.

Haeckel follows the path over the gentle rise of the slope. The NECROPOLIS is still out of sight, blocked by TREES and a STONE WALL, and the CURVE of the PATH up the HILL.

The agonized HOWL of the DOG is closer now, close enough to stop Haeckel in his tracks. Wolfram is right behind him.

Something is emerging from the dripping SHADOWS of the TREES that line the path. It is making its way, slowly emerging into the moonlight, WHIMPERING.

WOLFRAM

I beg you cease, Mr. Haeckel. You are stepping into a netherworld you should never enter.

Haeckel ignores him, and slowly steps toward the silhouette slowly emerging from the shadows.

The damned thing whines and yowls in deep agony, dragging itself into the MOONLIGHT.

Haeckel, and Wolfram behind him, step closer.

It is a DOG, and a familiar one at that. It is lying on the ground, pulling itself forward with its FRONT LEGS.

There is a HOLE in its CROWN, and brownish black BLOOD covers half its face. Howling weakly in pain, it continues to pull itself toward Haeckel, its glassy EYES on the young man.

HAECKEL

Good lord... I know this pitiful cur!

He bends down before it, as it drags itself along the path, its hindquarters still hidden by the shadows. Its FUR is MATTED with DIRT and MUD and DRIED BLACK BLOOD.

HAECKEL

Poor beast!

WOLFRAM

I'm begging you to stay away!

As he crouches before the WOUNDED DOG, the pitiful CREATURE pulls itself all the way out into the moonlight, revealing:

HALF of its BODY is MISSING!

The poor dog's BODY ends halfway down its BACK; its SPINAL COLUMN is trailing behind in the MUD. The BEAST is ROTTING, seemingly long DEAD.

It LASHES OUT at Haeckel, SNAPPING at him with frothing, gnashing JAWS. The thing is pitifully ineffectual, but trying as hard as it can to attack.

Hard to do without the back half of its body, though.

The ZOMBIE HALF-DOG snaps and flails at Haeckel, who is horrified and disgusted by the thing. It is easy to avoid its attack, however.

Haeckel picks up a large, mossy ROCK, and SMASHES the UNDEAD DOG'S SKULL in.

HAECKEL

Put the damned beast out of its misery.

After moments of stillness, it SQUIRMS to "life" again, trying to PULL itself out from under the rock that has crushed its skull and pinned it to the ground.

Haeckel picks up the rock, and bashes the flattened SKULL again and again and again, as the beast bellows one mournful, painful CRY after another.

The thing WEAKENS with every blow, even seems to DIE each time, but keeps coming back.

HAECKEL

(fevered, perspiring)
Die, damn you!

WOLFRAM

It is already dead, Haeckel. You cannot kill it again.

HAECKEL

That's impossible!

WOLFRAM

No. The filthy beast is dead.

HAECKEL

But the poor thing suffers so!

WOLFRAM

I tell you, there is nothing you can do!

The dog's broken, misshapen HEAD tries to BARK and HOWL, but without its VOCAL CORDS, it just comes out in a WHISPERING HUFF.

The wrecked beast keeps trying to pull itself along with its withered FRONT LEGS. The bony PAWS just dig little TRENCHES in the muddy path.

Walter GRABS him by his SHIRT FRONT, his face manic, his eyes crazed.

WOLFRAM

Do you see now? You have no idea
the horrors that await you here!

HAECKEL

All the more reason to go to your
wife!

WOLFRAM

All the more reason to stay away!

And then... ELISE'S CRIES begin again, closer than ever.

HAECKEL

What kind of man are you? You
actually *paid* this Montesquino to
bring back your wife's first
husband from the dead, you damned
fool!

He leaves the crushed RE-ANIMATED DOG to WHEEZE and SCRATCH
in the dirt as he makes his way up the HILL to the GRAVEYARD.

24 EXT. CEMETERY GATES - NIGHT

24

The IRON GATES are OLD and RUSTED, and the STONE WALLS are ANCIENT and falling apart. WINDS wind around the GATES and the WALLS, sprouting lush, rotting BLOSSOMS that play in counterpoint to the otherwise HORRIFIC TABLEAU.

The MOON is fully revealed by the CURTAIN of DARK CLOUDS. The GROUNDS are WET and SHINING. Lush OAKS surround the necropolis, guarding it from view.

Mounted on the IRON GATES is a SKELETON, chained there to keep away unwanted visitors as a SCARECROW would keep away the birds. The rotting remains of its clothing hang from the bones in rags.

The skeleton stares down at Haeckel with black, empty EYE SOCKETS and a frozen GRIN.

Haeckel reaches for the GATE, only to find that it is LOCKED and CHAINED. He turns to Wolfram.

HAECKEL
Give me the musket.

He grabs the GUN from Walter, and smashes it open with the gun butt.

The WINDS start to kick up as Haeckel struggles to pull the GATE OPEN. It fights him with a long, ragged SQUEAL as it OPENS.

The WIND BUILDS as Haeckel dramatically ENTERS the GRAVEYARD. Walter stays behind, right outside the GATE.

Haeckel looks back.

HAECKEL
Are you not coming?

WOLFRAM
I dare not tread upon consecrated ground. I dare not enter the place where Montesquino performs his dark magic.

HAECKEL
So be it.

Haeckel takes a tight grip on Walter's musket and makes his way into the dark, shadowy CEMETERY.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

Wolfram watches helplessly from the gate for a few beats, his EYES welling with TEARS. He buries his head in his hands, his shoulders quaking with SOBS.

Then, we see something that neither one witnesses:

The SKELETON slowly TURNS its SKULL and WATCHES Haeckel go...

25 EXT. CEMETERY - WITH HAECKEL - NIGHT

25

It's a meager GRAVEYARD: no massive tombs or towering stones, merely coarsely carved HEADSTONES and WOODEN CROSSES.

Haeckel makes his way through them toward the SOUNDS of some sort of RITUAL... and the VOICE of ELISE...

In the distance we hear a HOOTING OWL and CROAKING FROGS.

Haeckel rushes through, then TRIPS and FALLS into an OPEN GRAVE.

ANGLE - IN OPEN GRAVE

Haeckel breaks his fall. Beneath him in the OPEN WOUND of the ground is an old, BROKEN WOOD COFFIN, broken open from the inside, with no corpse within.

RESUME GRAVEYARD

Haeckel CLIMBS out of the OPEN GRAVE and continues his quest. He doesn't even wonder why there is no body in the grave.

In the distance, he sees:

FIRELIGHT, and SHADOWY HUMAN FORMS.

HAECKEL

Elise!

And he charges through the graveyard toward the activity.

Before the view is clear, he sees right up before him:

Montesquino is SEATED on a TOMBSTONE, PUFFING on a long TURKISH PIPE.

Haeckel rushes up and PULLS the necromancer off the STONE and KNOCKS him to the GROUND.

(CONTINUED)

HAECKEL

Bastard!

Montesquino recovers, and recognizes Haeckel.

MONTESQUINO

Ah, the Doubting Thomas... come to
save the maiden fair, no doubt.

HAECKEL

What have you done to her, damn
you!

MONTESQUINO

Not to her, young man... *for* her.
See for yourself.

Haeckel follows his gaze.

Just across the GROUNDS, we can see ELISE, spectacularly,
voluptuously NAKED in the SILVER LIGHT of the MOON and the
GOLD FIRELIGHT of TORCHES that surround her in a ten-foot
CIRCLE, burnishing her fair skin.

Haeckel is overwhelmed and embarrassed by her loveliness
revealed so completely... until he sees, as they say, what
lies beneath.

At first it seems she is sitting on the wet grass, her face
and chest FLUSHED, her BREATH coming in GASPS. Her CRIES are
not of anguish, but of PASSION.

And her bouncing, rolling MOVEMENT betrays the source of her
passion:

She is STRADDLING a MAN... but this man is DEAD. He is
covered in desiccated FLESH; his rotting HANDS are pawing at
her BREASTS as she takes him within her.

This is Elise's FIRST HUSBAND. Despite the corruption of his
features in death, we can tell that he was a HANDSOME MAN.
Though they are CLOUDED, his EYES are a deep, pale,
penetrating BLUE.

This is the HANDSOME YOUNG MAN in the MANTEL PORTRAIT!

She WRITHES up and down on the corpse, passionately coupling
with the man she loves most.

The TORCHES are held aloft by another FOUR or FIVE of the UNDEAD, surrounding this love act as if lighting a showgirl.

In a mad corruption of Busby Berkeley's favorite overhead angle, Elise is surrounded by TORCH-BEARING living CORPSES and FRESHLY-OPENED GRAVES.

As Haeckel watches in abject horror, Walter, flushed and out of breath, comes up behind him.

WOLFRAM

I warned you.

HAECKEL

(horrified)

You knew this was happening?

WOLFRAM

Of course I knew. I fear it is the only way she is satisfied.

HAECKEL

Good God, what is she?

WOLFRAM

A woman.

(anguished tears leak from his eyes)

A woman in love with a dead man...

HAECKEL

No natural woman would endure *that*.
Jesus! *Jesus!*

He looks over at Elise, who, with her dead lover, is in the throes of ecstasy.

The HEAT is spreading to the CORPSES who stand guard. They are not *completely* dead.

One of the DEAD GUARDS heads to the center of the CIRCLE and stands over the coupling couple. He cannot keep his rotting, decaying hands off of the stunning and voluptuous Elise, and, in the heat of this twisted passion, she doesn't fight him off.

The other UNDEAD approach the party, one at a time, and try to shove the CORPSE GUARD away so that they can partake. They push and shove at one another, dying to participate.

Elise and her late husband barely notice. Her CRIES reach off into the night.

Outraged, Haeckel SHOUTS OUT:

HAECKEL

Stop!!!

Furiously, he GRABS the MUSKET from Walter and charges off into the graveyard.

WOLFRAM

(calling after him)

Don't hurt her! She is not to blame!

He heads not for Elise, but for Montesquino. He CLIMBS over GRAVES and BRANCHES and the occasional FALLEN TREE.

HAECKEL

Montesquino! *Montesquino!*

27 OMIT

27

28 OMIT

28

28 CONTINUED:

28

29 EXT. CEMETERY / MONTESQUINO'S SEAT - NIGHT

29

Montesquino is watching from his seat on the back of a GRAVESTONE when Haeckel charges up to him and SLAMS him across the FACE with the BARREL of the MUSKET.

The necromancer falls to the ground, his FACE BLEEDING.

Haeckel AIMS the GUN at him, and PULLS BACK the HAMMER.

MONTESQUINO

Do not blame me, young sir! I am merely doing as I was paid to do!

HAECKEL

Get to your feet!

Montesquino rises, his hands raised in surrender, terrified that he's going to be shot. His entire demeanor has changed; he's no longer the arrogant, confident magician. He is now in the thrall of something out of his control.

HAECKEL

Whatever you did to start this,
undo it!

MONTESQUINO

I cannot, sir! I cannot!

Haeckel jams the MUZZLE of the MUSKET into Montesquino's ample BELLY.

HAECKEL

Stop it now, I command you! I swear to God, I will shoot you dead!

Montesquino can only shake his head, his eyes wild, his composure gone.

HAECKEL

Do it!

Montesquino is shaking, and cannot speak. Then:

WOLFRAM (O.S.)

Elise!

They turn to look.

ANGLE - WITH WALTER WOLFRAM

The pitiful Wolfram is CLAMBERING over GRAVESTONES and FALLEN TREES toward his WIFE.

WOLFRAM (cont'd)

Elise... please, Elise... you should come home now...

ANGLE ON ELISE

She doesn't even hear him; she is overwhelmed with sexual desire.

ANGLE ON ONE OF THE (OBVIOUSLY) AROUSED DEAD

It turns toward Walter.

ANGLE - INCLUDE WALTER, ELISE, AND THE DEAD

Walter stumbles through the necropolis to his naked wife, but there are re-animated BODIES between them. ONE of the DEAD GUARDS stands and shambles toward Walter, WAVING him away.

Walter continues toward her, TEARS running down his face.

WOLFRAM

Elise, please... come home with
me...

ANGLE - INCLUDE HAECKEL

HAECKEL

Walter, stay away!

The CORPSE continues toward Walter, still shooing the man
away from his bride. When Walter won't be shooed, the CORPSE
KNOCKS him to the GROUND.

Walter FLAILS and gets back up, but the CORPSE-- and another--
are on him.

They knock him back to the ground, then fall upon him.

HAECKEL

(to Montesquino)

Come with me!

He heads across the grounds, leading with the gun, and
Montesquino follows.

HAECKEL

I'm coming, Walter!

ANGLE - WITH HAECKEL AND MONTESQUINO

Haeckel and Montesquino scramble over the obstacle course of
the graveyard toward Walter and Elise, Haeckel leading with
the MUSKET.

When they reach Walter, he is SCREAMING as TWO of the UNDEAD
are TEARING red, steaming VISCERA out of his OPEN CHEST and
ABDOMEN.

Haeckel SWINGS the MUSKET and BATS one of the disintegrating
undead to the ground, but it just climbs back up and onto the
SCREAMING, DYING Walter.

The other CORPSE bends down and FEEDS off of Walter's EYE
SOCKET.

As Elise is being ravished on the other side of the GRAVE,
the LIVING DEAD GUARDS are dining on Walter as he DIES.

Horrified by what he's wrought, Montesquino RUNS away.

HAECKEL
Montesquino, stop!

He keeps running. Haeckel raises the gun and FIRES, and Montesquino goes down, HOWLING in the wet GRASS.

Haeckel goes to Montesquino, his musket now spent. He GRABS him by the COLLAR.

HAECKEL
What does it take to make this
stop? *What are the words?*

Montesquino is weak, wounded. His TEETH are CHATTERING.

MONTESQUINO
No... no words...

HAECKEL
How do we make it stop?

The FIRE is FADING from Montesquino's EYES.

MONTESQUINO
When... the... sun... comes...
up...

HAECKEL
You cannot stop it any other way?

MONTESQUINO
No... no... other... way...

HAECKEL
(shaking him)
Tell me, you bastard!

Montesquino SHOVES BACK, and Haeckel SLIPS on the WET GRASS, losing his footing, and FALLING hard onto a GRAVESTONE. He HITS it with a resounding SMACK, and falls unconscious.

A FLASH of WHITE, then:

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

30 EXT. CEMETERY - JUST BEFORE DAWN 30

HIGH and WIDE.

The first LIGHT of the SUN is just coming up over the HORIZON, just leaking into the darkness.

The DEAD are SLINKING and CRAWLING back into their GRAVES, pulling the EARTH and SOD over them like BLANKETS.

There is no sign of Elise, but WALTER'S BODY lies GUTTED and EMPTY on the grass.

Montesquino's BODY lies DEAD at Haeckel's feet.

Haeckel WAKES as a VULTURE (or CROW) tugs at his PANT LEG, just in time to see the last of the DEAD retire.

It is calm and quiet as Haeckel STANDS UP, reeling. The DEAD are a memory, and life slowly begins to spring up around us: the distant calls of the MORNING BIRDS and the DRONE of the DRAGONFLIES.

WITH HAECKEL

He looks all around him: at the evacuated corpse of Wolfram; at the wide-eyed CORPSE of Montesquino at his feet.

Life and death are not as he supposed.

His head throbbing, Haeckel makes his way through the quiet NECROPOLIS.

31 EXT. CEMETERY GATES - DAWN 31

Haeckel walks through the heavy iron gate, under the unblinking gaze of the SKELETON that is chained to it. He pushes the gate closed behind him.

DISSOLVE TO:

32 EXT. WOLFRAM HOUSE - DAY 32

Haeckel emerges before the house, and there is the sweet SOUND of a WOMAN SINGING. Haeckel stops to listen for a moment, then goes to the door and OPENS it.

33 INT. WOLFRAM HOUSE - DAY 33

Haeckel EASES the DOOR open and ENTERS.

The LIVING ROOM is empty, save for the FIRE in the HEARTH.
Haeckel EYES the PILE of his BELONGINGS next to the hearth.

The SINGING is coming from the BEDROOM.

34 INT. BEDROOM - DAY 34

Haeckel steps into the DOORWAY to find:

Elise is sitting in a ROCKER, a simple, gentle smile on her face, lovely with a glowing complexion, despite the SCRATCHES on her skin.

The BABY is NURSING at her breast, and the song on her lips is sweet. There is nothing but HAPPINESS in her EYES.

He stands there a couple BEATS before she looks up at him.

ELISE
Good morning.

Haeckel NODS at her, wondering what she remembers of the night before.

ELISE
The storm has passed, hasn't it?

HAECKEL
It has.

The baby sucks hungrily at her teat.

HAECKEL
Elise...

She looks up at him.

ELISE
Yes?

HAECKEL
Last night...

Her face goes even more radiant at the memory. Yes, she remembers.

ELISE

Last night...

HAECKEL

Out in the necropolis...

ELISE

Yes, out in the necropolis...

HAECKEL

Walter...

The smile slides away for the moment.

ELISE

Yes, I know. He's dead.

(beat)

He was old. But he was always kind to me. Old men are the best husbands. As long as you don't want children.

She sees Haeckel look down at the baby at her bosom.

ELISE

Oh, this isn't Walter's boy.

She gently TEASES the BABY from her nipple to proudly show off the child to him.

ELISE

See? He doesn't look anything like Walter. But he looks just like his beautiful daddy...

And she turns to reveal the BABY to Haeckel... and to us:

There it is: life-in-death, perfected.

The SKIN of its FACE is taut and GREY, and its limbs fat from its mother's milk, but its EYE SOCKETS are deep as the grave. Its mouth is wide, its full, ragged teeth-- not an infant's teeth-- bared in a perpetual GRIMACE.

The dead, it seems, had given her more than pleasure.

The DEATH'S HEAD of the nursing baby does indeed look just like its FATHER: a LIVING CORPSE. The son of death: ZOMBIE BABY.

ELISE

Would you like to hold him?

Haeckel BACKS AWAY, unable to speak.

Elise RISES to bring the baby to him. Haeckel keeps backing away until his back hits the wall.

ELISE
Please. Hold him.

She SMILES so sweetly.

In a sort of TRANCE, Haeckel reaches out, and she places the baby in his arms. He brings the baby to his chest.

The Zombie Baby looks up into his eyes, a Keane painting gone to hell and come back undead, then suddenly SNARLS and LURCHES for Haeckel's THROAT.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. WOLFRAM HOUSE - DAY

35

Haeckel's SCREAMS fill the otherwise calm and lonely air...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

36 EXT. CEMETERY GATES - NIGHT

36

The MOON is FULL and bright above, the OAKS casting long, leering SHADOWS.

The CAMERA CRANES up and over the GATES, just clearing the watchful grin of the SKELETON.

DISSOLVE TO:

37 EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

37

We make our way through the HEADSTONES and WOODEN CROSSES and SHRUBBERY. The NIGHT BIRDS are singing, the FROGS bellowing. The NIGHT is coming to life.

We move past OPEN GRAVES, MOUNDS of DIRT.

As we move CLOSER, we can hear the distant, familiar, passionate CRIES of Elise, building in intensity.

(CONTINUED)

Finally, we drift over the low, crumbling ROCK WALL to find the RING of TORCHES planted in the ground, and reveal the night's RITUAL.

We make our way up a line of the eager, aroused WAITING DEAD:

We recognize them as we move past them: Elise's once-handsome FIRST HUSBAND, the CORPSE who was mounting her on the other night; MONTESQUINO, a MUSKET-HOLE in his CHEST; the GUTTED CORPSE of WALTER WOLFRAM, reaching impatiently for his beloved wife.

But they'll have to wait: the lovely and voluptuous Elise is coupling fervidly with the late, lamented ERNST HAECKEL... a dream at long last realized.

Haeckel's EYES are wide with sated desire, a dream fulfilled.

Then: we move in TIGHT on Elise's eager, florid FACE, and follow the simple GOLDEN CHAIN around her NECK to the DISTINCTIVE, FILIGREED LOCKET, dangling at the end.

Just like Miz Carnation's.

The LOCKET has fallen open, and facing CAMEO PORTRAITS fill both sides: one of Elise, and the other of her handsome HUSBAND, together forever.

So romantic.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ANGLE - MIZ CARNATION'S LOCKET

Her gnarled old HANDS caress the LOCKET and the PICTURES within. We PULL OUT and she BLINKS, bringing us out of her story.

INCLUDE RALSTON

The fire still burns in the fireplace as Edward Ralston is held rapt and horrified by Miz Carnation's tale of Ernst Haeckel.

(CONTINUED)

MIZ CARNATION

And that, my handsome friend, is
how young Ernst Haeckel finally
found the love that he sought.

RALSTON

Good God, woman! That is the most
horrible tale ever told!

MIZ CARNATION

Is it?

RALSTON

That the woman would have carnal knowledge with the dead! It is disgusting, inhuman! It is an affront to God! Your story is impossible!

MIZ CARNATION

So say you, Mr. Ralston. So... may I assume you could not be happy to have your wife return under such circumstances? You do not love the sweet Samantha so much?

*
*

RALSTON

My wife is the spirit, not the body that holds it!

MIZ CARNATION

Just so, kind sir. Just so. I can return the body, but I hold no guarantee for the spirit.

RALSTON

Good God, woman!

MIZ CARNATION

No God in this simple home, sir. No God at all...

Ralston turns away from her, gazing into the fire, considering the horror of his wife minus her spirit.

And then, from another ROOM: a soft, mewling CRY. Miz Carnation either doesn't hear it or chooses to ignore it.

RALSTON

What is that sound? That horrible sound?

Miz Carnation just looks at him.

MIZ CARNATION

I hear no horrible sound.

And it ENDS. Ralston looks around, decides to let it pass.

RALSTON

How did you come to know this
terrible tale?

But they are interrupted by a SOUND from behind, and a LONG SHADOW reaches out from the other room as the DOOR BANGS OPEN.

A SILHOUETTED FIGURE comes shambling out of the room and approaches her CHAIR.

Miz Carnation turns and her FACE lights up.

MIZ CARNATION
Sweetheart! We were just talking
about you!

The BODY steps up to her and into the FIRELIGHT to reveal:

The long-dead CORPSE of ERNST HAECKEL!

Haeckel's re-animated CADAVER comes up behind her as she STANDS to GREET him, giving her a big, deep KISS as he SLIDES his ROTTING HAND over her withered BREAST.

She looks up at Ralston with a warm, salacious SMILE.

MIZ CARNATION
Montesquino taught me so much. I
shall always be deep in his debt...

A passionate PURR rumbles up from Miz Elise Carnation's bosom as she is caressed by her dead lover. And then, the MEWLING SOUND rises again.

Out of the bedroom comes the CORPSE of WALTER WOLFRAM, carrying the crying BABY ZOMBIE in the CROOK of his ARM, and a BABY BOTTLE full of MILK in his other hand. *
*

MIZ CARNATION
Oh, give me the little darling.
Come on, honey. Time for supper.
Daddy has to wait for his.

He brings it to Miz Carnation, who takes the BOTTLE to suckle the child, giving a lewd little chuckle. *
*

Still in the bedroom doorway, waiting his turn, is Elise's DEAD FIRST HUSBAND.

MIZ CARNATION
(to her lovers)
Gentlemen, we have a very handsome
guest. He claims to love his wife
as much as we love one another. Mr.
Ralston? *
*
*

Horrified, Ralston stumbles and runs for the door and makes a hasty retreat, fighting down his gorge. Miz Carnation watches him go, bemused. *

Her DEAD HUSBAND leans down over her, and they kiss
passionately, rotting corpse and decaying old woman, not too
far from the end of her life. But the life that is left in
her is hot with passion.

*
*
*
*

Haeckel and Walter converge on her, eager to share some of
that quality time with her.

*
*

38 CONTINUED: (6)

38

MIZ CARNATION

You boys can just wait until the
baby's fed... then we can all
play...together...

*

She lewdly licks her lips as the baby SUCKS happily away on
the BOTTLE.

*

*

39 EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

39

It sits calmly nestled in vines. We now see for the first
time that this is the same little house as the WOLFRAM
FARMHOUSE, several DECADES later.

We CRANE UP and OUT to see the old, overgrown NECROPOLIS in
the distance, as MUSIC swells to carry us away into the
night.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END