

DEVIL'S EYE

Written by

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Inspired by a true story

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EXT. KENTUCKY'S GREEN RIVER VALLEY - DAWN

TITLE OVER: LITTLE HOPE, KENTUCKY FEBRUARY 1812

The camera soars high over endless acres of winter forest. Bare branches reach hopelessly toward a gray sky.

Far below sits a small mining town: sagging wooden structures on either side of a dirt road.

The KEER, KEER, KEER of a raptor pierces the silence.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAWN

Two RED HAWKS fight viciously over a hunk of raw meat.

The camera moves beyond the hawks to a pair of dirty black boots, legs splayed.

We travel up the body - a wiry white man, thirties. His clothes are splattered with mud. The skin on his hands is stained black with soot.

His bare throat reveals a thick lateral cut. The hawks have torn away chunks of flesh along the gash.

The man's unseeing blue eyes stare at the sky.

We move in on those eyes.

A RUSTLING, then the hawks begin to peck the eyes away.

Pitch. Black. Darkness.

CUT TO:

Pitch. Black. Darkness.

Sounds of a little boy struggling. Muffled laughs. Pounding.

ALBERT

Let me out!

NATHAN

Can you see him then?

TOM

Is it the creeper? He said he had business with you.

Footsteps.

VIRGINIA

Why are you boys still here?

ALBERT

Help!

VIRGINIA
Step away. Now.

Light spills onto the screen as a door is thrust open.

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A small boy, ALBERT (10), tumbles from a closet trembling with fright. His tormentors NATHAN and TOM (also 10) laugh.

NATHAN
Look at him!

TOM
Did you pee yourself?

School teacher Virginia Dennison (20's) accosts them. Her porcelain skin contrasts with a dark mane pulled into a loose bun. She is fiercely independent and just about the only pristine thing in this hardscrabble town.

In her hands she holds the day's post. She gestures with her letter opener.

VIRGINIA
Enough! You two, out.

TOGETHER
(mumbled)
Yes ma'am.

The boys shuffle their feet as they head to the door.

Virginia places a comforting hand on Albert's shoulder.

He desperately tries to keep his lower lip from trembling.

ALBERT
I think there might've been something in there.

VIRGINIA
Let's have a look, shall we?

She makes a show of examining the closet. There's a mop and bucket, a shelf of Bibles and some winter clothes.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
See for yourself, a mop and a glove.

Tapping his nose with the mail, she elicits a reluctant smile.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 (smiling kindly)
 Nothing to fear from a woolen
 mitten.

A charm falls from the letter opener. Albert picks it up.
 It's a small, silver butterfly.

Albert steals a peek inside the closet, just to be sure.

Virginia crouches down beside him, taking back the charm.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 You know, Albert, when I was your
 age my sisters tormented me
 terribly. (Whisper) We're not meant
 to dislike our family are we?

Albert shakes his head 'no'.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 They told me that when I was a baby
 my father discovered me abandoned
 in a cemetery. They said any day my
 'real family' would come and take
 me home to live with them.
 Underground. With the worms. The
 Devil, they said, was always
 watching.

Albert squirms. Virginia doesn't notice.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 Cut me to the quick. Until, my
 father told me they were full of
 nonsense. And he gave me something.

She leans in conspiratorially.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 A protective amulet.

Retrieving a cloth purse tied to the folds of her skirt,
 Virginia pulls out a RED MARBLE WITH A YELLOW CORE.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 It's called a Devil's Eye.

She passes it to Albert who handles it reverently.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 The devil can't hurt you if he
 can't see you.

Move in on the closet - the door slightly ajar. Blackness
 inside.