

GRAVEWALKER

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. AN ANCIENT CEMETERY - NIGHT

Like a strobe-light, LIGHTNING illuminates decrepit tombstones and dead trees. Low rolls of THUNDER rumble in the distance. The soaring towers of a CASTLE, looming in the backdrop.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Mama...

A WOMAN (30s). Slim shoulders, raven-black tresses, with a shock of WHITE running along the part in her hair. Wearing a sensual, sweeping black dress. An amethyst brooch, fastened around her neck.

She's kneeling next to a precocious LITTLE GIRL (4). The mirror image of her mother, minus the brooch. She clutches a TATTERED DOLL, dressed in black rags, with the same tell-tale strand of white hair.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

It's the men in shiny armor, isn't it Mama?

WOMAN

(venom)

They're nothing. Nothing at all.

She looks back towards the closed gates --

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Did you say good-bye to your brother?

The girl nods sullenly.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Look at me --

She cups the girl's face with her hands. Her expression softens.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You're going to go away for a little while --

Tears run down the little girl's face --

LITTLE GIRL

But I don't want to go away, I want to stay with you!

The woman looks her straight in the eyes.

WOMAN

No, you're not going to cry, you hear me? You're going to be brave. You're going to remember what you are.

Reluctantly, the girl wipes away her tears.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

When you're ready, you'll come back. I promise.

The girl nods.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Do you remember what I showed you?

LITTLE GIRL

Yes, Mama.

The woman caresses the little girl's cheek. Proud.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

Will you come and visit me?

The woman almost cracks --

WOMAN

Here.

Unfastens her brooch -- holds it in her hand --

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(to the brooch)

Your freedom, upon her safe return.

The amethyst SHIMMERS as she quickly places it around the little girl's neck.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Just for you, ok?

The girl snuffles and nods.

LITTLE GIRL

Ok.

ANGRY SHOUTS from men in the distance --

WOMAN

You have to leave now, before they see you.

The shouts -- LOUDER --

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I love you --

A METALLIC CLANG as the gates bust open! The woman looks behind her shoulder, then back to the girl --

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Go, NOW!

The woman rises to her full height, turns around. Sorrow has given way to PURE RAGE. Behind her -- a WHOOSH, punctuated by a FAINT POP.

The woman's eyes glimmer VIOLET LIGHTNING as she stalks forth to face --

-- an array of KNIGHTS. Clad in full-plate armor, bearing gleaming swords. A literal WALL of shining steel. One of them steps up --

RENTON TALENDEL (45). Imperious, ice-cold blue eyes. His goatee, trimmed with military precision. He brandishes his sword --

RENTON

Gravewalker! The evil of your kind ends with you, tonight!

The woman's face twists in contempt --

WOMAN

The only evil that has been committed, has been by your hand, murderer!

RENTON

--silence, witch! Your death will finally bring an end to the horrors--

CRRAAACKKKOOOOM!! A fork of white-hot LIGHTNING splits the sky, cutting him off.

WOMAN

Fool. Too soon you'll discover the truth for yourself. And if you think I'm going to fall on your little toy sword --

She SNAPS her arms outwards, a VIOLET BURST of crackling energy rushing out in all directions. Eyes closed, hands out-stretched, as behind her --

-- the ground TREMBLES, the muddy earth CHURNING and BOILING. The gray, rancid flesh of a DECAYED ARM -- it EXPLODES into view, sending clods of wet soil flying. A few feet away -- rising, pushing from the dirt -- a ROTTED FACE.

Shadowed, empty eye sockets, wispy strands of hair clinging to its yellowed skull.

A veritable legion of CORPSES, clambering to free themselves. Their guttural MOANS of eternal suffering, driving the Knights back.

Renton quickly beckons to the rear. The Knights part as a MAN (30s) is dragged forth, then thrown to the ground before them. Stripped to the waist. Straw-yellow hair dripping over noble blue eyes, his face caked with blood and dirt.

Still, she recognizes him.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

No...

The animated corpses suddenly go inert. Sinking slowly back down into the soggy earth. On his knees, the man raises a tortured brow, fixing his one good eye on her, the other, nearly swollen shut.

MAN

(barely audible)

I -- I love--

Bright steel ERUPTS from his chest. Then, withdraws, as Renton pulls the blade out from behind.

Some of the other Knights remove their helmets -- startled. One such Knight is EDWIN BLAKE (25). Coarse, black stubble fails to hide the kindness in his brown eyes.

RENTON

(to the Knights)

Such is the price one pays when they consort with the enemy.

The man slumps forward -- face first to the wet dirt.

WOMAN

NO!!

She starts to run towards him -- WHOOSH!!

VANISHING in a FLASH of GREY MIST --

REAPPEARING a second later -- stop-motion -- right in front of him. She turns him over --

Dead.

She looks up -- eyes welling with unspeakable grief --

WOMAN (CONT'D)
YOU BASTARD!!!

With an inarticulate CRY of fury, she throws herself at Renton --
-- who greets her with the business end of his sword. He
leans in close --

RENTON
What did you say about not falling
on my sword?

The light slowly fades from her eyes as she slumps to the
ground. Her last sight --

-- the little girl's TATTERED DOLL. Its threadbare black
dress, rustling in the wind --

EXT. GROUP HOME - MORNING

Sunlight cuts through the morning chill to reveal...

...a HOUSE, all by itself in a natural cul-de-sac of trees.
A frumpy station wagon, parked in the driveway. A worn
placard on the front porch reads: *"The Salford Orphanage For
Young Women"*

INT. GROUP HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

TEENAGE GIRLS of various ages YELL and FUSS at a door.

MADDY (17), brunette tomboy. DONNA (18), blonde, cheap
glamour. LIZ (14), petite brunette, evil twinkle in her
eye.

Donna pushes the other girls out of the way -- POUNDS on the
door with her fist -- BAM! BAM!

DONNA
God dammit, hurry up! I'll never
get my hair done in time!

Maddy plops herself back into bed while Liz and Donna continue
to vent their unholy wrath.

INT. GROUP HOME - BATHROOM - MORNING

In front of the mirror, trying to ignore the chaos outside --
MELA (18).

Dark, sultry looks, obscured by a lack of conviction. Wearing
bargain-bin pajamas, she goes through her morning rituals.
Spending no extra time on make-up or awkward bangs, except
to tentatively finger a narrow strand of IVORY hair nestled
in with velvet-black.

She looks over at a plastic bottle on the sink counter --

Black Beauty Colorizer

Get Gorgeous Dark Hair in MINUTES!

She reaches for it, unscrews the top. Tries to dab a bit in, checking in the mirror --

BAM! BAM! The door rattles with the impact, almost causing her to spill the bottle.

MELA

Just a minute!

She quickly screws the bottle shut. Hides it into the far corner of the cabinet underneath. Turns to the door, gingerly cracks it open to reveal...a torrential barrage of YELLING and SCREAMING. She quickly SLAMS the door shut, puts her back to it, dreading the inevitable.

INT. GROUP HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Seated around the table -- Maddy, Liz, Donna and Mela. Mela, wearing a drab pair of pants and a mousy shirt -- anything but flattering.

Cooking, MRS. EVANS (60). Heavysset yet entirely efficient.

DONNA

--SO unfair. She *always* gets to the bathroom first, even while we're still sleeping.

Mela, busy stuffing pancakes into her mouth.

MADDY

(chews food)

Yeah. Why don't you sleep?

Mela shrugs. Reaches for the orange juice. Pours herself a glass.

MELA

Because I'm a night-owl?

Donna gives her a pointed look of derision.

DONNA

No. Because you're a flipping *weirdo* --

Mrs. Evans SLAMS her spatula on the countertop.

MRS. EVANS

Donna!

Donna picks at the eggs on her plate.

LIZ

Uh, Mrs. Evans, Donna's kind of right.
Like, she even freaks out the nerds
at our school.

Mela pauses briefly -- then keeps on chewing.

DONNA

(to Liz)
You forgot about Franklin.
(to Mela)
Is he good for your ego or something?

On cue, FRANKLIN HUCKFAST'S cherubic face fills up the window frame. 18, fat, lovable.

DONNA (CONT'D)

So. Gross.

Mela stands up from the table. Grabs her backpack.

MELA

Time to go! Bye Mrs. Evans!

MRS. EVANS

(calls after Mela)
Don't listen to them, dear. You
don't have to be anything other than
what you are --

Glaring at Donna --

MRS. EVANS (CONT'D)

-- as long as you try to do what's
right.

Liz, Donna -- gag me with your lameness.

MRS. EVANS (CONT'D)

The longest staying resident I've
ever had, you know.

LIZ

Only because no one ever adopted
her.

DONNA

Yeah, I got adopted three times before
I got sent to this crappy place.

MADDY

Sucks for us.

DONNA
Quiet, fatty.

MADDY
Fatty?

MRS. EVANS
Hush. All of you. She's a perfectly
normal young lady.

Through the window, Mrs. Evans watches them walk away, then commences on soiled pots and pans in the sink.

MRS. EVANS (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Spends too much time in that awful
cemetery though. Poor thing.

EXT. SUBURB SIDEWALK - MORNING

Mela and Franklin, walking alongside a lonely street.

FRANKLIN
Glad to get out of there this morning?

MELA
Yeah. Kind of. Ever since Donna
moved in, it's been a bit crazy.

FRANKLIN
Huh. So...what about tonight?! I
can't believe you're finally going
to play!

MELA
Yeah, I don't know. It's kind of
awkward. I mean, your mom thinks
I'm like, really weird.

FRANKLIN
Everyone thinks your weird, so don't
take it personally.

MELA
Thanks.

Mela, distracted by a rusted, frayed section of wrought-iron fence, running the length of the street. On the other side, wild grass encircles a hodgepodge of faded TOMBSTONES and CROSSES.

FRANKLIN
Anyways, you can still play whatever
class you want --

Franklin notices her lack of attention.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

You're not going to make me beg, are
you? Cause I swear I will --

Mela sees herself as a YOUNG GIRL (10) -- playing carefree
among the very same tombstones --

FRANKLIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Uh, hello?

Mela wakes up.

MELA

What? Oh. Yeah. Sorry.

Mela's view lingers on the cemetery as they leave it behind...